For Atsuko

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My interest in the religious identity of the Arakanese began in Athens, Ohio in 1992. I had attempted to write a term paper on Arakan for a Buddhist philosophy course at Ohio University for Elizabeth Collins. It was incredibly difficult to find any agreement in the secondary literature regarding the question of the religious identity of the Arakanese. Some scholars suggested that the Arakanese were Muslims, while others held that to be Arakanese was to be Buddhist. I stumbled across Portuguese accounts which described Arakanese rulers in ways which suggested concurrent Muslim and Buddhist identities. Faced with this duality, I opted to view this as an example of syncretism. With this perspective, I carried my interest in Arakan through a Masters thesis under William H. Frederick at Ohio University (1993), and through several seminar papers on Arakan for Victor Lieberman at the University of Michigan. I shelved a deeper investigation of the issue of Arakanese religious identities until a later date. This dissertation is the product of my return to this issue.

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GLOSSARY

Abhiseka. This is the ritual head-washing ceremony which precedes the king's assumption of the throne.

Ahmú-dàn. Royal commoner

Asi. free nonservicemen

Aranya-vasi monks. They are Buddhist monks who lived outside of society. They are often known as "forest-dwelling monks."

Atwìn-hmù. Interior commander

Beik-theik. The *abhiseka* ceremony

Ein-shei-mìn. The heir-apparent

Gama-vasi monks. Buddhist monks who lived in monasteries within society. In this dissertation, they are generally village-dwelling monks.

Glebe lands. Tax-free monastic lands

Hpòn. Charismatic power. This is the Burmese version of "soul-stuff."

Hsin-kei-kri. The "great elephant commissioner." He was one of the four great ministers of the Arakanese royal court.

Islamdom. This refers to the Muslim world (including areas of Muslim interaction outside of Dar al-Islam).

Islamicization. This refers to the influence of culture associated with Muslims independently of religious influence.

Islamization. Muslim religious influence

Jamudipa. This is the island where humans live in Buddhist cosmology.

Jati. Hereditary occupational groups

Kalimah. The Muslim confession of faith

Ko-ran. Arakanese royal bodyguard

Ko-ran-kri. The "great royal bodyguard." He was one of the four great ministers of the Arakanese royal court.

Krei. Village or settlement

leirei-mran. The "right-hand man" in the Arakanese royal court

leiwei-mran. The "left-hand man" in the Arakanese royal court

Maha-sangha-raja. Ecclesiastical head of the Buddhist *sangha* in Arakan

Mró. Town

Mró-su-kri. Township headman

Mró-zà. Appanage grantee or township governor

Parabeik. Bark-manuscript

Pareit. A special *suttra*

Parinibanna. Achievement of Enlightenment

Pesa. Palm-leaf manuscript

Pri-so-kri. The "great manager of the country's affairs." He was one of the four great ministers of the Arakanese royal court.

Rwa. Village

Rwa-kaun. A village headman
Samsara. Continual cycle of birth and rebirth in Buddhist doctrine

Sangha. The Buddhist monastic order

Sasana. The Buddhist religion

Sayyid. A person claiming descent from Muhammed

Sit-kè. Military commissioner

Su-krì. A local 'great man.' At times this referred to the headman of a group of *wa*
(circle) of villages. During Burman control and British rule, this term was applied
differently to indigenous authorities.

Ta-bain-krì. The "great sword commander." He was one of the four great ministers of the
Arakanese royal court.

Tipitika. The texts that together form the Theravadin Buddhist doctrine

Wa. "Circle" or group of villages

Win-hmù. Compound commander

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Arakan, "the Palestine of the Farther East"

Just before dying of a tropical fever, Emil Forchhammer published in 1891 a relatively slim volume purporting to provide the archaeological record of a strip of coastal land between the Arakan Roma and the Bay of Bengal. As the first head of the Burma Archaeological Survey, Forchhammer surveyed the archaeological ruins of not only the Arakan littoral, but also of the entire Irrawaddy Valley -- that is -- everything that fell within the political boundaries of British Burma. Forchhammer believed that Burmese Theravadin Buddhism, which he suggested was originally brought to Burma by two missionaries sent by the Indian emperor Asoka, had almost died in the tenth century. Anawrata and Kyanzittha, two rulers of the Irrawaddy Valley kingdom of Pagan, "again secured supremacy to Buddhism," through monks who rejoined the Pagan *sangha* with that of Sri Lanka.[1] This, Forchhammer felt, was the story of how Theravadin Buddhism, as it existed by the time of "his" Burma, emerged in the Irrawaddy Valley.

But for Forchhammer it was not the only Buddhism, and this was not the only

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[1]E. Forchhammer, Report on the Antiquities of Arakan (Rangoon: Superintendent, Government Printing and Stationary, 1892), 1.

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story. Among the Arakanese and the Mons, Forchhammer claims to have encountered the

roots of another kind of Buddhism:

> [T]here are old Buddhist traditions . . . [which] are the remnants of the old Northern Buddhism, which reached Arakan from the Ganges when India was mainly Buddhistic; they form a substratum cropping up here and there apparently without any connection; its centre is the Mahamuni pagoda, the most important remains of ancient Buddhism in Burma, antedating in this province both Brahmanism and the Buddhism of the Southern school. The legend asserts that . . . Gotama Buddha came [to Danra-waddy] . . . [and] held a prophetic discourse; after the casting of his image he departed to the south, visited Dvaravati (Sandoway), then turned to the east, and alighting (he is flying through the air) on the summit of Po-u-taung he delivered another discourse pregnant with prophesies. . . *the strange tradition*, unrecorded in the Tipitika [the Theravada Buddhist Canon], *is not an afterthought, conceived in modern times . . . The tradition is intimately connected with the religious history of Arakan and Burma in general; it is as old as Buddhism itself in that province. Nearly all pagodas within the confines of Dhaññavati and on the banks of the Irrawaddy owe their origin to it . . .*[2]

In one fell swoop, or rather a great leap, Forchhammer reaffirmed the unity and common

religious origins of the Arakanese and Burmese and suggested Arakan as a kind of

Burmese Buddhist 'homeland.' As Forchhammer proclaimed: "this land of strange

prophecies, Arakan, the Palestine of the Farther East."[3]

Forchhammer's comparison of the Arakan Littoral to Palestine, in the 1890s, is

ironic, for today, the population of the Arakan Littoral is polarized into two religio-ethnic

communities, the Rakhine Muslims (or Rohengyas, as they call themselves) and the

Rakhine Buddhists (called "Maghs" by the Rakhine Muslims). Each community has

drawn upon the same periods of Arakan's history and each has used archaeological

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[2]Ibid., 1-2. Italicization, for emphasis, is mine.

[3]Ibid., 2.

evidence to support its communal claims to Arakan as a homeland. As one summary of

Arakanese history from the Rohengya point-of-view explains:

> Arakan was a Hindu kingdom in the distant past . . . The Mongolian [Burmese-speaking Arakanese] invasion of 957 put an end to the Chandra dynasty and Hinduism in Arakan. The Mongols later assimilated with the locals-the Rohingya Muslims and the Magh [Bengalis, according to this account] Buddhists. In the 15th century, a number of Muslim Kings ruled Arakan, which was a golden period in the history of Arakan. During this period, Rohingya Muslims played a dominant role in the political life of Arakan . . . Burmese rule of Arakan [after 1784] was short lived but bloody and brutal. Historically, the Rohingyas association with Arakan is much older. The ancestors of the people, now known as the Rohingyas, came to Arakan more than a thousand years ago. They became [an] integral part of the Arakan [Littoral] socially, politically and economically. On the other hand, the Burmese have always been identified as the plunderers and despoilers.[4]

Likewise, Arakanese Buddhists claim the Arakan Littoral as their homeland:

> Two thousand five hundred years have passed since the time of parinirvana of Gautama Buddha. Throughout the centuries, ever since the introduction of Buddhism, up to the present time, Arakanese have professed Buddhism without a break.[5]

This view has been shared by some scholars, who have hinted that Muslims in Arakan are

a relatively recent development:

> [T]here is a danger posed by the increasing Muslim population. The Muslims have entered Arakan mostly during the British times and after [the] independence of Burma.[6]

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[4]Abdur Razzaq & Mahfuzul Haque, A Tale of Refugees: Rohingyas in Bangladesh (Dhaka: Centre for Human Rights, 1995), 15.

[5]San Tha Aung, The Buddhist Art of Ancient Arakan (An Eastern Border State Beyond Ancient India, East of Vanga and Samatata) (Rangoon: Ministry of Education, 1977), 108.

[6]Ashin Siri Okkantha, "History of Buddhism in Arakan" (Ph.D. diss., University of Calcutta, 1990), 177-178.

Thus, just as Arakan has come to have two religious identities, Arakanese history, as the

quotations above indicate, has come to have two edges.

The primary focus of this dissertation is on the rise of the Rakhine Buddhist

community within the overarching "family" of Burmese Buddhists in the Irra-waddy

Valley. Today, the Rakhine Buddhists, who form the more powerful of the two

communities, define themselves as Burmese Theravada Buddhists. They, along with

Burmese Buddhists in the Irra-waddy Valley, maintain, via the Burman nation-state, a

monopoly on published texts, historiography, and archaeological work.[7] To this

population, the Muslims of Arakan are foreigners. According to this view, the Muslims

generally came into the Arakan Littoral during colonial times and are thus not part of the

pre-conquest past.[8] The Rohengyas are expelled, from time to time, and are often shunned

by the Arakanese Buddhists.[9] I focus, but not exclusively, on the rise of Theravada

Buddhism in Arakan. In this dissertation, I seek to explain why one of these religio-ethnic

communities, that of the Rakhine Buddhists, has emerged and why this emergence took

place within the same context, the same polity, the same environment, and the same time

period as that which saw the emergence of the Rohengyas.

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[7]Aung Than Tun, "Letter from Arakan," Guardian 2, no. 4 (February, 1955): 25.

[8]'Asmi,' "The State of Arakan: (3) Years of Suspense," Guardian 1, no. 12 (October, 1954): 17.

[9]For discussions of Rohengya culture, society, and religion see Ba Tha, "Rowengya Fine Arts," Guardian 8, no. 2 (February, 1961): 20-22; and idem, "Roewengyas in Arakan," Guardian 7, no. 5 (May, 1960): 33-36. For a history of Arakan from the Muslim perspective see Mohammed Yunus, A History of Arakan: Past and Present (n.l.: Magenta Colour, 1994); Ba Tha, "Shah Shuja in Arakan (Origins of Muslims in Arakan)," Guardian 6, no. 9 (September, 1959): 26-28.

1.2 Previous Historiography

By studying the Arakan Littoral during the early modern period, I intend to provide a better understanding of the emergence of one religious identity, that of the Theravada Buddhists, in mainland Southeast Asia. While previous studies have been offered for the emergence of such a religious identity in certain Southeast Asian 'hegemon' states,[10] the present study focusses upon such a development in one of the myriad smaller states which 'lost out' in early modern state competition. This is important because the relationship between kings and religion in Arakan seems to have been different from that in the Irra-waddy and Chaophraya river valleys. Such mainland states as Burma actively promoted one religious identity at the expense of others and played a key role in identifying or defining religious orthodoxy.[11] In Arakan, however, the royal center (the kingship) was not simply indifferent to promoting one particular religious identity over another, but rather was one of the chief barriers restricting the emergence of Theravada Buddhist orthodoxy in the Arakan Littoral. By examining the development of the Theravada Buddhist identity in early modern Arakan, I contribute to our understanding of how factors other than central religious patronage fostered the rise of such an identity. I will stress, among other factors, the relationship between Buddhist religious sects and

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[10]According to Lieberman, these include Burma, Thailand, and Vietnam. See Victor Lieberman, "Local Integration and Eurasian Analogies: Structuring Southeast Asian History, c. 1350-c. 1830," Modern Asian Studies 27 (1993): 480.

[11]As Lieberman explains: "During [the early modern period] and particularly in the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries the Burmese and Thai . . . courts moved towards more self-consciously Theravada Buddhist modes of ceremonial, literary, legal, and monastic expression. Animist, Shaivite, and Mahayanist elements, though never eliminated, were either marginalized or subject to more effective royal regulation." Ibid., 487.

rural cultivator communities, the long-term presence in Danra-waddy of an attractive but underpopulated agricultural frontier and elite attempts to exploit it, and changes at various social levels in patron-client relationships.

This study also challenges the "Buddhist-traditionalists" who have argued for the ever-present dominance of Theravada Buddhist orthodoxy in premodern Arakan. They share a primordialist view that religion is one of the "basic organizing principles and bonds of human association throughout history."[12] The Buddhist-traditionalist school combines this primordialist view with contemporary Burmese-Buddhist political rhetoric and hagiography to offer an anachronistic picture of the existence in the distant past of the same kinds of Burmese-Buddhist communities that one finds today in Arakan and the Irra-waddy Valley. At its most extreme, the Buddhist-traditionalist school suggests that to be Arakanese, throughout the premodern period was to be a Theravada Buddhist as defined by contemporary understanding of this religious identity.[13] Of course, a major effort of this school has been to downplay the role of Muslims in Arakanese history and to deny them a traditional basis in the Arakan Littoral.[14] The Muslim-traditionalist school has countered this view by emphasizing a critical role played by Muslims in Arakanese history, or by anachronistically attributing the rise of a Muslim community in Arakan to a

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[12]Anthony D. Smith, The Ethnic Origins of Nations (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), 12.

[13]This view is held throughout Aung, Buddhist Art of Ancient Arakan. A more recent proponent of this school is Okkantha, "History of Buddhism in Arakan."

[14]Jacques Leider, "These Buddhist Kings With Muslim Names . . . A discussion of Muslim Influence in the Mrauk-U Period," in Etudes Birmanes eu Hommage à Denise Bernot. P. Pichard & Fr. Robinne, eds. (Paris: EFEO, 1998): 189-215.

period as early as the seventh century.[15]

The Buddhist-traditionalist school has had some difficulty in facing the issue of the concurrent use of 'Muslim' and 'Buddhist' titles and symbols by early modern Arakanese kings. Some Buddhist-traditionalist scholars have suggested that these symbols and titles were only used to reflect sovereignty over Chittagong, which is anachronistically viewed as a "Muslim" town.[16] Other Buddhist-traditionalist scholars discard this evidence as meaningless altogether, often without sufficient elaboration.[17] Muslim-traditionalist scholars, however, view the royal usage of 'Muslim' titles and symbols as evidence of Mrauk-U's vassalage to Muslim Bengali rulers.[18] I contribute to this debate by adapting to Arakan Phillip Wagoners' thesis of Islamization versus Islamicization in early modern Vijayanagara and Max Weber's observations on kingship and religion.[19] I suggest that the symbols and vocabulary of both the so-called "Muslim" rulership and "Buddhist" kingship in early modern Arakan did not signify religious identity. Rather these were rooted in high-status political and cultural models of rulership

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[15]As Ba tha suggests, the ancestors of the Rohengyas "made Arakan . . . their permanent home since the 7th century A.D." Tha, "Rowengya Fine Arts," 20.

[16]Suniti Bhushan Qanungo, "Chittagong During the Afghan Rule, 1538-1580," Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bangladesh 21 (1976): 54-75.

[17]Leider, "These Buddhist Kings With Muslim Names."

[18]A. B. M. Habibullah, "Arakan in the pre-Mughal History of Bengal," Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal 12 (1945): 33-38.

[19]Phillip B. Wagoner, "'Sultan among Hindu Kings': Dress, Titles, and the Islamicization of Hindu Culture at Vijayanagara," Journal of Asian Studies 55 (1996): 851-880.

adopted by indigenous rulers who sought to enhance their image *vis-a-vis* indigenous elite families and foreign rulers. Having challenged the central role of the 'central' court in religious change and identity, I again stress that we have to look for the emergence of religious identities further away from the royal court, both spatially and socially.

I will also attempt to draw Arakan into the discussion of religious change in early modern Southeast Asia. This discussion has old roots but has generally skirted a discussion of smaller 'forgotten' kingdoms and societies such as that of early modern Arakan. Unfortunately, much of this debate took place at a time when Europeans colonized much of South and Southeast Asia and carried with them notions of the 'natural' progression of superior cultures *vis-a-vis* 'primitive' indigenous cultures. When Europeans found 'Hindu' temples and the evidence of a high level of premodern civilization, they assumed that only Indian conquerors and Indian colonists could have brought them, a view which found form in the early twentieth century 'warrior theory.'[20] When evidence for Indian invasions proved scanty, other theories such as the 'trader theory,' which focused on the role of Indian merchants, continued to suggest a unilateral flow of religious influence from India.[21]

In the past half-century, scholarship on religious change in early modern Southeast Asia has stressed the role of indigenous agency in religious change. Van Leur opened the door to this discussion with the posthumous publication of <u>Indonesian Trade and Society</u>

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[20]I. W. Mabbett, "The 'Indianization' of Southeast Asia: Reflections on the Historical Sources," <u>Journal of Southeast Asian Studies</u> 8 (1977): 143-4.

[21]Ibid., 144.

in the 1950s.[22] Van Leur suggested that we should be thinking of cultural (and implicitly religious) influences in premodern Southeast Asia as 'brought from India' as opposed to 'brought to Southeast Asia.' In other words, Southeast Asians saw in certain cultures and religions in India things that made sense to them and helped explain their own world; thus, Southeast Asians sought out these influences and indigenized them. Current research on the emergence of Theravada Buddhism in early modern Southeast Asia has developed along this trajectory, stressing the important role of Buddhist monks in seeking out religious ideas and symbols from Sri Lanka and elsewhere.

Most recently, much work has tended to view religious change in premodern Southeast Asia as a general phenomenon. In other words, this scholarship suggests that there are various attractions offered by different religions and that indigenous societies as a whole 'converted' for the same set of attractions.[23] Social differentiation or the special environmental, political, or economic concerns of one group as opposed to another do not play a sufficient role in this literature.

A half-decade ago, scholars of South and Southeast Asia began to pay attention to

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[22]Van Leur wrote this as a doctoral dissertation, which remained unutilized by Southeast Asian historians throughout the 1940s and into the 1950s. Van Leur, meanwhile, was killed when his ship was sunk by the Japanese in World War II. The dissertation finally reached publication in the mid-1950s as J. C. van Leur, Indonesian Trade and Society: Essays in Asian Social and Economic History (The Hague: W. van Hoeve, 1955). See also the contextualization of van Leur's thesis in Mabbett, "The 'Indianization' of Southeast Asia," 144.

[23]See, for example, Reid's discussion in Anthony Reid, Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce 1450-1680 (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1993), 2:150-173.

Robin Horton's theory of religious change in Africa,[24] to suggest that in Asia (like Africa) mobility invites the development of religious affiliation. Questions of the differences between African and South and Southeast Asian society, economy, traditional political and family structures, and environment aside, Anthony Reid and Richard Eaton have applied Horton's theory with considerable care to Southeast Asia as a whole (Reid)[25] and the Nagas in northeastern India (Eaton).[26]

As Robin Horton's "intellectualist theory" suggests, indigenous African religious systems typically have two tiers of gods, one local and the other universal. When daily life remains within confines of the village or local area and involves little contact with the outside world, the tier of local gods or spirits prevails in the religion of the village.[27] As a local community comes into contact and interacts with peoples, cultures, and religions further afield, however, the community's own universal god comes to the forefront.[28] Often the local universal god is recast in the image of a more widely accepted universal being and this constitutes what appears to be religious conversion, but in actuality is only

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[24]See, most recently, Robin Horton, Patterns of Thought in Africa and the West: Essays on Magic, Religion, and Science (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

[25]Anthony Reid, "Islamization and Christianization in Southeast Asia: the Critical Phase, 1550-1650," in Southeast Asia in the Early Modern Era: Trade, Power, and Belief, Anthony Reid, ed. (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1993): 159.

[26]Richard M. Eaton, "Comparative History as World History: Religious Conversion in Modern India," Journal of World History 8 (1997): 243-274.

[27]Horton, Patterns of Thought in Africa and the West, 359.

[28]Eaton, "Comparative History as World History," 247.

one of several stages towards true religious conversion. As this model would suggest, and as has been demonstrated in related research, relatively superficial recasting of local conceptions of a universal god can be changed quickly in a rapidly changing religious environment.[29]

Anthony Reid offers a more functionalist approach to religious change in early modern Southeast Asia. Echoing Horton, Reid has made the case that when trade increased in early modern Southeast Asia, Southeast Asians found themselves moving farther from the village locale. In a such a situation, Reid asserts, travellers need universally-relevant gods who can move around and who are not just relevant to a local piece of land or territorial object located in some former habitat. The most prevalent universal gods, as opposed to local spirits, also come armed with numerous proselytizers and are backed by religious texts and an extensive literature.[30] The logical extension of all of this, as suggested most recently by Eaton, is that mobile communities are more likely to change than static communities, and agricultural communities often fall into the latter category.[31]

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[29]Salisbury explains, for example, that in the pre-Islamic Iberian peninsula, conversion to Christianity was only superficial, and when Islam arrived, the pre-Christian religious basis of the village remained essentially intact. See Joyce Salisbury, Iberian Popular Religion, 600 B.C. to 700 A.D. (New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 1985), 227-228. For the latest discussion of the universal god concept in Africa, see Sandra E. Greene, "Religion, History and the Supreme Gods of Africa: A Contribution to the Debate," Journal of Religions of Africa 26 (1996): 122-138.

[30]See Reid, Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce, 2:151. For a good, coherent discussion, based upon the prevailing theoretical literature, of the mobility and textual basis of world religions, and thus part of the reason for their success in early modern Southeast Asia, see ibid., 2:151, 153-4.

[31]Eaton, "Comparative History as World History," 267.

The case of early modern Arakan is not so easily answered by Horton's model for religious change. Horton's model does suggest the impact of increased movement beyond the village in the process of religious change, but (like Reid's analysis of religious change in early modern Southeast Asia generally) it does not answer the question of why religious change occurred unevenly and in complex ways in a society such as that of early modern Arakan. Suggesting that the Arakanese in the early modern period were subject to forces which encouraged movement and which brought new religious influences does not in itself explain why and when some Arakanese became Theravada Buddhists and some became Muslims. In short, how could the same society become Theravada Buddhist and Muslim at the same time?

During my research on religious change in early modern Arakan, it soon became clear that societies do not 'move' as a whole or in the same direction. The theme of this dissertation is that even in an age of change, different groups within the same society move in different religious directions, for different reasons, at different speeds, and to different degrees. Further, I found that there was a social logic to this differentiation. Central elites and rural populations, to compare two extremes, existed in different economic, political, and environmental contexts and had widely different perceptions of the world and different interests within it.

1.3 Structure of Argument

My central questions are how and why the rise of an associative ethno-religious identity (Burmese Buddhist) or at least its advanced roots developed in the Arakan

Littoral by the nineteenth century and how a religious communal identity emerged out of this identity. The Buddhists in Arakan and in the Irra-waddy Valley began to share an "imagined community" in the nineteenth century, if not earlier, and the process by which this shared ethno-religious identity emerged was long in the making. Buddhist sects out-of-favor with the royal court, village craftsmen, slaves, rural brigands and strongmen, the writers of court literature in distant kingdoms, and a host of others contributed to this emergence. As this list suggests, much of this religious change occurred independently of the royal court, questioning the hegemonic role sometimes attributed to the royal center in conditioning and determining the religious and ethnic identity of the general population. If anything, the early modern Arakanese court contributed more to the dual trajectory of religious change in the Arakan Littoral, than it did to the rise of Theravada Buddhism in the same place over the same period of time. Although this dissertation focusses upon the emergence of the Burmese Theravadin Buddhist community in early modern Arakan, and I thus do not provide an equally comprehensive study of the rise of the Rohengyas, this does not prevent me from suggesting how the early modern Arakanese context and social milieu encouraged such an emergence. Indeed, as will be apparent in the later chapters of this dissertation, one cannot talk about the emergence of a Burmese Theravadin Buddhist identity in Arakan without talking about the emergence of the Rohengyas. No comprehensive study has yet been offered for the emergence of Theravada Buddhism in

Arakan within the context of other religious trends.[32]

In providing a similar context for the rise of both Theravada Buddhism and Islam in early modern Arakan, I am, of course, emphasizing the *why* of religious change in early modern Arakan. Different groups interpreted Buddhism and Islam in ways which were locally (spatially and socially) relevant. In early modern Arakan, relevance was often perceived in terms of one's relationship to the soil (the means of production) and the center of political authority (status). Changing economic, social, and political relationships sometimes encouraged shifts in religious identities, sometimes they did not. In short, religious change in early modern Arakan was a complex development, irreducible to a simple 'mechanistic' formula.

In this dissertation, I make two inter-related arguments. I first argue that the theories most recently applied to religious change in Southeast Asia do not explain the formation of a Buddhist religious identity in early modern Arakan. Horton's theory is not relevant, I suggest, because there was no 'moment' or even a general period when Arakanese villagers were not interacting with the outside world. A variety of religions, and their gods and spirits and views of the cosmos were ever-present, and Horton's theory does not help us to understand why one religious identity formed as opposed to another. Similarly Reid's often functionalist approach to religious change (i.e. movement beyond the village requires universal gods, religious texts are portable, etc.) as peculiar to an 'age of

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[32] I exclude here Okkantha, "History of Buddhism in Arakan," as it is a relatively uncritical and descriptive study treating Buddhism as a constant in Arakanese history, with no consideration of rivals in the local context.

change' again implies a model of a static Southeast Asia shocked out of tradition by commercial expansion. It is true that commercial changes and other factors stimulating more frequent (or further afield) movement influenced the direction of religious influences, but they alone do not offer answers to the questions of why and how religious change occurred. Instead, I argue that we have to look at different social groups in Arakan and the relevance that each perceived in various religious models.

Second, I argue that Buddhist communalism emerged in part out of competition between communities from southern Arakan and from western Danra-waddy for settlement in the newly reopened eastern Danra-waddy agricultural zone. British colonial authorities were partly responsible, as colonial policies reduced the vitality of more prevalent forms of communal action, such as rural gentry-villager patron-client relationships. Further, British attempts to avoid the alienation of either Buddhists or Muslims actually worked to antagonize rural Buddhist monks. These monks filled the vacuum left by the erosion of village relationships with the rural gentry by offering leadership in forging community bonds and collective action in nineteenth century Arakan, and who envisaged an ideal Burmese-Buddhist state. Thus, Buddhist communalism in Arakan is a relatively recent, chiefly nineteenth-century development. This makes it far younger a development than supposed in the secondary literature.

Since religious change in early modern Arakan was not a sudden event or a development along a single trajectory, I have found it necessary to balance topical discussion with historical narrative. Chapter 2 examines the environmental (natural and

social) context. Chapter 3 challenges the religious identity assumed of early Mrauk-U kingship. In chapters 4 and 5, I examine the emergence of Theravada Buddhism in both the urban (chapter 4) and rural setting (chapter 5). I discuss the emergence of Muslim groups (chapter 6) in early modern Arakan in the late sixteenth and seventeenth century: they would play an important role in later centuries as the "Other" in the minds of nineteenth-century Buddhist communalists. I also use this discussion of Islam in the Arakanese context as a vehicle for examining general themes regarding religious change in the Arakan Littoral. In chapters 7, 8, and 9, I address the dramatic economic and social upheavals of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries which provided what I see as the critical catalyst for religious change in early modern Arakan (chapters 7 and 8) and the role played by Burman rule in the formation of a Burmese-Buddhist identity in Arakan between 1785 and 1825 (chapter 9). Finally, I argue that new forms of community-formation were needed when older forms had evaporated and how this need contributed to Buddhism's transition from religious identity to religious communalism (chapter 10).

For the transcription of Burmese words, I generally follow John Okell's conventional transcription with accented tones, with modifications to suit the Arakanese dialect.[33] In the case of the consonant "ရ," for example, I use "y" when transcribing names and places in the Irrawaddy Valley, and "r" for all other nouns, since they are discussed in the Arakanese context. I made further, though relatively minor, adjustments.

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[33]John Okell, <u>A Guide to the Romanization of Burmese</u> (London: The Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland, 1971), 31-45, 66-67.

CHAPTER 2

IN THE REALM OF DANGERS AND STRANGERS:

THE ROOTS OF ARAKANESE CULTURE AND SOCIETY

Although I do not suggest ecological or climatological determinism for religious

change in the early modern Arakan Littoral, Arakan's ecology and climate conditioned the

way in which the Arakanese lived and the nature of political relationships in the region.

They also contributed to the way in which the Arakanese viewed the world around them.

In short, ecology and climate provided one important context for the pattern of religious

change in the Arakan Littoral as well as the context for other developments which

influenced the trajectory of religious change, as will be evident in later chapters.[34] Bayly,

who used of evidence of ecological change and the role of climate in his study of social

change in eighteenth and nineteenth century northern India, demonstrated that such data

can be applied effectively to the study of broad social developments as an important

though not deterministic variable.[35] Although such a view has an extensive historiography

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[34]In previous research on Arakan and the Irra-waddy Valley, I stressed the important role which the natural environment and the human response to it played in indigenous history. Michael W. Charney, "Shallow-draft Boats, Guns, and the Aye-ra-wa-ti: Continuity and Change in Ship structure and River Warfare in Precolonial Myanma," Oriens Extremus 40 (1997): 16-63.

[35]C. A. Bayly, Rulers, Townsmen and Bazaars: North Indian Society in the Age of British Expansion, 1770-1870 (London: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 74-96.

for the Irra-waddy Valley,[36] it has not been applied to the study of Arakanese history since a brief article by Daw Thin Kyi was published in 1970.[37] Thus, a critical shortcoming in the literature regarding Arakanese religion and religious identities is the neglect of the role played by the natural environment, that is, the climate and the ecology of the Arakan littoral and Banga, in the emergence of the Arakanese, including their culture and view of the cosmos.

In this chapter, I will first explain why the Arakan littoral and Banga together form an environmental continuum. Although most of this dissertation will focus upon the Arakan littoral, from the seventh chapter on I will also discuss the deportees from Banga who brought their own culture and perspectives with them to Danra-waddy. Thus, I seek to show that the "Arakanese" and the "Bengalis" from Banga had a shared environmental heritage, which fostered similar interpretations of the ways in which things worked in the cosmos. I will then turn to the ever-present natural threats to human life in the Arakan littoral and Banga. I will explain how these "dangers" affected the indigenous populations of Banga and Danra-waddy in two ways: (1) dangers produced tensions in human settlement and (2) there were possible psycho-religious implications for the indigenous population

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[36]For more recent examples, see Victor B. Lieberman, Burmese Administrative Cycles: Anarchy & Conquest, c. 1580-1760 (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1984); Richard M. Cooler, "Sacred Buildings for An Arid Climate: Architectural Evidence for Low Rainfall in Ancient Pagan," Journal of Burma Studies 1 (1997): 19-44; and Michael Aung-Thwin, Irrigation in the Heartland of Burma: Foundations of the Pre-colonial Burmese State (DeKalb, Illinois: Northern Illinois University, Center for Southeast Asian Studies, 1990).

[37]Daw Thin Kyi, "Arakanese Capitals: A Preliminary Survey of their Geographical Siting," Journal of the Burma Research Society 53 (1970): 1-14.

In the southern Arakan littoral (Mekha-waddy, Rama-waddy, and Dwara-waddy), by contrast, the natural environment was more stable, but agricultural land there was less productive and, coupled with other geographical features, established a limit to human settlement. As a result, those who derived revenues from agricultural surplus (in different contexts, either the ruling elites, the rural gentry, or sometimes the cultivators themselves) had incentives to promote (and even force) settlement of Danra-waddy (and Banga), despite natural threats which would otherwise dissuade human settlement. The 'agricultural frontier,' then, was in the central zone itself, and it remained open to new settlement well into the nineteenth (if not the twentieth) century. In Danra-waddy, the rapid turnover in human settlement, the tensions between cultivators and elites, and lack of geographical constraints to population migration (relative to the southern littoral), encouraged population mobility throughout, and external migrations into, Danra-waddy (and Banga).

I then discuss how rural and central elites in the Arakan littoral approached the natural environment and a mobile and diverse population by attracting people to themselves (the village headman, the circle *su-kri*, the appanage grantee, or the royal court) through various strategies. Finally, I will explain how kingdoms in the Arakan littoral were familial states, in which the royal line attracted local elite families into association with the royal court through titles and intermarriage. These kingdoms were thus characterized by diffuse power, that is, the degree of political centralization was weak, and there was little direct royal control, if any at all, over outlying political

centers.[38]

2.1 The Five Zones of the Arakanese Kingdom

The Arakanese world of the early modern period, at least until the mid-seventeenth century (as reflected and documented in Arakanese chronicles), included roughly five sub-zones over which the Arakanese kings claimed vassalage. Four of these sub-zones together comprised most of what is today's district of Arakan in the Union of Myanmar: (1) Danra-waddy river basin, the two great islands of (2) Rama-waddy and (3) Mekha-waddy, and, further south, (4) Dwara-waddy, which included the Taunsin-kunit-khayine.[39] One more region, the furthest north, and itself outside the Arakan Littoral, was the region known classically as (5) Vanga/Banga, which included Chittagong, Sundiva Island, and Ramu (see Figure 2.1).[40] Fringing this strip, which as a whole can be described as the Arakan Littoral, and further into the interior, were periodic vassal kingdoms, the two most important being Tripura and Chocoria. For a very brief period, the Arakanese

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[38]This situation in the Arakan littoral was hardly altered by the rise of the Mrauk-U dynasty and even very slowly after that. In Bengal, by contrast, the political landscape was changed in degrees with the foundation of a Muslim state, which, if anything, was more centralized than anything that emerged in early modern Arakan, at least until the end of the sixteenth century. Richard M. Eaton, The Rise of Islam and the Bengal Frontier, 1204-1760 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 22-70, passim.

[39]U Kalà says that San-twei (Sandoway) was included in the Taunsin-kunit-khayine. See U Kalà, Maha-ya-zawin-kyi, Hsaya U Khin Soe, ed. (Rangoon: Hantha-waddy Press, 1961), 1:115; and Pamela Gutman, "Ancient Arakan (Burma) With Special Reference to its Cultural History Between the 5th and 11th Centuries" (Ph.D. diss., Australian National University, 1976), 4.

[40]Today, Vanga is roughly encompassed by what we know as Southeastern Bangladesh. It has also been described as "the new delta." Dudley Stamp, Asia: A Regional and Economic Geography (London: Methuen, 1967), 302.
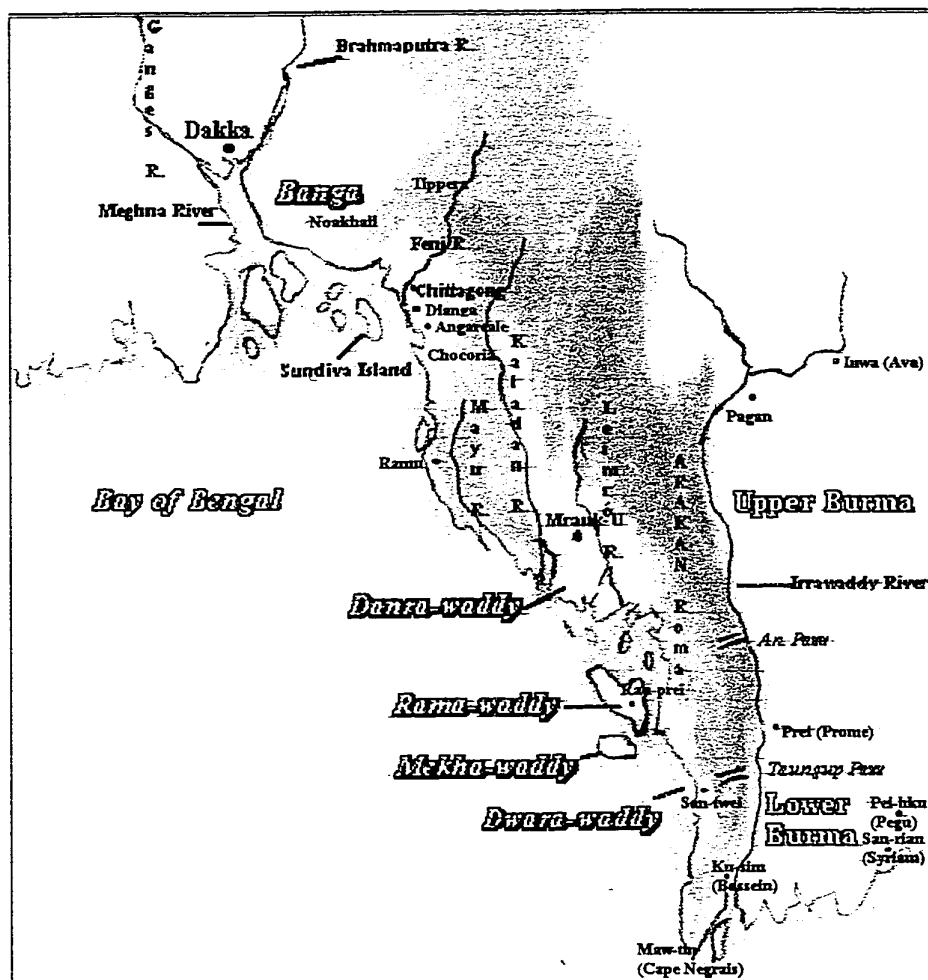
Figure 2.1. Map Indicating the Sub-regions of the Arakan Littoral

kingdom also included Lower Burma, but this claim was tenuous and only temporary.[41]

The mountain chain known as the Arakan Roma physically divides the Arakan Littoral from the Irra-waddy Valley. It is a formidable barrier, with some peaks over ten thousand feet above sea-level. In the southern portion of the Arakan Littoral, the foothills of this mountain chain sweep out to the Bay of Bengal,[42] physically separating Dwarawaddy from the other sub-zones to the north. From an early period, the Arakan Roma became a political dividing point as well, although the kings of Arakan never brought these mountains, nor their inhabitants, under their authority.[43] The Arakan Roma was a dark and forbidding place to the Arakanese. It was also home to hill tribes who today are known as the Chins.[44] No similarly forbidding natural barrier, however, existed between Banga and Danra-waddy.[45] It was partly for this reason that early modern Arakanese

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[41]For a specific study of this brief episode, see Michael W. Charney, "The 1598-99 Siege of Pegu and the Expansion of Arakanese Imperial Power into Lower Burma," Journal of Asian History 28 (1994): 39-57. The background of this campaign and its results are also examined in idem., "Arakan, Min Yazagyi, and the Portuguese: The Relationship Between the Growth of Arakanese Imperial Power and Portuguese Mercenaries on the Fringe of Mainland Southeast Asia 1517-1617" (M. A. thesis, Ohio University, 1993).

[42]Stamp, Asia, 387.

[43]Arthur Phayre, "Account of Arakan," Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal 10 (1841): 680.

[44]G. H. Luce, Phases of Pre-Pagán Burma: Languages and History (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 1:77-88; G. S. Comstock, "Notes on Arakan, by the Late Rev. Comstock," Journal of the American Oriental Society 1 (1851): 222, 228; Gutman, "Ancient Arakan," 15-16; Phayre, "Account of Arakan," 683; W. Gwynne Hughes, The Hill Tracts of Arakan (Rangoon: Government Press, 1881), 12-13; and Burma Gazetteer: Northern Arakan District (or Arakan Hill Tracts), vol. A (Rangoon: Office of the Superintendent, Government Printing, Burma, 1910), 12-13.

[45]Although in the pre-mid-seventeenth century period, the two regions were separated by 'untamed' wilds, heavily wooded zones that were not insurmountable, but likely discouraged population migration.

rulers seem to have been so much more active in Banga than in Burma (*vide* Chapters 6

and 7). Likewise, the absence of an important natural barrier between Banga and Danra-

waddy meant that Arakanese rulers kept a watchful eye for potential political and

military threats emanating from the northwest.

On the whole, the early modern Arakanese kingdom consisted of river valleys,

coastal lands, and islands, all focussed upon the Bay of Bengal.[46] As a result, the

geography and climate of this great bay heavily influenced Arakanese history both before

and during the early modern period. This focus tied all the various sub-regions of Arakan

together in different ways and helped to characterize the rhythm of life in the littoral.[47]

Banga and the Arakan littoral are together the rainiest lands on earth. Thus, unlike

much of the rest of the Gangetic plain and Burma, Banga and the Arakan littoral share an

extremely high level of rainfall throughout the year, with rainfall in most of Arakan

reaching two hundred inches per year.[48] Normal rainfall, at least in Danra-waddy, is

heaviest along the coasts and decreases further inland.[49] The level of rainfall also increases

as one moves eastward in Bengal toward Arakan and northwestward from the Irra-waddy

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[46]Stamp, Asia, 404; Comstock, "Notes on Arakan," 222; and R. B. Smart, ed., Burma Gazetteer: Akyab District, vol. A (Rangoon: Superintendent, Government Printing and Stationary, Union of Burma, 1957), 2.

[47]The daily lives of the inhabitants of these sub-regions (and for much of western mainland Southeast Asia, as well), for example, depended upon river and coastal boats, rather than overland travel. Stamp, Asia, 302. For a discussion of the Irrawaddy valley, which I suggest were relevant to Arakan as well, see Charney, "Shallow-draft Boats, Guns, and the Aye-ra-wa-ti," 16-63.

[48]Stamp, Asia, 301, 391.

[49]Smart, Burma Gazetteer: Akyab District, 6.

Valley into the Arakan Littoral toward Banga.[50] In this way, Banga and the Arakan

Littoral were not only connected but complemented each other. Together, Banga and the

various sub-regions of the Arakan Littoral shared not only the benefits, but also the

dangers of life around the Bay of Bengal.

2.2 The Realm of Dangers: Environmental Threats in Danra-waddy and Banga

Climate and geography also divided the five sub-zones mentioned above into two

related groups, tying (1) Danra-waddy more closely to Banga than to (2) the southern

three sub-zones (Mekha-waddy, Rama-waddy, and Dwara-waddy). This re-division is

the result of a major fault-line between two continental plates and the most severe thrusts

of Bay of Bengal monsoonal winds upon Banga and the western portion of Danra-waddy.

As I will explain, this unfortunate intersection of a geological and a climactic front make

Banga and western Danra-waddy amongst the most dangerous places for human survival

in South and Southeast Asia. A third way in which Banga and Danra-waddy are similar is

the important role played by major river-systems, which are generally absent in the

southern part of the Arakan Littoral.

The Arakan Roma is the result of the drifting of continental plates which have met

and folded together along a fault-line which runs down the center of Banga, straddles the

coastline of the northern Arakan down past Danra-waddy, and then juts out into the Bay

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[50]The average rainfall at Dacca is appreciably greater than that of Calcutta, and the level of rainfall at Sylhet is over twice that of Dacca. In the Irrawaddy Valley, yearly rainfall can be as low as twenty inches, as compared to two hundred inches per year in the Arakan littoral. Stamp, Asia, 302, 391.

of Bengal away from Rama-waddy, Mekha-waddy, and Dwara-waddy.[51] As a result,

Banga and Danra-waddy have suffered the brunt of resulting earthquakes. In 1676, an

earthquake (supposedly occurring during a hurricane), for example, "destroyed"

Chittagong,[52] and likely affected Danra-waddy as well. An earthquake also shook the

whole Bay of Bengal, Arakan included, in 1678.[53] In the 1750s, several major earthquakes

struck Danra-waddy so severely that they prompted the Arakanese ruler to have himself

twice reconsecrated and, in 1761, an earthquake destroyed and ruined many of the

Buddhist *cetis* and pagodas.[54] Another earthquake in 1762, not only destroyed

Chittagong but also submerged into the Bay of Bengal sixty square miles of the northern

Arakan Littoral.[55] Geological evidence of this particular earthquake indicates that just as

the northern Arakan Littoral lowered, portions of the southern Arakan Littoral rose as

much as twenty-two feet.[56]

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[51]See map in Stamp, Asia, 20.

[52]Streynsham Master, The Diaries of Streynsham Master 1675-1680 and Other Contemporary Papers Relating Thereto, Richard Carnac Temple, ed. (London: John Murray, 1911), 2:40.

[53]Ibid., 2:182.

[54]Forchhammer, Report, 26; and Nga Mi, "Rakhine Razawin," [palm-leaf manuscript, number 3465a] AMs, n.d. [circa 1840], pp. 225b, 226b, Oriental and India Office Collection, British Library, London.

[55]East Pakistan District Gazetteers: Chittagong (Dacca: East Pakistan Government Press, 1970), 54; Bangladesh District Gazetteers: Noakhali (Dacca: Superintendent, Bangladesh Government Press, 1977), 9.

[56]Arthur P. Phayre, History of Burma including Burma Proper, Pegu, Taungu, Tenasserim, and Arakan: From the Earliest Times to the End of the First War With British India (London: Trübner & Company, 1883), 182-3.

The Brahmaputra-Ganges river delta, Chittagong, and the coast of Danra-waddy (as it existed in the early modern period) also suffer from the same threat of cyclones (hurricanes), due to their shared position on the Bay of Bengal monsoons. These cyclones and the accompanying storm-waves thus worked to condition coastal settlement in the Banga-Danra-waddy coastal belt in the same ways. Reliable data is only available from the late eighteenth century, and judging from this data, the damage wreaked by these periodic storms was enormous. Severe storm-waves of ten to twenty feet in height (and ten to forty-five feet on the coastal islands), for example, could sweep inland up to six miles and even further along river mouths, washing away most buildings in their path.[57] During these cyclones, floods that hit the northern portion of the Arakan Littoral also threatened to wash out downriver settlements within the Danra-waddy plains.[58] Not only would thousands of inhabitants drown in such storms, but the detrimental effects of salt-water upon food and drinking water brought further threat to life.[59] The long-term effects of such storms included reduced agricultural productivity resulting from the loss of farm animals and saline residue in the fields. [60]

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[57]East Pakistan District Gazetteers: Chittagong, 45, 46; Smart, Burma Gazetteer: Akyab District, 7.

[58]Kyi, "Arakanese Capitals," 4.

[59]East Pakistan District Gazetteers: Chittagong, 46; Bangladesh District Gazetteers: Noakhali, 27, 28, 29, 31; East Pakistan District Gazetteers: Dacca (Dacca: East Pakistan Government Press, 1970), 33-35.

[60]East Pakistan District Gazetteers: Chittagong, 46, 47, 48, 49; Bangladesh District Gazetteers: Noakhali, 27, 28, 29, 31; and East Pakistan District Gazetteers: Dacca, 33-35.

Another scourge was disease, which sometimes accompanied storms and flooding.

Major floods, for example, dramatically worsened endemic cholera. In some cases,

cholera, aggravated in this way, carried off in some areas as much as eleven percent of the

general population *in addition* to the immediate victims of the flood.[61] These floods bear

remarkable similarity to those reported in the Arakanese chronicles.[62] With or without

the effects of major storms, smallpox was as deadly in the Arakan Littoral as it was

elsewhere.[63] Malaria was also a major threat.[64]

Although heavy rains also watered the southern three sub-zones during the rainy

season, monsoonal storms which culminated in cyclones much more severely affected

Banga and the Danra-waddy central zone, as I will explain below. Neither did Mekha-

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[61]East Pakistan District Gazetteers: Chittagong, 46, 47, 48, 49; Bangladesh District Gazetteers: Noakhali, 27, 28, 29, 31; and East Pakistan District Gazetteers: Dacca, 33-35.

[62]In 1506, for example "there was a great flood [and] in this year, many people developed sores and sickness." Mi, "Rakhine Razawin," 142a. Another chronicle describes the same flood and subsequent disease as follows: "there was a great inundation, and the inhabitants suffered much from coughs and asthmatic complaints." "Extrait d'une Chronique Arakanaise," [Anglais 26-ms.] TMs, n.d., p. 4, Bibliotheque National, Paris, France. This document is an unpublished chronicle kindly provided to the author by Dr. Jacques Leider.

[63]One outbreak of smallpox was so deadly in 1686 that it was recorded in the Arakanese chronicles. See Mi, "Rakhine Razawin," 204a. Smallpox also carried off King Thiri-thu-raza in 1761. Ibid., 226a-226b.

[64]See the chronicle references to disease in Sithugammani-thinkyan, "Rakhine Razawin," [palm-leaf manuscript, number 2297] AMs, n.d., p. 22a, National Library, Ministry of Culture, Yangon, Union of Myanmar. Pagination for this *pesa* manuscript follows my own system. See also references to endemic malaria in the Arakan littoral in Burma Gazetteer: Arakan District (Arakan Hill Tracts), 4; Hughes, Hill Tracts of Arakan, 6; and Report on the Revision of Soil Classification and Land Revenue Rates in the Kyaukpyu District, Season 1898-99 (Rangoon: Superintendent, Government Printing, Burma, 1900), 1. See also Rhoads Murphey's suggested scenario for the spread of the anopheles mosquito and thus malaria to South and Southeast Asia and its possible effects upon indigenous societies in Rhoads Murphey, "The Ruin of Ancient Ceylon," Journal of Asian Studies 16 (1957): 181-200. Other diseases were in evidence as well. See one outbreak in 1468, in Mi, "Rakhine Razawin," 137a.

waddy, Rama-waddy, and Dwara-waddy possess river systems of the same magnitude as Banga and Danra-waddy, and thus the changes produced by such river systems were less characteristic of the southern Arakan Littoral. Danra-waddy and Banga, however, shared a different relationship with the Bay of Bengal than that just discussed for their southern counterparts. As coastal lands along the northeastern shores of the Bay of Bengal, the Danra-waddy zone and Banga have contained the historic contact points for maritime trade, especially from India and Sri Lanka.[65] Along with trade, foreign influences also arrived first in Banga and Danra-waddy before they had any impact upon the southern littoral or more interior areas.[66] Finally, both trade and foreign influences were brought by foreign populations of diverse cultural and ethnic mixes,[67] encouraging, as I will discuss later, cultural heterogeneity in these coastal ports and in the royal cities which depended upon their control.

In Danra-waddy and Banga, the rise and fall of port cities often occurred not so much because of changes in trade *per se*, but rather due to the changing geography of the major river deltas of the region. Two of the chief river-systems, the Brahmaputra-Ganges (especially the Meghna branch) and the Kalà-dàn-Lei-mró (see Figure 2.2), are notorious

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[65]G. E. Harvey, History of Burma: From the Earliest Times to 10 March 1824 The Beginning of the English Conquest (New York: Octagon Books, 1983), 137.

[66]See example of the establishment of permanent Arab trading settlements in the Bay of Bengal only at Dacca and Arakan (presumably in the Danra-waddy zone) in André Wink, Al-Hind The Making of the Indo-Islamic World (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1990), 1:82.

[67]See examples of this in seventeenth century Arakan in Michael W. Charney, "Crisis and Reformation in a Maritime Kingdom of Southeast Asia: Forces of Instability and Political Disintegration in Western Burma (Arakan), 1603-1701," Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient 41 (1998): 210-211.
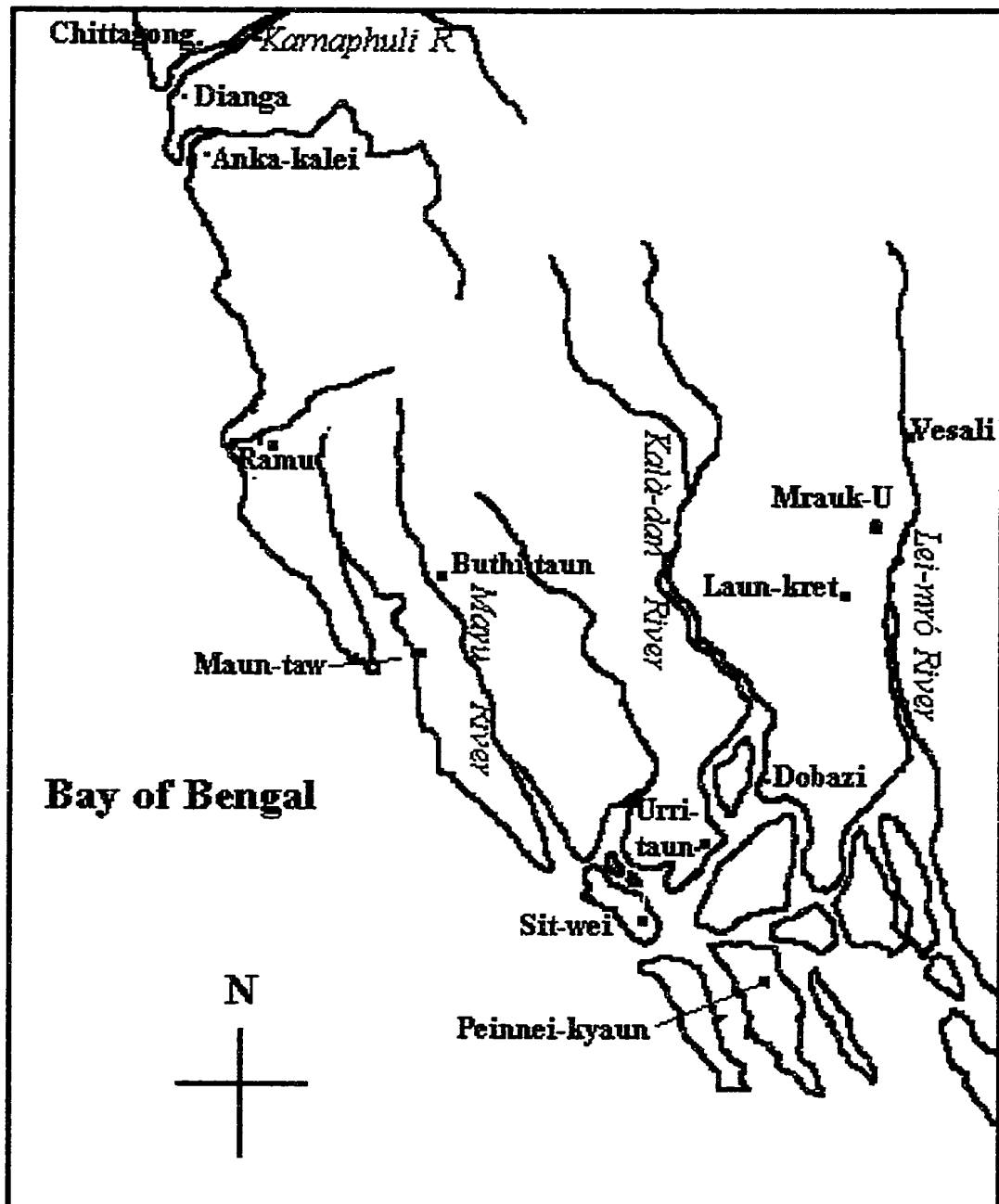
Figure 2.2. Map of Danra-waddy and River-systems

for shifting their positions and changing the landscape with their tremendous alluvial deposits, opening up new lands where there had been none and closing off formerly coastal lands from the sea.[68] As bamboo cultivation and *toun-ya* (ေတာင္ဆယ္) or swidden agriculture increased in the hill areas, replacing evergreen forests, they increased soil erosion during heavy floods and thus the level of alluvial deposits further downstream.[69] The Danra-waddy deltaic plains in the classical period, for example, were likely akin to islands, and so-called in the contemporaneous sources, while today the landscape has been filled in as a consistent plain broken only by rivers and creeks.[70]

New lands produced from the above scenario often meant more land available for cultivation and thus settlement.[71] Conversely, older cultivated areas, now deprived of traditional levels of fresh water, became moribund. As ports and well-watered agricultural land shifted, so too did their populations to new sites.[72] Together new agricultural areas,

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[68]Bangladesh District Gazetteers: Comilla (Dacca: Superintendent, Bangladesh Government Press, 1977), 7, 10, 54-5; Bangladesh District Gazetteers: Patuakhali (Dhaka: Superintendent, Bangladesh Government Press, 1982), 3; Bangladesh District Gazetteers: Noakhali, 5-6, 8; and Kyi, "Arakanese Capitals," 2-3. The Brahmaputra-Ganges, for example, dramatically changed both its course and the point of intersection between the Brahmaputra and Meghna (the eastern-most branch of the Ganges) rivers throughout the early modern period. Bangladesh District Gazetteers: Comilla, 10; Bangladesh District Gazetteers: Noakhali, 5; and Eaton, Rise of Islam and the Bengal Frontier, 194-8. Apparently, only a small range of hills in the northeast, known as the Madhupur Jungle, has prevented the Brahmaputra-Ganges from shifting further east than its course is at present. Stamp, Asia, 302.

[69]I have extrapolated this from the discussion in Stamp, Asia, 405.

[70]Kyi, "Arakanese Capitals," 2; Comstock, "Notes on Arakan," 223.

[71]Daw Thin Kyi suggests, for example, that the population of the Danra-waddy basin was concentrated in the northern area of the plains prior to the transformation of the delta via alluvial deposits. See Kyi, "Arakanese Capitals," 2.

[72]Eaton, Rise of Islam and the Bengal Frontier, 195.

new ports, and the disadvantages of older sites likely encouraged large-scale migration into

new sites.

I have already referred to the detrimental effects of large-scale floods and cyclones

fostered by the Bay of Bengal monsoonal system, but the dry season presented additional

problems for agricultural cultivation. Regular tidal flooding of the coastal lowlands and

rivermouths left brackish water, which was a more consistent and separate

phenomenon.[73] British colonial authorities in the nineteenth century cited this "incursion

of salt water" at the river-mouths as a major impediment to the extension of agricultural

cultivation.[74] Such flooding salinized soils for part of the year, until the cleansing sweeps

of river water in the rainy season could aid the desalinization of the soil and deposit rich

alluvial soil.[75] For the full utilization of the soil in coastal areas and along rivermouths,

however, water control projects and embankments were needed, as is done today.[76] At

the same time, water-control efforts were hindered as settlement of agricultural areas and

the cultivation of rice and cash crops worked to increase flood levels and thus contribute

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[73]Smart, Burma Gazetteer: Akyab District, 2; and Report on the Summary Settlement Operations in the Kyaukpyu District, Season 1904-05 (Rangoon: Superintendent, Government Printing, Burma, 1905), 4, 5.

[74]"Note by the Settlement Commissioner," in Report on the Summary Settlement Operations in Kyaukpyu District, Season 1904-05, 1.

[75]East Pakistan District Gazetteers: Chittagong, 55; Smart, Burma Gazetteer: Akyab District, 7; and Stamp, Asia, 302.

[76]Smart, Burma Gazetteer: Akyab District, 2, 3, 7; East Pakistan District Gazetteers: Comilla, 12-13; and "Note by the Settlement Commissioner," 1, 2.

to the overflowing or breakage of embankments.[77] In other words, constant labor inputs are necessary in floodplains, above and beyond the labor needed specifically for the cultivation of agricultural produce.

Although periodic crises might be seen as unpredictable and outside of one's control, daily water management to avoid 'normal' problems of flooding and salinization required community cooperation. Bunds, for example, and other labor-intensive tasks had to be formed and maintained on a continual basis. If the construction and maintenance of embankments was too demanding, coastal and downriver communities might opt instead to clear out new areas in the mangrove, where soils were fertile for only a few seasons, but bringing them under cultivation entailed less labor (even then, community cooperation was needed to do the clearing).[78] In later chapters it will be evident that central Arakanese ruling elites sought not to break up local communities, but encouraged instead community solidarity through religious patronage of whatever religion 'worked' for the local community.

Of course, Mekha-waddy, Rama-waddy, and Dwara-waddy also had endemic diseases, flooding and other periodic crises. In much of these areas, however, the impact

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[77]East Pakistan District Gazetteers: Comilla, 14.

[78]As British colonial authorities lamented in the nineteenth century: "The people . . . generally resort to clearing fresh patches of mangrove which, owing to the virginal nature of the soil, yield a good crop without ploughing. This they do because they are adverse to spending much labour in adequately bunding their former clearings, and improving the exhausted soil by means of manure. These patches are given up in a few years as soon as they show signs of exhaustion. They complain that they have no means to enable them to have adequate bunds made and they are much too lazy to do the earthwork themselves. Usually kauklat paddy is used as seed in these flooded clearings, as the grain ripens early, before the water which has been rendered almost fresh by the rain can regain its natural brackishness." Report on the Summary Settlement Operations in the Kyaukpyu District, Season 1904-05, 4.

of such 'crisis events' was not so severe as in Danra-waddy.[79] The milder natural environment of the southern Arakan Littoral encouraged the stability of human settlements and we have fewer examples of large-scale migrations out of these areas until the nineteenth century. Lacking major floodplains,[80] however, these zones possessed less fertile soils (or lesser acreage of fertile soils) than in Danra-waddy.[81] Further, Dwara-waddy was an enclave in the southern end of the Arakan Roma, whose mountainous topography severely restricted the expansion of human settlement and agricultural cultivation.[82] Together, less fertile soils and geographical limits to demographic growth in

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[79]Dwara-waddy is the best example, and was known to British colonial administrators in the early twentieth century as being "healthier and more pleasant than . . . any other part of Arakan," and "[d]isastrous floods are unknown." W. B. Tydd, Burma: Gazetteer: Sandoway District, vol. A (Rangoon: Superintendent, Government Printing, Burma, 1912), 4. As for the indigenous cultivators, they "have nothing to dread but except the occasional attacks of caterpillars." Ibid., 23.

[80]In Dwara-waddy, for example, the rivers are only "mountain torrents to within a few miles of the coast." Ibid., 3.

[81]In Dwara-waddy, fertile lands on par with those of Danra-waddy are limited to the river-banks. Tydd, Burma Gazetteer: Sandoway District, 23. As a colonial report issued in 1899 compared the agricultural lands of Mye-bôn (traditionally part of Danra-waddy but administratively, under the British, part of Kyaukpyu district) with those of Rama-waddy, Mye-bôn, like Akyab District (the remainder of Danra-waddy minus the hill tracts), was noted for the "superior quality of the soil, especially suitable for paddy." Rama-waddy (speaking specifically of Kyaukpyu and Ramree townships), however, was noted for the "general poorness of the soil (being mostly composed of sand) and unfavourable configuration of the country for paddy. The surface is undulating, being all over covered with low hills on numerous salt-water creeks which always go up to the base of the hills." Although Mekha-waddy had better soils, even here the "soil was not of first quality." Report on the Revision of Soil Classification and Land Revenue Rates in the Kyaukpyu District, Season 1898-99, 17. Again, the "greater portion of the soil in the Ramree island is poor and yields a poor crop." Ibid., 9.

[82]In Dwara-waddy, the plains made up only about 1/18th of the area of the district. Tydd, Burma Gazetteer: Sandoway District, 2. As a result, British colonial authorities felt, and I think correctly, that this was a severe limit upon the enhancement of Dwara-waddy's population density. Indeed, most of the population in Dwara-waddy hugged the slim coastal plains and land along major streams. Ibid., 16. These restrictions were partially offset by turning to the sea, and Dwara-waddy in particular was predominantly a sea-oriented area. At the beginning of British rule (1827 enquiry), for example, only about one-third of Dwara-waddy's population was engaged in agriculture, the remainder being "fishermen, boatmen, boat-builders, salt-boilers, and wood-cutters." Ibid., 20-21.

these zones, regardless of the security and safety (relative to Danra-waddy) offered to settlers, meant that the ceiling for population growth, settlement, and agricultural cultivation in these three zones was lower than in Danra-waddy.[83] This was an important factor in migrations in the nineteenth century.

2.3 Responses to the Natural Environment: Human Settlement, Mobility, and Migration

Despite the threat of disasters, there was a major inducement for continued settlement in Danra-waddy's floodplains. Cultivation of the fertile floodplains is attractive to those who gain the surplus from agricultural pursuits in these areas. The drainage and alluvial deposits in the alluvial plains and rivermouths, for example, offer Arakan's richest soils and produce the best rice.[84] Another benefit was an earlier harvest in such areas: the harvest along the Kalà-dàn river (which is very exposed to the Bay of Bengal) was earlier than the harvest along the Lei-mró river (which is further in the interior). Amongst other things, this meant that rice from agricultural communities along the Kalà-dàn river reached markets earlier than that from Lei-mró communities.[85] In other words, while areas along the coasts and along the lower reaches of Danra-waddy's river-systems were hazardous in the long-term, they presented opportunities for increased

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[83]By 1899, agricultural cultivation in Rama-waddy had "reached its limit." Report on the Revision of Soil Classification and Land Revenue Rates in the Kyaukpyu District, Season 1898-99, 17.

[84]Smart, Burma Gazetteer: Akyab District, 7.

[85]Report on the Settlement Operations in the Akyab District, Season 1887-88 (Rangoon: Superintendent, Government Printing, Burma, 1888), 20.

agricultural surplus. In the premodern period, this likely helped to influence the direction of human settlement and the application of human settlement to coastal areas in the same ways throughout the Banga-Arakan coastal belt.

For Arakanese ruling elites the most important consideration was maintaining an agricultural cultivator class in the most fertile (and most dangerous) agricultural lands in the Arakan Littoral, in order to draw off the agricultural surplus and other revenues. While the tendency of agriculturalists was to avoid the coastal and rivermouth rim-lands, an important royal project was to keep these areas settled by agriculturalists, often through captive labor inputs (especially by those populations taken from Bengal). Additionally, if the coasts were depopulated prior to the seventeenth century, when contemporaneous sources specifically say that they were, making some use of the coastal land may have required coercion and forced resettlement. This is a possible development that I will discuss in a later chapter.

In those areas of Arakan beyond the coasts, further in the interior, the Arakan Littoral's topography is generally hilly or mountainous. Agriculture and animal husbandry outside of the lowlands could be carried out in narrow strips of alluvial soil alongside mountain rivers and streams.[86] Generally, however, highlanders and some lowland cultivators practiced *toun-ya* cultivation.[87] *Toun-ya* cultivation required not crop rotation,

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[86]Burma Gazetteer: Arakan District (Arakan Hill Tracts), 4, 9, 20.

[87]Gutman, "Ancient Arakan," 9-10; Burma Gazetteer: Arakan District (Arakan Hill Tracts), 19; Phayre, "Account of Arakan," 702-704; Hughes, Hill Tracts of Arakan, 18-19; and T. Latter, "A Note on Some Hill Tribes on the Kuladyne River;--Arracan," Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal 15 (1846): 65.

but the rotation of agriculturalists from plot to plot, often at great distances from each other, depending upon the size of the community and the presence of neighboring communities.[88] After two or three years, *toun-ya* communities changed the focus of their labors from plot to plot or from locality to locality,[89] encouraging the building of temporary housing and a sense of group mobility.[90] At the same time, since the Arakan littoral was underpopulated and its geography did not encourage central control, failed usurpers, renegade monks, unhappy villagers, and fearful court ministers always had someplace to which to flee. This opportunity was reflected in the chronicles and may have given rise to the stories of the foundations of towns along rivers, at places wherever fleeing groups stopped.[91]

Environmental instability provided greater opportunities for crisis-events in coastal areas than in interior ones and encouraged community bonds. From a demographic perspective, the local population was sufficiently reduced to open up lands for additional settlers with perhaps different ideas, religions, and even different connections. There was probably also a psychological response. We lack sufficient studies, however, of the psychological impact of disasters upon communities in Southeast Asia. Until comprehensive psychological studies of the Arakanese are available, research in the West

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[88]Phayre, "Account of Arakan," 703.

[89]Hughes, Hill Tracts of Arakan, 19.

[90]Latter, "A Note on Some Hill Tribes," 65-6; and Phayre, "Account of Arakan," 704-5.

[91]See, for example, the account in Sithugammani-thinkyan, "Rakhine Razawin," 1a, 15a, 19b-20a.

on the relationship between disaster events, such as major floods, and human psychology may help suggest some ways in which these events affected Arakanese perspectives.

Western psychological research suggests that residual psychological impairment, of one kind or another, is not a short-term, but a long-term problem (even five years or more after a disaster). There is a correlation between the severity of impairment and age (the older one was at the time of the disaster, the more severe the impairment).[92] Another point is that success in healing psychologically after a disaster may depend to a certain extent upon the degree of support from other members of one's own family (and, by extrapolation, I would suggest the community as well).[93]

Such a loss of population suddenly, as I have discussed above, on a periodic basis may be sufficient cause for the victims to question their universe and their gods, perhaps even to abandon them and to seek out new ones. It has been found that those who choose to remain in disaster-prone areas, as opposed to those who consciously settle outside of an area due to endemic natural threats, are more likely to be "externals," that is, people who "attribute consequences to forces outside their control and consider nature less predictable than do internals."[94] Such people would also seem to be predisposed to

[92]Goldine C. Gleser, Prolonged Psychological Effects of Disaster: A Study of Buffalo Creek (New York: Academic Press, 1981), 141, 146.

[93]This has been found to be true in North American communities. Gleser, Prolonged Psychological Effects of Disaster, 147.

[94]P. Simpson-Housley & A. F. de Man, Psychology of Geographical Disasters (n.l.: Atkinson College, Department of Geography, 1987), 46.

religions that claim control over external powerful sources.[95] I suggest that it is likely that populations who remained for the long-term in the natural disaster-endemic coastal areas of Banga and Danra-waddy had a pre-disposition toward religion to provide answers for changes in their environment, perhaps even new religions when disasters occurred repeatedly.[96] Certainly, at the very least, crisis events may have provided an opportunity for proselytizers of new religions to seek out converts.

I speculate that such a climate and geography affected the psychological perspectives of the inhabitants of Banga and the Arakan littoral in additional ways which may have had an impact on their cultural development. The need for mobility, whether due to natural catastrophes, the expansion of alluvial plains, changing river courses, or the demands of swidden agriculture, fostered a cultural perspective which saw mobility, migration, and change generally as the norm. These same factors provided a culturally and ethnically heterogenous society. These perspectives can be found in the origin myths and the semi-legendary accounts in the Arakanese chronicles. These myths will be discussed more extensively in later chapters, but it should be mentioned here that these chronicles focus their narratives upon continuous change and the migration of peoples of various cultural and ethnic identities. These migrations often involved the bringing together of

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[95]Externals, for example, believe "the outcome of an event to be mainly contingent upon fate, luck, chance, powerful others, etc.," Simpson-Housley & de Man, Psychology of Geographical Disasters, 31. A study of Carmen, Canada, a town in the midst of such a floodplain, for example, found that despite the frequency of major floods, and personal experience with these floods, residents did not abandon the area. Ibid., 90.

[96]More than one study, for example, has indicated that religion has been a significant factor in improving psychological health after a disaster. See, for example, Gleser, Prolonged Psychological Effects of Disaster, 131.

diverse peoples, symbolized by marriages between local queens and hill tribe chieftains, San-twei (Sandoway) princesses and Indian brahmans, the daughters of Burman refugees and Arakanese kings, and so on.[97] In short, the inhabitants of the Arakan Littoral and Banga were prepared for continuous change in ways that would affect patterns of religious conversion and models of kingship.

2.4 The Realm of Strangers: Migrations From the Irra-waddy Valley

It has often been suggested that Arakan was populated by groups of Tibeto-Burmese speakers as an extension of a process of migration which brought the same groups into Upper Burma in the pre-tenth-century period.[98] While linguistic evidence suggests that the migration of the Burmans originated from the northeast, in southwestern China,[99] we do not have sufficient evidence of a particularly Burman migration into the Arakan Littoral. There are vague references to invasions of the Arakan Littoral by groups of Shan, groups whom many scholars have suggested were in fact Burman.[100] We do have evidence from later periods of Burman settlement in the Arakan Littoral, but it is unlikely

[97]Sithugammani-thinkyan, "Rakhine Razawin," 1a, 15b, 32a; and "Rakhine Min Raza-kri Arei-taw Sadan," [palm-leaf manuscript, number 1632] AMs, n.d., p. 3b, National Library, Ministry of Culture, Yangon, Union of Myanmar. Pagination for this *pesa* manuscript follows my own system.

[98]Hughes, Hill Tracts of Arakan, 10; Kyi, "Arakanese Capitals," 10; and Gutman, "Ancient Arakan," 16-17.

[99]Conversation with the linguist (Chinese and Burmese languages) Dr. Julian Wheatley of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 6 October, 1998; Luce suggests the same thing, although embellished with all sorts of conjectural detail. See Luce, Phases of Pre-Pagán Burma, I, 42-3.

[100]Kyi, "Arakanese Capitals," 12, note 4. Some have suggested that the Arakanese have traditionally used "Shan" as a generic term for all people in the East. Jacques Leider, personal communication, August, 1998 in Bangkok. Still, however, this does not constitute clear evidence.

that these periodic and not too substantial settlements provided a sufficient base by themselves for replacing the indigenous populations. The scenario of Burman-ization via cultural accretion is likely a valid model for Arakan, but we will have to work with it a bit if we are to explain the rise of Burmese speakers in the Arakan Littoral and southeastern Banga.

Even if we cannot speak of a major Tibeto-Burman migration into the Arakan Littoral in the late pre-Pagan era, an array of evidence suggests that a number of peoples of different cultural and linguistic origins crossed over the Arakan Roma mountains and became involved in the lowland Hindu-Buddhist kingdoms of the Arakan Littoral at least by the tenth century. Although Burman and Arakanese chronicles refer to peoples by name such as the Mro, Sak, Lin-ke, and Kan-ran, as well as many others,[101] it would be perhaps too hasty to suggest cultural and ethnic identities for peoples at a time for which they themselves have not left their own records. All that can be done for the moment is to work with anthropological data collected on these people in the late eighteenth and into the nineteenth centuries. Such data, if used with care, are useful and if considered alongside indigenous, albeit lowlander, materials, they can tell us something about the peoples involved.

Certainly, Burmese legends, recorded in the chronicles, suggest a scenario of migration by these peoples out of the Irra-waddy Valley and into the Arakan Littoral

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[101]For a discussion of these early migrant peoples in the Arakan littoral see Appendix II; and Kalà, Maha-ya-zawin-kyi, 1:307.

during the pre-classical period.[102] Arakanese chronicles add to this, suggesting that many

of these peoples suddenly became important to the lowland societies of the Arakan

Littoral around the tenth century. A sudden wave of migrants moving across the Arakan

Roma at one time seems unlikely, as it would have required an unusually high level of

political organization. A safer position would be to suggest that however they got there

and during whatever period prior to the historical period in the Arakan Littoral, peoples

whom the Arakanese and Burmans termed Sak, Lin-ke, Mro, Kan-ran, and so on, were

scattered about on both sides of the Arakan Roma. We simply do not have the evidence

to suggest anything more than this.

If this is the case, then it would not be unreasonable to accept the understanding,

disguised in an origin myth found in the Burman chronicles, that some peoples related to

the Burmans, along with the other peoples just referred to, migrated over the Arakan

Roma as well. Perhaps it is the case that those who hived off from the people who would

become the Burmans were the Sak, Lin-ke, and Mro themselves. In any event, an in-

depth investigation of Arakanese-Burman ethnogenesis *per se* is beyond the scope of this

dissertation and must remain a topic for exploration in the future.

Once these groups crossed through the mountain passes of the Arakan Roma and

descended into the lush river valleys of the Danra-waddy central zone, they would have

found an Indian or Indianized civilization, centered, politically, at the port town of Vesali

(c. 788-957 A.D.). They would also have found a royal cult focussed upon a Buddha

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[102]See, for example, ibid.

image, the Maha-muni image, said to have been cast when Gautama Buddha is claimed to have arrived at Vesali just before achieving *parinibbana*. The court of Vesali appears to have been Mahayanist, similar in many ways to the Palas, Chandra-style dynasties, and Varmans to the northwest in Vanga and Samatata,[103] although we know little about religious beliefs in the Arakan Littoral beyond the ruling elites. As was common of Mahayanist kingdoms of this area and this period, both the Buddha and the gods of the Hindu pantheon were worshipped, their temples and shrines patronized, and represented in the iconography. Land donations to the religion, the advantages gained from strategic niches in Bay of Bengal maritime trade, and royal coinage, all established a fixed place for Vesali in the geography and the history of the region. Additionally, Vesali's maritime connections brought some southern Indian influence,[104] as well as Muslim influence by the tenth century at the latest. Although we cannot be certain until further archaeological work has been completed, it appears that alongside Danra-waddy, several other lowland and port-centered polities at Tippera, Ramu, and San-twei, also dotted the Arakan Littoral at the same time.[105] In any event, despite the influence of the Vesali-Chandras in

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[103]Labelling the Chandra dynasty of Vesali in Arakan as the "main" Chandra Dynasty, David W. MacDowell, in his study of some coins found at Sylhet, suggests that during the seventh and eighth centuries, during a decline of this "main" royal line, separate Chandra dynasties appeared in the region, including the line he suggests for Sylhet, who issued Chandra-style coins. See David W. MacDowall, "Eight Coins of Arakan from Sylhet," Numismatic Chronicle, 6th ser., 20 (1960): 229-233; and Bangladesh District Gazetteers: Noakhali, 36, 37.

[104]Wicks refers to Southern Indian influence in Vesali epigraphic scripts in the late sixth century. Robert S. Wicks, "The Ancient Coinage of Mainland Southeast Asia," Journal of Southeast Asia Studies 16 (1985): 202.

[105]Wicks, "Ancient Coinage," 200-205; and MacDowall, "Eight Coins of Arakan from Sylhet," 229-233.

Harikela (Chittagong-Tippera area), the fact that the distribution of actual Vesali-Chandra coins is limited to the Danra-waddy river basin suggests that Vesali's practical political control was not widespread.[106]

The direction of Irra-waddy Valley (though not necessarily Burman) migrations is important, because it turned the lowland quasi-Indian civilizations of the Arakan Littoral into a frontier, marking in blurred detail, an important, but nonetheless temporary, stopping point for the Irra-waddy Valley migrations from the east to the west. The peoples who were involved in these migrations, such as the Sak and the Kan-ran, were said to have been pushed out of the Irra-waddy Valley and across the Arakan Roma by the people who came to be known as Burmans in Upper Burma. The chronicle accounts of the fall of Vesali in the tenth century are substantiated by numismatic and archaeological data. Numismatic evidence indicates, for example, that there were still kings in the lowlands of the Arakan Littoral into the tenth century, and these coins, bearing the trident and recumbent humped bull,[107] have not been discovered for later periods.

Arakanese chronicles provide accounts of the demographic and cultural transition which followed the arrival of the migrants, providing stories of the transfer of legitimacy of rule via sexual relations between widowed lowland queens and tribal chieftains, tribal chieftains seeking to acculturate their peoples to lowland civilizations, and demonstrations of the Buddha's superhuman powers, as well as of Brahmanical gods and

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[106]Wicks, "Ancient Coinage," 202.

[107]R. D. Banerji, "Unrecorded Kings of Arakan," Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, n. s., 16 (1920): 85.

animist spirits.[108] Such stories, as Phayre partly observed over a hundred and fifty years

ago, may have expressed processes which occurred and were retained in oral traditions

which were cemented in the form in which we have them now, when they were put into

writing and recorded in the chronicles.[109]

Arakanese stories of the meetings between eastern Indian culture and western

Southeast Asian culture reflected the overlap of two sets of frontiers. The first involved

the frontier to the east of what we have come to know as India.[110] The other was the

frontier to the west of what we have come to call Burma and what I prefer to call the Irra-

waddy Valley. The second set of frontiers and their intersection in Arakan occurred when

the lines between what was coastal and what was interior were blurred. This may,

perhaps, be one way to interpret the Vesali-Mro synthesis as described in the chronicles.

At the center were a motley collection of migrating lowland peoples, hill tribes, political

and religious refugees, and missionizing monks. This mixture of frontiers was further

complicated when the Muslim and Christian maritime worlds crossed over each other in

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[108]Sithugammani-thinkyan, "Rakhine Razawin," 15b, 16b, 17a-17b.

[109]Phayre, discussing certain stories involving conflicts between humans and *bhilus* (ogres) included in Nga Mi's chronicle, explained in one case: "This legend perhaps refers to the warfare the Burman race had to wage against the aborigines, the present savage hill tribes, who already possessed the country when they themselves entered it, and who probably long after struggled for independence . . ." See Arthur Phayre, "On the History of Arakan," Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal 13 (1844): 33.

[110]This is illustrated by a tradition recorded in the gazetteer for Noakhali: "The Meghna is the great river which in older days formed the last limit of the wanderings of the Aryans. The story runs that when in their wanderings the Pandavas reached its banks, Bhim, the most adventurous of those heroes, was sent across to explore the country on the further side and on his return address his elder brother, Yudhisthira, in such intemperate language that the latter turned his back forever on a land which could so pervert a man of gentile breeding. The country east of the Meghna has therefore been called by the orthodox Hindus a Pandava barjita desh, a land of utter barbarism." Bangladesh District Gazetteers: Noakhali, 5.

Arakan later during the early modern period.

2.5 Coping With the Human Environment: Charisma and Patron-client Ties

A vital aspect of these frontiers (or, rather, the combined frontier of eastern Indian and western Burma) is that the Arakan Littoral has been continually underpopulated, by comparison with its neighbors, and its geography favors social, cultural, and political fragmentation. To a lesser extent, mainland Southeast Asia generally has suffered from similar problems and with similar results. Southeast Asians, the Arakanese included, for example, rely upon cognatic kinship which has meant more flexible social formations.

O. W. Wolters, understanding that Southeast Asian society developed along a different trajectory and from different roots than those of Indian society, has presented a model for Southeast Asian social and cultural development. Wolters' model stressed that cognatic kinship, and thus the devaluation of lineage descent, is related to the Southeast Asian emphasis on prowess, or charismatic power.[111] The same charismatic power animated all people and all things, and different people possessed greater and lesser amounts of this power.[112] For Arakanese and Burmese this charismatic power is known as *hpòn*, and all powerful men (especially the strong kings of the pre-modern period), possess superior amounts of it. Part of this belief, Wolters continues, is that descent does

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[111]Benedict Anderson has suggested that this understanding is relevant today and, in his case study of Indonesia, continues to play an important role in Southeast Asian political behavior. See his discussion in Benedict R. O'G. Anderson, Language and Power: Exploring Political Cultures in Indonesia (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1990), 17-77.

[112]O. W. Wolters, History, Culture, and Region in Southeast Asian Perspectives (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1982), 6-9.

not imply inheritance of charismatic power, and in each new generation, new powerful men emerged.[113] Those who were possessed of lesser amounts of charismatic power attached themselves to such men of "men of prowess," for two reasons: they expected to realize material rewards and their own charismatic power "would participate in his, thereby leading to rapport and personal satisfaction."[114]

Belief in *hpòn* strengthened social formations that developed out of personal attraction. Historically, Arakanese society, like the rest of Southeast Asia, works through patron-client ties, that is, vertical connections, as opposed to class, or horizontal relationships. In early modern Arakanese society, the basic connection was between the villager and the local 'great man' or *su-kri*. Sometimes this might be a head-man of the village or the head of a group of villages, that is a *wa* or "circle." In the parlance of the early Mrauk-U kingdom at its height, however, the title of *su-kri* was applied to one position on the patron-client chain, from the village to the court: *asis* (free commoners), *rwa-kauns* (village headmen), *su-kris* (circle headmen), *mró-zas* (township governors), and, finally, the king.[115]

Bonds in the patron-client ties were immediate. When the Arakanese kingdom fell apart from time to time, it was believed by court elites that the basic connection between

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[113]Ibid., 6-7.

[114]Ibid., 6.

[115]Appanage-holders held a myriad of titles which confused the vocabulary and this chain, and both the Burmans and the British used the same vocabulary for different relationships, but for our purposes here, the basic patron-client chain I have described in the text is adequate.

the *su-kri* and villagers remained intact, and there is no evidence to dispute their understanding. This illustrates that the relationship between the patron and the client was personal and did not depend upon the continued legitimation of the entire chain in toto. Looked at from a different angle, it meant that central rulers did not command the loyalties of people at lower rungs in the chain directly. Rather, Arakanese rulers throughout the early modern period had to work through lesser clients to reach the general populace and the material and agricultural resources they produced. I think the galactic model suggested by Tambiah, conceiving of a constellation of 'centers,' around which lesser centers separately orbited is applicable to the patron-client structure of early modern Arakan that I have just discussed, if we turn Tambiah's model 'upside down' and view it as emerging from bottom-up, rather than top-down.[116]

Arakanese rulership was thus oriented towards attraction. By attracting local elites to the central court, their clients were connected with the central court as well. As a result, tribute could be gained and the authority of the central court could be supported, if not always obeyed. As we shall see in the following chapters, Arakanese rulers devised some interesting ways of establishing their authority without continual force. Intermarriage with local elite women, the exchange of central regalia and human and material inputs for a flow of tribute, and the promise of support against important local threats all worked to support the attraction of outlying elites to the central court and their

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[116]Stanley J. Tambiah, World Conqueror and World Renouncer: A Study of Buddhism and Polity in Thailand Against a Historical Background (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 102-131.

respect for its authority. These are not new observations and are by no means limited to

Arakan.

What concerns us here, however, is another means by which the central court

sought to instill a respect for its authority. Local religious beliefs formed a potent field for

establishing royal authority. By building a mosque, a pagoda, or a shrine, a ruler

connected the periphery to the royal center and connected himself with sites of

charismatic power in the local area.[117] In the pre-Laun-kret period (that is, prior to the

thirteenth century), much of this patronage was provided by local elites, who established

their authority in the local religious context.[118] This was true, even should the authority

of the central court have been accepted by these elites. Although this continued through

the Laun-kret period and into the early Mrauk-U period (fifteenth and sixteenth

centuries), Arakanese rulers in the late Laun-kret period slowly began to deny local elites

this privilege by razing local temples and replacing them with new ones built by the

central ruler.[119] Patronage of local sites of charismatic power, including the placement of

slaves for their upkeep, was now made by the central ruler instead of local elites.[120]

In the Arakan Littoral, connecting the central ruler with local religious beliefs did

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[117]See the discussion of the relationship between royal rule and patronage of Buddhism in early modern Arakan in Charney, "Crisis and Reformation in a Maritime Kingdom," 191.

[118]San Shwe Bu, "The Legend of the Andaw Pagoda, Sandoway," Journal of the Burma Research Society 8 (1918): 164-6.

[119]See, for example, account in ibid.

[120]Michael W. Charney, "Rise of a Mainland Trading State: Rahkaing Under the Early Mrauk-U Kings, c. 1430-1603," Journal of Burma Studies 3 (1998): 12-14.

not mean changing these beliefs. Rather, Arakanese rulers, especially of the early Mrauk-U period, respected local religious beliefs more than they challenged them, at least until the mid-seventeenth century (*vide* Chapter 7). The effect of this central orientation was that religious conversion and change remained an open field for religious proselytizers, whether Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu, or Christian. It allowed the retention of local spirits in ways that were not possible east of the Arakan Roma or in Bengal to the north. In the following chapters this will be discussed more fully. Further, as we shall see, this manner of central rule had major ramifications for cultural as well as religious identities in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

A caste system has not emerged in Southeast Asian society, but with the emergence of more complex political formations, elite families sought to emulate the vocabulary of caste and the ideas of lineage-status and thus maintain their positions at the top of society. Brahmanical priests, given a place in court ceremony by ruling elites in Southeast Asia, provided the necessary vocabulary. To borrow Van Leur's terminology, the image in the royal court of carefully-defined social divisions based upon caste was never more than a 'thin glaze' over Arakanese (and Southeast Asian) society. As royal service groups were not consistently monitored when royal courts were weak, artificial *jati* barriers in the royal city dissolved rapidly. Nonetheless, central elites in Arakan sought social permanence for their descendants and (retroactively) their ancestors. Various groups who desired to get close to the Arakanese court responded using this vocabulary: Brahmanical priests convinced Arakanese rulers that they were Kshatriyas,

Buddhist monks hailed Arakanese rulers as members of the Sakya clan (Gotama Buddha's

clan), and at least one Muslim account of the eighteenth century labelled the Arakanese

ruler a Sayyid (a descendant of Muhammed).

2.6 The Familial State and Political Devolution in Early Modern Arakan

Kingdoms in the Arakan Littoral were familial states. A familial state was one in

which one central family, the royal line, attracted local elite families into association with

the royal court through titles and intermarriage. In many ways, this familial state

approximates the "atomic" state suggested by Edward L. Keenan for early modern

Muscovy or the galactic polity discussed by Stanley Tambiah and others for premodern

Southeast Asia.[121] Thus, in early modern Arakan, there was a flexible inner circle, whose

members worried chiefly about being pushed too far away from the ruler and were

concerned about rival families getting too close to the 'royal center.'[122] The orientation of

elite families was always towards this center because material and spiritual redistribution

always started at the top and dissipated in volume and significance as it trickled down to

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[121]See Edward L. Keenan, "Muscovite Political Folkways," Russian Review 45 (1986): 139-140. See also Tambiah's discussion of the "galactic polity" model in Tambiah, World Conqueror and World Renouncer, 102-131.

[122]In the 1720s, during the reign of Sanda-wizaya-raza, for example, the *ta-bain-kri*, who had come from rural and common origins, enjoyed great favor with the king and had succeeded in getting his sons appointed to various posts. As the *ta-bain-kri* and his family became increasingly intimate with the king and gained more power, rival elite families grew jealous and spread stories of the *ta-bain-kri's* supposed plans to overthrow the king. As a result, the king had the *ta-bain-kri* killed and his sons hunted down. Monk of Ran-naun-myin, "Kya Khwetsa," as presented in Htoon Chan, "A Synopsis of Kya-Khwetsa (Tiger Killing Poem)," Journal of the Burma Research Society 8 (1918): 154.

lower tiers of society.[123]

At different levels of society, clients approached their patrons in the same way, by attempting to keep close, and keep others from getting too close, to the patron. Although there was thus a strong centripetal "pull," the degree of actual political centralization was weak, and there was little direct royal control, if any at all, over outlying political centers. Instead, "ruling" the kingdom involved working through families, attracted to the kingship through a variety of incentives and strategies of inclusion (such as material and spiritual redistribution).

The Arakanese chronicles are our chief source of information on the period between the tenth and fifteenth centuries for the Arakan Littoral. The chronicles, however, have been heavily influenced by Hindu-Buddhist cycles in which an age of chaos and the decline of the *sasana* (for Buddhism) precedes the rise of a unifying king whose reinvigoration of Dharma ushers in an extended era of peace, stability, and order.[124] Thus, the chronicles suggest, the decline of Vesali in the mid-tenth century was followed by disorder, which led to the rise of the Laun-kret kingdom (thirteenth-fourteenth centuries), and then, after a chaotic interregnum, the Mrauk-U kingdom (fifteenth-eighteenth centuries) was established.[125] Such a dichotomous portrayal of

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[123]For a brief discussion of this, see Charney, "Crisis and Reformation in a Maritime Kingdom," 191-192.

[124]Tambiah, World Conqueror and World Renouncer, 122; and Lieberman, Burmese Administrative Cycles, 65-7.

[125]"Rakhine Min Raza-kri Arei-taw Sadan," 8b, 9a, 11b, 24b.

Arakan's premodern history is not necessarily incorrect, but disorder and order in each case have likely been overemphasized to make a point. Central rule and order was not always (if ever) so complete in premodern Arakan as the chronicles themselves indicate in all-too-brief references to revolts and independent rulers in outlying areas. Similarly, I hesitate to suggest that the period after the fall of Vesali was as chaotic as the chronicles make it appear. We cannot, however, ignore Arakanese historiography on this period, as the indigenous understanding of their own history helps characterize their impressions of their own age and, again, the chronicles are almost our only sources for arriving at an understanding of what occurred, or may have occurred.

One fundamental characteristic of the ninth to early fifteenth century period was the diffuse nature of the political landscape. In the Arakan Littoral, for example, one gets the sense, from the sudden appearance at distant towns of new rulers, that there were various competitive political centers existed in the 957-1270 period.[126] In later years, especially during the Mrauk-U dynasty, there is a good deal of evidence of the existence of powerful elite families amongst whom the major positions of the court were distributed by birthright as opposed to kingly whim.

Unity and stability, the ideal converse of disunity and disorder, were symbolized in the royal court. Both were assured by the presence on the throne of a just king 'of the blood.' Upon taking the throne, such kings reinvigorated order when it became lax through their symbolic reorganization of the court. Upon receiving the consecrated water in the

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[126]See "Rakhine Min Raza-kri Arei-taw Sadan," 7b-8b; and Sithugammani-thinkyan, "Rakhine Razawin," 16a, 18b, 19b, 20a.

abhiseka ceremony, the king headed a court with four queens, one for each of the four

cardinal points (and entitled, appropriately enough, the 'north queen,' the 'south queen,'

and so on); he was aided by his four chief ministers (likely again the four cardinal points);

and important court ceremonies included men representing the twelve symbolic sub-kings

of the kingdom (regardless of the actual number of sub-rulers). As for the number twelve,

it may refer to the lunar months and may have stemmed from the king's role as a pivot in

the yearly agricultural cycle (the king symbolized the source of fertility in both people

and the soil).[127]

This court order was sanctified by court treatises and chronicles which stressed

the continuity of the court structure going back to the days of the Vesali dynasty.[128]

Some court ministers validated the Mrauk-U court structure by anachronistically placing

mirror images of these arrangements as they stood in the late sixteenth and early

seventeenth century into descriptions of the court in the earlier periods.[129] Thus, for the

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[127]See Barbosa's interesting account (and I tend to believe that it is based upon fragments of information that spread from traders who observed Arakanese court ceremony) concerning the twelve cities of the Arakanese kingdom, and the twelve, twelve-year-old maidens collected at each, for the king's perusal as candidates for his harem. Their fertility was symbolized by the king's act of smelling their moist undergarments after they had been forced to sit in the sun for several hours. Duarte Barbosa, The Book of Duarte Barbosa: An Account of the Countries Bordering on the Indian Ocean and Their Inhabitants, Written by Duarte Barbosa and Completed About the Year 1518 A.D., translated by Mansel Longworth Dames (London: Hakluyt Society, 1921): 2:151-152.

[128]"Rakhine Min Raza-kri Arei-taw Sadan," 5a-6b, 9b-11a.

[129] See, for example, the text written by the early seventeenth century *ko-ran-kri*, Maha-zeiya-thein-ka, as it is included in NL 1632; This worked for historical events as well. Min-ba-ti's flight from Arakan to Delhi and his submission to the king after the late eleventh century invasion by Pagan armies sounds suspiciously like Nara-meik-hla's flight to Bengal where he submitted to the Delhi king (according to several versions of the story) after the early fifteenth century invasion by Burman armies. Similarly, King Thutayit-sandaya's eighth-century campaign into Bengal, after the twelve Banga towns revolted, followed by the submission of Delhi to Arakan and the provisioning of daughters of the Delhi rulers to the Arakanese king, also sounds like Min-ba-kri's campaign into Bengal in the sixteenth century, with similar roots to

sixteenth century Arakanese, their court structure was established by the legendary Arakanese king, Thuriya-di-pati, the son of Sanda-thu-riya who was said to have met the Buddha and had cast the Maha-muni image. Through the legend of Thuriya-di-pati's organization of the court, the court structure of the late sixteenth century was legitimized.[130]

Beneath the king, four ministers constituted the upper tier of the court. The most important of these ministers was the *ko-ran-kri* (the 'great royal bodyguard'), who commanded the royal court's standing army and palace guard units, both within the capital and when on campaign abroad. Servants of the king, the princes, lesser royal relatives, and royal ministers were distributed and managed by the *pri-so-kri* (the 'great manager of country's affairs'). The royal elephant herds and the elephant keepers were managed by the *hsin-kei-kri* (the 'great elephant commissioner'). Finally, the *ta-bain-kri* (the 'great sword commander') managed a variety of groups which maintained the waterways and ponds.[131] From contemporaneous accounts, the power and authority of these ministers was just as real as it was apparent, and during campaigns, these ministers also served as the chief military commanders.[132]

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the conflict and similar results. See "Rakhine Min Raza-kri Arei-taw Sadan," 7a-14b.

[130]This legend can be found in "Rakhine Min Raza-kri Arei-taw Sadan," 5a-6b.

[131]Ibid., 5b.

[132]See an example of the role of the *ko-ran-kri* in ibid., 16b. There were also legendary accounts of these ministers deposing or killing their kings, and thereupon, seizing the thrown. Ibid., 7b. This indicates, I think the understanding of the closeness of the kings and the men who held these positions, and the potential threat they posed if balance among these elites were not maintained.

The king provided such posts to men of powerful families in the Arakan Littoral.[133] This was an effective approach to the immigration of new and potentially threatening clans, an endemic feature of the Arakan Littoral. In exchange for submission to the Arakanese ruler and the presentation of a daughter to foster kinship ties, the head of a powerful clan (whether indigenous or newcomer) could receive a revenue-grant, political authority, and a title. Titles and positions of authority in association with the royal court were attractive to local elites for two reasons: titles and positions of authority, often hereditary (titles and positions could be passed on),[134] substantiated a place in the inner circle around the ruler and the central court could often (but not always) provide substantial coercive power (soldiers, for example) to support local elites when they were threatened by revolt or usurpation. In short, a title or a position of authority provided "protection" to elite families in a highly competitive social setting.

In one case, a powerful rural family was drawn into Sanda-wizaya-raza's court in the 1720s via the bestowal of increasingly-important titles. Eventually, the head of the family was given the title of *ta-bain-kri*, which is the title by which he is recorded in the chronicles, while his sons were given significant titles as well.[135] Such families could accumulate significant influence, wealth, and power within the court and hold their titles from son-to-father for generations. One family, for example, held the post of *ko-ran-kri*

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[133]Ibid., 5a-6b indicates that these posts were distributed among men who were already *mró-zàs* of important towns.

[134]See, for example, Appendix III.

[135]See Monk of Ra-naun-myin, "Kya Khwetsa," 153-156.

throughout the early Mrauk-U period and until the mid-seventeenth century. This family, the most famous member of which was the great Arakanese adviser Maha-pyinnya-kyaw, wielded so much influence that they eventually gained the rich appanage of Chittagong.[136] As the *ko-ran-kri*, Maha-pyinnya-kyaw, like other men of his family before and after him, commanded the major Arakanese war campaigns, controlled the royal bodyguard (the *ko-rans*), and was responsible for conducting inquisitions against sects of the *sangha* when these sects fell out of royal favor (I will discuss this in a later chapter).

Beneath this upper tier, other positions in the royal court were provided to the sons of the four great ministers. These positions included the *win-hmù*-ships (compound commanders) of the north, east, west, and south and the *atwin-hmù*-ship (interior commander). Important men of the king's own family, including his sons and younger brothers, were also given court positions such as *ein-shei-min* (heir-apparent) and the *leira-mran* and *leiwei-mran* ('right-hand man' and 'left-hand man').[137]

The order and unity of the court and the kingdom were also symbolized and maintained in a practical sense by the inclusion of women from throughout the kingdom, but especially from central and outlying elite families, in the royal harem.[138] These

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[136]See Appendix III.

[137]"Rakhine Min Raza-kri Arei-taw Sadan," 5b, 6a-6b.

[138]For a thorough discussion of the role of the royal harem in this way, see Tambiah, World Conqueror and World Renouncer, 116-117; and Lieberman, Burmese Administrative Cycles, 82.

included the north queen, the south queen, and the middle queen,[139] whose sexual union

with the king formed kinship ties through which the king and upper elites could influence

each other without disrupting the stability or unity of the royal kingdom.[140] The

daughters of especially powerful families in the royal circle were provided with the chief

positions as queens, which brought to them and their families appanage grants, including

the revenues of towns, villages, and slaves for their material support.[141]

This approach to holding the elites of the kingdom together occasionally failed.

Nara-meik-hla (r. 1404-1406 & 1430-1433), for example, granted the title of *ko-ran-kri* to

the head of a certain clan which had arrived in the royal kingdom from the Irra-waddy

Valley in the time of his father. When Nara-meik-hla insisted upon taking a woman of the

clan, either the *ko-ran-kri*'s sister or wife (perhaps she was both his sister and wife, a

typical elite practice during the premodern period), a dispute resulted and the *ko-ran-kri*

encouraged a Burman invasion which drove Nara-meik-hla off the throne. Likewise,

because intermarriage between the royal and elite clans promoted unity through blood and

kinship ties, it also increased the chances, at least in Arakan, of challenges to the throne,

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[139]"Rakhine Min Raza-kri Arei-taw Sadan," 6a.

[140]As Tambiah explains: "the queens and concubines were taken from, or more usually gifted by, the princes and nobles, who on the one hand could hope to influence the king and court through their sisters and daughters and who on the other hand could be manipulated and controlled by the king in whose harem these women were confined as 'hostages.' Thus in centralized polities the king could be viewed as representing his subjects through the obligatory or politically feasible alliances between himself, as the highest personage, and the princes..., nobles and high officials..., who in various ways are leaders of groups of people, rulers of regional subdivisions, and members of the upper echelons of the social hierarchy." Tambiah, World Conqueror and World Renouncer, 117.

[141]"Rakhine Min Raza-kri Arei-taw Sadan," 6a.

owing to the large number of blood claimants to kingly succession. The performance of

the *beik-theik* (*abhiseka*) ritual consecration of the royal candidate for the throne was

meant to secure the king's position on the throne.[142] Throughout the premodern period,

however, Arakanese kings were overthrown by brothers and uncles, which was not

difficult, as intermarriage had multiplied the numbers of important male kin.[143]

2.7 Summary

As I have explained in this chapter, I view an understanding of the relationship

between the indigenous population and the natural environment as critical to a discussion

of the cultural, religious, and political development of the Arakanese. I will return to the

influence of the natural environment upon the population of Danra-waddy, which formed

the central "zone" of the Arakan Littoral in the early modern period. But the natural

environment will be referred to over and over again. The Arakan Littoral's position

between two great river valleys (the Brahmaputra-Ganges and the Irrawaddy) meant that

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[142]See description of this ritual in Michael Aung-Thwin, Pagan: the Origins of Modern Burma (Honolulu, Hawaii: University of Hawaii Press, 1985), 49-51. More recent studies of the *beik-theik* ceremony have been offered in Ryuji Okudaira, "A Study on a 'Mythology of Kingship' Described in Manugye Dhammathat—Significance of Muddha 'Beitheik' or the Surname Ceremony," a paper delivered at the Burma Studies Colloquium, DeKalb, Illinois, 8 October 1994 and idem., "A Study on 'Institutionalization' of Myanmar (Burmese) Coronation Ceremony under King Badon with Special Reference to the Muddha Beiktheik," a paper delivered at the Burma Studies Colloquium, DeKalb, Illinois, 26 October 1996.

[143]For Arakan, there is scant evidence for incestuous marriages between primary brothers and sisters on a sustained an regular basis, as we find in Burma from the sixteenth century. Such marriages did occur, of course, but only occasionally, perhaps indicating a stronger need for inclusion of rival elites than we find in post-sixteenth century Burma. For the case of such marriages to produce a 'pure' lineage and clear line of succession, see Lieberman, Burmese Administrative Cycles, 82-3. The converse of Lieberman's observation, of course, is that pre-sixteenth century marriage arrangements in Burma also did not fit the pattern he outlines. Perhaps this indicates that pre-sixteenth century Burmese rulers shared similar concerns of elite inclusion that conditioned projects of royal marriage and succession in Arakan for the entire pre-1784 period. We will have to wait for a focussed and in-depth study of this phenomenon.

the Arakanese interacted with two very different cultures and religions. Depopulation in Danra-waddy's best agricultural lands also encouraged the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century slave trade which brought a substantial portion of the population of Banga into river valleys in the Danra-waddy zone.

I also argue that Arakan's mountainous topography and environmental instability along the coasts and rivers encouraged population mobility as well as migrations into the Arakan Littoral. Alone, a highly mobile population base made political centralization difficult. Coupled with a mountainous topography, however, such an agenda was beyond the limits of the resources of early modern Arakanese rulers. Thus, attraction rather than direct rule was the only practical option. In later chapters, we will see that this approach had important implications for the direction and pace of religious change in early modern Arakan. Finally, I describe the kingdoms of the Arakan Littoral as familial states, which involve the attraction to the center and inclusion in the royal court of elite families who otherwise might be political rivals to the king or to the kingdom.

CHAPTER 3

BUDDHIST OR MUSLIM RULERS: MODELS OF KINGSHIP IN ARAKAN IN THE FOURTEENTH TO SIXTEENTH CENTURIES

A very confusing aspect of early modern Arakan is the heterogenous models of kingship which local rulers adopted, depending upon the time and place and the people on whom the ruler wished to make a good impression. These models are often explained by contemporaneous observers and even scholars of the present in terms of religious identity. Yet, extrapolating from models of kingship in order to arrive at conclusions regarding the religious identity of a king and a people is problematic. If one is to penetrate the veneer of self-presentation and examine the underlying religious context, a better understanding of what, at least on the surface, appear to be the royal court's religious affiliations will first have to be established. Such a project is attempted in this chapter. Although it is true that early modern Arakanese kings localized the practices, cultural objects, and vocabularies that today we might view as Muslim or Buddhist, this chapter will indicate how these kings perceived such things not as "religious" symbols, but rather as part of the cultural accoutrements of especially powerful and respected dynasties in other kingdoms. Even so, the effort to localize the practices, cultural objects, and vocabularies of high-status courts sometimes indirectly influenced religious change.

In more recent centuries, religious identity is sometimes linked with material culture or personal adornment. Clothing, foods, and even hairstyles, for example, can symbolize many kinds of identities (such as family, village, ethnic, political, or status identities, for example), not simply religious affiliation. But in the early modern period, at least in the Arakan Littoral, if there were connections between religious identities and material culture or personal adornment, they were much more fluid than we might consider them to be today. Nineteenth century British administrators in the Arakan Littoral, for example, observed that save for their profession of Islam and observance of its requirements, Arakanese Muslims such as the Myedu were not distinguishable from the Buddhist population (that is, in terms of material culture).[144]

Similarly, many scholars today attribute a Muslim identity to early modern Arakanese rulers because they dressed 'like Muslims,' had 'Muslim' names, and used 'Muslim' symbols of rulership. It was not out of place for an Arakanese king of the fifteenth, sixteenth, or even early seventeenth centuries to dress as a 'Muslim' Bengali would dress, or to speak as a 'Muslim' Persian would, or to call himself by a 'Muslim' Persian name, and yet pay homage to an image of the Buddha, worry about *samsara*, or proclaim himself a Buddhist. This seems to have occurred at other levels of society as well, although evidence regarding society as a whole is sparse for this period, and we have to be careful with its interpretation. Certainly, many Muslim writers in Bengal did not see

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[144]As Tydd claimed: "Except in their religion and in the social customs their religion directs, these Burman Mahomedans are not distinguishable from their Burmese and Arakanese neighbours." Tydd, Burma Gazetteer: Sandoway District, 19.

the Arakanese or their kings as Muslim, and to describe how un-Muslim the Arakanese were, they chiefly cited (and exaggerated) cultural practices which did not agree with their interpretation of how a Muslim should act.[145]

In the Arakan Littoral selective acculturation was autonomous to religious conversion, at least to a limited degree. The failure to distinguish between these two developments (acculturation and religious conversion), as I suggest, has contributed to a misunderstanding in the prevailing literature of the religious identity of the Arakanese court (whether portrayed as a clearly Theradava Buddhist court or as the center of authority in an Islamic state) .[146]

3.1 Strengthening Central Rulership

Although the titles, practices, and general organization of the court were static throughout Arakan's pre-conquest history (*vide* Chapter 2), Arakanese rulers were dynamic in the ways in which they presented themselves (that is, the 'model of kingship'). Over time, Arakanese kings accumulated many images that they utilized depending upon the audience which they wished to impress. The model of kingship was a vital part of the political, cultural, and religious landscape in early modern Arakan, as it reflected how the king and his entourage wished to be portrayed at different times to

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[145]As one account reads: "Their religion is distinct from Islam and Hinduism. Barring their mothers, they can take all other women for their wives; for instance, a brother may marry his sister. . . and their males do not keep beard." Gulam Hussain Salim, Riyazu-s-Salatin (A History of Bengal), translated by Abdus Salam (Delhi: Idarah-i Adabiyat-i Delli, 1975), 14-15.

[146]To join the elite in the Mrauk-U kingdom did not require any particular religious affiliation, unlike Bengal, which, though allowing for non-Muslim officials, did not confer the same level of appointments or full social status to non-Muslims.

different audiences. I think we can apply to Arakan's adoption of multiple models of

rulership Phillip B. Wagoner's theory (which I will discuss in greater depth, as pertains to

the early Mrauk-U rulers' borrowing of the so-called 'Muslim' models of rulership, in

Section 3.3) regarding the partial appropriation of Islamic culture for occasions when such

appropriation is highly opportune. As Wagoner explains:

> [W]hen a given cultural form adopted from the Islamic world has a functional
> counterpart already existing in the indigenous culture, the import does not
> necessarily replace the established form in all contexts. While a given Islamicized
> form may be used in those social domains where a symbolic expedient--as, for
> example, in courtly audiences and receptions where political, military, and
> mercantile representatives from the larger Islamic world are present--use of the
> indigenous analogue will likely continue in other domains, where such an appeal
> would be irrelevant or even counterproductive--as for example, in the context of
> certain types of Hindu ritual performances, where it is in conformity with
> brahmanical cultural norms that confer legitimacy.[147]

But more than this, the model of kingship helped influence the court's agenda. Specialists

in appurtenances, rituals, behavior, language, and other matters related to one or another

model of kingship had to be brought to the court. Important symbols of rulership also had

to be captured (conquest), received (vassalage), or borrowed (localized) abroad.[148] In so

doing, the model of kingship also had implications for religious patronage. It would have

been inconceivable, for example, for a king portraying himself as a Bengali-style sultan to

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[147]Wagoner, "'Sultan Among Hindu Kings'," 854.

[148]I think the Arakanese conquest of Pegu in 1599 is a perfect example of this pattern at work. In this campaign, the Arakanese king won for himself the symbols of First Toungoo kingship, including the regalia, the white elephant, a daughter of the fallen house, and the chief images of the First Toungoo palace. Thereupon, the Arakanese ruler called himself "Lord of the White Elephant," and stationed the other symbols he had taken around his palace. I discuss this campaign in detail in Charney, "The 1598-99 Siege of Pegu," 39-57.

slaughter the Muslims of the royal capital or to raze to the ground, as Bayín-naun of the Irra-waddy Valley's First Toungoo Dynasty did, mosques within the royal domain.[149] Finally, the model of kingship borrowed was also an attempt to enhance the authority or magnetism of the king and the court. As I shall argue below, models of rulership changed in reaction to changes in the local political climate.

Without becoming lost in the myriad of details which the chronicles offer, we can make some general characterizations of models of rulership based upon Arakanese perceptions of their own past and the admittedly less rich, but more reliable data that comes from the few inscriptions, coins, and other materials which we do possess. An important characterization regarding Banga and the Arakan Littoral from the tenth to fifteenth centuries does emerge from a comparison of the evidence available: the important symbols of pre-tenth century rulership were abandoned. It is not difficult to demonstrate that, at least on one level, the Vesali model of kingship had broken down, although I am willing to entertain more subterranean continuity in ideas of Arakanese rulership. Coinage provides evidence to a certain degree. The minting of commemorative coronation coinage, for example, was an important part of Bengali and later of Muslim rulership in establishing a ruler's claim to authority and this was begun only when a ruler felt secure

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[149]We do not find such pogroms against Muslims in Arakan until the mid-seventeenth century, after the rulers of Mrauk-U ceased to aspire to Bengali sultan-ship. On Bayín-naun's razing to the ground of Muslim mosques in Pegu, see "Nidana Ramadhipati-katha," H. L. Shorto (trans.), unpublished typescript translation kindly provided to the author by Dr. Victor Lieberman, 98.

enough to claim central authority for himself.[150] Although we find coronation coinage in

Arakan for the Vesali period, and then again for the Mrauk-U period, during the period

between the fall of Vesali and the fall of Laun-kret, we find no such coronation coins.

Similarly, in Banga, we find no coinage minted from the eleventh to thirteenth

centuries.[151] Another category of evidence is less equivocal: although the Vesali kings had

earlier adopted Bengali-Hindu style regnal names,[152] later, during the period between

Vesali and Laun-kret and into the early Laun-kret period, regnal names seem to have been

of purely local origin.[153]

3.2 The Spread of the Irra-waddy Valley (Burman) Model of Rulership

When power was diffuse and it was difficult to assert authority by force alone,

the enhancement of one's royal aura likely was an important objective of the petty rulers

of this period. Unfortunately, it is for this period (thirteenth-fourteenth centuries) which

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[150]The minting of coins was one step in establishing political legitimacy in Muslim states: "The right to mint coins . . . was a government monopoly in early Islamic society and there was no equivalent to the private coinage of western Europe; the mention of a caliph or other ruler's name on the coinage was, along with the mention in the sermon or khutba at Friday prayers, one of the ways in which sovereignty was acknowledged." Hugh Kennedy, The Prophet and the Age of the Caliphates: The Islamic Near East From the Sixth to the Eleventh century (London: Longman, 1986), 388. For this role of coins and the sultanate of Bengal, see Eaton, Rise of Islam and the Bengal Frontier, 33. Although some Bengali Muslim coin issues bore images, earlier Muslim Arabic coinage, which may have served as a model for Muslim coinage elsewhere, "was to be . . . purely epigraphic with an inscription giving the date, the caliph's name and a religious slogan." Kennedy, The Prophet and the Age of the Caliphates, 99.

[151]See Eaton, Rise of Islam and the Bengal Frontier, 95-6.

[152]This is clear from the list in Harvey, History of Burma, 370-371.

[153]I have searched without success for a Bengali- or Pagan- familiar to any of the regnal titles of Arakanese rulers during this period.

we lack much of the data which render both the Vesali and Mrauk-U periods much easier

to study. The Arakanese and Burmese chronicles conflict irreconcilably, for example, on a

number of critical features of the Arakan Littoral's history during this period, and even

then, the information that is provided is sketchy and hardly informative. But this does

not mean that the sources are not useful at all. From the Arakanese chronicles and even

those of the Burmans, we can arrive at some understanding of how they viewed their

history during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, and how they related it to their

own time. These indigenous perspectives revolve around several 'themes' which I think

are relevant to this dissertation: (1) some rulers in the Arakan Littoral sought to enhance

their prestige by adapting a high-status model of Pagan-Buddhist kingship, while the

Burmans have interpreted this as actual Pagan rule of Arakan and (2) continued political

and cultural influence, but not religious change, emanating from the Irra-waddy Valley

outweighed that emanating from the northwest in India.

It seems to have been in the context described in the previous section that the

petty chieftains of the Arakan Littoral looked to the closest powerful state for assistance

and association—Pagan, east of the Arakan Roma. Several kinds of evidence are available

which strongly indicate this development: inscriptions, coinage, and dynastic lists.

Inscriptions, for example, ceased to be written in Deva-negari and instead, our

inscriptions from the Laun-kret period are written in Burmese script, Pagan-style.[154] The

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[154]The earliest reliable example of Burmese script, derived from Mon script, is found in a Pagan inscription of 1058. Some inscriptions bear earlier dates, but these are copies and there is good reason to doubt the authenticity of their dates. See Harvey, History of Burma, 29, 29f.

lack of coronation coinage may also suggest, in the context of other trends, that Laun-kret

(and earlier) kings had begun to emulate the pattern of Burman kingship where no

coronation coinage was necessary. At the very least it indicates that the patterns of

kingship prevalent in Bengal were less emphasized in Arakan during this period.

Increasingly in the Laun-kret period, Arakanese rulers borrowed their regnal names from

Pagan and post-Pagan era Burman dynastic lists, and the names as a whole begin to fit

more and more the pattern of Burman kingship.[155] Localizing a Pagan-style model of

kingship had its limitations, however, for although Arakanese kings also claimed lineage

from the first king of the world, Maha-thamada,[156] I have found no evidence that

Arakanese kings drew from the Irra-waddy Valley's parallel and important tradition of

royal descent from the half-god, Pyu-zàw-htì.[157]

In the eleventh to thirteenth centuries, post-Vesali Arakan shared in a cultural

exchange with the Irra-waddy Valley.[158] Both the Burmese and Arakanese chronicles

assert that, during these centuries, Arakan was brought under Burman political and

religious influence and into Pagan's political orbit by two rulers of Pagan: Anaw-rata and

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[155]See Appendix IV.

[156]"Rakhine Min Raza-kri Arei-taw Sadan," 33b; Sithugammani-thinkyan, "Rakhine Razawin," i.

[157]Pyu-zàw-htì, according to one of the two traditions of Burmese kingship, was the progenitor of the kings of the Pagan dynasty.Lieberman suggests that the tradition may have been "an early origin myth later challenged by Buddhist orthodoxy." Lieberman, Burmese Administrative Cycles, 83, 83f.

[158]Pagan's connections with Arakan were facilitated by a road called the "Burekmanyo," which connected the Danra-waddy plains with Pagan. "Rakhine Min Raza-kri Arei-taw Sadan," 8a; Maurice Collis & San Shwe Bu, "Arakan's Place in the Civilization of the Bay," Journal of the Burma Research Society 15 (1925): 38.

Alaun-sithu. Much of what we know about the early rise of Pagan as the preeminent

political, cultural, and religious center of western mainland Southeast Asia has been

ascribed to the first of these kings, Anaw-rata.[159] There is much to suggest that Anaw-

rata, whom some regard as only semi-historical, however, has been credited with a range

of longer-term developments all lumped together by the process of human remembrance

into one man's reign.[160] Even so, the processes attributed to him are relevant to our

discussion here.

In both the Irra-waddy Valley and the Arakan Littoral, the establishment of

Pagan's authority was realized through the acquisition of the symbols of local religious

beliefs and their relocation at Pagan, under the Pagan kingship's control. Arakanese and

Burmese chronicles, as well as colonial histories based upon these chronicles, portray

Pagan's campaigns against Arakan and elsewhere as religiously-inspired conquests.[161]

After the acquisition of a queen from Pateikkaya, for example, Anaw-rata is reputed to

have attempted, unsuccessfully, to carry off the Maha-muni Buddha image, a centerpiece

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[159]Harvey, History of Burma, 29-30, 34, 45-6; Sithugammani-thinkyan, "Rakhine Razawin," 17a-17b, 18a, 19a-19b.

[160] A number of scholars, for example, have pointed to the curious lack of evidence for the story of Anaw-rata's conquest of Thaton and taking the Tipitika and Mon monks back to Pagan. E. Michael Mendelson, Sangha and State in Burma: A Study of Monastic Sectarianism and Leadership (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1975), 37.

[161]Anaw-rata's looting of Thaton allowed for Pagan's acquisition of Buddhist texts, Theravadin Buddhist monks, and artisans from this town. Harvey, History of Burma, 29; similarly, Anaw-rata is said to have sought out the chief religious symbols of the lowland Indian societies of the Arakan littoral.

of the kingdom of Vesali.[162] In any event, Anaw-rata was placated by Arakan's nominal

vassalage to Pagan and a royal princess, Hti-lain-pru, whom the Arakanese king, Min-

kala, sent to Anaw-rata as tribute.[163]

The Arakanese chronicles also stress, perhaps more usefully for our discussion

here, that political competitors in the Arakan Littoral, when they otherwise failed to

achieve their political aspirations, sought aid from Pagan. After a usurper removed their

father, Min-bilu, from the throne, for example, Min-nan and his brother Min-rei-tara fled

to Pagan and took shelter under the protection of Kyan-zittha and his successor, Alaun-

sithu, in 1110. Arakanese chronicles claim that Alaun-sithu sailed around Maw-tin island

and put Min-nan on the Arakanese throne at Vesali,[164] although more colorful traditions

differ over the details of this event.[165] Again, however, the conflict between Arakanese

religion and the Burmans from Pagan is stressed. After securing Min-nan's place on the

throne, for example, the Mons and the Pyus are said to have looted the Arakan Littoral of

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[162]Ibid., 29; according to the chronicles, in 1072, when Anaw-rata tried to move the Maha-muni image, the Buddhas flew through the sky and frightened him so that he trembled, writhing on the platform of the temple for three days. He was not relieved until he placed relics in the relic chamber as was usual, and then he prospered. Sithugammani-thinkyan, "Rakhine Razawin," 17a.

[163]"Rakhine Min Raza-kri Arei-taw Sadan," 8a, 35a-35b.

[164]"Rakhine Min Raza-kri Arei-taw Sadan," 8b, 35b; Sithugammani-thinkyan, "Rakhine Razawin," 19a, 19b; Harvey, History of Burma, 45.

[165]An account found in a nineteenth century chronicle of Arakan, for example, claims that Min-rei-tara was Minnan father. While in exile, Min-rei-tara and his sister-queen had a son, Leira-min-nan, and a daughter, Shwei-guthi. Leira-min-nan, after his father's death, made his plight known to his patron, Alaun-sithu, by wearing his hair in the fashion of Vesali during the headwashing ceremony. Angered, Alaun-sithu was prepared to punish him, until Leira-min-nan used this opportunity of gaining the king's attention, to ask for his help in recovering the Arakan littoral. Having been provided with an army of Mranmas, Mons and Pyus, and having been made military commander, Leira-min-nan took back the Arakan littoral, married his sister Shwei-guthi, and ascended the palace. Sithugammani-thinkyan, "Rakhine Razawin," 19a-19b.

its religious objects, including the Maha-muni image with severe consequences for the thieves.[166] Again, the chronicles stress the exchange of princesses with the rulers of Pagan as a sign of vassalage: Alaun-sithu is said to have left Arakan upon receiving Min-nan's daughter, Mra-ban, as tribute.[167]

The Burman chronicles, perhaps expectedly, claim cultural hegemony in the relationship between Pagan and the Arakan Littoral. The clearest example is the suggestion in the Burman chronicle tradition that the name "Rakhine" can be ascribed to Alaun-sithu's campaigns. [168] In any event, Pagan's power, although perhaps not its cultural identity, dissipated rapidly after the Chinese attack on its kingdom in the early thirteenth century; sometime after 1286, Rakhine-Danra-waddy, as one of many outlying areas supposedly maintaining a faint tributary relationship with Pagan, "refused to send tribute, seceded, and rebelled."[169]

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[166]The Mon barge that held the Maha-muni image was sunk by the Nagas and taken away by them, while the Mons and Burmans were "afflicted with leprosy." Sithugammani-thinkyan, "Rakhine Razawin," 19b; and "Rakhine Min Raza-kri Arei-taw Sadan," 8b.

[167]"Rakhine Min Raza-kri Arei-taw Sadan," 8b.

[168]According to the Burman chronicles, during a period of political fragmentation, Alaun-sithu's *sik-thu-kris* Nga Yeidan and Nga Ran-nain campaigned against the tributary king of the Sak, Kadon-kyo, whom they summarily defeated. Kalà, Maha-ya-zawin-kyi, 1:229. The war captives who were sent back to Alaun-sithu as tribute from this campaign, were taken by Alaun-sithu and his armies to Lan-pya, where they: forced the prisoners who had been taken to form villages in this place [and] because all those who had been taken ["ra," to take] had been placed and controlled ["kain," to place and control], it is called 'Ra-kain' to the present day. Ibid. This etymological reasoning appears to me to be extremely specious, and it should be noted that there are numerous other explanations for the name "Rakhine" even in the same Burman sources that include the above explanation.

[169]Kalà, Maha-ya-zawin-kyi, 1:307-8; The Arakanese chronicles also tell us that in the late thirteenth century, the "authority of the overlord kings [of Pagan]" had receded. Sithugammani-thinkyan, "Rakhine Razawin," 24b.

3.3 Sultan-ship: Islamic or Bengali model of Rulership?

The Arakanese kings had other models of rulership as well, especially that of

Bengali rulership. A misunderstanding has developed in the prevailing literature, however,

regarding the early Mrauk-U dynastic utilization of Muslim regnal titles, inscriptions on

coins bearing these titles and sometimes the Muslim *Kalimah*, and the temporary

vassalage to the Muslim sultan of Bengal. It is generally assumed that this borrowing

represents one of two developments: (1) the Arakanese kings needed to propitiate

Muslim communities that lay within areas under Arakanese rule, such as Chittagong or

Banga,[170] or (2) as a requirement by the sultans of Bengal as part of Arakan's supposed

vassalage to the same.[171] These positions, however, share a similar flaw in that they

reflect the link between cultural and religious identities that exist in the twentieth century.

The prevailing work on early modern Arakan, in other words, assumes that the symbols

of kingship which the early Arakanese kings borrowed were essentially Muslim and

implies that they were seen as such by the Arakanese kings. The logical conclusion of this

line of reasoning is that early Mrauk-U rulers were indeed Muslim. The evidence,

however, suggests otherwise: many of these so-called "Muslim" Arakanese kings were

highly devoted to Buddhism and permitted the exclusion of Muslims from the most

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[170]San Baw U suggests that the Arakanese usurpation of Moslem titles was for the purposes of their Muslim subjects: "the title assumed . . . as Lord of his Mahommedan subjects." San Baw U, "My Rambles," Journal of the Burma Research Society 13 (1923): 104; Alamgir M. Serajuddin, "Muslim Influence in Arakan and the Muslim Names of Arakanese Kings: A Reassessment," Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bangladesh 31 (1986): 17-23.

[171]Habibullah, "Arakan in the pre-Mughal History of Bengal," 33-38.

important activities. [172]

There is another problem here, which has been suggested by Marshall Hodgson at a more general level when he argues that the terms 'Islam' and 'Islamic' have been applied carelessly to a range of different phenomena.[173] This problem involves the use of Arakanese participation in what is assumed to be Muslim material and political culture as evidence of participation in Islam as a religion. A glance at early modern Arakan, for example, quickly reveals communities who were of the Muslim faith, but who did not appropriate (or retain, in some cases) the material or political culture which seemingly prevailed in the early modern Dar al-Islam, as well as groups who did participate in this material and political culture, but who were not Muslim. A review of the primary source materials, both indigenous and European, has led me to consider the symbols of kingship that early Mrauk-U kings adopted as not essentially Muslim. What, then, were they?

It is fairly clear that court cultures which developed in the Middle East had, by the ninth century, attained such a high level of sophistication and prestige, that they became models to be adopted and localized by other Muslim courts throughout the Mediterranean world. In Córdoba, for example, the spread of Islam and Muslim rule preceded the spread of Abbasid-style court cultures.[174] This suggests that 'Muslim rule'

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[172]Manrique, Itinerario, 2:29.

[173]These terms, Islam and Islamic, applied "casually both for what we may call religion and for the overall society and culture associated historically with the religion." Marshall G. S. Hodgson, The Venture of Islam (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), 1:57.

[174]Jessica A. Coope, "Religious and Cultural Conversion to Islam in the Ninth-Century Umayyad Córdoba," Journal of World History 4 (1993): 52-3.

per se and 'highly prestigious court cultures' (which characterized particular Muslim

courts) were separate phenomena.[175] Wagoner, as I discussed earlier, has examined

Vijayanagara and based upon his research he has provided the best theoretical approach to

understanding the process of cultural Islamicization (as opposed to religious

Islamization). As Wagoner structures his understanding of this process:

> I would suggest that this process of cultural change may be understood in
> terms of three characteristics. First, Islamicization refers to a political strategy, by
> means of which indigenous elites attempt to enhance their political status and
> authority through participation in the more 'universal' culture of Islam. Second, this
> participation is effected through the adoption of certain Islamic cultural forms and
> practices, which--given the political nature of the process--largely pertain to the
> broad sphere of secular culture, as opposed to the narrower domain of formal
> religion. As such, the process of Islamicization has nothing to do with religious
> conversion or syncretism. . . Finally . . . Islamicization does not necessarily occur at
> the expense of indigenous cultural traditions.[176]

I think that the same kind of analysis explains much, though not everything, about the

"borrowings" of the early Mrauk-U court of things Islamic. If we can interpret Wagoner's

approach as applicable to any high court culture, I would suggest that the Arakanese

borrowing of things Islamic did not mean the same thing to the Arakanese as it did to the

Hindu rulers of Vijayanagara. As it would have been understood to the early modern

Arakanese, for example, the material and political culture in question was not Muslim *per*

se, but rather it was that political and material culture which had come to characterize the

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[175]See also Hodgson's distinction between 'Islamic' and 'Islamicate' in Hodgson, The Venture of Islam, 1:58-59.

[176]Wagoner, "'Sultan Among Hindu Kings'," 854.

Bengali royal court.[177] Looking at the "Muslim" symbols of rulership adopted in the

Arakanese court, which have been used specifically to underline the argument suggesting

the Muslim religious identity of that court, I suggest a different perspective was at work.

The so-called Muslim symbols of rulership, I think, should be viewed as Bengali, or

rather symbols of Bengali rulership that had been influenced by Persian ideas of rulership

in the fourteenth century. Arakanese 'Muslim' regnal names, for example, were not drawn

freely from the Islamic world, but solely from the Bengali sultanate's regnal lists.[178]

These Bengali regnal titles, however Muslim they may appear, fit into a prevailing

pattern of kingship in the Arakanese littoral, as we have seen in previous chapters,

whereby Arakanese kings borrowed symbols of kingship from powerful states to the

northwest and the east, that is Bengal and Burma. The question, regarding these symbols,

which is never asked, for example, is why Arakanese kings also maintained essentially

Burmese titles and included Burmese regnal titles in the inscriptions on their coins,

alongside the supposedly "Muslim" regnal titles.

The conditions which led to the adoption of the Bengali/Muslim titles and coinage

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[177]Arakanese chronicles admit all kinds of relationships with rulers and cultural influence which we would interpret today as Muslim. But closer inspection of the sources reveals that the writers of the *raza-wins* viewed these rulers and influences as Indian or Bengali and not as Muslim. One source, for example, casts aspersions upon "Mussalamans" (Muslims) as 'monkeys' and suggests that those people who become friends with them become 'ruined.' National Library, Ministry of Culture, Rangoon, MS 136913, Shin Kawi-thara, "Rakhine Arei-taw-poun" [palm-leaf manuscript number 136913] AMs, 1839 [copy of 1787 original], p. 21a, National Library, Ministry of Culture, Yangon, Union of Myanmar. But this same source finds no problem in admitting that Arakanese rulers were vassals of the *thuradan* (sultan) of Bengal or that Arakanese kings used what is described in the text as 'Kala' (Indian) names, such as Mubarak Shah or Iskander Shah, which we today identify as Muslim.

[178]Habibullah, "Arakan in the pre-Mughal History of Bengal," 35.

seem to have been related to events occurring in Banga, rather than in Arakan.[179] To be certain, there were major developments occurring within the thirteenth and early fourteenth century Arakan Littoral which required this change. However, the character of the change itself, that is, the adoption of the Bengali symbols of rulership was due to changes in the Bengali (that is, all of Bengal and not just Banga) political and religious landscape. In other words, Bengali symbols of kingship became Islamicized because Bengali elites and many others in Bengali society were becoming Muslim. Thus, if an Arakanese king had localized a model of Bengali rulership in the eighth century, for example, he might appear to us today as a "Hindu" ruler. On the other hand, if an Arakanese ruler localized a model of Bengali rulership in the fifteenth century, he would appear to us today as a "Muslim" ruler (and thus we have the confusion regarding the religious identity of the early Mrauk-U kings). In short, Arakanese kings saw one "Bengali" model, while today we might see two, one "Hindu" and the other "Muslim."

In exchange for the support of the court of the sultanate of Bengal in reestablishing Arakanese control of the Danra-waddy river-basin region, Nara-meik-hla and his successors accepted nominal vassalage to the Bengali sultanate and significant features of the Bengali model of rulership (i.e. Bengali sultan-ship).[180] It would be a mistake, however, to characterize the early Mrauk-U kings as Muslim Sultans. The statecraft of

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[179]See the discussion of the rise of Muslim rule in Bengal and the Islamization of Bengali models of kingship in Eaton, Rise of Islam and the Bengal Frontier, 22-70.

[180]According to one account, the early Mrauk-U kings 'took the seal' (accepted vassalage) of the Sultan of Gaur, Basa-min. The taking of 'Muslim' titles began with Nara-meik-hla's successor, Ali Khan. See Sanda-mala-linkaya, Rakhine Razawin Thet-kyan (Mandalay: Hantha-waddy Press, 1932), 2:27.

early Mrauk-U rulers was complex, and so was their identity. A large part of this stemmed from a conscious attempt to attract traders of different cultures and religions, and to achieve status in the eyes of rival rulers to the east and northwest. The role of Muslim sultan was merely one facet of a multi-faceted kingship. Indigenes, especially in the outlying provinces (Rama-waddy, Mekha-waddy, and Dwara-waddy) for example, likely had no perception of any form of Muslim identity in their rulers.

As Arakan recovered from the Burman and Mon invasions, the new capital city of Mrauk-U developed and prospered, and the Arakanese Littoral was tied to this royal city through a series of royal campaigns against outlying centers. During this period, the symbols of Arakanese authority became increasingly, though not completely, Islamicized.[181] This process took several reigns to come to fruition. Indeed, the ruler most dependent upon the Bengali sultanate for his position on the throne, Nara-meik-hla, adopted no Muslim title at all.[182] A Muslim mercenary force and the construction of a Muslim mosque in the royal capital were followed by the adoption of Muslim titles and coinage with Persian characters only in 1433. This coinage was followed by coins bearing the *Kalimah*, or Muslim confession of faith, only from 1459, issued by the Arakanese king entitled, appropriately enough, Kalimah Shah, although some coins bearing the

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[181]I am considering, here, regnal titles, coinage inscriptions, and the periodic 'Muslim' royal audiences provided for Muslim traders during the Mrauk-U dynasty.

[182]Ba Tha has tried to make the case that Nara-meik-hla's regnal name, Saw-mon, was Islamic and should be read as Samoon. Tha, "Roewengyas in Arakan," 34. This is unconvincing and, in fact, Saw-mon was a name used by other, clearly non-Muslims in pre-Mrauk-U Arakanese history.

Kalimah may possibly have been issued as early as the 1440s.[183] The act of stamping

coins was one requirement of independent sultan-ship in the Bengal context.[184] Although

portrayed later with Muslim overtones by scholars, this requirement was rooted in the

pre-Islamic past and was inherited from the Buddhist Chandras, whose use of coinage

benefitted them in maritime trade.[185] The coins of the early Mrauk-U dynasty, however,

do confirm the use of Persian and Muslim names and titles by Arakanese rulers from the

mid-fifteenth century. [186]

3.4 Summary

In this chapter, I discuss the process of acculturation and argue that we have to

consider religious influence and change apart from general cultural influence, although they

were not necessarily unrelated. I bifurcate these processes, however, in order to

demonstrate that they were not one and the same. Beyond this, I attempt to demonstrate

that portraying early modern Arakanese kings as Muslim sultans can distort our

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[183]Arthur P. Phayre, The International Numismata Orientalia: Coins of Arakan, of Pegu, and of Burma (London: Trübner & Co., 1882), 1; we have undated coins, which some suggest can be dated to the 1440s, which also bear the *kalimah*, but without dates this can only be considered conjecture. Ibid., 1.

[184]As suggested in the editorial notes of one volume, "[t]he recital of the Khutbah after one's name and the minting of coins, was regarded by Musalman sovereigns as emblems of sovereignty." Salim, Riyazu-Salatin, 6f.

[185]Phayre, International Numismata Orientalia, 2. The exclusivity of coinage to maritime trade states during this period, suggests that these coins were indeed maritime-trade related.

[186]Although the coins indicate Muslim and Persian influence, they coexist with Buddhist and Brahmanic symbols on the same coins. This does not mean that the coins would have been rejected by Muslims. In Bengal, for example, the early Turki Muslim rulers also retained pre-Islamic Brahmanic symbols on their coins, but with the inclusion of the ruler's Muslim name. Ibid., 25.

understanding of what really did occur in the way of religious influence and change in the

Arakan Littoral during the early modern period.

CHAPTER 4

MONKS, TEXTS, AND SECTS:

THE EMERGENCE OF THERAVADA BUDDHISM IN THE ROYAL CENTER AT

MRAUK-U

In previous chapters, I discussed how climate, geography, and migration patterns affected the nature of the state and how this state affected the nature of cultural interaction between Arakan and both Bengal and the Irra-waddy Valley. Although several pieces of evidence seemingly portray the early Mrauk-U kingdom as a Muslim sultanate, when we look at the early Mrauk-U state more closely, what appears to have been religious Islamization was actually the Islamicization of the royal court's political culture. When we look at the early modern Mrauk-U kingdom in this way, the numerous suppositions which scholars have often put forward concerning early modern Arakanese society and its religious identity evaporate. Aside from evidence that points directly to the Islamicization of the political culture of Arakanese rulership (as opposed to religious Islamization), we only find convincing evidence of a significant and permanent Muslim presence in the Arakanese kingdom from the late sixteenth century.[187] In other words, the

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[187]I do not find specific reference in the Arakanese chronicles for Muslims in Arakan until 1571, when "Mussalaman" (Muslims) are enumerated among King Min-palaun's subjects. Mi, "Rakhine Razawin," 160b.

misunderstanding of the Islamicization of the early Mrauk-U state as a religious rather than a political-cultural phenomenon provoked scholarly and popular attribution of substantial religious Islamization in Arakan some two centuries too early. So, what really happened during these two centuries?

The Arakanese court in some ways emulated the symbols of kingship and elite culture of Bengal (which had become Islamicized), but the Arakanese court and elite also interacted in more fundamental ways with the Buddhist world of Sri Lanka and the Irra-waddy Valley. Two developments occurred over the 1430-1630 period. First, Arakanese Buddhists began to look to Sri Lanka rather than to northern India for their religious texts and the source of religious purity. Second, connections and cultural interactions with the Irra-waddy valley strengthened and grew more complex. Finally, I will look at the different roles played by *gama-vasi* and *aranya-vasi* sects and the reasons why the royal court on several occasions, but especially in the early seventeenth century, turned against the *gama-vasi* monks and hindered their expansion in Arakan.

4.1 The Introduction of Buddhism into the Arakan Littoral

In using the concept of 'Theravada Buddhism' for comparative analysis either generally or between Southeast Asian societies we must exercise care. Buddhism in each society has taken on its own character, integrated different local traditions, and evolved according to its own experiences. Buddhism, as it emerged in early modern Arakan, has drawn upon both the Theravada and Mahayana traditions as well as indigenous systems of religious beliefs. Considerable research, for example, demonstrates that premodern

Buddhism in Arakan and Burma included elements and beliefs from both the Mahayanist and Theravadin Buddhist traditions.[188] On the other hand, over the past millennium, but especially since the fifteenth century, the religious cultures of Southeast Asia and Sri Lanka have interacted with each other, borrowed religious texts and monks from each other, and circulated ideas and symbols of Buddhism amongst each other. As a result, in mainland Southeast Asia and Sri Lanka, there is a body of doctrines, texts, popular practices, and emphases that are clearly different from their analogues in East Asian and Tibetan Buddhism. I will view Theravada Buddhism as system of religious beliefs and practices which have come to exist out of the re-invention of Buddhism within local religious frameworks and out of interaction between emerging Buddhist societies in Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia. I will consider the Buddhist practices and beliefs which these religious cultures do not share as local variants in the interpretation or acceptance of Buddhism.

The available sources do not allow us to reconstruct a clear picture of when or how Buddhism entered the Arakan Littoral. The chronicles are not much use for peering into the early centuries of Buddhism in the Arakan Littoral, as they are filled with apocryphal tales and borrow heavily from the traditional Buddhist accounts of Sri Lanka and the Irra-waddy Valley. The chronicles, for example, date the conversion to Buddhism of the population of the Arakan Littoral to the lifetime of the Buddha.[189]

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[188]See Nihar-Ranjan Ray, Sanskrit Buddhism in Burma (Amsterdam: H. J. Paris, 1936); Gutman, "Ancient Arakan;" and Aung-Thwin, Pagan, 36-7.

[189]Gutman, "Ancient Arakan," 326-334.

We do know, however, that Buddhism came to the Arakan Littoral very early; we have Arakanese inscriptions referring to Buddhism from the sixth century. In these centuries, and for centuries afterwards, Buddhism does not seem to have been the dominant religious tradition and, even then, Buddhism in Arakan was not simply Theravadin but was highly heterogenous and may have been more aptly described as Mahayanist. Outside royal centers, the lack of evidence, such as inscriptions, religious architectural remains, or even legends placing Buddhism in rural areas, may mean that spirit cults dominated local religious beliefs throughout much of the Arakan Littoral. Even in the royal centers themselves, there is strong evidence that Buddhism was not only highly heterogeneous,[190] but also that Brahmanism, Hinduism, and royal ancestor cults may have been just as important or more so than Buddhism.[191]

Kings of the Arakan Littoral may have been especially attracted to Buddhism. We already have a large body of work which examines the ways in which kings of Buddhist societies met the expectations and roles placed upon them. Discussion of the relationship between kingship and Buddhism is warranted since kings were the ones who sponsored the Buddhist *sangha*, built the monasteries and pagodas, sent Buddhist missions to Sri Lanka in search of religious texts, and were theoretically empowered to purify the *sasana* (religion).

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[190]Gutman believes that although early Arakan was Mahayanist, Theravadin influence was also present from an early date. Ibid., 24.

[191]San Shwe Bu, "The Coronation of King Datha-Raja (1153-1165 A.D.)," Journal of the Burma Research Society 7 (1917): 181; and Gutman, "Ancient Arakan," 185.

In the realm of personal life, kings and court elites faced the same kinds of natural threats, loss of loved ones to disease, had reason to fear disease themselves, and so on, as the general populace.[192] As we know from the Irra-waddy Valley during the same period, Buddhist monks were called to cure royal illnesses.[193] But kings also faced special threats connected with their unique responsibilities in their societies. Unhappy subjects often led to the usurpation of the throne and the murder of the man on the throne.[194] Some of Weber's observations as to the advantages of religions with a priesthood, such as Buddhism, as opposed to local spirit cults, may help to explain why insecure kings looked beyond local spirit cults in favor of new religious systems. Weber suggested, for example, that an important difference between universalist and local religions (which he terms magic) is that universalist religions shift blame for things that go wrong from the manipulator of the spirits to the commitment of the lay community or the priesthood. In other words, in local religions of the pre-universalist stage, the local person of power was not only the secular head of the community, but he or she also had spiritual functions and responsibilities. The success or failure of these functions in achieving their expected

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[192]In 1556, Min-deikka, for example, died of smallpox. In 1470, when his daughter died, the king, Kalama Shah, made a great donation to the Buddhist *sangha*. Likewise, in 1519, when King Min-raza's daughter died, the king constructed a religious edifice "for the princess' good merit." In 1742, King Mettarit, died from disease. See Mi, "Rakhine Razawin," 137a, 142b, 156b, 222a.

[193]Than Tun, "Mahakassapa and his Tradition," in Than Tun, Essays on the History and Buddhism of Burma, Paul Strachan, ed. (Whiting Bay, Scotland: Kiscadale Pub., 1988), 99.

[194]Numerous early Mrauk-U kings met this fate. In 1494, Min-ranaun was beheaded in a rebellion led by his uncle, Salinga-thu. Salinga-thu was in turn murdered in 1499. In 1523, Min-raza was dethroned by his own court after the Sak succeeded in seizing the royal capital and laying waste to the kingdom. In 1571, King Sekka-wadei was also dethroned and killed. Mi, "Rakhine Razawin," 141b, 142a, 143b-144b, 160a.

result, such as better rainfall, prevention of disasters, or success in war, was tied directly to the practitioner of these functions (i.e. the local leader-cum shaman). In short, when things went badly for the community, the local leader was blamed and perhaps punished or replaced. Weber suggests that the opposite is true in Buddhism and other universal religions: in universal religions, blame for things going badly could be placed onto the lay community (which was not devoted enough).[195] Thus, Weber stresses the security of rulership as one enticement for royal adoption of a universal religion. This advantage was limited, however, for it is also clear that in Buddhist Southeast Asian societies, the ruler was still held accountable when things went badly.

Explicitly royal connections with Buddhism were made in the development of the Maha-muni cult. The Maha-muni tradition which underlay this cult held that the Buddha personally came to Arakan during his own lifetime (as opposed to a miraculous reappearance sometime after he achieved *parinnibanna*). The Arakanese king who greeted him cast a golden figure in the Buddha's exact image. Thereupon, the Buddha breathed life into the image, called him his younger brother, and told him to remain in Arakan to make himself accessible to the faithful during the five thousand years of the *sasana* which would follow.[196] This tradition also tied the Buddha image directly to the king: for it claims that the Buddha image would talk only to the king.

As Gutman has explained, the Maha-muni cult was originally Mahayanist.

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[195]Weber, Economy and Society, 1:427-428.

[196]Gutman provides the full account of this tradition in Gutman, "Ancient Arakan," 326-334.

Originally known as the *Hpara-kri* (great lord) at least up to the mid-seventeenth century, the image represented the Boddhisattva Amitaba. Worship of the image was said to prevent evil things from occurring and through devotion to the image one might be reborn in the Western Paradise. The image's identity, however, eventually changed (and retroactively changed in the chronicles), probably from the seventeenth century, first to that of Maitreya and then to that of Gautama Buddha, hence Maha-muni ("great teacher"). Pilgrimages from the royal city to this image were made easier by the roads which were constructed specifically to connect the Maha-muni shrine to the royal city.[197]

In the sixteenth century, Buddhist monks taught the king and court elites that Buddhism, perhaps in association with the Maha-muni image, could provide more powerful help than other gods in fending off threats and dangers. Buddhist monks taught the king, for example, that while other gods recognized and accepted the Buddha, they were not brave enough to resist the same natural forces that the Buddha could contain:

> At that time there suddenly appeared a golden temple, containing a chair of wrought gold; and the height of the temple was thirty cubits, upon which Brahma alighted, and held a canopy over the head of Sacya [Sakya-muni]; at the same time Indra descended, with a large fan in his hand, and Naga, the Raja of serpents, with shoes in his hand, together with the four tutelar deities of the four corners of the universe; who all attended to do him service and reverence. At this time likewise the chief of the Asurs [demons] with his forces arrived, riding on an elephant, to give battle to Sacya; upon which Brahma, Indra, and the other deities deserted him and vanished. Sacya, observing that he was left, invoked the assistance of the earth; who, attending at his summons, brought an inundation over all the ground, whereby

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[197]Ibid., 184, 336.

the Asur and his forces were vanquished and compelled to retire.[198]

Despite the additional protective powers offered by Buddhism, Arakanese kings did not abandon all their traditional rites of protection from the environment. Worship of local spirits and the belief in their control over natural forces continued to be associated with the central ruler. In the elite Arakanese view of the cosmos, for example, the Buddha was associated with what appears to be an earth goddess, called Wunti Nat. As indicated in the inscription I quoted above, the Buddha's powers to prevent enemies and to control the waters of the earth stemmed from his connections to the earth goddess, who was likely Wunti nat. Throughout the early Mrauk-U period, Arakanese kings made donations to and maintained the shrine of Wunti nat on a hill close to the royal capital. In case of great danger the Arakanese king personally performed rites at the shrine, which are supposed to have had dramatic results. When the Burmese under King Bayín-naun (r. 1551-1581) prepared to attack Arakan, for example, the Arakanese king personally called upon Wunti nat to save his kingdom. According to Arakanese traditions, as a result of the royal plea to Wunti nat, Bayín-naun died when Wunti nat crept into his palace while he slept and murdered him.[199]

Other, pre-Buddhist forms of protection associated with the kingship also continued to function as well. An eighteenth century royal bell, for example, was hung in the Arakanese capital as a means to destroy neighboring peoples when a troublesome

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[198]Arakanese inscription found near Chittagong, date 1542, in John Shore, "The Translation of an Inscription in the Maga Language," Asiatick Researches 2 (1801): 386.

[199]San Shwe Bu, "Wunti Nat," Journal of the Burma Research Society 9 (1919): 53.

situation might occur.[200] The Arakanese believed that Nga Kuthala's successful seizure of the throne in 1638 only occurred after he and the reigning ruler, King Thiri-thu-dhamma-raza, had waged a contest of magic, a contest which the king lost and died as a result.[201]

During the 1430-1630 period, Buddhism thrived in the Arakanese royal city and probably in many of the chief towns of the Arakan Littoral, such as San-twei. It is only for this period, however, that our sources become sufficiently numerous and reliable to suggest reliable scenarios for religious change or conversion. Since Buddhism had already made a place for itself in the royal capital, we cannot talk about conversion *per se* of the urban populace to Buddhism. I can only assert that for a variety of possible reasons, Buddhism had taken root in the major population centers of the Arakan Littoral and especially in the royal court. Beyond this, however, I shall discuss the interaction of Arakanese Buddhism with Sri Lankan and Irra-waddy Valley Buddhism from the early fifteenth century.

4.2 Arakanese Buddhist Interaction with Sri Lanka and the Irra-waddy Valley

From the Laun-kret period, but especially during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, Theravada Buddhism steadily influenced the Mrauk-U court and elite. This religious influence came via two main routes. First, Theravada Buddhist texts and ideas came from maritime connections between Arakan and Sri Lanka. Second, similar texts and

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[200]Forchhammer, Report, 10-12.

[201]Maurice Collis, "The Strange Murder of King Thiri-thudhamma," Journal of the Burma Research Society 13 (1923): 236-243.

ideas, as well as monks and Buddhist lay communities, came to Arakan from the Irra-

waddy Valley over the Arakan Roma or around Pagoda Point. Since religious influence

from Sri Lanka also informed the Buddhism of the Irra-waddy Valley, the Buddhist

influence coming to Arakan by both routes was strongly Theravadin. In this section, I will

argue that the 1430-1630 period brought Arakanese Buddhism closer to those beliefs

associated with Sri Lankan Theravada Buddhism. I will look first at Arakanese religious

interactions with Sri Lanka via the sea route, and then discuss Arakanese interactions with

the Irra-waddy Valley.

4.2.1 Maritime Connections

From the early fifteenth century, Southeast Asia as a whole experienced a general

expansion of maritime trade.[202] As a result, various parts of Southeast Asia and other

Indian Ocean ports became intertwined in a mesh of maritime connections. Along these

routes, ideas and proselytizers accompanied merchants and goods. This development

enhanced Sri Lanka's influence in Arakan during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

The rulers of many fifteenth century mainland Southeast Asian kingdoms in the

fifteenth century turned to Sri Lankan-defined Theravada Buddhist orthodoxy. This

phenomenon has been examined by Atsuko Naono. Naono argues that an increase in

fifteenth century maritime and domestic trade increased the resources available to

mainland Southeast Asian rulers of the period, and some of them became powerful enough

to unify the various competing and mutually antagonistic Buddhist sects throughout their

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[202]Reid, Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce, 2:10-16.

kingdoms.[203] To do so, Naono continues, these rulers patronized the sect they believed to be the most pure. Some monastic sects who received ordination in Sri Lanka advertised the superior purity of Sri Lankan-derived Theravada Buddhism as a means to undermine the credibility of rival (and already established) sects.[204] By the end of the fifteenth century, Naono explains, Sri Lanka-ordained monks and replicas of the Mahabodhi temple in northern India were both appearing in various new and expanding kingdoms in central and western mainland Southeast Asia.[205]

A similar process likely occurred in fifteenth century Arakan as well. As I have explained elsewhere, the early Mrauk-U kingdom experienced unprecedented expansion from its establishment in the 1430s. This expansion seems to have fed off resources derived from maritime trade.[206] As I explained in the third chapter, ideas, items, and people from abroad were gaining high status in the Arakanese court, as exemplified by the court's emulation of the Bengali/Muslim model of rulership. A related trend involved the high status attributed by the court to Buddhist texts and monks associated with Sri Lanka during this period. This view is substantiated by Catherine Raymond's study, based upon chronicle accounts and art historical evidence, which clearly indicates the significant

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[203]Atsuko Naono, "The Buddhist Kings of Chiengmai and Pegu, The Purification of the Sangha, and the Mahabodhi Replicas in the Late Fifteenth Century" (M. A. thesis, University of Michigan, 1996), 47-49.

[204]Naono, "Buddhist Kings of Chiengmai and Pegu," 18.

[205]Ibid., 49-55, 63.

[206]Charney, "Rise of a Mainland Trading State," 4-11.

religious interaction between Sri Lanka and Arakan during the fifteenth and sixteenth

centuries.[207] From the thirteenth century, according to the indigenous sources,

Arakanese kings sent a series of religious missions to Sri Lanka, the center of the

Theravada Buddhist tradition. The founder of Laun-kret, Alau-ma-pru, dispatched the

first reliably-recorded Arakanese religious mission to Sri Lanka, consisting of twelve

Arakanese monks, in the mid-thirteenth century.[208] According to one Arakanese

chronicle, Alau-ma-pru sponsored this mission for the specific purpose of studying the

Buddhist texts of Sri Lanka.[209] After this brief episode, we hear little of Sri Lankan-

Arakanese interaction of any sort until the Mrauk-U period.[210] Raymond suggests that

the second Mrauk-U sovereign Min-khari (Ali Khan) dispatched the first Mrauk-U

period mission to Sri Lanka in 1439 in order to provide Buddhist religious legitimation for

the new Mrauk-U kingdom (which was inaugurated with the construction of the town of

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[207]Catherine Raymond, "Étude des Relations Religieuses Entre le Sri Lanka et l'Arakan du XIIc au XVIIIc Siècle: Documentation Historique et Èvidences Archèologiques," Journal Asiatique 283 (1995): 469-501.

[208]Catherine Raymond says that this event was recorded in an inscription found in Laun-kret and dated to 1256. Raymond does not provide a bibliographic reference, or any indication of which collection this inscription might be in. As I have not seen this inscription personally, and am currently unable to locate it, I tentatively accept Raymond's claim. Raymond, "Relations Religieuses," 478.

[209]"Rakhine Min Raza-kri Arei-taw Sadan," 24b.

[210]"Rakhine Min Raza-kri Arei-taw Sadan," claims that Min-di also sent a mission to Sri Lanka in pursuit of Buddhist religious texts. "Rakhine Min Raza-kri Arei-taw Sadan," 24b. This is far too early a period to rely on this source, however, and it is generally the case that almost anything associated with 'good kingship' during the Laun-kret period is associated with Min-di. To justify Min-di's extensive 'exploits,' Arakanese chronicles often attribute to Min-di a reign of over one hundred years.

Mrauk-U, it is said, in 1433).[211]

Raymond, who has provided the best analysis yet of Arakanese-Sri Lankan relations prior to and during the Mrauk-U period, indicates that the acquisition of Pali Buddhist texts was the chief goal of Arakanese missions to Sri Lanka during the Mrauk-U period. The Arakanese mission acquired Sri Lankan-derived copies of the Tipitika (or the "three baskets," the Theravada Buddhist Canon) in the 1439 mission to Sri Lanka. As Raymond explains, the Arakanese king treasured these texts and placed them, for reference by monks of the *sangha*, in a new library he had built at the Maha-muni shrine complex.[212] In 1475-6, the mission dispatched by Ba-saw-pru brought another copy of the Tipitika to the Arakanese court from Sri Lanka.[213] The king constructed a library to house these texts in Mrauk-U, as opposed to the Maha-muni shrine, perhaps stressing the association between Sri Lanka and the Arakanese central kingship. In 1591, Min-palaun established another library in Mrauk-U for Sri Lankan-derived texts. The last of the early Mrauk-U missions to Sri Lanka seems to have occurred in 1596 during the reign of Min-raza-kri.[214] This ruler also constructed a special library, the "pitaka-taik," in

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[211]Raymond, "Relations Religieuses," 479. Raymond is following here the extracts of the text, Sappadanapakarama, as provided by Forchhammer in his 1892 report.

[212]Raymond, "Relations Religieuses," 479; and Forchhammer, Report, 6.

[213]Mi, "Rakhine Razawin," 137a; and Raymond, "Relations Religieuses," 479.

[214]Raymond, "Relations Religieuses," 480-81.

Mrauk-U to house newly-acquired Buddhist texts from Sri Lanka.[215]

There is additional evidence of Arakanese-Sri Lankan interaction during these two

centuries. Catherine Raymond has looked at the bronze-cast Buddhas in Arakan prior to

and during the Mrauk-U period and suggests that these bronze images are stylistically Sri

Lankan.[216] Raymond dates these bronzes variously between the twelfth and eighteenth

centuries, confirming, as she argues, chronicle accounts of religious interaction between

Arakan and Sri Lanka.[217]

4.2.2 Trans-Roma Connections

Connections and cultural interactions with the Irra-waddy valley became stronger

during the 1430-1630 period. After a hiatus of several decades in the early fifteenth

century, cultural and religious exchange between the Arakan Littoral and the Irra-waddy

valley resumed. I will argue that this exchange also encouraged Theravada Buddhism in

Arakan.

In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, the Arakan Littoral probably saw

increased trade with the Irra-waddy Valley. It is easy to suggest, however, the existence

of close connections between the Irra-waddy valley and the Arakan Littoral during the

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[215]As Forchhammer explains: "the Buddhist scriptures, commentaries and scholia, which Narapati-kri had received from Ceylon were deposited in this receptacle." Forchhammer, Report, 31.

[216]As Raymond explains: "Parmi ces bronzes, neuf d'entre eux sont d'un tout autre style . . . Ils diffèrent totalement de l'iconographie birmane ou arakanaise mais possèdent en revanche de nombreuses analogies avec un certain type de bronzes cinghalais." Raymond, "Relations Religieuses," 488.

[217]Raymond, "Relations Religieuses," 491.

1430-1630 period, but this suggestion is difficult, though not impossible, to demonstrate. European source materials from these centuries indicate that not only early European visitors to Southeast Asia, but also the local traders from whom they gathered information for early reports, believed (incorrectly) that Ava (the chief town and royal capital of Upper Burma) was located in Arakan.[218] Since these assumptions came from observers keen on identifying trade routes and items of commerce, this association of Ava with Arakan may suggest that some of Ava's commerce passed through Arakanese ports, which was likely the case for some of Ava's precious stone exports.[219]

Although it is always best to be wary of external accounts of indigenous developments, an analysis of several key pieces of contemporaneous evidence found in the Irra-waddy valley is helpful. We have two pieces of evidence from the Burman court of Ava -- an Avan inscription from 1456 (referring to a meeting in 1442 between the kings of Ava and Arakan) and an Avan *parabeik* dated 1603 -- which together illustrate the change in Burman perceptions of Arakanese kingship from the 1440s to the first decade of the seventeenth century. The inscription of 1456, referring to 1442, for example, describes the Arakanese king thusly:

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[218]See, for example, Tomé Pires, The Suma Oriental of Tomé Pires: An Account of the East, From the Red Sea to Japan, Written in Malacca and India in 1512-1515, translated by Armando Cortesão (London: Hakluyt Society, 1944), 1:111.

[219]As Tome Pires explained in 1515: "They say that in Burma is the mine for the precious stones that go from there to the city of Ava, which is in Arakan . . ." Ibid., 1:111. Pires specifically identified a mountain range known as Capelanguam as the original source of the rubies and that from there they went directly to Ava. Although at one point Pires seems to imply that the rubies went from Ava to Pegu (p. 1:96), a letter sent by Pires to King Manuel in 1516 suggested the rubies reached both Arakan and Pegu, and that in both of the latter kingdoms there were "great craftsmen for polishing them." See "Letter of Tome Pires to King Manuel," from Cochin, 27 January 1516, in ibid., 2:516.

The Rakhine [Arakanese] lord who is *descended* from the Panthi [Muslim] kings who are named Gazzapati and Athabati, who rules over the Theks, Mrons, and Chins whom the past great kings of Pagan ordered to wage war in Mazzima-desa.[220]

Although the above, whether in 1442 or 1456, suggests that the Arakanese lord was a descendant of the Muslim rulers of India, the Burman royal description of 1603, viewed the rulers of Arakan quite differently. As this description, found in a *parabeik*, describes the Arakanese king:

The Rakhine [Arakanese] bayin, Lord of the White Elephant, who has soldiers who number hundreds of thousands, who became adversary to the kings Narapati, Gazabati, and Athabadi who lived in the region of Mazzimadesa . . .[221]

The key characteristic of the Arakanese king worthy of note by the Burmese recorders, then, changed over the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. At first, the Burmans saw the Arakanese king as a descendant of the Muslim rulers of India. Later, the Burmans saw him as the "Lord of the White Elephant," a Buddhist status title, and enemy of the Muslim rulers of northern India. With a little imagination, it might even be suggested that from a Burmese point-of-view, the Arakanese king had left the 'family' of the Indian Muslim rulers and joined the 'family' of Buddhist kings.

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[220]The Burmese text from the inscription for this quotation is: " မရှိမဒေသ အရပိနှိုက်ရှေ့ကပုက်မင်ကြီတို့ဝစဝိထိုဝိလေဝစေသည် သက်မြုန့်ချင်ကိုဝ အစိုဝိရသောကဇ္ဇပတိ အသာပတိ မည်သာပန်သောမင်တိုဝိ၏၊ အမျိုဝိအန္တ္တ ဖွစ်သော ရခိုင်မင်သည် . . . " <u>She Haung Myanma Kyauksa Mya</u> (Rangoon: Department of Archaeology, Government of Burma, 1987), 5:35-36. The italics in the translation are mine.

[221]The Burmese text for this *parabeik* is: "မရှိမထိုက်နှိုက်ဖြစ်သော၊ အသာပတိ၊ ဂဇပတိ၊ နရပတိမင်းတို့ကို၊ ရန်ဘက်ပြုသောအသိန်း မကသောစစိသည်ရှိသော၊ ရခိုင်ဘုရင်ဆင်ဖြူရှင် သည်၊ . . ." "Parabeik number 30," [unpublished bark parabeik] AMs, 1603, p. 1, Henry Burney Parabeiks Collection, Oriental and India Office Collection, British Library, London, Great Britain.

Burmese perceptions of the Arakanese kings aside, the comparison of these two Burmese sources may indicate developments occurring within Arakan during the intervening centuries. On the one hand, a comparison of these two sources may indicate changes in the ways in which Arakanese rulers during this period portrayed themselves and their cultural affinities to their Buddhist neighbors in the Irra-waddy valley. On the other hand, the transition may indicate that political, cultural, and religious interaction between the Arakan Littoral and the Irra-waddy valley heightened gradually over the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, making the authors of the Burman inscriptions and *parabeiks* more familiar with the nature of Arakanese kingship. I suggest that both processes are at work here. Thus, I view the fifteenth and sixteenth century relationship between the Arakan Littoral and the Irra-waddy valley as one of political, cultural, and religious changes and changed perceptions. Although the Arakan Littoral and the Irra-waddy Valley likely exchanged monastic missions, we have no sources that explicitly make this assertion. For the time being, I will have to rely upon an examination of the kinds of evidence which are available.

During the 1430-1630 period, political interactions were frequent between the kingdom of Arakan and the Irra-waddy Valley kingdoms. As was standard political behavior for meetings between kings, regalia were exchanged.[222] Although the Arakanese kings had long looked to the west for symbols of kingship, they increasingly cast an eye towards the resurgent kingdoms and courts of Lower Burma in the mid- to late-sixteenth

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[222]In 1480, for example, in the meeting between the king of Prome and Kalama-shah, the two kings exchanged regalia. See Mi, "Rakhine Razawin," 138a.

century. The Arakanese rulers were especially impressed by the First Toungoo Dynasty, which, under a short series of energetic rulers backed by maritime revenues and firearms, had brought much of mainland Southeast Asia under their control.[223] According to the Arakanese chronicles, the Arakanese king, Min-ba-kri, having heard about the conquests of Tabin-shwei-hti, the founder of the First Toungoo Dynasty, immediately began a major reconstruction and fortification of Mrauk-U.[224] In the mid- to late-sixteenth century, Arakanese rulers also sought out Irra-waddy Valley queens, especially those descended from the First Toungoo ruling house, for their status.[225]

Arakanese rulers' attempts to gain possession of specifically Buddhist texts and Buddhist monks, however, provides reliable evidence of Arakanese royal interest in Buddhist religious paraphernalia. Of course, these could also be seen as status objects or even objects which themselves possessed charismatic power or soul-stuff. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, for example, Arakanese campaigns against Irra-waddy valley kingdoms, especially First Toungoo Burma, were begun specifically to acquire such objects. But I suggest here that the status objects which Arakanese rulers found

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[223]This is discussed in-depth in Victor B. Lieberman, "Europeans, Trade, and the Unification of Burma, c. 1540-1620," Oriens Extremus 27 (1980): 203-226.

[224]Mi, "Rakhine Razawin," 147b-148a.

[225]Atsuko Naono, "Arakan and Burma During the First Toungoo Dynastic Period: An Analysis of the Direction of Cultural Interactions," a paper delivered at the International Conference of Asian Studies, Leiden, The Netherlands, 28 June 1998, p. 9-11; The ko-ran-kri, Dhamma-thaw-ka, for example, brought to the Arakanese court the first in a series of Irra-waddy valley queens in 1538, as the sister of the Bayin of Prei (Prome). "Rakhine Min Raza-kri Arei-taw Sadan," 15a; the most famous of these queens was the daughter of Bayin-naun, Shin Twe-hnaun, who was part of the war booty brought back to Arakan from the campaign into Lower Burma in 1598-99. Ibid., 21a.

meaningful were steadily characterized as Buddhist. Non-violent political interaction between Arakan and Irra-waddy Valley kingdoms, for example, also gradually included clearly Buddhist symbols. Whether or not Arakanese rulers viewed these status objects as meaningful specifically because these were 'Buddhist' objects is anyone's guess. Even if Arakanese rulers did not view these objects as 'Buddhist' *per se*, however, the acquisition of Irra-waddy Valley Buddhist monks, Buddhist texts, and the Buddhicization of status objects brought Irra-waddy Valley-defined Buddhism directly into the Arakanese royal city and especially into the Arakanese royal court.

The most basic texts of the Theravadin Buddhist canon together form the Tipitika. In 1480, the Arakanese ruler Ba-saw-pru met the king of Ava in the Arakan Roma. There, the two kings took an oath "on the relics and the Peedagait (Tipitika) scriptures."[226] The Arakanese were especially interested in obtaining Buddhist texts from Pegu in 1599, which they brought back to Arakan after their successful campaign against the city.[227]

Perhaps because of personal religious devotion, the *ko-ran-kri* seems to have played a significant role in preserving and circulating the Buddhist texts taken from Pegu. These were chiefly the basic texts of the Pali canon: the five works of the *vinayas*, the three works of the *suttas*, and the seven works of the *abidhamma*.[228] The *ko-ran-kri* had these texts collected and took steps to preserve them. Afterward, he ordered them

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[226]"Extrait d'une Chronique Arakanaise," 1.

[227]"Rakhine Min Raza-kri Arei-taw Sadan," 36b.

[228]Ibid.

replicated, so that there would be about a thousand copies for the people. We are also told that the *ko-ran-krì* took personal interest in looking out for the Wamma-sami monk (an unclear reference) and the *sasana*.[229]

But more than the texts themselves, the Arakanese also sought out Lower Burmese monks with noted skill in reading them, such as the monk Shin-pittakatra, who had a special skill and training "in the literary classics."[230] The victorious Arakanese king also sought out Buddhist monks generally, in order to bring them back to Arakan as part of the loot from this campaign.[231]

4.3 The Troubled *Sangha*: Tensions Between *Gama-vasi* and *Aranya-vasi* Sects

As I have explained, Buddhism offered certain advantages to the throne. Further, over the 1430-1630 period, contacts with Sri Lanka and Burma led to the gradual emergence in Arakan of the kind of Buddhism we today term Theravadin. But Buddhism was also influential in the royal city for other reasons. As an organized 'priestly' religion, it developed an institutional basis of its own, the *sangha* and its monastic establishments, in Arakan probably many centuries prior to the period under examination here. In any event, as an institution it both influenced and was influenced by the royal court and Arakan's ruling elites. An understanding of the Arakanese *sangha* is thus necessary for

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[229]Ibid.

[230]Kalà, Maha-ya-zawin-kyi, 3:85.

[231]Naono, "Arakan and Burma During the First Toungoo Dynastic Period," 11; and Kalà, Maha-ya-zawin-kyi, 3:85.

understanding important aspects of the emergence of Theravada Buddhism as an Arakanese identity in later periods.

Historically, the *sangha* has been vulnerable to sectarian cleavages on the basis of what one or another group of monks feels is the correct interpretation of, often seemingly minute, details of the *vinaya*. The eighteenth and nineteenth century *sangha* in the Irrawaddy Valley was sharply divided over the issue of whether the monk's robe should be thrown over one shoulder or both. Of course, other disputes were based on more significant aspects of Buddhism, such as the controversy over whether meditation of the Dharma could be achieved while remaining in towns and villages (*gama-vasi*) or required living apart from the world, in the forest (*aranya-vasi*). This controversy pitted monastic sects against each other, often to violent ends. Further, this question was also relevant to the kingship, since it involved issues regarding alienation of land (*sangha* land was tax-free) and competition for authority in the kingdom. As I will explain in this section, the dispute between *gama-vasi* and *aranya-vasi* monks played an important role in determining access to, and influence from, Buddhism amongst the Arakanese.

4.3.1 *Gama-vasi* Monks

Gama-vasi monks lived in close proximity with the people in towns and villages. *Gama-vasi* monks enjoyed royal and popular patronage, and many also possessed *glebe* lands which supplied them with food and their other material needs.

In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, *gama-vasi* monks played an important role in introducing the Arakanese to Buddhism. Since the *gama-vasi* monks did not see a

contradiction in learning and living amongst the general population and because their dependence upon popular patronage encouraged them to form community bonds, *gama-vasi* monks opened monastic schools to young men in the towns and probably the villages as well. These monastic schools offered instruction in various, and not necessarily theological, topics.[232] Education in schools in the royal city probably affected the Mrauk-U elite in several ways. First, the association between elites and Buddhism in this way probably enhanced the status of *gama-vasi* monks and Buddhism in the eyes of the general populace. Second, the traditional relationship between student and teacher placed monks in the highly esteemed and respected position of *hsaya* (teacher). In Arakanese and Burmese culture, the relationship between student and teacher transcends the period of education and remains a life-long relationship. I conjecture that this relationship helped increase not only respect for Buddhism, but also the status of Buddhism. As one account, probably written by a forest-dwelling monk, complained in the late sixteenth century, the *bwei-kyauns* in some periods turned everyone into a follower of the *gama-vasi* way: the king, the ministers and commanders, and the country people. During the 1430-1630 period, then, a large but uncertain portion of the Mrauk-U elite were educated in Buddhist monastic schools.

The success of *gama-vasi* sects often made them threats to the king. Smaller monasteries, for example, might be completely dependent upon popular donations for

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[232]The espoused purpose was not the proselytization of Buddhism *per se*, but rather the education of male children in literature and good manners (*buenas costumbres*). Sebastião Manrique, Itinerario de Sebastião Manrique, Luis Silveira, ed. (Lisboa: Agência Geral das Colónias, Divisão de Publicaçoes e Biblioteca, 1946), 1:194.

their sustenance. But larger monasteries would also need some tax-free land, in addition to lay donations, to sustain their monks.[233] As *gama-vasi* sects grew into larger monastic establishments, they likewise accumulated both wealth and *glebe* lands which were alienated from the royal tax-base. Especially influential and wealthy *gama-vasi* monastic establishments also had the popular support and the wealth necessary to circumvent or to pressure royal authority when the *gama-vasi* monastic establishments perceived a threat to their interests. Further, owing to the *aranya-vasi* restrictions on living among the laity, usually only *gama-vasi* monks could practically be appointed as the *maha-sangha-raja*,[234] the ecclesiastical head of the *sangha* in the kingdom. Although this position seems to have been intended to centralize royal influence over the *sangha*, the *maha-sangha-raja* could accumulate immense authority over both the court and the kingdom and was venerated above the king in court ceremony. Kings with adequate prestige and authority could reduce the size of *gama-vasi* sects by claiming that they were impure or disordered. The king's ministers would then interrogate monks of the 'impure' or 'disordered' sect to identify false or 'bad' monks and then de-frock them.

Min-ba-kri, arguably one of the earliest of the truly powerful Arakanese rulers, undertook such a purging of the *gama-vasi* after he returned from his campaign in Banga in the 1530s. After defrocking supposedly twelve thousand *gama-vasi* monks, he put these "bogus monks" into the elephant and horse herds, at the entrances of the royal city

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[233]Ibid., 128.

[234]On the problems of *aranya-vasi* monks accepting "official honors or . . . becom[ing] royal preceptors," see Mendelson, Sangha and State in Burma, 78.

(as guards?), and as groups of farm laborers in the royal fields.[235] Finally, Min-ba-kri

tried to enhance royal influence over the *sangha* by establishing a *maha-sangha-raja* who

would remain in the royal city as ecclesiastical head of the *sangha*. Min-ba-kri also

attempted to tie the Buddhist *sangha* together with the royal Maha-muni cult by having

numerous images of the Maha-muni image made and spread throughout Arakan,

particularly in the Hlain-kaun-kri pagoda (also known as the Shitthaung pagoda).[236] This

pagoda, which Min-ba-kri erected in the center of the royal city, became the central

Buddhist temple in the Arakanese kingdom. The Hlain-kaun-kri was characterized by

narrow passages that wind crookedly throughout the pagoda, the walls lined with 84,000

images of the future Buddhas.[237] Over time, the pagoda's popular name reflected this

number, in the simplified "Shitthaung-para" ("80,000 Buddhas"). More importantly, there

are indications that the Hlain-kaun-kri pagoda's function was three-fold: (1) as the central

royal Buddhist temple, where Arakanese kings were crowned, it connected the Buddhist

temples throughout the kingdom to the royal city and the central ruler,[238] (2) as the

temple associated with the residence of the *maha-sangha-raja*, it served as a center-point

of the *sangha* throughout the kingdom, and (3) as the pagoda in which the remains of

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[235]"Rakhine Min Raza-kri Arei-taw Sadan," 36a.

[236]Gutman, "Ancient Arakan," 336.

[237]Mi, "Rakhine Razawin," 151a.

[238]San Baw U, "My Rambles Among the Ruins of the Golden City of Myauk-U: Chapter VI," Journal of the Burma Research Society 16 (1926): 41.

Arakanese kings were interred, it became an ancestor temple, tying the royal family directly with the Buddhist center in the kingdom.[239]

The *sasana* reform directed against *gama-vasi* orders may have been due in part to the constant need by the kingship to limit the growth of *gama-vasi* monasteries so that these monasteries would not require extensive *glebe* lands (which drew land out of the royal tax-base). Further, we know from the case of land donated to teaching monks in Burma, that when an adequate successor could not be found when that monk died, the land could be resold by the original donor:[240] certainly smaller monasteries encouraged the likelihood of such an event more than did larger monasteries. In any case, since *gama-vasi* monks were dependent upon such popular patronage, they were extremely protective of their position in society and were known to have prevented Catholic missionaries, and probably other religious proselytizers from entering 'their' villages.[241]

4.3.2 *Aranya-vasi* Monks

The *aranya-vasi* monks, the 'forest-dwellers,' sought escape from urban centers and the domain of everyday human life. To find religious purity and practice effective meditation in isolated areas, they set up monasteries on the fringe of human habitation or

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[239]Kawi-thara, "Rakhine Arei-taw-poun," 66a; The royal remains were individually interred in stone tombs on the terraces. See description in San Baw U, "My Rambles Among the Ruins of the Golden City of Myauk-U: Chapter VI," 37.

[240]Mendelson, Sangha and State in Burma, 128.

[241]Manrique, Itinerario, 1:254.

in the forests, hence the terminology 'forest-dwellers."[242] At the same time, however, *Aranya-vasi* monks did not have to go too far from populated areas (a specific distance, such as five hundred *ta* [or two thousand cubits], was usually prescribed by the order),[243] and many existed on the fringes of towns and villages. Although their contact with the laity was not as intimate as that experienced by *gama-vasi* monks, *aranya-vasi* monks were respected by the laity as holy men, just as were other ascetics.

Aranya-vasi monks presented several benefits for central authority. As monks who, ideally, lived apart from society and strove to follow the *vinaya* as closely as possible (that is they tried to focus upon their meditation drawing them further and further away from interaction with the secular world), *aranya-vasi* monks were potentially appealing to kings: theoretically, the more 'worldly' an order became, the more land and power it accumulated and "thereby . . . interfere[d] in politics."[244] Despite the *aranya-vasi* monk's disavowal of materialism, Than Tun has made a convincing argument that forest-dwelling monk sects in the Irra-waddy Valley accumulated considerable wealth, property, and influence in the late Pagan and Avan kingdoms.[245] Even so,

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[242]Tun, "Mahakassapa and his Tradition," 85.

[243]Dr. Victor Lieberman, personal communication, January, 1999. In the case of the Zeta-wun monastery in the early seventeenth century, the prescribed distance was five hundred *ta* (roughly two thousand cubits). The monastery was thus built that distance to the east of the royal city. See "Rakhine Min Raza-kri Arei-taw Sadan," 33a.

[244]Mendelson, Sangha and State in Burma, 64.

[245]Than Tun explains that references to the *aranya-vasi* order do not emerge until an inscription from 1247 and were still active after 1500. As he also explains, these *aranya-vasi* monks "lived in great monastic establishments [and] owned vast estates . . . " Tun, "Mahakassapa and his Tradition," 86, 100.

according to Than Tun, *aranya-vasi* monks offered some agricultural and economic benefits to Irra-waddy kingdoms.[246]

The *aranya-vasi* monks in Arakan also seem to have been more influenced by the Mahayanist Boddhisattva ethic. These monks encouraged Arakanese kings to become ascetics, whose meditation would help the entire kingdom along the path to salvation. Min-ba-kri's Hlain-kaun-kri pagoda, for example, included images of Min-ba-kri in the meditation posture. The *aranya-vasi* interpretation of the *vinaya* could be seen as more favorable to the emergence of a royal cult emphasizing the king as a savior, as opposed to the devolution of agency in salvation (whereby one's level of merit largely depended upon one's own efforts) according to the *gama-vasi* monks. In short, the Arakanese *aranya-vasi* view elevated the religious importance of the king and this may have been one of the appeals of the *aranya-vasi* monks for Arakanese rulers.

4.3.3 Min-raza-kri and *Sasana* "Reform"

The *gama-vasi* and the *aranya-vasi* monks interacted with other Arakanese in different ways. First, the *gama-vasi* and *aranya-vasi* monks presented different kinds of

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Likewise, we also know from Tun's study that "seclusion" from the human world and strict observance of *vinaya* were not always the same: Than Tun explains that forest-dwelling monks presided over great feasts involving the eating of meat and the drinking of mass quantities of alcohol, which both clearly deviate from the monastic code embodied in the *vinaya*. Ibid., 86-87.

[246]As forest-dwellers, the *aranya-vasi* monks often opened up new lands (although with increasing wealth, they began purchasing land as well). The *aranya-vasi* monastic orders funneled some of the produce from their estates into the domestic economy through lay officials hired by the monastery to conduct their business. Tun, "Mahakassapa and his Tradition," 86, 87, 94. But the *aranya-vasi* monks lacked much of the popular patronage that *gama-vasi* monks enjoyed, and thus they were often the most adamant at gaining royal patronage. This was especially true since *aranya-vasi* lands were not above reclamation by the king when the evidence for *aranya-vasi* monastic ownership was weak. Ibid., 94-5.

challenges to royal authority. Second, each sect played a different role in society. The *gama-vasi* monks, since their approach to society was inclusive, clearly provided greater access to Buddhism for both urban and rural Arakanese. The *aranya-vasi* monks, however, as respected they were, usually had little direct influence in society outside of the royal court.

There were, however, strong tensions within the *sangha*. The *aranya-vasi* monks through their influence in the royal court continually hindered the influence of the *gama-vasi* orders during the 1430-1630 period. The underlying motive of the *aranya-vasi* monks seems simply to have been that the *aranya-vasi* and *gama-vasi* monks (in Arakan at least) despised each other and went to considerable lengths to blame each other for anything that went wrong in the human or the natural environment.[247] For a brief period in the early seventeenth century, *aranya-vasi* orders almost threatened the continuity of *gama-vasi* influence altogether. A crisis in royal authority in the early seventeenth century, for example, coupled with the *aranya-vasi* and *gama-vasi* controversy and led to a dramatic purge of the *sangha* which threatened dramatically to reduce Buddhist influence in Arakanese society generally. As I will explain, this crisis involved the sudden reversal in Min-raza-kri's place in Lower Burma and Banga, and his position on the throne in Mrauk-U as well.

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[247]We know this because royal involvement in this controversy is stressed in the Maha-zeiya-thein-ka text ("Rakhine Min Raza-kri Arei-taw Sadan"). Although the text stresses that the controversy was an old one and played a pivotal role in conflict between Vesali and early post-Vesali Arakan and Irra-waddy Valley kingdoms, we have no evidence to verify it, and I consider this to be an anachronistic rendering of the controversy to stress the longevity of the debate within the Arakanese context. This was also true in the Irra-waddy Valley. In nineteenth century Burma, for example, *gama-vasi* monks urged villagers to burn *aranya-vasi* texts and attack the *aranya-vasi* monks. Mendelson, Sangha and State in Burma, 59.

To understand fully the extent of Mīn-raza-kri's successes by the end of the sixteenth century would take more space than I can allow here, but I will attempt to provide the critical details. In the mid-sixteenth century, as I explained earlier, Arakan was repeatedly threatened by Tabin-shwei-hti and Bayín-naun. This threat was very real to the Arakanese, because it came from what was probably the most powerful kingdom in early modern Southeast Asia. As I have also explained, Mīn-raza-kri played a key role in the conquest of the First Toungoo capital, and in addition to his acquisition of their white elephant and a princess of the dynasty, he claimed authority over what had been the First Toungoo dominions. For several years, Mīn-raza-kri claimed, and could demonstrate, authority over Lower Burma, and Mrauk-U became the most significant and powerful royal capital in western mainland Southeast Asia. Additionally, Mīn-raza-kri demonstrated his control over the northern littoral, including Chittagong, and by drawing levies from Banga, he seems to have enjoyed considerable authority there as well.

In the space of eight years, however, Mīn-raza-kri suffered a series of military defeats in both Banga and Lower Burma. From 1603 to 1607, for example, a handful of Portuguese desperados and a few thousand Mons broke away from Mīn-raza-kri's 'empire,' fended off numerous and large-scale Arakanese sieges and armadas, and finally, in 1607, Mīn-raza-kri admitted defeat and abandoned Lower Burma altogether. At the same time, in Banga, another Portuguese upstart, Sebastião Gonsales y Tibau, seized control of the island of Sundiva near Chittagong. As a result of Gonsales' raids and local alliance-making, Mīn-raza-kri lost Chittagong and suffered from both a Portuguese blockade and

even a Portuguese river assault in Danra-waddy. More damaging to Min-raza-kri's

credibility, Mughal expansion drove him out of Banga with a considerable degree of

humiliation. After one battle, news spread throughout the Muslim and Portuguese world

that Min-raza-kri fled from the field, alone, on a female elephant. At some point, during

this embarrassing series of events, Min-raza-kri's eldest son and *ein-shei-min* (heir-

apparent), Min-kamaun, gathered together an army of Mons and Bengalis at San-twei and

then marched on Mrauk-U in an attempt to seize the throne.[248]

In short, there was no precedent for this kind of flip-flop in the fortunes of an

Arakanese ruler. During these years of disaster, the Portuguese blockade of the Arakanese

coast up to and after Min-raza-kri's death in 1612,[249] ensured that Min-raza-kri's losses

in battle could not be easily overcome. His prestige was also shattered. Further, his son's

attempt to seize the throne, though unsuccessful militarily, was likely a sign that Min-

raza-kri's authority was sufficiently weakened to make such an attempt appear feasible.

In 1607, Min-raza-kri reacted to these events by turning against the *gama-vasi*

monks. The damage done to his authority and his resources made the *gama-vasi* monks

highly vulnerable to such a reaction for two chief reasons.

First, the *aranya-vasi* monks were able to convince Min-raza-kri that the best

thing for him to do was to pay closer attention to the *aranya-vasi* teachings. Min-raza-kri

is said to have committed himself to observing the practices of the *aranya-vasi* "noble

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[248]Charney, "Crisis and Reformation in a Maritime Kingdom," 195-196.

[249]Ibid., 194-99.

sangha."[250] What this observance entailed is not clear, but it may refer simply to the king's patronage of the *aranya-vasi* monks, rather than personal asceticism. The other side of the coin, of course, was that along with following the *aranya-vasi* way, the king should also stop patronage to the *gama-vasi* monks, both by himself and by the general population. To justify this, the *aranya-vasi* monks encouraged the king to see disorder among the *gama-vasi* monks and stressed royal prerogatives in bringing order to the sangha.[251] *Gama-vasi* monks, it was claimed, quarreled with one another, they wanted "to make themselves raised as kings," and they were exploiting the villagers, holding out to the villagers "deep dishes" for donations.[252]

Second, Min-raza-kri also may have turned against the *gama-vasi* monks because they were a continued draw upon his resource base and his authority in the royal court. Although the *aranya-vasi* monks may have possessed significant estates, these estates would have consisted of land away from areas of human settlement (since *aranya-vasi* monks avoided human settlements) and, logically, further from the reach of the king. I conjecture that these lands would thus have been more difficult for the king to reclaim and then draw back into the royal resource base. The estates of *gama-vasi* monks (who, by their interpretation of the *vinaya*, were human-world dwellers) were located in the royal

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[250]"Rakhine Min Raza-kri Arei-taw Sadan," 36b.

[251]As one *aranya-vasi* monk encouraged Min-raza-kri during a royal audience: "when the *sasana-baing* is unable to bring order to the *gamavasi* monks . . . he should submit [his authority over his order] to the king's power and control." Ibid., 33a.

[252]Ibid., 36b.

capital, the towns, and the villages, and were thus those lands most accessible to the king.

Royal donations to *gama-vasi* monks in the royal capital and in areas close to the royal

center may have continually depleted royal agricultural and manpower reserves in the

central zone, as the lands and slaves donated could not be taxed by the king.[253] Since this

would have placed additional demands upon *ahmú-dàns* who remained within royal

groups, sending them into hiding in the *sangha* or among *asis* (free people), it may explain

the large-scale interrogations by the *hsin-kei-kri* of *asi* groups in order to find royal

servicemen (presumably) who had taken refuge among them.[254]

Min-raza-kri, especially by 1606 and 1607, was in desperate need of people for

his armies, due to continued and significant losses to the Portuguese. As one

contemporary Portuguese source explained, Min-raza-kri prepared to attack Syriam again

in 1606-1607. But since he had suffered so many losses in the past few years, he now

gathered "all of his people," to form the great *armada*.[255] This attempt to resolve the

depletion of royal manpower reserves helps to explain Min-raza-kri's purge of the *gama-*

vasi monks at about the same time. Buddhist monks were not liable for royal taxes or

labor service and could not be forced into royal armies. A 'bad monk,' however, could be

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[253]In early modern Arakan, taxes were not collected from the *glebe* lands donated to the monasteries and pagodas. Further, slaves attached to these pagodas were not taxed either. See "Ran-ma-wadi Mró Sit-tàn," 90. This was also the case in the seventeenth century. Manrique, Itinerario, 1:194.

[254] "The *hsin-kei-kri* captured the people who had sought refuge in and entered the *asi* caste and the king ordered them placed in the elephant and horse [royal service] groups. The *ahmú-dàn* caste was not calm nor was it peaceful." "Rakhine Min Raza-kri Arei-taw Sadan," 25a.

[255]Sebastien Gonzales, Newe Relation (Augsburg, Chrisostomo Daber, 1611), 2. This passage was thankfully translated for me by Stephan van Galen.

defrocked, given a weapon, and made to fight. Min-raza-kri's new commitment to the *aranya-vasi* monks made it possible for him to declare the *gama-vasi* monks 'bad monks,' but he would have faced resistance by the *gama-vasi* monkhood, especially from the high-ranking elders of the Buddhist *sangha*.

Although Arakanese sources tell us about how Min-raza-kri had the *gama-vasi* monks defrocked, our information for how Min-raza-kri eliminated the resistance of the *gama-vasi* elders comes from Fernão Guerreiro.[256] Guerreiro's compilation places the blame upon a terrible storm for Min-raza-kri's hostility to the *gama-vasi* monks. In Guerreiro's version of these events, in 1607, while Min-raza-kri was hastily putting together his forces for a new (and final) campaign against Syriam, a great thunderstorm struck the royal capital: lightning struck the stall of the white elephant and the tops of the great Buddhist pagodas in Mrauk-U. According to Guerreiro, the Buddhist monks told Min-raza-kri that these were omens of his destruction. Min-raza-kri, who, Guerreiro implies, distrusted the personal loyalties of these monks, vented his anger upon them. Thereupon, Min-raza-kri is said to have put the thirty most important, and likely *gama-vasi* (since they were in regular attendance in the court, they could not have been *aranya-vasi*), monks to death.[257]

Pre-1784 Arakanese sources inform us of how Min-raza-kri dealt with the

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[256]Guerreiro was a compiler of the Portuguese accounts that arrived in Lisbon from Asia in the early seventeenth century.

[257]Fernão Guerreiro, Relação Anual das Coisas que Fizeram os Padres da Companhia de Jesus Nas suas Missões . . . Nos Anos de 1600 a 1609, Artur Viegas, ed. (Coimbra: University of Coimbra, 1930), 2:319.

remainder of the *gama-vasi* monks. The *ko-ran-kri* branded the defrocked *gama-vasi* monks with a "lion image" (I suggest that this was probably a symbol of their affiliation with the kingship) and forced them into royal service as part of the royal 'standing army' (the *ko-rans*).[258] Other resources were reclaimed as well from the purge of the *gama-vasi* monks. As one source complained, the *gama-vasi* monks saved up property that had been donated to them and sold it, the villagers entrusted their property to them (which probably means that this land was disguised as *glebe* land and hence free of royal taxes), and, again, they offered a "deep dish" for village donations. To stop the alienation of land to the *gama-vasi* monks, Min-raza-kri issued a royal order forbidding the "people's" donations to the *gama-vasi* monks. Min-raza-kri went further and took back the property which had already been given to the *gama-vasi* monks.[259]

4.4 Summary

Over the 1430-1630 period, Theravada Buddhist influence deepened in Arakan. This influence came from Arakanese interaction with Sri Lanka and with the Irra-waddy Valley over the Arakan Roma. I discussed the different roles played by *gama-vasi* and *aranya-vasi* sects and how, by the beginning of the seventeenth century, the royal court restricted the spread or increase of *gama-vasi* sects. In the next chapter, I will discuss, in relation to Buddhism in rural Arakan, how this situation was reversed.

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[258]"Rakhine Min Raza-kri Arei-taw Sadan," 36b.

[259]Ibid., 25a, 36b.

CHAPTER 5

RELIGION BEYOND THE ROYAL CITY:

THE EMERGENCE OF THERAVADA BUDDHISM AND ROYAL PATRONAGE IN

THE RURAL LANDSCAPE, C. 1430-1630

Over the 1430-1630 period, I will suggest, Theravada Buddhism moved beyond

the royal center and the court elites and began to influence life in the rural areas of the

Arakan Littoral. Buddhism attracted the Arakanese in several ways. *Gama-vasi* monks,

increasing rural-urban interaction, and rural festivals played an important role in spreading

this influence. In short, both villagers and the royal center played roles in the emergence

of Theravada Buddhism in rural Arakan. I then take up the question of why Buddhism

should have been attractive to rural Arakanese or at least why it seemed relevant to their

lives. I suggest that Buddhism, as it was portrayed and because of some of its key

perspectives, made sense to villagers in significant ways. Finally, I will argue that

Arakanese kings used Buddhist patronage in several ways to strengthen or cement

political control in rural Arakan. Of course, Arakanese rulers established their authority

over former royal centers by building Buddhist edifices in them as well as in their own

capital city. But Arakanese rulers also built pagodas and monasteries in new Buddhist or

quasi-Buddhist communities in the countryside. By following Buddhism into the

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countryside, royal patronage of Buddhism fostered rural recognition of central authority.

Before I turn to a more substantial discussion of these developments, however, a word of

warning is in order: I do not suggest that we see the rise of specific and well-defined

religious or ethnic identities in the fifteenth or sixteenth centuries. It would go far beyond

what the evidence says to argue that, during the 1430-1630 period, Arakan Littoral

populations saw themselves as, first and foremost, members of a supra-local religious

community, whether Buddhist or Muslim, or depended upon these identities to forge

group unities for supra-local collective action.

Instead, during this period in the Arakan Littoral, people participated in groups

for collective action on the basis of more immediate and personal bonds: patron-client

ties, often reinforced through kinship ties, for example, or membership in local spirit

cults.[260] I do suggest, however, that this period helped provide some of the building

blocks for the religious and ethnic identities which gradually crystallized over the late

seventeenth to early nineteenth centuries (and underwrote the religious communalism and

separatism of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries).[261] Even today, Arakanese, both

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[260]For a similar view, regarding premodern northern India, see Gyanendra Pandey, The Construction of Communalism in Colonial North India (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1990), 198-200.

[261]As Talbot explains in the case of India: "No one would deny that modernization has led to the sharper articulation of identities encompassing broad communities or that such identities have been 'imagined' and 'invented' to a large extent. Nor can we uncritically accept the primordialist view that postulates the inherent and natural roots of national and ethnic identity. However, modern identities do not spring fully fashioned out of nowhere. They commonly employ the myths and symbols of earlier forms of identity which may be less clearly formulated and more restricted in circulation but are nonetheless incipient cores of ethnicity." Cynthia Talbot, "Inscribing the Other, Inscribing the Self: Hindu-Muslim Identities in Pre-Colonial India," Contemporary Studies in Society and History 37 (1995): 694. For an excellent discussion of the different arguments regarding the time of the emergence of ethnic identities, see Smith, Ethnic Origins of Nations, 13-18.

Buddhist and Muslim, draw upon memories of the Arakan of the 1430-1630 period for evidence to support their separate claims for communal precedence (in the Arakan littoral), possession (of Arakan as a homeland), and political rights. We will turn again to this topic in a later chapter.

5.1 Expansion of Theravada Buddhist Influences

Over the 1430-1630 period, Buddhist influence spread throughout the rural landscape. It is difficult, however, to develop a complete understanding of religious developments in outlying population centers and in the rural areas of the Arakan littoral during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, primarily because of the nature of the source materials available. The textual and epigraphic sources available have been left to us by an urban court elite. Even foreign travellers spent most of their time in the environs of the royal capital. But we also have references in these sources to activities by non-elites which at least suggest that some of the Buddhist influences for which we have a clearer picture in later periods were in place or were developing in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. For example, poems, chronicles, and other sources from the late sixteenth century indicate that *gama-vasi* village monks were active during this time and that Buddhism had begun to play a role in festivals and mass celebrations in rural areas. Moreover, there is evidence from the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries for the same kind of Buddhist monastic schools for elites and villagers that we find in the nineteenth century.

5.1.1 Bringing the People to Buddha

Over the 1430-1630, rural Arakanese were drawn to Mrauk-U, and there they were exposed chiefly to Buddhism, Buddhist monks, and Buddhist symbols, for a variety of reasons. In this section, I suggest that two main factors were involved. First, population growth, increased urbanization, and new markets helped to make the royal city an attractive economic center. Second, pilgrimages to traditional royal festivals, though generally not Buddhist in origin, also brought rural Arakanese into Mrauk-U.

Rural Arakanese came into contact with Buddhism through increased contact with the royal city. Mrauk-U was a royal city of unprecedented size and influence in the Arakan littoral. Not only was it by far the largest and most populous royal capital in Arakanese history,[262] it was also the most important. No Arakanese capital in the past had brought the entire Arakan littoral under its control or attraction. Early Mrauk-U rulers also successfully monopolized the ports and maritime trade connections, which does not seem to have been the case in the preceding period. Not only did revenues from the countryside pour into Mrauk-U, but so did villagers, in search of markets for village products, legal decisions regarding village disputes,[263] help in fending off hill tribe raids in the hinterland, and as levies for the increasingly numerous and large Arakanese military campaigns abroad. Those who had been in the royal city for any number of reasons likely described what they had seen in Mrauk-U to their villages, but without testimony from

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[262]Manrique, in the 1630s, estimated that there were 160,000 people in Mrauk-U, in addition to foreign merchants. Manrique, Itinerario, 1:192.

[263]"Rakhine Min Raza-kri Arei-taw Sadan," 6a.

the villagers so involved, this observation must remain a conjecture.

Festivals also drew villagers into the royal city. As I explained in the second chapter, for example, the rainy season was a period in which disease and disaster could accompany especially heavy rainfall or flooding in the coastal areas. As in Burma, Indra, the Hindu god of rain and king of heaven (who was incorporated into Buddhism as Sakra), was associated with the control of rain and thus with the change of seasons. The king was the earthly representative of Indra and thus the king figured prominently in particular festivals during the rainy season. The *thinkyan* (သၤင်္ကြန်, or the modern Burmese သင်္ကြန်) or "new year water festival," the largest celebration of which was held in the royal capital. More local versions of this festival seem to have occurred in the villages as well. In April, as part of the water festival, boat races were also held in the canals of the royal city, south of the royal palace.[264] In February, the tug-of-war festival was held, which was believed to help control the rains and ensure agricultural fertility.[265] Although these festivals were not specifically Buddhist, in the sixteenth century, these festivals did draw villagers into the royal city. According to a sixteenth century poem, for example, which discusses the February tug-of-war festival:

> Today was the festival of Tug-of war:
> The cold had gone;
> through the mild evening air
> Holiday crowds entered the capital,

[264]Mi, "Rakhine Razawin," 157a.

[265]San Shwe Bu, "Notes on the Above Poem," Journal of the Burma Research Society 13 (1923): 231.

> Singing their old songs to the old-time tunes,
> Till the whole city was full of their sound . . .
> Groups of them gathered at the tugs-of war . . .
> Night advanced;
> the moon rose over the city.
> The streets were still full of the same mad crowd . . .[266]

As the poem suggests, this festival drew celebrants from outside the royal city. It is unclear how far rural Arakanese came, but it is likely that villagers throughout the Lei-mró and Kalà-dan river areas had relatively easy access to Mrauk-U. Once in the city, as I shall explain, such rural crowds likely encountered the symbols, edifices, and monks of Buddhism in the city.

Travel to the royal city meant that outlying villagers were exposed to Buddhism. The royal capital, after all, was the major site for the display of centrally-defined Buddhism. Throughout Mrauk-U were pagodas, massive monuments to the Buddha, standing out through their detailed iconography and were filled with large and impressive images of the Buddha.[267] The major monastic establishments were also located in the royal city and throngs of worshippers could not have escaped the attention of visitors to the royal capital. In this way, the royal city was not only the royal capital, it was also a window through which Buddhism was displayed and advertised.[268] Of course, there were

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[266]Ukka Bran, "An Arakanese Poem of the 16th Century," Maurice Collis (trans.), Journal of the Burma Research Society 13 (1923): 228.

[267]Manrique, Itinerario, 1:201.

[268]Certainly, other newcomers to the royal city were impressed by the Buddhist establishment. For Europeans, for example, it was the idols and pagodas which drew much of their attention. As Barbosa explains, "[t]hey worship Idols and have great houses of prayer." See Barbosa, Book of Duarte Barbosa, 2:151.

also foreign communities and non-Buddhist communities with their own religious edifices, but generally these were located in specific *bandels* on the outskirts of Mrauk-U.[269]

In short, during the 1430-1630 period, Buddhism penetrated outlying areas in the Arakan littoral. Further, this occurred at a time when rural Arakanese interacted increasingly with a royal city whose landscape was filled with the imagery, the monks, and the belief in the power of Buddhism. This does not demonstrate that Buddhism had become an important part of the daily lives of the Arakanese in outlying areas, but it does indicate perhaps a scenario such as that suggested by Horton for the availability of a world religion: although villagers in outlying areas of the Arakan littoral focussed upon *nat* spirits and local beliefs in their daily affairs, they were interacting more with a significant Buddhist center and were coming into contact with the images, symbols, and monks of a new "God" (as they must have perceived him to be, without knowledge of the actual doctrine of Theravada Buddhism) known as *Hpara* ("Lord").

5.1.2 Bringing Buddha to the People

Exposure to Buddhism in the royal city was coupled with new developments during the 1430-1630 period which helped to bring Buddhism directly into rural communities. First, Buddhist monks in the countryside tried to convince Arakanese villagers that Buddhism could provide protection from threats emanating from the human and natural environment. Tensions between *gama-vasi* and *aranya-vasi* were resolved in

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[269]Father A. Farinha, "Journey of Father A. Farinha, S. J., from Dianga to Arakan, 1639-40," in Travels of Fray Sebastien Manrique, 1629-1643, translated by C. Eckford Luard & Father H. Hosten (Oxford: Hakluyt Society, 1927), 1:174.

the seventeenth century in favor of the *gama-vasi* monks, allowing *gama-vasi* monks to play an even more important role in rural villages. Second, Buddhist symbols, perhaps reflecting the influence of central festivals, began to become an important part of traditional rural celebrations.

5.1.2.1 Forest Monks and Village Monks

Both *aranya-vasi* and *gama-vasi* monks carried Buddhism into rural Arakan. They promoted Buddhism as both a way of viewing the cosmos and as a remedy to, or protection from, the dangers that emanated from the human and the natural environment. But the differences between *aranya-vasi* and *gama-vasi* approaches to Buddhism, as mentioned in the previous chapter in reference to the royal court, also meant that they had a different impact on rural religion. *Gama-vasi* monks, who did not isolate themselves from society as did *aranya-vasi* monks, interacted more with Arakanese villagers and became more integrated into the social fabric of village life.

Buddhist monks in rural Arakan popularized Buddhism in the same general way as they had done in the royal center: they made Buddhism relevant to the lives of those to whom they promoted the Buddha. As I explained in the second chapter, the Arakanese viewed the human and natural environment as full of threats and unpredictable disasters. Although villagers certainly saw or heard about Buddhism during this period, and it is true that Buddhism offered portability, these factors would have been meaningless unless Buddhism offered ways of understanding the ways in which things worked and offered ways to cope with the challenges that the human and natural environment provided. Of

course, at one level, Buddhism offered an understanding of the ways in which things worked. Its basic doctrine suggested that life was misery (*dukha*), was subject to continual cycles of birth and rebirth (*samsara*), that the only solution was to escape existence through release (Enlightenment), and one's accumulated merits and demerits (*karma*) determined one's position on the merit-path to Enlightenment. But Buddhist monks also stressed that Buddhism could provide ways of coping with the problems of everyday life.

Although orthodox Buddhism frowns upon *nat*-worship, popular Buddhism allowed for the continuity of traditional *nat*-worship and the reliance upon amulets and other specially-empowered items. Many related practices intended to placate or fend off supernatural or human forces with bad intentions are still much in evidence today. Amulets, tattoos, mercury or iron balls, and squares inscribed with powerful symbols provide "protection against natural, as well as supernatural harm."[270]

Instead of challenging these local preexisting beliefs, Buddhism added additional forms of protection from disease, disaster, floods, and evil spirits, as well as remedies to these problems when they did occur. These protections took the form of *suttas*, protective texts, perceptions of the monks as healers, and monks themselves as sites for worshippers to influence their fate. Buddhist monks, for example, provided *pareits*, which were special *suttas* (*sutras*). Although in some schools of East Asian Buddhism, the act of repeating a certain *sutta* can bring Enlightenment, in Arakan and Burma, *suttas*

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[270]Melford E. Spiro, Burmese Supernaturalism, expanded ed. (Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Issues, 1967), 2-3, 36-37.

remained relevant mainly to problems in the present life. The kind of *sutta* known as *pareit* (ပရိတ်), when repeated, could ward off the bad spirits (*nats*) who caused outbreaks of disease or other kinds of problems.[271]

Buddhism was thus attractive in part because of (and not despite) its acceptance of the pre-Buddhist beliefs of the Arakanese and Burma. Buddhism, for example, by being able to fend off *nats*, was thus clearly more powerful than local spirits.[272] By accepting *nats*, *nats* could be integrated into the Buddhist perception of the cosmos in a position inferior to that of the Buddha: although the Buddha had achieved Enlightenment, *nats* had not and were still subject to *samsara* as were ordinary humans. Not only were *nats* accepted into Arakanese-Burmese Buddhist cosmology, Indra, as king of the *nats*, also became the protector of the Buddhist *sasana*.[273]

As I discussed in the previous chapter, there was a good deal of competition between *gama-vasi* and *aranya-vasi* monks in Arakan during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Royal interference in *sangha* affairs often complicated this competition. In two cases I discussed, those of Min-ba-kri and Min-raza-kri, Arakanese kings turned against the *gama-vasi* monks, defrocked them, took back the property which had been donated

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[271]Min-raza-kri, for example, depended upon the *tisi-pareit* to fend off his problems after his continued defeats at the hands of the Portuguese in the early seventeenth century. See "Rakhine Min Raza-kri Arei-taw Sadan," 36b. For an example of how *pareits* continue to be applied today, see Spiro, Burmese Supernaturalism, 37.

[272]Ibid., 278.

[273]Zeiya-thinkhaya, Shwei-boun Nidàn (Yangon: Zwei-sa-bei-reib-myoun, 1957), 8.

to them, and, at least in the case of Min-raza-kri's *sasana* reform, made a personal commitment to the *aranya-vasi* way. The reasons for doing so, as I further explained, were manifold: the *gama-vasi* monks were blamed for things having gone badly in the later years of Min-raza-kri's reign; *aranya-vasi* monks offered *pareits* (protective *suttas*) and other protections which would solve Min-raza-kri's problems (and hence those of the kingdom as well), and the king was able to recoup significant manpower and material reserves which had been alienated by the population to *gama-vasi* monks.

Such royal 'reforms' periodically hurt the *gama-vasi* sects, but the *gama-vasi* monks continued and prospered, largely because of their intimate contact with the general population on a daily basis in a range of social activities. Further, outside the royal city and areas close to the royal center, *gama-vasi monks* may not have been affected by such royal edicts at all, save for a decline in royal patronage. Although certainly *gama-vasi* monks in the royal city likely suffered, royal influence within the villages, especially those villages outside the Danra-waddy central zone, was probably very limited. As I have explained, Arakan was not "ruled" in a direct sense, but rather was an attractive polity. There is no evidence, for example, that local elites purged the *gama-vasi* monks in the villages or reclaimed their property. Certainly there was a superficial incentive to do so (more collections meant more wealth), but *gama-vasi* influence in many villages must have been considerable. I conjecture, until more evidence is available, that local leaders were either not strong enough to challenge the *gama-vasi* monks in the villages or, looked at another way, they may have feared losing whatever protections the *gama-vasi* monks

offered (the king's losses, after all, were not necessarily their losses). In any event, *gama-vasi* influence in many Arakanese villages was considerable, and these monks certainly were closer to the village than was the royal court. *Gama-vasi* monks were strong enough, after all, to keep other religious proselytizers out of 'their' villages in Danra-waddy.[274] Further, one could point out that, as an indication of popular support for the *gama-vasi* monks, villagers kept the *gama-vasi* monks alive with popular donations and they even entrusted their property to the *gama-vasi* monks.

Aranya-vasi monks, however, also offered answers regarding, and protection against, the problems of the human and natural environment. Why, then, did the *gama-vasi* monks enjoy so much influence in the village, in contrast to *aranya-vasi* monks? I think the best answer to this question is that while *aranya-vasi* monks were, owing to their understanding of the *vinaya*, ascetics and often isolated themselves from the human world, *gama-vasi* monks interacted with village populations on a daily basis. Although evidence for the sixteenth century or earlier is sparse, we know from later periods that *gama-vasi* monks played significant roles in rural education, funerals for the village dead, and making themselves locally accessible for popular donations, which provided a means for the villagers to gain merit.[275]

5.1.2.2 Buddhist Festivals

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[274]Manrique, Itinerario, 1:254.

[275]William Foley, "Journal of a Tour Through the Island of Rambree, with a Geological Sketch of the Country, and a Brief Account of the Customs, &c. of Its Inhabitants," Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal 5 (1835): 29, 31, 33.

One indication of the gradual inclusion of Buddhism into village life was the association of aspects of Buddhism with preexisting festivals associated with the yearly agricultural cycle. As I will explain in a later chapter, Buddhist symbols became a central part of these festivals and their imagery. Over time, these rural festivals were redefined according to Buddhist traditions and came to be seen as Buddhist festivals associated with the life of the Buddha. Further, as I explained in an earlier section in this chapter, Arakanese and Irra-waddy Valley cultural interaction increased during the 1430-1630 period, so it should not be surprising that such festivals on both sides of the Arakan Roma began to resemble each other, with the same forms of observance, similar terminologies, and similar underlying mythologies.

We have evidence, though spotty, that the Buddhicization of indigenous festivals was already underway by the late sixteenth century. During festivals in the month of Wagyut, for example, flowers were offered to Buddha images and pagodas and there seem to have been group processions to pagodas. In village festivals in the month of Tasaungmon, some villagers erected bamboo poles, strung with oil lamps, in association with the Buddha.[276] The story associated with this celebration, known and practiced today as the "Festival of Lights," is too long to consider fully here, but it suggests that the Buddha at one point descended to the city of the gods to expound further upon *abhi-dhamma*. After he had finished at the end of Buddhist Lent he is believed to have

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[276]Bran, "An Arakanese Poem," 226, 227.

descended to earth, his path lit by "heavenly torches."[277]

Late sixteenth century sources indicate, however, that although centrally-defined Buddhist influence became more important in rural areas, this influence was not complete. Local festivals involving the drinking of alcohol and mass intoxication, often associated with the worship of *nat* or ancestral spirits, took place outside the limits of the royal city.[278] The fact that urban-dwellers who wished to participate in the drinking of alcohol during religious celebrations left the royal city and went to rural areas in order to do so may indicate a distinction between the degree of Buddhist influence, or different criteria in the royal city and the countryside for the correct interpretation of Buddhism. But in later centuries, as I will explain, we do have evidence that these same popular festivals in rural areas were associated with or integrated into popular Buddhism.

Buddhist festivals fit into the ways in which villagers interacted with the natural environment during different periods of the year. As Melford Spiro explains:

> Its origin aside, the Buddhist annual cycle is clearly tied to the natural . . . and agricultural cycles. Buddhist holydays do not occur during the plowing, transplanting, or harvesting seasons, nor do pagoda festivals occur during the rainy season when travel is difficult. They all take place during those months which, economically and physically, are most conducive to the expenditure of the time and effort required for the planning and organizing of the holydays, and the travel required for the festivals.[279]

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[277]Melford Spiro, Buddhism and Society: A Great Tradition and Its Burmese Vicissitudes (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), 225.

[278]Bran, "An Arakanese Poem," 226.

[279]Spiro, Buddhism and Society, 219-220.

This may be true, but Spiro does not emphasize, as he should have, that the reason that Buddhist festivals were so convenient for the agricultural cycle is that many of these were preexisting festivals which had come to be reinterpreted as Buddhist festivals. In any event, "Buddhist" festivals thus did not present insurmountable demands upon a rural and agricultural community whose lives were arranged by the seasons of the year and the requirements of agricultural cultivation.

Further, since Arakanese and Burmese Buddhism was highly flexible in absorbing pre-Buddhist traditions and gods, Buddhism could easily transform preexisting rites into Buddhist ones. Indra, for example, known to the Arakanese as Sakra (and Burmese as Thagya), became the king of the *nats* and the guardian of the Buddha's holy *sasana* in Buddhism.[280] This transformation was especially important to Arakanese agriculturalists, because Indra had earlier entered the Arakanese belief system from Brahmanical-Hindu influence as the god of rain and fertility (as well as the ruler of the city of the gods), which made him a key figure in rites associated with agriculture.

Indra myths were especially important in the water festival, although we do not know when this festival became Buddhicized. We have little evidence from the 1430-1630 period in Arakan to suggest a role for Buddhism in the festivities. Spiro has identified two Indra myths which underlay the festival, and one clearly associates Indra with the agricultural fertility cycle. As Spiro explains:

> . . . once in the remote past (Sakra) engaged a brahma deva in debate (Sakra won and) decapitated the deva and was immediately confronted with a problem:

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[280]Zeiya-thinkhaya, Shwei-boun Nidàn, 8.

what to do with the head? Were he to bury it, the earth would dry up in a terrible drought; were he to cast it into the ocean, the waters would dry up. To forestall both calamities, he ordered seven goddesses to hold the head, in turn, for a year. At the end of the year the goddess in charge washes it and passes it on to the next goddess, and so on. The New Year begins when the head is passed from the old to the new goddess.[281]

This festival, however, has also come to be understood in additional ways associated with Buddhism. As Spiro explains, there is today an additional story which explains the reasons for the festival. The second account also centers upon Indra, but now, Indra as Sakra, the protector of the *sasana*, comes to earth for the final two days of the year. During this time, he records the merits and demerits of the people (the accumulation of merit is necessary in the Buddhist system, as is good and bad *karma* in Hindu belief, for a better rebirth in the next life, on the path to Enlightenment for Buddhists or *moksha* for Hindus).[282] Although the water festival was certainly practiced in the late sixteenth century,[283] we do not know when this festival was recast, via the second account of Indra's participation in this festival, but it was likely a gradual process, especially so as this transformation is not complete today (that is, the pre-Buddhist story is also held as a valid account for the meaning of this particular festival).

5.2 Making the Buddha Local

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[281]Spiro, Buddhism and Society, 220.

[282]As Spiro explains: "[Sakra] annually descends to the earth, where he remains for the last two days of the old year. He notes the doers of good and the evildoers, and records their names in two separate books. Completing his work, he returns to his abode in Ta-wa-deing-tha . . . heaven on the third day, his return marking the beginning of the new year." Spiro, Buddhism and Society, 220.

[283]Bran, "An Arakanese Poem," 224.

The populations of Danra-waddy faced numerous challenges from the natural environment. For a solution to, or protection from these challenges, Arakanese tried to control the environment by appeasing the forces of nature via the worship of local spirits ever-present in natural objects in the local environment.

Buddhism influenced the indigenous religious framework by adding Buddhist images to the local *repertoire* of protective objects. These images filled the rural landscape and by paying obeisance to them, people could overt or moderate natural disasters and disease. Nga Kuthala, who usurped the throne in 1638, for example, depended upon a series of images placed in the rice-fields around Laun-kret to fight off malaria.[284]

Buddhism also became part of local traditions through the association of the local landscape with Buddha stories.[285] In the late 1890s, E. Forchhammer looked at the association made between rural pagodas and Buddha stories. These stories, part of "the Maha-muni legend," suggested that the Buddha, when he visited Arakan in his own lifetime before achieving *parinibbana*, had prophesized in advance the locations for building these temples. Forchhammer relied upon the version of the legend as it existed in the 1890s and accepted it at face value as the reason for the construction of specific pagodas in rural Arakan. As Forchhammer explained:

> The legend asserts that during the reign of Candrasuriya, King of Dhaññavati (Northern Arakan), Gotama Buddha came with many followers to this country

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[284]Forchhammer, Report, 48, 49.

[285]Evidently some of these stories passed into Burmese jataka stories, one of which placed the Buddha during one of his previous existences in Dwara-waddy. Ibid., 2.

[Arakan]. On the Selagiri . . . [Gautama Buddha] held a prophetic discourse; after the casting of his image he departed to the south, visited Dvaravati (San-twei), then turned to the east, and alighting (he is flying through the air) on the summit of the Po-u-taung (a steep hill 7 miles above Prome on the Irrawaddy) he delivered another discourse pregnant with prophesies . . . The tradition is intimately connected with the religious history of Arakan and Burma in general . . . Nearly all pagodas within the confines of Dhaññavati and on the banks of the Irrawaddy owe their origin to it ; ancient Arakanese kings, mindful of the prophesies it contained, built pagodas on the spots indicated, and modern kings rebuilt or repaired them; the Urri-taun pagoda, the Ugin *ceti*, the An-daw, Nan-daw, and San-daw shrines in Sandoway still exist in fulfillment of Gotama's dicta; and the removal of the Maha-muni image the Arakanese look upon as the temporary working of the still unexpiated result (Kammavipaka) of Gotama's two evil deeds . . . committed on Cheduba [Mekha-waddy] island and visited on his younger brother and representative [Maha-muni image].[286]

I look at what Forchhammer has described another way. The stories associated with the temples likely emerged after their construction. We have no evidence for the legend, for example, from a period prior to the building of these temples. By associating these Buddhist stories with specific temples, the Buddha was made locally relevant. Thus, villagers did not see the Buddha as a foreign challenger to local spirits, but rather as a god or spirit or supernatural holy-man who had always worked in conjunction with local spirits and who was a familiar and traditional part of the local landscape.

5.3 Royal Patronage in the Countryside: Embedding Royal Authority

There is one more trend of the Mrauk-U period which concerned rural Buddhism. The Mrauk-U kings increased the geographic scope of their construction and donation of Buddhist edifices in rural areas. In this section, I will explain what this said about

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[286]Ibid., 1-2.

Buddhism in rural Arakan and how it was related to the spread of royal authority in the countryside.

One distinguishing feature of the early Mrauk-U dynasty is that, unlike preceding periods in Arakanese history, the Arakanese kings did not limit the royally-sponsored construction of Buddhist edifices, pagodas and so on, to the immediate royal domain. In other words, the early Mrauk-U kings, especially in the sixteenth century, dotted outlying areas, not just the royal capital, with Buddhist pagodas. One reason, for this, perhaps, is that Mrauk-U sovereigns exerted greater influence and sometimes control over outlying areas than in any previous period. This could be seen as an assertion that Arakanese kings would have built Buddhist pagodas anywhere in their kingdoms and it was only now that they controlled the areas to which they laid claim, and thus Buddhist pagodas and monasteries began to pop up in new areas far from the royal capital. I think a more accurate assertion, however, would be to suggest that the construction of Buddhist pagodas and monasteries, an important requirement of Buddhist kingship, occurred in outlying communities when Buddhism began to emerge in those communities. In short, I assert that when we talk about the increase and greater spatial separation of royal Buddhist building programs, we are not really talking about territorial expansion and state centralization *per se*, but rather about the shift in Arakanese Buddhism from Buddhism as royal cult, to the popularization of Buddhism.

There were three categories of Buddhist pagoda-building during the early Mrauk-U period. The first two categories were typical of pre-Mrauk-U Arakanese kingdoms as

well as kingdoms in other areas of mainland Southeast Asia: Buddhist pagodas were built

in the royal center, that is the royal city, and Buddhist pagodas in earlier royal centers

were rebuilt in order to connect the authority of the current dynasty with that of its

predecessors or to subvert the same. Thus, we find early Mrauk-U kings building

mammoth Buddhist pagodas in the royal city.[287] Likewise, early Mrauk-U dynastic

rulers continued to be interested in repairing the Buddhist pagodas of Laun-kret, Dwara-

waddy, Min-bya, and Vesali, as well as other former royal centers.[288]

The third category, however, is more important for our discussion here: early

Mrauk-U rulers built Buddhist pagodas in new areas not associated with previous royal

centers or rival political centers (as far as can be determined from the available evidence).

The best examples of this are the Urri-taun pagoda (ce 1521), the Ukin-daw *ceti* (1591),

and the Para-bo pagoda (1603).[289] In the seventeenth century, this trend continued. Out

of eleven (mostly rural) pagodas, three ordination halls, and one monastery in existence in

Rama-waddy by the end of the eighteenth century, for example, only one pagoda had

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[287]See, for example, the construction in Mrauk-U of the Dukkan-thein, the Andaw pagoda, the Ratana-pon, the Shitthaung, and the Lemyekna in ibid., 20-30.

[288]We know from the three great *cetis* (Andaw, Sandaw, and Nandaw) of Dwara-waddy that not only early Mrauk-U kings, but also kings of preceding dynasties of Danra-waddy, established their authority over this distant town by razing the earlier temple structures and rebuilding them anew. Thus we find that the Sandaw was built by the Dwara-waddy king Min-nyo-kin in 784, was razed and rebuilt by Maha-zaw of the Laun-kret dynasty in 1323, the same was done by Min-raza-kri of the early Mrauk-U dynasty in 1607, and so on. The same was true of the Andaw and Nandaw *cetis* as well. See Forchhammer, Report, 61-63; see also the reconstruction or repair of the Maha-hti pagoda in 1591 by Min-palaun. Ibid., 45.

[289]Ibid., 42-43, 55-59. For locations, see map in Figure 3.

been built prior to the mid-seventeenth century.[290]

As I will discuss more fully in relation to the construction of Christian churches by Arakanese rulers in the following section, I suggest that Arakanese kings attempted to establish their authority by inscribing that authority in the rural landscape via religious edifices, that is, local sites of charismatic power. The early Mrauk-U kings seem to have had this purpose in mind when they rebuilt Buddhist pagodas in former royal centers. Does the construction of Buddhist pagodas in new areas represent, then, the same attempt? If it does, as I suggest here, we would also have to accept one of three things: (1) kings connected royal authority specifically to Buddhism, (2) they inscribed royal authority into the religious edifices and symbols which local communities found important, or (3) that Arakanese kings attempted to connect their authority with local sites of charismatic power, regardless of the religious associations of such sites. As I will explain in the following section, using evidence of Arakanese patronage of Catholicism, it is unlikely that royal authority was tied inseparably to specifically Buddhist symbols of religious authority. This was already suggested by the Islamicization or Bengalization of Arakanese rulership during the early Mrauk-U period. Instead, Arakanese kings sought to attract local charismatic power to themselves, and in doing so attracted the people associated with the sites themselves.

5.4 The Catholic Priest as Pawn: Royal Patronage and Coastal Luso-Arakanese

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[290]"Ran-ma-wadi Mró [Sit-tàn]," in Burmese Sit-tàns 1764-1826: Records of Rural Life and Administration, translated by Frank N. Trager & William J. Koenig (Tucson, Arizona: University of Arizona Press, 1979), 89-90.

Communities

The primary goal of Catholic missionary priests in Banga and the Arakan Littoral was to keep the Portuguese desperados in the area within Christianity. Proselytizing to the indigenous population was at best a secondary consideration. Indigenous rulers, however, saw in the Catholic priests a means of establishing their authority over the Portuguese community. As I will explain in this section, it was with this end in mind that Arakanese kings sponsored Catholic religious missions and built Christian churches for the Catholic priests within their domain.

Catholic priests were called to Arakan and Bengal by Portuguese exiles, desperados, and free traders.[291] That Portuguese priests were preceded in the area over many decades by autonomous Portuguese, free of *Estado da India* control, distinguishes Catholicism in Arakan from the rest of Southeast Asia. Elsewhere, the cross followed the Iberian conquest, such as in the Spanish Philippines, Portuguese Melaka, and Portuguese Timor. Portuguese communities in the northeastern Bay of Bengal, however, were already in the making, outside the auspices of actual Portuguese or Spanish political control. This created problems for the Catholic missionizing effort in Arakan. There were, for example, few Catholic priests in Arakan and Banga. Additionally, these Portuguese settlements were not yet under royally-supervised Catholic priests (known as "secular priests") as they fell outside of *Estado da India* political auspices. Thus, the question of to whom the

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[291]At the turn of the seventeenth century, similar Portuguese at Chittagong wrote to the Vicar General of the Dominicans for ministers. Father Luis de Cacegas, _Terceira Parte da Historia de S. Domingos Particular do Reino e Conquistas de Portugal_, 3d ed., Father Luis de Sousa, ed. (Lisboa: Panorama, 1866), 5:426.

Catholic missionizing priests should devote their resources and time in proselytizing was answered for them. Their first duty was to provide for the spiritual needs of the Portuguese community *per se*. Missionizing to the "infidels" had to be a second consideration. Missionizing to the indigenous population was set back even further on the agenda of Catholic priests in areas which were chaotic or where society had been massively disrupted. Catholic priests who entered Lower Burma during the Arakanese wars (1598-1607) were unable to achieve any success in converting the indigenous population and, in fact, argued against wasting any effort on this task.[292]

Catholic priests in Banga and Arakan thus focused their energies on the Portuguese populations scattered throughout these regions. The sight of the priest in front of his altar reminded these "former" Christians of their Catholic upbringing.[293] The clear identification of the Catholic priests with the established Portuguese community, however, fostered additional problems. Arakanese kings, who treated different religious groups tolerantly, viewed the role of the Catholic church in Arakan in political as well as religious terms. The primary concern of the Arakanese king was to maintain order and stability in the kingdom. The Arakanese conception of a cellular society, with individualized pockets of people based on ethnic-religious-functional criteria, meant that

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[292]De Brito's letter to Pimenta in 25 January 1601: The priest who was already in Pegu left and then Father Friar Belchior da Luz of St. Dominic: "who is my very near relative...came to seek me there, and is now with me; and , as the country is still disturbed, it holds out no promise; but we hope with the help of God that, when it is pacified, it will yield some good fruit. Till this takes effect, whenever your Paternity will be pleased to send us (?Fathers) to console us, I shall consider it a great favour, the country yielding that which may suit them." Father N. Pimenta, "Fr. N. Pimenta, S. J., on Mogor (Goa, 1 Dec., 1600)," translated by Father H. Hosten, Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, n. s., 23 (1927): 95-96.

[293]Cacegas, Terceira Parte da Historia de S. Domingos, 5:426.

the Arakanese king sought to find a "natural" intermediary between himself and the Portuguese *ex-patrio* communities along the Arakanese coasts and in the royal city. Self-elected leaders of the Portuguese often proved to be unfaithful opportunists. The Catholic priests, however, seemed able to bring the Portuguese communities in which they preached solace, order, and stability. [294]

What was especially visible in Catholic sermons was the atmosphere of silence and awe that the priest evoked from the Catholic audience during the ritual. As the Catholic priest delivered his sermon, the Portuguese became quiet and sedate and respectful to the priest as he reverenced his god:

> [T]he indigenes [*os naturaes*], accustomed not to see nor to hear among [the Portuguese] anything but fighting, grunting and ferocity, were enchanted with these seizures of humanity and gentleness.[295]

Indigenous rulers were impressed by this ability of Catholic priests to bring the Portuguese to heel. Thus, they sought to utilize Catholic priests to quiet the otherwise uncontrollable Portuguese community. The Catholic priests thus became, in addition to the religious guides of the Portuguese communities, their political intermediary with the Arakanese crown:

> Because all those *naciones* believe that the Christians of these parts esteem very much the *Religiosos* and the *Padres*, when the king saw that I had placed myself in his power, he was completely self-assured.[296]

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[294]See one example of this in ibid., 5:427.

[295]Ibid.

[296]Manrique, Itinerario, 1:84.

One particularly dramatic performance of indigenous statecraft at Chittagong in 1602 indicates the role which the Arakanese king expected the Catholic priests to play. The king of Arakan, Min-raza-kri, supported by a powerful fleet raided the Portuguese settlement by surprise, sacking the entire place. The Dominican priests abandoned their church, which was burned to the ground, and took refuge instead in a gunboat from which they defended themselves. During the same period, Min-raza-kri had placed two other Catholic priests, Jesuits, also present at Chittagong, in prison, where they were mistreated; one of them died in captivity. When the question of peace came up, Min-raza-kri included in his terms the continued presence of the Catholic priests among the Portuguese at this place which he had just destroyed and a Catholic church which he would now allow them to rebuild. Despite his destruction of the Portuguese *bandel* as and the Catholic church, and having jailed and threatened the lives of the Catholic priests (and caused the death of one), Min-raza-kri came to the Catholic priests himself and asked them to stay. In return, he would build them a new church with his own money. The transformation was hardly extreme and was not attributed by the priests to divine inspiration. Rather, Min-raza-kri in his role as king, had seen a political resolution to a Portuguese problem reach fruition. Now he had to find some way of restoring stability at Chittagong, which would continue to include the same Portuguese traders he had just humbled. Min-raza-kri realized that Catholic priests could play a useful role in his statecraft regarding the Portuguese community at Chittagong. As his explanation has been recorded: "he spoke to them in person and beseeched them so that they would not leave,

considering that he would never have peace securely with those Portuguese, without Priests remaining with them."[297]

Despite the new church and Min-raza-kri's promises, the whole episode revealed to the Catholic priests the *realpolitik* of Arakanese-Portuguese relations. The relationship between the Arakanese crown and the Portuguese Catholic priests allowed the Arakanese king to fulfil two necessary functions of Arakanese kingship. First, the Catholic priests brought stability and order, a political function. Second, the Arakanese kings became the patrons of the local Catholic priests, allowing them to fulfil their religious function as the primary religious patron of the kingdom, regardless of the particular religion being patronized. Since indigenous rulers considered Catholic priests as political intermediaries between themselves and the Portuguese community, the indigenous rulers retaliated against the Catholic priests when the Portuguese behaved badly.[298] Some Catholic priests, such as the Dominicans, seem to have felt threatened by this. The Dominicans abandoned the Chittagong mission soon after, not to return for several years.[299]

Despite the Dominicans' temporary withdrawal from Chittagong, Min-raza-kri and his successors continued to support the Catholic priests who would serve as

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[297]Cacegas, Terceira Parte da Historia de S. Domingos, 5:429.

[298]During a raid by the King of Arakan in 1602, in Chittagong, Father Francis Fernandez lost an eye and then died shortly afterward in an Arakanese prison. Father Andrew Boves was chained, hands and neck, and thrown into an Arakanese prison as well. J. J. A. Campos, History of the Portuguese in Bengal, with an introduction by B. P. Ambashthuya (Patna: Janaki Prakashan, n. d.), 102.

[299]This occurred shortly after Min-raza-kri's November, 1602 raid. Cacegas, Terceira Parte da Historia de S. Domingos, 5:429.

intermediaries with the Portuguese communities in Arakan and as communication links between these communities and the Arakanese king. In fact, this was not an unusual expectation and characterized the statecraft of rulers throughout Southeastern Bengal as well. Throughout the region, from Mrauk-U to Chandecan, indigenous rulers had shifted responsibility for controlling the volatile Portuguese communities onto the bearers of the cross. Catholic priests, despite the example of the Dominicans at Chittagong, did not shirk this responsibility, and, in fact, invited it. In doing so, however, the Catholic priests misunderstood this assignment of political responsibility, when they interpreted it as the recognition of their order's moral superiority:

> [W]hat pleases him [The king of Chandecan] most is that he hears everybody praise the honesty and uprightness of our Society. He gave the Father another ground and site, suitable for building a Church and a house...He also gave welcome assistance in erecting the buildings by supplying the artisans and workmen. *He generally leaves it to the Father to settle all the affairs of the Portuguese.*[300]

The Catholic priests in Southeastern Bengal and Arakan were no longer simply the religious guides and conscience of the Catholic community, they were political intermediaries, even policemen. And, as many Catholic priests found to their surprise, they were scapegoats for punishment by indigenous rulers when the Portuguese communities, such as those at Sripur and Chittagong, became volatile. In return, Hindu and Buddhist rulers, from Sripur to Mrauk-U, provided the Catholic priests with stipends, land-grants, buildings to be used as churches, and permission to proselytize.

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[300]Father Francis Fernandez, "The Letter of Fr. Francis Fernandez, dated Dianga the 11th before the Kalenda of January of the Year [15]99," in Father N. Pimenta, "Jesuit Letters from Bengal, Arakan & Burma (1599-1600)," translated by Father H. Hosten, Bengal Past and Present 30 (1925): 58. The emphasis is mine.

One religious grant followed another from the late sixteenth century: at Sripur in 1598, at Chittagong and Chandecan in 1599, again at Chittagong in 1602, and so on.[301] In any case, indigenous interpretations of "their" Catholic priests thus contrasted sharply with the Catholic priests' views of themselves.

Indigenous rulers expected the same things from the Catholic priests that they expected of other leaders of local communities. Similar expectations existed for *rwa-kauns* and *su-kris* for the good behavior of their village and super-village communities, respectively. Similar accountability also characterized these expectations. The difference, however, was that the Catholic priests probably saw themselves as religious and not political leaders.[302] Without their consent, their identity had been transformed by the Portuguese-Arakanese relationship and by the nature of the special missionizing of the Catholic priests in the northeastern Bay of Bengal in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Having focussed their attentions on a particularly Portuguese audience, they were tied to them in the minds of indigenous rulers.

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[301]At Sripur in 1598, the ruler Cadaray, a "gentile," opened the doors for limited Catholic conversion in his domain: "[He] gave permission to his subjects to become Christians. Besides, he had letters-patent executed by which he granted them a yearly income of six hundred crowns, and asked them to look for a convenient place to build a Church, for he wished to provide everything necessary for its erection. At their request, he gave many privileges to those who should become Christians, so that, with the help of God, they hoped to have in a short time many conversions of infidels." Pierre du Jarric, "A Missionary Tour of Bengal in 1598," translated by Father A. Sauliere, Bengal Past and Present 14 (1917): 157-8. In 1599, the king of Arakan wrote a letter to Father Francis Fernandez, and then: "At once he [the king of Arakan] selected and ordered a site to be cleared, which is suitable for building Church and a house and convenient for the Christian inhabitants. Those who are experienced and versed in these matters assert that in virtue of this diploma [letter] the King is bound to provide us with everything necessary both in the port of Chittagong and in the town of Arracan." Fernandez, "Letter," 62; and Cacegas, Terceira Parte da Historia de S. Domingos, 5:429.

[302]There is no evidence to suggest that Catholic priests in Arakan or Banga saw themselves as anything more than proselytizers, priests, and moral authorities in the areas in which they missionized.

But there was another side to the priest's intermediary role. The building of Catholic churches by indigenous rulers was even more significant as a symbol than as a practical way of keeping Catholic priests in their realms. Having established the intermediary status of the Catholic priest between themselves and the Portuguese communities, and thus having added a political component to a religious function, indigenous rulers constructed new churches for the Catholic priests as a means of transferring this authority over the church to the broader Portuguese community. The Catholic churches became sites for the successful and peaceful mediation of the contest between Portuguese autonomy and indigenous authority. When this contest was lost by indigenous rulers, the church was destroyed. This paralleled, in a sense, the purification of the Buddhist *sangha* from time to time in the various kingdoms of mainland Southeast Asia (excepting Vietnam). Just as the king patronized the reformed *sangha* after his purification of the former *sangha* (often the same people re-ordained), royal patronage was renewed for the Catholic priests after the destruction of their church. After the king destroyed the Catholic church and punished the priests, for example, the position of the Catholic priests was renewed through a new grant of land and the building of a new church, always at the expense of the indigenous ruler. There was never a question of expelling the Catholic priests on a permanent basis or of preventing the construction of new Catholic churches, as long as they were built by royal grant, for to do so would have meant permanently surrendering royal claims to authority over the Portuguese.

Again, as I discussed in the previous section, Arakanese rulers viewed their royal

patronage of Buddhist monks in the countryside in much the same way as they viewed

their patronage of Catholic priests as discussed in the present section. This does not

imply, however, the full development of religious identities in rural Arakan. Instead, I

would suggest that it expressed royal assumptions that religious clergy were important to

the religious, whether Buddhist or Christian, and that by tying the religious clergy to the

royal center through religious patronage, outlying recognition of central authority could be

strengthened or enhanced or, at the most basic level, introduced when no recognition of

central authority existed in the first place.

5.5 Summary

This chapter suggests how Buddhism may have spread in rural Arakan over the

1430-1630 period. The process worked in two directions. First, rural Arakanese

responded to increasing domestic and international trade and the urbanization of the royal

capital, as well as traditional royally-sponsored festivals, by taking their goods and

themselves to the royal city. The royal city itself was a window for the advertising of

Buddhism. Second, *gama-vasi* monks during this period made important inroads into

rural Arakan and introduced Buddhism in terms which were readily understandable by

rural Arakanese: they stressed the Buddha's control over sickness and disease, as well as

other natural threats. Further, Buddhism was recognizable in other ways, as Buddha

images and religious sites seemed familiar to those who had traditionally worshipped

images of *nats* and natural sites of supernatural power. Finally, pagoda- and monastery-

building, as well as Catholic-church building (not to mention the funding of religious

clergy) by the royal court was one way in which it established its authority in an attractive polity.

CHAPTER 6

FROM CAPTIVES TO LORDS AND LABORERS:

MUSLIMS IN ARAKAN IN THE SEVENTEENTH AND EIGHTEENTH

CENTURIES

In the nineteenth century, the Arakan Littoral's Muslim population consisted of

large numbers of fisherman, agriculturalists, and textile-makers ("weavers and dyers").[303]

According to the colonial census-takers who collected data in Arakan for the Report on

the Census of British Burma (1872),[304] few Arakanese Muslims identified themselves as

Sayyids, the term for the prestigious status-group consisting of claimed descendants of

Muhammed. Instead they called themselves Shaykhs, who formed a lower status-group

among the Muslims of northern India.[305] But an additional factor makes these Muslims

relevant to the process of religious change in early modern Arakan: a substantial portion

of Arakan's Muslim population was made up of descendants of Muslims who had lived

in Arakan for centuries. I am concerned chiefly with these Muslim cultivators, to whom I

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[303]Comstock, "Notes on Arakan," 220, 238; and Foley, "Geological and Statistical Account of the Island of Rambree," 202-203.

[304]Report on the Census of British Burma Taken in August 1872 (Rangoon: Government Press, 1875).

[305]"Appendix 1: Arakan Division," in Report on the Census of British Burma Taken in August 1872 (Rangoon: Government Press, 1875), 17.

refer collectively as the "Muslim cultivator class." In the nineteenth century, the British, for reasons that will be discussed in Chapter 10, pinned the hopes of developing eastern Danra-waddy's agricultural potential upon this large and successful group of Muslim cultivators who dominated western Danra-waddy (chiefly the Kalá-dan Valley).

From the available evidence, however, a Muslim cultivator class does not seem to appear in Arakan until the early seventeenth century. Even then, prior to the nineteenth century, few large-scale and permanent Muslim communities emerged in the Arakan Littoral outside the northern section of the Arakan Littoral (the Chittagong area, for example) and Danra-waddy.[306]

Determining, then, how a Muslim cultivator class emerged in Arakan is an important question. There is no evidence, however, to suggest for Arakan anything similar to Eaton's vision of the rise of Muslim cultivators in Bengal. Eaton's scenario for the Islamization of rural Bengal posits Mughal land-grants to predominantly Muslim rural gentry, and the inclusion of support for the local mosque in the wording of these land-grants. These local mosques, Eaton continues, provided agency in two developments: the organization of communities and land reclamation on the one hand, and the slow inclusion

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[306]Chittagong fell under Mughal rule in the 1660s and it is unclear how much the Islamization of Chittagong owed to the post-1660s period rather than to the period of Arakanese rule. Out of the four remaining zones which remained part of the Arakanese kingdom, significant Muslim communities of longstanding duration emerged chiefly in Danra-waddy. Exceptions include the small group of Muslims whose ancestors were deported to Rama-waddy in the 1660s and the Muslim community in San-twei which seems to have developed out of a garrison of Muslim soldiers left behind by the Burmans after 1784. See Tydd, Burma Gazetteer: Sandoway District, 19; Report on the Settlement Operations in the Sandoway District, Season 1897-1898, 2; "Report on the Revision of Soil Classification and Land Revenue Rates in the Kyaukpyu District, Season 1898-99," 3.

of Muslim belief into the indigenous religious framework on the other.[307] Arakan does not fit specifically into such a model. Instead, in Danra-waddy, the rise of a Muslim cultivator class, as well as of Muslim town-dwellers (elites, artisans, and others), owed much to the emergence of the Luso-Arakanese 'slave-trade' in captives drawn from Banga throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

I will assert that there was a long-term but relatively minor Muslim presence in the Arakan littoral, as early as the ninth century. Large and permanent Muslim settlements, however, arose in Danra-waddy only from the late sixteenth century at the earliest. I will support this assertion with an examination of the impact of the Luso-Arakanese trade in Bengali captives upon both the royal city and outlying areas in Danra-waddy during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. First, I will discuss the earlier presence of Muslims in Arakan. Then, turning to the slave-trade, I will discuss the differences between Arakanese and Luso-Arakanese slave-raiding in Bengal. To stress the significance of the slave-trade, I will also suggest the likely demographic impact of this trade upon Danra-waddy. Third, I will attempt to explain how Bengali captives resettled in the Arakan littoral formed two different kinds of Muslim groups: one urban and one rural.

6.1 Early Muslims and Itinerant Muslim Traders in the Arakan Littoral

Although I argue in this chapter that large and permanent Muslim communities did not develop until the seventeenth century in Danra-waddy, I do recognize that there was

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[307]Eaton, Rise of Islam and the Bengal Frontier, 265, 268-9, 302-303.

a small but, on the whole, itinerant Muslim population in Danra-waddy from as early as the ninth century. Thus, as individuals, Muslims had been associated with Arakan long before the seventeenth century, although I think there is little reason to believe that they formed "communities" in the Arakan littoral on a par with those that developed in the seventeenth century. These "individuals" consisted of castaways, mercenaries, intermediary service elites (that is, court functionaries, such as scribes, eunuchs who handled matters involving the royal harem, the royal bodyguard, and so on), and itinerant traders.

Arakanese traditions hold that as early as the eighth or ninth centuries, Muslim traders were shipwrecked on the coast of Rama-waddy. These castaways were then sent to Danra-waddy, where they settled in villages,[308] but do not seem to have provoked any religious changes.

The growth of the Muslim presence in Arakan coincided with the emergence of the early Mrauk-U dynasty. As I have explained elsewhere, early Mrauk-U expansion did not depend solely upon Portuguese mercenaries. During the early Mrauk-U period Muslim mercenaries were brought to Arakan to fight in special campaigns or to solve special problems.[309] During the early seventeenth century, Min-raza-kri tried to solve his

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[308]Ahmad Hasan Dani, "Early Muslim Contact with Bengal," in S. Moinul Haq, ed., The Proceedings of the All Pakistan History Conference. First Session. Held at Karachi. 30th. 31st March & 1st April 1951 (Karachi: Pakistan Historical Society, n.d.), 193.

[309]For a discussion of the benefits which maritime-derived resources such as mercenaries and firearms, offered to indigenous rulers, see the discussion in Lieberman, "Europeans, Trade and the Unification of Burma," 203-226; on the dangers of using mercenaries during this period, see Victor Lieberman, "Was the Seventeenth Century a Watershed in Burmese History?," in Southeast Asia in the Early Modern Era: Trade. Power. and Belief, Anthony Reid, ed. (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University

problems with Muslim mercenaries from Masulipatam.[310] It is unlikely that these

mercenaries had no influence in terms of advertising Islam to the Arakanese. After all, the

Muslim mercenaries who helped restore Nara-meik-hla to his throne seem to have built

the Santikan mosque in Mrauk-U in about 1430.[311]

There was also certainly a small Muslim presence among the intermediary service

elites in the royal city during the early Mrauk-U period. The requirements of acting as a

Bengali-Muslim sultan required people skilled in Persian, stamping Muslim-style coinage,

and tailoring Islamic clothing. At the beginning of the seventeenth century, there were

many Muslims in the Arakanese court, including a Turkish courtier (referred to in

Guerreiro's text as a "rume," but more properly, "Rum") who seems to have become a

kind of royal adviser.[312] There is no reason to suppose, however, that these Muslims

would have been any more than individual foreigners in the service of the Arakanese royal

court. In any case, they formed an 'invisible' population, since we do not find written

evidence of their presence until the late sixteenth century.[313]

The Mrauk-U Muslim merchant community during this and later periods

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Press, 1993), 228.

[310]Guerreiro, Relação Anual, 3:84.

[311]Forchhammer, Report, 39.

[312]Guerreiro, Relação Anual, 1:291.

[313]According to one source, in 1571, when Min-palaun ascended the throne, his subjects included "ပြဿဿန် စ ေသာ က္လား: အဆုၤိၤ: (the Indians together, amongst whom were the Mussalmans [Muslims])." Mi, "Rakhine Razawin," 160b.

contributed to the Muslim presence in Arakan, but the size and influence of this generally

itinerant community waxed and waned in correlation to the vitality of Mrauk-U's

maritime trade. Temporary commercial wayfarers, Muslim traders found a special place

in the tolerant Arakanese royal city. In the 1510s, these traders included Kalingas and

Bengalis.[314] By the 1580s, Parsees (Persians?) "using ocean-going ships and boats," came

to trade in Mrauk-U "yearly without fail."[315] Some Muslim traders or travellers were

also employed in Arakanese royal service as advisers or mercenaries, or port officials.[316]

Despite Portuguese fears of a Muslim dominance in the court,[317] the number of Muslims

permanently settled in Arakan prior to the 1620s must have been relatively small and

limited almost completely to Mrauk-U.

During some periods, Muslim traders likely abandoned the royal city altogether.

When the Portuguese freebooters at Syriam began raiding the eastern Bay of Bengal from

1603, for example, they targeted Muslim shipping, either forcing it into Syriam or

destroying it.[318] Portuguese activity after 1607, made it nearly impossible for Muslim

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[314]Pires, Suma Oriental, 1:95.

[315]Sanda-mala-linkaya, Rakhine Razawin thet-kyan, 2:93.

[316]In 1601, for example, Min-raza-kri took advice from a Turkish Muslim and Muslim representatives of the Sultan of Masulipatam. See Guerreiro, Relação Anual, 1:291.

[317]Ibid., 1:291.

[318]Documentos Remettidos da India ou Livres das Monções. Raymundo de Bulhão Pato, ed. (Lisbon: Ordem da Classe de Sciencias Moraes, Politicas e Bellas-Lettras da Academia Real das Sciencias de Lisboa, 1885), 2:392.

trade with Arakan to continue. The self-made king of Sundiva, the pirate Sebastião

Gonsalves y Tibao, for example, raided the entire Arakanese coast and temporarily ruined

Mrauk-U's maritime trade,[319] likely forcing Muslim traders to pull out.[320] Confirming

this, one contemporary source speaks of the concern of the Arakanese king to bring back

"Indian" traders (this usually referred to Muslim Indian traders during this period) to

Arakan, implying that these traders had stopped coming to Mrauk-U.[321]

After the Arakanese suppressed Gonsalves y Tibao's 'kingdom' in 1617, however,

Muslim trade with Arakan certainly resumed. In the early 1620s, William Methwold

speaks of "Moores, Persians and Arabians" (likely traders), who enjoyed the favor of the

Arakanese king.[322] Manrique confirms the presence of large numbers of Muslim (and

other) traders from Masulipatam, Aceh, and elsewhere.[323] The Dutch sources, as well,

indicate that in the 1630s there was a settlement of Muslim traders near Mrauk-U which

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[319]Ibid., 1:357; 2:393. For a general account of Tibao, see Faria e Sousa, Asia Portuguesa, with an introduction by M. Lopes d'Almeida (Coimbra: Livraria Civilização, n.d.), 5:284-292; 6:80-86. See also the discussion in Charney, "Crisis and Reformation in a Maritime Kingdom," 196-198.

[320]See Gonzales, Newe Relation, 5-11, partially translated for me by Stephan van Galen.

[321]Ibid., 4.

[322]William Methwold, "Relations of the Kingdome of Golchonda and Other Neighbouring Nations within the Gulfe of Bengala, Arrecan, Pegu, Tannassery, etc., and the English Trade in Those Parts," in Relations of Golconda in the Early Seventeenth Century, W. H. Moreland, ed. (London: Hakluyt Society, 1931), 42.

[323]Manrique, Itinerario, 1:192.

the Dutch knew as "Moorsche Bandel."[324] Thereafter, Muslim traders continued to form

a small, possibly influential, segment of Danra-waddy's population throughout the

remainder of the pre-1784 period.[325]

As a result, it is doubtful if we can really talk about a stable, large, or permanent

Muslim *community* during the early Mrauk-U period. I would suggest that most Muslims

in Danra-waddy prior to the 1620s lived in Mrauk-U as temporary visitors. Although

they likely advertised Islam, there are no sources which indicate that they contributed in a

major way to religious change in Arakan.

6.2 Captive Raids

Arakanese slave-raids during the seventeenth century contributed to the emergence

of a permanent Muslim community in early modern Arakan. Although Arakanese

Muslims of this period had diverse roots, clearly Arakanese slave-raiding into Bengal in

the seventeenth century dramatically increased the presence of Islam in Danra-waddy.

Over the seventeenth century, for example, the Muslim community in Arakan emerged

from a numerically unimportant group to perhaps the majority population in the Danra-

waddy zone, at least in very large sections of it. In this section, I focus upon the slave-

raids, an understanding of which is necessary for the discussion which follows in later

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[324]Subrahmanyam also explains that "bandel" comes from the Persian word "bandar." See Sanjay Subrahmanyam, "Slaves and Tyrants: Dutch Tribulations in Seventeenth-Century Mrauk-U," Journal of Early Modern History 1 (1997): 219.

[325]Alexander Hamilton, A New Account of the East Indies, with an introduction and notes by William Foster, ed. (London: Argonaut Press, 1930): 2:17, refers to presumably small numbers of Muslim Indian traders in Arakan at the beginning of the eighteenth century.

sections. As I will explain more fully in the second section of this chapter, the Bengali

communities brought over to Arakan were already going through the process of

conversion to Islam and these developments were carried into the Arakan Littoral.

6.2.1 The Purposes and Organization of the Luso-Arakanese Slave-raids

From the late 1610s or early 1620s, both the Arakanese and Portuguese under

Arakanese overlordship raided Bengal for captives, but out of different motives. I will

explain how this affected the direction of the flow of Bengali captives out of Banga and in

or out of the Arakan Littoral, especially during the first half of the seventeenth century.

Although it has been suggested that the Arakanese began raiding Banga for

captives and loot only from the beginning of the seventeenth century,[326] this practice

actually goes back at least a century-and-a-half earlier. During the late fifteenth and

sixteenth centuries, for example, the Arakanese raided the northern Arakan Littoral and

Banga for captives and booty. Arakanese raiding into the Irra-waddy Valley for the same

ends actually goes back even centuries earlier. In a population-poor region, plagued by

diseases and disasters which frequently could carry off a substantial part of the

population at any moment, it made sense that royal courts sought new and frequent

population inputs. Arakan itself was a target for such raiding: hill tribes, for example, also

raided the Arakan Littoral's lowlands for captives and many Arakanese found themselves

sold in Upper Burma from time to time.[327] Captive-raiding was a normal part of life not

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[326]Habibullah, "Arakan in the pre-Mughal History of Bengal," 33.

[327]Mi, "Rakhine Razawin," 205a, 209b.

only in the Arakan Littoral, but throughout early modern Southeast Asia.

Anthony Reid has drawn conceptions of slavery derived from scholars working on early modern Africa and has applied them usefully to early modern Southeast Asia. As Reid suggests, as in Africa, in early modern Southeast Asia there were examples of both "open" and "closed" systems of slavery. In an "open" system, the system which prevailed in cities, slaves gradually were absorbed by general society. By contrast, in a "closed" system, a system prevailing in labor-intensive agricultural areas, slaves formed a class apart and their social position was characterized by low status and hereditary social barriers that prevented movement out of slavery.[328] This simple bifurcation was not as clear as it seems, however, and represented merely the polar opposites of a range of different social positions related to different categories of slaves. In pre-seventeenth century Arakan, a "closed" system did exist in the form of Buddhist pagoda slaves, those who were "donated to the *sasana*" and became members of a hereditary and low-status community servicing monasteries and monastery- and pagoda-lands.[329] There is no evidence from the pre-seventeenth century that captives in Arakan were bought or sold. Instead, Arakanese society of that period seems to have treated villagers and others captured in raids much as they would local and pre-existing villagers. The likely reason for this was that Arakanese rulers were especially interested in adding new productive

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[328]Anthony Reid, "'Closed' and 'Open' Slave Systems in Pre-Colonial Southeast Asia," in Slavery, Bondage and Dependency in Southeast Asia, Anthony Reid, ed. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1983), 156-7.

[329]The most colorful example of this is the case of Ukka Bran as discussed in San Shwe Bu, "U Ga Byan, Governor of Sindin, Arakan," Journal of the Burma Research Society 9 (1919): 151-2.

agricultural villages to rural Arakan, perhaps to provide sustenance to the court elite, perhaps to provide produce or special goods for maritime markets. The sources, however, do not tell us enough about this to make any reliable assertions. In any case, in the pre-seventeenth century, the Arakanese brought back captives destined to live in rural Arakan as communities, not as individuals, thus not breaking down communal or family ties as was the case of the Atlantic slave-trade. Entire villages carried to Arakan from the Irrawaddy Valley, for example, spotted the lowlands of the Arakan Littoral and remained agricultural communities just as they had been prior to their deportation to Arakan.[330]

The Arakanese also sought new population inputs for the court. When Arakanese raiders took royal service groups, such as dancers or scribes, from defeated royal courts, for example, the Arakanese brought these royal service groups back to Arakan where they became Arakanese royal service groups, with the same kinds of tasks as they had before (that is, dancers remained dancers, and scribes remained scribes).[331] We know that when Arakanese raiders returned with captives from Bengal, the captives were interrogated regarding their skills and other personal data, and based upon this information, the best were brought into the royal court.[332] It should not be surprising that elite Muslim women

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[330]Kawi-thara, "Rakhine Arei-taw-poun," 59b; and "Rakhine Min Raza-kri Arei-taw Sadan," 21a.

[331]Ibid; and Kawi-thara, "Rakhine Arei-taw-poun," 59b.

[332] The Arakanese, as the account continues: "Only the Feringi pirates sold their prisoners . . . the Maghs employed all their captives in agriculture and other kinds of service." Shihabuddin Talish, "The Feringi Pirates of Chatgaon, 1665 A.D.," translated by Jadunath Sarkar, Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, n. s., 3 (1907): 422; "Upon their arrival they were conducted to the rajah...who chose from among them for his slaves all the handicraftsmen, and most useful persons, amounting to about one fourth of the whole number:..." R. E. Roberts, "Account of Aracan. Written at Islàmabad (Chittagong) in June, 1777," Asiatic Annual Register 1 (1799): 157. According to Stephan van Galen, Dutch sources claim that

captured in Banga entered the Arakanese royal harem or became concubines to Arakanese elite men.[333] Likewise, many Bengalis, probably Muslims, were castrated and entered into the royal court as eunuchs. Some, like the Muslim eunuch Ashraf Khan in the seventeenth-century Arakanese court even gained positions of authority in the royal city.[334]

In the seventeenth century, however, Arakanese rulers realized that income could be derived directly or indirectly from selling some of their captives. The European arrival into the early modern Bay of Bengal, for example, ushered in the rise of attractive markets for selling human captives.[335] The Arakanese court gave permission to autonomous groups of raiders, especially the Portuguese at Chittagong, to raid Banga for slaves without fear of royal retaliation (Banga was one of the Arakanese king's claimed domains). Those who wished to raid Banga thus had to secure permission from the Arakanese king to do so. In exchange for royal permission, crown servants were to be allowed to hand-pick one-fourth of the captives and one half of the material loot, although the crown

seventeenth century Dutch traders observed that the Arakanese wrote down all kinds of data regarding Bengali captives in big black books (*parabeiks*?). These "books," however, have since been lost. Stephan van Galen, personal communication, Leiden, the Netherlands, June, 1998.

[333]As Talish explains: "Many high-born persons and Sayyads, many pure and Sayyad-born women, were compelled to undergo the disgrace of the slavery service or concubinage...of these wicked men." Talish, "The Feringi Pirates of Chatgaon," 422.

[334]See Subrahmanyam, "Slaves and Tyrants," 222-223.

[335]Sinnappah Arasaratnam, "Slave Trade in the Indian Ocean in the Seventeenth Century," in Mariners, Merchants and Oceans: Studies in Maritime History, K. S. Mathew, ed. (New Delhi: Manohar, 1995), 197.

demands often exceeded these limits.[336] Out of the slaves picked by the court, those who were not selected for royal service were either placed or sold in the domestic labor market for agricultural labor.[337]

The beginning of the Dutch trade with Arakan also prompted the Arakanese court to become directly involved in selling slaves outside the domestic market. The V. O. C. (Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie or Dutch East India Company) needed slaves and rice for their plantations in the 'Spice Islands' of Banda and Amboina, as well as for labor in shipyards and workshops in the company's factories.[338] The closest source for both slaves and rice was, of course, Java, but indigenous rulers there were unwilling to provide either to their Dutch enemy, especially since Javanese Muslim rulers were hesitant to sell Muslims to gentiles. Further, Coromandel markets for slaves hinged upon unpredictable local famines (many sold themselves into slavery during such famines).[339] Thus, the

[336]As an account of 1777 relates: "The rajah of Rekheng...will not permit any of his subjects to leave his country, to plunder and makes slaves, until he had received from them a considerable sum of money. When these plunderers return to Rekheng, every thing they have made prize of is carried to the rajah. Of the goods it is his allowed privilege to take half, and of the prisoners, one-fourth; but he generally exacts the lion's share." Roberts, "Account of Aracan," 159.

[337]According to one source: "the rest [of the captives, the Arakanese king] returned to the captors, who conducted them, by ropes about their necks, to a market, and there sold them from twenty to seventy rupees each, according to their strength, abilities, &c. The purchasers assigned them the cultivation of their lands, and other laborious employments . . ." Ibid., 157.

[338]Remco Raben, "Batavia and Columbo: The Ethnic and Spatial Order of Two Colonial Cities 1600-1800," (Ph.D. diss., Leiden University, 1996): 120; Khin Maung Nyunt, "Burma's Rice Trade in the 17th Century," Guardian 17, 4 (April, 1970): 15; Charney, "Crisis and Reformation in a Maritime Kingdom," 200-201.

[339]Raben, "Batavia and Columbo," 120.

Dutch turned to the Arakanese Littoral, where slaves could be had very cheaply.[340] The

Arakanese court, however, via the royal monopoly, prevented the Dutch from trading

with the Luso-Arakanese slavers based at Chittagong. Instead, the court forced the Dutch

to trade goods and silver for Bengali slaves and Arakanese rice at Mrauk-U.[341] Although

the Dutch trade was substantial, it effectively disappeared in the 1660s, in part because

of Mughal pressure (stemming from Mughal concerns over the continual plunder of their

districts in Banga by the Luso-Arakanese raiders) upon the Dutch to end their trade with

Arakan.[342] Despite the decline of the Dutch trade, however, Arakanese slave-raiding into

Banga (for labor inputs at home rather than for sale in maritime markets) continued up

through and after the Burman conquest, and does not seem to have changed in

character.[343]

The Portuguese began slave-raiding in Banga solely for the purposes of selling the

captives in slave-markets. The Portuguese at Chittagong, for example, were profiteers,

and they primarily sought Bengali captives to sell in maritime markets in eastern India.[344]

In doing so they responded to the early modern labor crisis which took place in European

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[340]Om Prakash, ed., The Dutch Factories in India, 1617-1623: A Collection of Dutch East India Company Documents Pertaining to India (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal, 1984), 52.

[341]Charney, "Crisis and Reformation in a Maritime Kingdom," 200-202.

[342]Ibid., 205; and Raben, Batavia and Columbo, 120.

[343]Roberts, "Account of Aracan," 157.

[344]Arasaratnam, "Slave Trade in the Indian Ocean," 197.

ports and enclaves in the Bay of Bengal. Europeans, for example, found it difficult to reconcile the high cost of paid labor in these ports and the demand for profit at home.[345] Thus, slaves were a low-cost alternative.[346] On at least one occasion, the Portuguese on Sundiva island, under Sebastião Gonsalves y Tibau, also sold captive Arakanese crews whom they had captured.[347]

The Portuguese at Chittagong do not seem to have undertaken substantial slave-raiding in Banga until the second decade of the seventeenth century. This was in part due to the way in which the Arakanese ruler Min-kamaun brought them under more forcible Arakanese authority after the Gonsalves y Tibau episode. In the past, the Portuguese at Chittagong had been a motley group of free traders, exiles from the *Estado da India*, and mercenaries who garrisoned Arakan's chief northern port. After Min-kamaun brought Sundiva under Arakanese rule and resettled the Portuguese survivors at Chittagong, the Portuguese were given revenue-lands to support themselves and were expected to provide service to the Arakanese crown in war.[348] The Arakanese crown also demanded half their revenues to the king, but the Portuguese were left to their own devices as to the source of these revenues, either through the revenues of their estates or through raiding Banga for

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[345]Ibid., 198, 203.

[346]This is inferred from ibid., 197.

[347]Antonio Bocarro, Decada 13 da Historia da India Composto por Antonio Bocarro Chronista d'Aquelle Estado (Lisboa: Academia Real das Sciences de Lisboa, 1876), 2:442.

[348]Manrique, Itinerario, 1:252; and Charney, "Crisis and Reformation in a Maritime Kingdom," 203.

loot and captives. Thus, the Portuguese responded partly to the new Dutch demand for slaves, not only in eastern India, but also in Java. In so doing, the Portuguese slavers made little differentiation between whom they captured or to whom they sold their captives,[349] even selling the slaves back to the Mughals.[350]

Further, the Portuguese were freer to raid Banga than they had been in the past. Previously, the Portuguese had probably been restricted by Arakanese claims to be protectors of Banga. Prior to the 1620s, for example, the Arakanese court conceived of Banga as part of the Arakanese kingdom. In 1430, when Nara-meik-hla needed Muslim ·support to recapture the Laun-kret throne, he is said to have transferred Arakanese claims to Banga to the sultanate of Bengal. Later, Min-ba-kri rescinded this transfer of sovereignty and claimed authority over the "twelve towns of Banga."[351] This claim was more symbolic than real, but certainly the Arakanese were able to demonstrate physical control of portions of Banga during several campaigns in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. By the 1620s, however, a series of military defeats in Bengal, during the reigns of Min-raza-kri and Min-kamaun, seems to have demonstrated to the court that regardless of their claim to sovereignty in Banga, the Mughals exercised real control. As a result, the Arakanese court accepted an arrangement with the Portuguese

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[349]The Portuguese captured both Hindus and Muslims without differentiating between them. Talish, "The Feringi Pirates of Chatgaon," 422. Further, they even sold slaves taken from Mughal Bengal back to the Mughals.

[350]The Arakanese, as the account continues: "Only the Feringi pirates sold their prisoners . . . the Maghs employed all their captives in agriculture and other kinds of service." Ibid., 422.

[351]"Rakhine Min Raza-kri Arei-taw Sadan," 13b-14a.

community at Chittagong that half the booty taken in Banga was to be sent to the Arakanese court.

6.2.2 The Demographics of Slave-raiding: the Banglacization of Danra-waddy

Whether it was the Arakanese or the Portuguese slavers who raided Bengal, large numbers of Bengali Muslim captives were funneled into Danra-waddy settlements. The Portuguese sent half their loot from Bengal, including the captives, for example, to Danra-waddy as tribute to the Arakanese court.[352]

The regional impact of the Luso-Arakanese slave-trade is indicated in part by Muslim settlement patterns which continued up through the nineteenth century (as well as the twentieth). The colonial Census of 1891 fortunately provided village, circle, township, and district tabulations of returns regarding declarations of religious affiliation, which allow us to construct a fairly clear picture of Muslim settlement patterns in Arakan. Table 1 indicates that about ninety-four percent of all Muslims in the Arakan Littoral lived in Danra-waddy, other zones (Rama-waddy, Mekha-waddy, and Dwara-waddy) accounting for about six percent of the total Muslim population (I have left the Arakan Hill Tracts out of this tabulation as they are not relevant to this discussion). Looked at another way, as a percentage of the population in each zone, Muslims made up a substantial portion of Danra-waddy's population, but only four percent at most in other areas.

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[352]Talish, "The Feringi Pirates of Chatgaon," 424.

Table 1

Muslims in the Arakan Littoral, Calculated by Zone (1891 Census)

Zone	No. Muslims	% of all Muslims	No. All Religions	Muslims as % of Total Pop.
Danra-waddy	119, 157	94	416, 305	29
Rama-waddy	4, 195	3	138, 492	3
Mekha-waddy	106	1	25, 340	less than 1
Dwara-waddy	3, 128	2	77, 134	4
Total	126, 586	100	675, 271	19

We do not have the necessary data, however, to provide a detailed and completely reliable quantitative analysis of the increasing numbers of Bengali Muslims in the Arakanese littoral in the seventeenth century. Simply stating that Muslims became a numerically important group in the seventeenth century is insufficient in itself and requires at least some quantitative evidence to demonstrate the point. I will attempt to provide a rough estimate of the numerical impact of Bengalis (and, as I will explain in the following subsection, Muslims) upon the population base of the Danra-waddy zone in the seventeenth century. My rough estimate of the population of the Danra-waddy zone in the early seventeenth century is about 170,000 people.[353] I focus upon the Danra-

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[353]For an explanation of how I arrived at this estimate, see Appendix V.

waddy zone, because Muslims were numerically insignificant in Rama-waddy, Mekha-waddy, and Dwara-waddy during this and later centuries. I think that this strengthens the view that Bengali Muslim settlement was of critical importance for the royal capital, because Bengali Muslim captives were concentrated into settlements in the Danra-waddy zone, which was the central zone wherein sat the royal capital. This concentration increased their effect upon Danra-waddy and the royal city in the seventeenth century than would have been the case if they had been scattered more evenly throughout the Arakan littoral. I will thus attempt to come up with a rough estimate of the numbers of these Bengali Muslim captives. By comparing these two rough estimates, those for the overall population of Danra-waddy in the seventeenth century and for the number of Bengali Muslim captives, the numerical impact of Bengali Muslim captives upon Danra-waddy's population base becomes clearer.

When we compare the ceiling population (as above, 170,000) with the demographic inputs provided by Bengali deportees, it is fairly certain that they had an important impact upon Danra-waddy's population base. We have general statistics for the 1622-1629 period: Manrique claimed that the Portuguese brought 24,000 Bengali captives, or about 3,000 per year, to the two settlements near Chittagong known as Dianga and Angarcale.[354] For the 1630-1634 period, Manrique claims that the Portuguese

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[354]Manrique cites two previous Portuguese priests who were at Dianga and Angarcale prior to him. At a later point, Manrique encompasses these years with the five years he was in Arakan (late 1629 to early 1635) under "thirteen years." Thus, the earlier total should refer to the years from 1622 to the end of 1629. Manrique, Itinerario, 1:253.

brought 18,000 slaves, or about 3,600 per year, to these two settlements.[355] These statistics are likely not as incredible as those provided by the priests for ambiguous "conversions" of the captives. The Dutch records show, for example, that Arakanese royal agents at Chittagong kept detailed lists of the personal data for each captive in "big black books."[356] Further, since these slaves were commodities to the Portuguese, the Portuguese likely had a keen interest in keeping detailed records and (in view of the percentage of booty which had to be given to the royal court) would have underestimated, rather than overestimated these numbers. Manrique, who worked amongst these captives and had day-to-day interactions with both Arakanese royal authorities and the Portuguese slavers, easily had access to either source. Thus, from 1622-1634, 42,000 Bengali captives likely passed through Dianga and Angarcale. This does not include Bengalis taken captive during royally-sponsored campaigns.

Arriving at an estimate for the number of Bengali captives brought into Arakan during the period prior to 1622 or after 1634 is more problematic. It becomes easier if the parameters of an estimate are limited to a beginning year of 1618 (when the Portuguese slaver community likely became active at Chittagong) and 1666 (when the Mughals captured Chittagong). Thus, estimates need to be made for the 1617-1621 period (five years) and the 1635-1666 period (32 years). If we apply the lowest average (that for the

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[355]Manrique was in Arakan from the very end of 1629 to the very beginning of 1635. Thus, his "five years" in Arakan mainly refers to the period 1630-1634. Manrique, Itinerario, 1:253.

[356]This comes from Stephan van Galen, personal communication, Leiden, the Netherlands, June, 1998, from his research in the Dutch archives.

1622-1629 period) of 3,000 captives per year to the 1617-1621 and 1635-1666 periods, we arrive at the rough estimates of 15,000 captives for the 1617-1621 period and 90,000 captives for the 1617-1621 period. Altogether, this would amount to 147,000 Bengali captives brought to Arakan between 1617 and 1666.

Of course other factors would reduce the 147,000 figure. A high deathrate among people brutally captured, treated, and transplanted must have occurred. According to Dutch sources, for example, forty percent of the ten thousand captives taken by Thiri-thudhamma-raza in a raid in the 1630s died quickly in captivity.[357] Even then, out of a group of slaves who had survived the journey to Mrauk-U, seventy-five percent died after they were bought by the Dutch.[358] Many Bengali captives also escaped throughout the seventeenth century, and it is not impossible to imagine that the overall numbers of captives may have included many people captured a second or a third time. Finally, the Portuguese-Arakanese arrangement supposedly limited the number of captives delivered to the Arakanese royal agents at one-fourth of the total (even though this was often exceeded), or about 37,000 captives.

Again, however, numerous Arakanese royal campaigns also brought thousands of additional Bengali captives to the Arakan Littoral. By 1630, there may have been about eleven thousand Bengali families settled in rural areas of Danra-waddy.[359] I do not know

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[357]Subrahmanyam, "Slaves and Tyrants," 218.

[358]Ibid.

[359]Manrique, Itinerario, 1:133.

what Manrique meant by "family" or how many people made up each family. If

Manrique referred to households, they likely numbered on the average about five

people.[360] This would give us roughly 55,000 Bengalis in rural Danra-waddy in 1630 or

so. Arakanese raiding afterwards would have added to this figure.[361] Since the Dutch

factors at Mrauk-U were only allowed to buy "new" Bengalis (that is, newly-captured

Bengalis and not those who had been settled in Danra-waddy already),[362] Dutch slave

purchases after 1630 indicate the continuity of the influx of Bengali captives.[363] As slave

raids into Bengal in the eighteenth century could bring in as many as eighteen hundred

Bengali captives at any given time,[364] the Bengali population inputs could easily add

further tens of thousands to the Danra-waddy population base over the century between

the 1660s and the 1760s, even when we allow for Bengalis who migrated back home. I

suggest that a conservative estimate for the number of Bengalis who survived their

resettlement to Danra-waddy by the end of the seventeenth century was perhaps sixty

thousand, probably much higher.

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[360]I borrow five as a standard family base from Than Tun. Than Tun used an average family size of five people to calculate the probable size of Burma's population in the 1630s-1640s. See Than Tun, "Administration Under King Thalun 1629-1648," Journal of Burma Studies 51 (1968): 175.

[361] In 1751, there was an Arakanese royal expedition against Banga, which also reached Dakka. A more thorough campaign took place against the northern portion of the Arakan Littoral in 1753. The Arakanese plundered the Muslim Bengalis who lived along the coasts and rivers of Chittagong and Ramu. Mi, "Rakhine Razawin," 224b.

[362]Subrahmanyam, "Slaves and Tyrants," 225.

[363]See Appendix VI.

[364]Roberts, "Account of Aracan," 157.

I have tried to provide a rough estimate of the number of Bengali Muslims who survived the journey to Danra-waddy. According to these estimates, Bengali Muslim captives may have comprised thirty percent or so of the pre-existing population by the 1660s. Of course, their numbers were maintained (or even grew) not only through increase but also due to the continuation of slave-raiding in Banga throughout the eighteenth century. In this light, it is not surprising that in the late 1770s, as observers based in Chittagong explained: "Almost three-fourths of the inhabitants of Rekheng [Danra-waddy] are said to be natives of Bengal, or descendants of such..."[365] In short, despite the lack of complete data, it is still apparent that the demographic contribution of Bengali captives to Danra-waddy's population base was considerable.

6.2.3 Original Locale and Religious "Identities" of the Captives

The Bengalis whom the Arakanese brought to Danra-waddy as captives were not hill peoples nor were they from the inner or western reaches of what we think of today as Bengal. Rather, they came from the harsh and yet bountiful environment of the Brahmaputra-Meghna delta and thus had developed perceptions of the ways in which the human and natural world worked which were not dissimilar from those of the indigenous population of Danra-waddy. For one thing, these traditions involved a highly flexible religious framework. Second, these traditions developed in response to the threats of the natural and human environment and provided the means to cope with the these threats. In this section, I will explain more fully whence these Bengalis were taken by the Arakanese

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[365]Ibid., 159.

and the kinds of traditions brought by the Bengalis to Danra-waddy.

Most Bengali slaves came from Banga. On occasion, Arakanese royal expeditions

under the command of the *ko-ran-kri*, for example, might attempt to raid as far as Orissa,

but Banga was the usual target.[366] The Luso-Portuguese slavers as well raided areas in

Banga along the major rivers and many miles inland along their banks. As Manrique

explained:

> [The Portuguese] were given permission [to go] with their Geliàs [boats] into
> the kingdoms of Bengala, subjects to the Gran Mogol [the Great Mughal], where
> they sacked and devastated all the towns and settlements which were on the banks
> of the Ganges and two or three leagues [ten or fifteen miles] inland, [and] carried
> away all the movable possessions which they found were of great importance,
> capturing also all the people whom they encountered.[367]

The areas from which Bengali captives were taken by the Arakanese, then, were

areas which had been influenced by Islam for several centuries. However, this does not

mean that Islamic identities had developed in the sense of modern orthodox Islam or that

clearly Muslim identities were yet recognizable. Abdul Karim and Richard Eaton have

both argued that outside urban centers, "Islam" and "Hindu" were not clearly defined

identities in Bengal during this period. Eaton, for example, views a single "Bengali folk

religion." As he explains:

> Instead of visualizing two separate and self-contained social groups, Hindus and
> Muslims, participating in rites in which each stepped beyond its 'natural' communal
> boundaries, one may see instead a single undifferentiated mass of Bengali villagers
> who, in their ongoing struggle with life's usual tribulations, unsystematically picked

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[366]Subrahmanyam, "Slave and Tyrants," 226, 232.

[367]Manrique, Itinerario, 1:252.

and chose from an array of reputed instruments -- a holy man here, a holy river there -- in order to tap superhuman power.[368]

But the existence of a common religious framework, a common perspective on the ways in which the world works, does not necessarily mean that religious identities were not in the process of forming. Karim, for example, seems to view a similar kind of folk religion at work for both Bengali Hindus and Muslims (and even retroactively to Bengali Buddhists of an earlier time) and a cross-sharing by them of the symbols and the sites of Bengali folk religion at least through the sixteenth century. But Karim differs with Eaton by suggesting that there was enough differentiation in the identification of these symbols and sites (holy men, the importance of physical representations of supernatural forces, holy sites, etc) to suggest separate popular religious identities.

Karim suggests that for Muslims in rural Bengali, folk religion had developed into "popular Islam." Karim first differentiates between orthodox and popular Islam as it was understood by Bengalis up through the sixteenth century. Karim defines orthodox Islam, for example, according to five practices: "Iman or belief in God and His Apostles, Namaz or prayer to God, Roza or fasting . . . Hajj or pilgrimage to the holy cities of Makkah and Madinah [and] Zakat (poor-rate)."[369] Popular Islam, however, reflected more of the indigenous Bengali religious framework. As Karim explains, the three aspects of Bengali popular Islam were: "(i) the *Pirism* or the concept of the supremacy of the *Pirs*, (ii)

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[368]Eaton, Rise of Islam and the Bengal Frontier, 281.

[369]Abdul Karim, Social History of the Muslims in Bengal (Down to A.D. 1538) (Dacca: the Asiatic Society of Pakistan, Dacca, 1959), 162.

Mullaism or the growth of the priestly influence and (iii) the reverence to the foot-prints of the Prophet."[370]

These aspects of popular Islam, or Islamized aspects of Bengali folk religion, provided protection from the human and natural environment. *Pirism*, for example, also reflects Eaton's suggestion of the importance of holymen in Bengali folk religion.[371] Certain men were believed to be endowed with superhuman powers and were worshipped, or rather important sites associated with them were revered by both Hindus and Muslims (for Muslims, these men or *pirs* were interpreted as *Sufi* saints).

In addition to living holymen, other sources of protective power were provided by physical symbols of holymen or god(s). Reverence to the foot-prints of the Prophet, like reverence to the tombs of *pirs*, for example, concretized powerful symbols of God or superhumans in the local or accessible environment (in the latter case, these symbols became pilgrimage sites). *Mullaism* also offered a means of holding communities together, which ensured group protection and group prosperity. *Mullaism* refers to the social importance of *mullas*, who were socially-respected Muslim holymen, with many social functions similar to those of Brahman priests in Hindu society, but who did not constitute a caste or separate class of priests.[372]

As I will explain in the following section, popular Islam helped agriculturalists to

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[370]Ibid., 162.

[371]Eaton, The Rise of Islam and the Bengal Frontier, 281.

[372]Karim, Social History of the Muslims in Bengal, 162.

cope with Danra-waddy's human and natural environment. Although not all Bengalis who were brought to Danra-waddy were Muslim, "Muslims" and "Hindus" brought from Bengal shared a prior text -- Eaton's Bengali folk religion -- which offered similar notions of how one could protect oneself in a strange and dangerous new land.[373] With this shared prior text, I will explain, Bengali Hindus and Muslims brought to Danra-waddy likely were open to Muslim influences in the Arakan Littoral which stemmed from the spread of saint cults in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and additional Muslim influence from Mrauk-U's Muslim population and visiting Muslim traders along the coasts.

6.3 Muslims in Danra-waddy

Bengali Muslim captives resettled in Danra-waddy gradually formed two different kinds of social groups over the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. As I explained earlier, the Arakanese court took its pick of the skilled and elite captives and sent non-elites and agriculturalists into the countryside, sometimes to be sold in domestic markets. The difference was important. Muslim Bengalis in the countryside, for example, lived close to the soil and traditional spirits. Their Islam was conditioned by their daily interaction with the natural environment and rural agriculture. I will discuss rural Muslim Bengalis and then I will turn to the Bengali Muslims in the royal city. Bengali Muslims retained in the court and the royal city, however, were distant from the rural surroundings of their counterparts in agricultural villages. Bengali Muslims in the royal city came into contact with ideas and people from different cultural and religious backgrounds, including

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[373]Eaton, The Rise of Islam and the Bengal Frontier, 281.

Muslim traders from Persia and the Middle East.

6.3.1 Servants to the Soil

Although there is very little evidence of a rural Muslim community in Arakan prior to the 1570s, they clearly made up a substantial proportion of the population in the 1770s, prior to Burman rule. Perhaps up to three-quarters of Danra-waddy's population by the 1770s may have been Muslim.[374] In the 1830s, however, only thirty percent of Arakan's general population was Muslim. When we adjust for the absence of large numbers of Muslims in Rama-waddy, Mekha-waddy, and Dwara-waddy, however, the proportion of Muslims in the Danra-waddy zone's population was probably much higher. At least upon the surface, then, the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in Arakanese history brought dramatic changes to the religious landscape of Danra-waddy.

As discussed earlier, captives were divided by the Portuguese and Arakanese according to their skills and status and sent to different places for settlement or sale. Upper caste Bengali captives and Bengali artisans and others who reached Danra-waddy likely ended up in the palace or in royal service-groups in and around the royal city. Others, those who were considered common laborers or agriculturalists found a different home. This may explain the 'caste' divisions suggested in the Census of 1891, the first colonial census to tabulate returns according to 'caste' distinctions, although for Muslims these were status distinctions. The extremes of these distinctions were Sayyid (those who claimed descent from Muhammed) and Shaykhs (a humbler designation, which Eaton

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[374]Roberts, "Account of Aracan," 159.

suggests was how most Muslim cultivators in Bengal identified themselves). These

distinctions, as they applied to Arakanese Muslims are indicated in table 2.

Table 2

Arakanese Muslims, Divided by Status-distinctions (1891 Census)

Zone	Total Muslims	Shaykhs	% of all Muslims	Sayyids	Other
Danra-waddy	58, 255	57, 874	99%	0	381
Rama-waddy & Mekha-waddy	3, 917	3, 890	99%	0	27
Dwara-waddy	2, 121	2, 087	98%	5	29
Total	64, 293	63, 851	99%	5	437

As the tabulations indicate, few Arakanese Muslims identified themselves as anything but

Shaykhs. This lends some support to my contention that it was chiefly agriculturalists

among the Bengali captives who increasingly populated Danra-waddy's rural landscape.

Although Bengali captives coped with the local environment in ways similar to

that of the indigenous population, their approach to the local environment was gradually

reinterpreted in Muslim terms. In short, by examining settlements of Bengali

agriculturalists we can see in part how broader Arakanese or Banga beliefs and

perceptions of how things worked were Islamized.

The Arakanese placed or sold many captives procured from Bengal into rural areas

as agricultural cultivators.[375] There is evidence to suggest that the Arakanese court placed

some of the captives in uncultivated areas ("in the forest") in order to foster the

development of new agricultural communities.[376] European captives also may have

wound up in such communities.[377] Others may have been sold to local *su-kris* or others

to work land already under cultivation. According to one Arakanese source, those who

were captured in one expedition in 1753, were placed "in markets just like cattle and were

sold."[378]

Bengali captives also entered agricultural communities which were to supply food

and other necessities to monasteries, perhaps *aranya-vasi* monasteries, which would have

had greater need for such labor than *gama-vasi* monasteries which received popular

donations to sustain themselves. Some slaves sold in the market-place, for example,

became monastery slaves,[379] which indicates either that some of the captives were bought

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[375]The Arakanese, as the account continues: "Only the Feringi pirates sold their prisoners . . . the Maghs employed all their captives in agriculture and other kinds of service." Talish, "The Feringi Pirates of Chatgaon," 422; "The purchasers assigned them the cultivation of their lands, and other laborious employments, giving each person, for his monthly support, only fifteen seers of rice." Roberts, "Account of Aracan," 157; As the Portuguese Catholic priest, Sebastião Manrique claimed to have told Thiri-thu-dhamma-raza in the 1630s, Min-kamaun had depopulated Arakan during his wars against Pegu, Assam, and the Mughals; the "Portuguese" repopulated them with entire villages and towns brought over from Bengal, involving over eleven thousand families. Manrique, Itinerario, 1:133; Roberts explains of the king's handling of slaves he did not want: "the rest he returned to the captors, who conducted them, by ropes about their necks, to a market, and there sold them from twenty to seventy rupees each, according to their strength, abilities, &c." Roberts, "Account of Aracan," 157.

[376]Subrahmanyam, "Slave and Tyrants," 215.

[377]Ibid., 234, 243.

[378]Mi, "Rakhine Razawin," 224b.

[379]Ibid.

for the purposes of donation or that the administrators for *sangha* lands were directly purchasing such captives. Bengalis captured in royal campaigns were also donated directly by the king to the *sangha*. In 1723, for example, Sanda-wizaya-raza, after a successful campaign against Chittagong, brought back captive Bengalis (these particular captives were called Kala-douns in the chronicles) who were then donated as pagoda-slaves in the ordination halls and monasteries, including the Maha-muni shrine complex.[380]

These Bengalis, whether they were Muslim or Hindu, likely faced many problems after resettlement in the Danra-waddy. Although the environmental threats faced in their new locale were similar to those they had faced in Banga, traditional means of security had been either removed or shaken badly. The 'Arakanese captivity' shattered the community bonds of the captives at four different levels. First, although large numbers of people from particular communities were captured, I doubt if entire communities could be taken without many escaping capture. Second, around Chittagong, the Luso-Arakanese slavers divided up the captives and royal agents sent a large number of them to Danra-waddy. Third, within Danra-waddy, royal agents divided up the captives according to their skills and status, sending some to the royal city and some to rural Arakan. Fourth, in rural Arakan, many of the captives were sold in domestic markets, which likely entailed further separation of fellow villagers and families. For some, traditional local spirits, shrines, or sites in Banga were also no longer relevant or at least accessible in the new

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[380]Ibid., 216b.

locale. Bengali captives, then, had to find new means of protection and security in a new (and often hostile) human and natural environment.

As I discussed in the second chapter, the populations of Banga and Danra-waddy faced the same challenges from the natural environment. For a solution to (or protection from) these challenges, these populations tried to control the environment by appeasing the forces of nature via the worship of local spirits present in the natural environment. These spirits lived in natural objects, trees, rivers, rocks and so on. I have already discussed how Buddhism influenced the indigenous religious framework by reinterpreting local spirit images as the Buddha or Buddhist images or adding Buddhist images to the local *repertoire* of protective objects. These images continued to fill the rural landscape and by paying obeisance to them, natural disasters and disease could be avoided or rectified. In a similar way, popular Islam provided security and protection to Bengali communities from a hostile human and natural environment. Indigenous communities maintained the worship of preexisting images even after their acceptance of Islam.[381] Popular Islam allowed Bengalis a way of easily introducing (and re-identifying) new sacred sites, symbols, and holymen into their lives.[382] Since these sites, symbols, and

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[381]Buchanan hints at this practice as late as the end of the eighteenth century when he journeyed through that part of the Arakan Littoral which had been taken by the Mughals from Arakan in the 1660s. As Buchanan explains: "Here the Hindoos make offerings of grain flowers and eggs to the Gods of the place, Ram and Seeta: They are imitated by the foolish Mohammedans of this province." Francis Buchanan, Francis Buchanan in Southeast Bengal (1798): His Journey to Chittagong, the Chittagong Hill Tracts, Noakhali and Comilla, Willem van Schendel, ed. (Dhaka: University Press, 1992), 103.

[382]Whatever its actual origins, the Buddermokan 'mosque' in Akyab (at the mouth of the Kaladan River) was also a shrine venerated by Arakanese Buddhists and Hindus in the nineteenth century. Forchhammer, Report, 60.

holymen emerged from an environment and a perspective similar to that within which Bengali folk religion (or popular Islam) had emerged, the Bengalis in Danra-waddy shared a prior text and a similar religious framework with the indigenous population.

I have already discussed how Arakanese Buddhists placed the Buddha throughout the landscape by attributing to him previous existences in the Arakan Littoral. Like Buddhists, Muslims also sought to place Islam into the traditional landscape. As Buchanan observed just north of the Naf River (in an area which had been part of the Arakanese kingdom until the 1660s):

> [The Muslims] of this province . . . have adapted some fable to almost every place esteemed holy by the Gentoos [non-Muslims]: probably thinking, that it would be disgraceful for their religion, were it not provided with as many ceremonies, and holy places, as that of their neighbours.[383]

Buchanan is a hostile witness, but although he misunderstood what was occurring before him, he did indicate the gradual nature of conversion to Islam in the Arakan Littoral. Coming from an indigenous religious framework which saw nature spirits in the natural environment, Arakanese-Banga Muslims, like Arakanese Buddhists, made sense of their new religion by making it relevant to the traditional perceptions of how things worked. This meant connecting Islam with the natural environment and making Islam locally relevant (as observed by Buchanan in the quotation above).

Islam was reinforced by continued contacts with Banga, with Muslim sailors and traders, and by Muslim holymen. Growing maritime connections between Bengal and maritime Southeast Asia in the mid- to late-eighteenth century contributed to the spread

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[383]Buchanan, Francis Buchanan in Southeast Bengal, 103.

of these saint-cults. Along the maritime coasts of western mainland Southeast Asia, Muslim traders also began to set up mosques in the seventeenth century in honor of the Muslim Sufi saint, Budder Auliah. One of these mosques, the Buddermokan, near modern-day Akyab, was probably built in the early seventeenth century (although current stories claim this occurred in 1756) and served as a mosque for Arakanese Muslims in the area.[384]

Although Muslims in Mrauk-U had greater opportunity for interaction with Muslim merchants and others from outside the Arakan Littoral, Muslim agricultural communities were not necessarily isolated from the Muslim world. Many Bengali Muslims returned to Banga at various times when Mrauk-U was too weak to bring them back, but many Muslims joined rural Muslim communities in Arakan when times were bad or tax collections too severe in Chittagong and elsewhere. It seems that since many of the rural Muslim communities were located closer to the coast than was Mrauk-U, maritime traders conducted their business at markets in rural Muslim communities in the area.[385] More generally, Muslim traders stopped periodically along the Arakanese and other western mainland coasts for food and water during their journey from India and Bengal to maritime Southeast Asia.

6.3.2 Muslims in the Court and Capital

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[384]Subrahmanyam, "Slaves and Tyrants," 237, 241; and Forchhammer, Report, 60.

[385]This is how I interpret the Muslim settlement at Dobazi mentioned by Manrique in the 1630s. See Manrique, Itinerario, 1:186.

Muslim residents in Mrauk-U came from a number of different sources. The majority of Muslims in the royal city were probably captives brought over from Banga. As I have mentioned, Arakanese royal agents perused the collections of captured Bengalis at Dianga and Angarcale, interrogating each as to their special skills, status, and other information. Those with skills useful to the court were given a place in the royal service. Further, sometimes captured crews from Muslim ships, regardless of their ethnicity, would be divided as spoils among the Mrauk-U elite.[386] Other, more lowly destinations awaited some captives, who might be assigned to the galleys or to the king's elephant herds: "[the king] has had all the Muslim, Gentile and Christian prisoners . . . who had been brought here on ships, made into grasscutters for his elephants and rowers on his boats."[387] As also noted, there was a smaller, but wealthy and influential community of Muslim traders. Even higher status Muslims arrived as political refugees from Bengal with Shah Shuja in the mid-seventeenth century.[388] Together, Muslims in the royal city formed a special social group with a privileged and unique socio-political role than their rural counterparts enjoyed, with different connections to the Muslim world.

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[386]Subrahmanyam, "Slaves and Tyrants," 227.

[387]Quoted in ibid., 236.

[388]Shah Shuja fled from the usurpation of his throne in Bengal by his younger brother Aurangzeb. Shah Shuja's party included not only his family, but also two hundred followers. Jean Baptiste Tavernier, Travels in India, translated by V. Ball (London: Hakluyt Society, 1889): 1:368. Another estimate is much lower: "Shah Shuja. . . hurried to Rakhang with all his family and those forty or fifty men, who. . .had remained loyal and faithful to him." Aqil Khan Razi, The Waqiat-I-Alamgiri of Aqil Khan Razi (an Account of the war of succession between the sons of Emperor Shah Jahan), translated by Khan Bahadur Maulvi Haji Zafar Hasan (Delhi: Mercantile Printing Press, 1946), 54.

Many Muslim captives from Banga entered royal service in the royal city.[389]

Some Bengali Muslims, if they were craftsmen, probably formed specialized communities

in or around the royal city, providing the court with special items or producing goods

which would be sold by the king's agents to maritime traders. Such craftsmen were so

important to the royal court that on several occasions the king himself forbade the Dutch

from buying artisans or anyone with a trade: "I do not want that craftsmen should be sold

to you [the Dutch], or taken out of this land."[390] Craftsmen or 'tradesmen' emerged in the

following two centuries as a devoted and influential segment of Arakan's Muslim

population. In the nineteenth century, for example, it was the Muslim craftsmen of

Mrauk-U who sponsored and repaired the Santikhan mosque.[391]

By the mid-seventeenth century, a substantial number of minor court officials and

some important ministers were Muslim.[392] According to Manrique, the commander of the

royal bodyguard in 1630 was a Muslim, entitled *lashkar-wazir*.[393] Likewise, port

officials and others were often drawn from the Muslim traders in Mrauk-U. Like all titles

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[389]According to one source: "the Maghs employed all their captives in agriculture and other kinds of service." Talish, "The Feringi Pirates of Chatgaon," 422. The royal seizure of skilled Bengalis from slave-raids for use in the royal court continued at least until the 1770s. Roberts, "Account of Aracan," 157.

[390]Dutch letter translated in Subrahmanyam, "Slaves and Tyrants," 225. See also Ibid., 232.

[391]Forchhammer, Report, 39.

[392]From our knowledge of the size of the Muslim population, Tavernier's comment that only "several Muhammadans were settled" in Arakan can be seen as extreme understatement. Tavernier, Travels in India, 1:368.

[393]Manrique, Itinerario, 2:15.

in the Mrauk-U polity, revenues came along with such appointments. The *lashkar-wazir*, whom Subrahmanyam believes was the eunuch Ashraf Khan, for example, was also given the revenues from the rice-trade at Chittagong.[394] According to Muslim Bengali works (written in Mrauk-U) in 1630s Arakan, Ashraf Khan had the *"rajaniti* (government) largely in his hands."[395] There was also a Muslim minister to whom Manrique attributes all kinds of ritual excesses. Manrique admits that these stories were rumors, and all Manrique really tells us is that the king placed great faith in this Muslim minister and that the minister was well known for having gone on the *hajj*.[396] Perhaps the rumors heard by Manrique were stories circulated by elites in Mrauk-U who feared a minister who was getting too close to the king, and hence pushing them further away from the royal center.[397] In any case, without evidence this suggested scenario must remain conjecture. Another Bengali Muslim, Magan Siddiqi, was a high court official under two successive Arakanese rulers (1645-1660).[398] Muslims in the royal city remained influential in the

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[394]Subrahmanyam, "Slaves and Tyrants," 221-2.

[395]Ibid., 223.

[396]Manrique, Itinerario, 1:316.

[397]After all, Manrique says they were heard by the Portuguese from others and considering the intimate connections between the women of the Portuguese community and Arakanese handmaidens in the royal palace it is likely that the Portuguese community had a keen ear for the rumor-mill among the Mrauk-U elite.

[398]Yunus, A History of Arakan, 88.

Arakanese court until the Burman conquest in 1784.[399] What often seems to be anti-Muslim activity may very well have been purely the pursuit of material or political gain against a community that did quite well in Mrauk-U. [400]

Unlike Bengali Muslims settled in rural villages in Danra-waddy, some Bengali Muslims in Mrauk-U participated in the development of an elite Muslim culture in the royal city, perhaps reflecting their privileged backgrounds in Banga. The Bengali Muslims whom the Arakanese had selected for settlement in the royal city, for example, came from educated elites or specially-skilled groups (such as scribes). High and mid-level posts in the royal court and chief ministries, a literate and elite urban culture, and association with traders and others from elsewhere in the Muslim world gave them greater access to mainstream cultural trends in the Muslim world. These Muslim elites in turn helped foster the development of an elite Muslim culture in the Arakanese royal city. The more successful urban Muslims, for example, displayed their wealth and support of Islam by sponsoring Bengali-Muslim poetry and other forms of cultural expression. In the 1630s, for example, Ashraf Khan patronized the Muslim Bengali poet Daulat Qazi, who was also in Mrauk-U and who is today recognized as the founder of modern Bengali poetry.[401]

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[399]In the 1770s, for example, a Bengali Muslim, Tahes Mahmud, "was formerly the rajah's derrwan, and afterwards became his dewan [and had] gained some riches in that part..." Roberts, "Account of Aracan," 159.

[400]The Tahes Mahmud case is important, because it stresses that when the king of Arakan sought to remove him, it was not because of his religious affiliation, but because of the wealth he had accumulated in the king's service, and the king wished to take it. Ibid., 159.

[401]Yunus, History of Arakan, 87; and Subrahmanyam, "Slaves and Tyrants," 222.

The Bengali work begun by Daulat Qazi and completed by Sayyid Alaol, <u>Sati Mayana O Lora Chandrani</u>, praises the virtue of "[t]hat vessel of righteousness, the virtuous Ashraf Khan, Of the Hanafite sect, and a Chishti lineage."[402] Urban Muslims were also literate and often well-educated, as opposed to the Bengali Muslims settled in rural Arakan. It thus seems fair to assume that they were more likely to be familiar with text-based Islam than were rural Bengali Muslims.

Muslims in the royal city, as opposed to the rural captives, seem to have played a special role in converting some in Arakan to Islam. As I explained in the case of conversion to Christianity by the servants or slaves of Christians in the previous chapter, this seems to have occurred among urban elite Muslims in Mrauk-U as well. Some of these Muslim elites, especially rich traders, for example, were also great purchasers of Bengali slaves and even European captives or children as well.[403] In one case, for example, the Mrauk-U *lashkar* Ashraf Khan had circumcised and converted a Dutchman of whom he had taken possession.[404]

It is likely during periods of heavy taxation, famine, or epidemics that Arakanese tried to sell themselves to wealthy and high-status Muslim traders and officials (as well as to non-Muslim elites) in Mrauk-U. Remco Raben, for example, has made the valuable observation for India of this period that during times of famine, "starvation forced many

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[402]Ibid., 222.

[403]Ibid., 224, 246.

[404]Ibid., 224.

people to sell themselves."[405] Clearly, the rationale was that rich owners would provide

food and security. During the Arakanese famine of the mid-1640s, for example, numerous

Arakanese tried to sell to the Dutch their wives, sisters, and friends.[406] Since Muslim

officials and traders were wealthy, just like their Buddhist counterparts in the royal court

(even more so, as there seems to have been no indigenous, non-Muslim class of free

merchants),[407] they, like the Dutch, may have offered the most likely prospects for

hungry Arakanese. We do have evidence that wealthy Muslim merchants in Mrauk-U

were indeed buying slaves.[408]

Another factor was the flight by Arakanese from royal taxation, which could be

quite onerous. As one Dutch source explains of the heavy royal taxes in Arakan under

Narapati-kri in the early 1640s, men "had therefore to sell their women and children."[409]

These were likely temporary transfers of family members for the duration of a loan. As

Lieberman has explained, this form of slavery, debt-bondage, often involved no more

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[405]Raben, Batavia and Colombo, 120. As Raben also explains: "massive transactions [in slaves] were only possible in times of food shortages and epidemics." Ibid., 119.

[406]Subrahmanyam, "Slaves and Tyrants," 234.

[407]The reasons for the absence of an indigenous class of free merchants in Arakan seem to have been the same as those in other areas of early modern mainland Southeast Asia. One reason was the absence of alienable property rights by the general populace as the king theoretically owned everything. Insecurity of property was also aggravated by frequent seizures by the king. See an excellent discussion in Jeyamalar Kathirithamby-Wells, "Restraints on the Development of Merchant Capitalism in Southeast Asia before c. 1800," in Southeast Asia in the Early Modern Era: Trade, Power, and Belief, Anthony Reid, ed. (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1993), 123-148.

[408]Subrahmanyam, "Slaves and Tyrants," 246.

[409]Quoted in ibid., 229.

difficult or demanding life than that encountered among many *asis* (free people) and *ahmú-dàns* (royal servicemen) generally. Debt-slavery, for example, removed the burdens of royal taxes and corvee labor (although *corvee* labor might have been required in lieu of the master's personal obligations).[410] Again, Muslim officials had the wealth necessary to provide both loans and the authority necessary to ensure that royal tax and *corvee* demands upon their slaves (as clients) were circumvented. Even then, this scenario does not include the more common patron-client relationships which accompanied wealth and influence, and through which clients likely emulated the religious identity of their patron.

It is difficult to ascertain, however, which identity, Muslim or Bengali, had developed sufficiently, even as late as the mid-seventeenth century, to define this urban elite. On the one hand, it, especially the class of rich merchants, sponsored Bengali-language poetry and culture. They spoke Bengali or a dialect of it, and the Arakanese chronicles, after all, knew them mainly as Kalas (Indians), not frequently as Muslims. On the other hand, the authors of Bengali Muslim poetry during this period praised their patrons as Muslims, and they may have been important sponsors of mosque-building in certain villages. Given the high degree of Islamization that was developing in southeastern Banga, whence most of these Bengali and Muslim elites came, we could view their identity in a different way: for these elites, to be Bengali was to be Muslim. Of course, this cannot be demonstrated with any degree of certainty, but it does help explain why the Bengali population brought over to Arakan from Banga developed over the next two

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[410]Lieberman, Burmese Administrative Cycles, 108.

centuries into Arakan's large Muslim population.

What happened to the Muslim elites of Mrauk-U is a difficult question. As I mentioned in the introduction to this chapter, Muslims in nineteenth century Danra-waddy identified themselves not as Sayyids, but rather as Shaykhs, a more common designation frequently adopted by Muslim agriculturalists in Bengal. Nineteenth century Arakan's Muslim population was almost wholly agricultural, save for the Muslim descendants of *ko-rans* deported to Rama-waddy in the late seventeenth or early eighteenth century. In Chapter 9, in which I discuss the Burman conquest, I will discuss the deportation by the Burmans of tens of thousands of Arakanese (Muslim and Buddhist) from Mrauk-U and surrounding areas to the Irra-waddy Valley. It is likely that many of the descendants of Mrauk-U's Muslims were removed from Danra-waddy in this way. Further, as I discuss in Chapter 10, Burman rule led to the depopulation of eastern Danra-waddy, including the Mrauk-U area as a result of excessive exploitation of human and material resources there. Although there is little data to extrapolate from, I conjecture that many Muslim elites fled elsewhere, perhaps to Bengal. Two other components of Mrauk-U's Muslim elites should be pointed out as well. First, Muslim traders formed an itinerant population and by the eighteenth century, only a few Muslim traders appear to have continued to come to Danra-waddy. Second, we cannot expect many descendants from Muslim officials in the Mrauk-U court, who often seem to have been eunuchs, for obvious reasons (although there was the possibility of adopting heirs). As a result, when I speak of the descendants of seventeenth century captives in nineteenth-century Arakan, I

chiefly refer to the Muslim agriculturalists of western Danra-waddy.

6.4 Summary

I have tried to accomplish three things in this chapter. First, I stress that although there was a very early Muslim presence in the Danra-waddy, large-scale and permanent Muslim "communities" in Danra-waddy really only emerged from the late sixteenth century. Second, I examine the seventeenth-century influx of Bengali (especially Muslim) captives into Danra-waddy and attempt to provide a rough estimate of their quantitative impact. I followed this discussion with an attempt to explain how two different groups of Bengali Muslims emerged in the Arakan Littoral: one rural and non-elite, and the other urban and at least partly elite. As I have explained, I doubt if these groups saw themselves primarily as Muslim prior to the mid-seventeenth century, although this identity was certainly developing. In any event, I will discuss the formation of this identity in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 7

THE TIME OF TROUBLES:

THE DECLINE OF CENTRAL KINGSHIP AND RELIGIOUS PATRONAGE,

1630S-1690S

In the mid- to late-seventeenth century, a series of crises in the Arakan Littoral from the 1660s helped to foster a greater sense of group identity. Although some of these crises have been defined in communal terms in the prevailing literature, I think they can be viewed another way: a variety of economic, political, and social factors contributed to a dramatic disruption of the constellation of elite families which held the Arakanese kingdom together. During the seventeenth century, for example, a contest between rival elites led to the decimation or extirpation of a substantial portion of Mrauk-U's upper social strata, a decline in maritime revenues hurt the economic attraction of the royal court reducing its ability to forge new elite alliances, and intermediary urban elites responded to both the weakening of the upper social strata and economic decline by usurping authority and central resources for themselves. The royal court in turn attempted to offset its damaged prestige and weakened authority through accelerated religious devotion. Finally, by the end of the seventeenth century, the royal city was a mere shadow of what it had been under Min-raza-kri.

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As I will explain, although these developments contributed to religious change in the Arakan Littoral in the seventeenth century, they did not constitute the same kind of communal activity that emerged in the nineteenth century. The seventeenth century, in other words, helped define the 'building blocks' necessary for the emergence of Arakanese Buddhists and Muslims as we find them at a later time.

7.1 Arakan: Within or Without the Islamic World?

The Mrauk-U court had done well by the mid-seventeenth century. Learned Muslim and Buddhist ministers staffed the opulent Arakanese court; the harem was extensive; wealth poured in from maritime trade, including that in slaves, rice and other commodities with the Dutch, and this trade wealth and the goods from trade were funneled into political and religious patronage. But beneath the veneer of an opulent court, tensions had developed over the preceding decades which would affect the direction of religious change in Arakan. One major development was that Arakan's relationship with Islamdom became clearer, in large part due to its problems with the Mughals as well as Arakan's activities in Banga. For many Muslims, Arakan was no longer a distant and tolerant outpost for Muslim traders, but rather a land of piratical gentiles who pillaged Banga and enslaved Muslims. Another development was the increasing influence of the Buddhist *sangha* upon the Arakanese court and royal perceptions of the Muslim community as a threat.

We should not necessarily expect that Arakan had a favorable image in Islamdom because of the existence of a large Muslim community in mid-seventeenth century

Mrauk-U. For Bay of Bengal Muslims, the image of Arakan changed over the sixteenth to seventeenth centuries. In the sixteenth century, Arakan, with an Islamicized court allied with several of the more important Muslim courts of eastern India, did not stand out so sharply from its Muslim neighbors such as Bengal. Increasingly throughout the first half of the seventeenth century, however, the Muslim world's image of Arakan changed: Arakan became the sweeper of Muslim lands, the enslaver of Sayyids and Shaykhs in Bengal, and the chief obstacle to Mughal expansion in the East. By the mid-seventeenth century, as I will discuss, a series of Mughal military conquests brought Bengal under their firm political control and Mughal control into the northern Arakan littoral. At the same time, changing trade patterns had made the Arakanese king take a more direct role in squeezing revenues from maritime trade which was drying up in the mid-seventeenth century. This included increasing royal competition with Muslim traders, an aggressive approach to rival Muslim trading polities in the Bay of Bengal,[411] the occasional refusal to allow Acehnese and other Muslim merchants to leave Mrauk-U, and the seizure of Muslim ships at sea.[412] Other Muslim rulers did not turn a blind eye to this activity: in 1643, in response to the Arakanese capture of a Muslim merchant and his ship, an Arakanese ship and its captain were captured in Masulipatnam -- the Arakanese king

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[411]In the 1630s, for example, Aceh and Golchonda both had special grievances against the actions of the Arakanese court. Subrahmanyam, "Slaves and Tyrants in Mrauk-U," 222.

[412]A Muslim-owned ship returning from Aceh was taken by the king in the 1630s. In 1643, the *ko-ran-kri* captured Muslim-owned ships enroute from the Maldives. In the same year, a ship owned by a Masulipatnam Muslim trader, Isma'il Beg, was captured by the Arakanese near Pegu. Further, the capture by the Arakanese of even non-Muslim ships coming out of Muslim ports such as Aceh must have caused irritation as well. See ibid., 224, 226, 227, 232.

abandoned trade with Masulipatnam and sent his ships to Dutch Melaka instead.[413]

Arakan was now more of an untamed frontier on the fringe of Mughal Bengal than it was a haven for Muslim merchants in western mainland Southeast Asia. Some contemporary Muslim sources, such as the Persian-language account of Shihabuddin Talish even fell silent regarding the presence of Muslim traders at Mrauk-U.[414] Muslims now assessed the Arakanese kingdom by how much it veered from Islam.[415] The rumor in mid-seventeenth century eastern India was, for example, that the Arakanese kings drank "raw buffalo blood" and were not the equal even of Mughal captains.[416] On two counts, then, Arakan's place in Banga was a threat: it was the sole remaining indigenous challenger of Mughal control in the northeastern Bay of Bengal and, second, orthodox Muslims could now only see the Arakanese as aggressive gentiles.[417]

The hostility found amongst many Muslims in the Bay of Bengal towards Arakan was coupled by prejudices which emerged the other way around. In the early seventeenth century, perhaps earlier, some Arakanese Buddhist monks seem to have begun to view

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[413]Ibid., 226.

[414]As Talish explained: "They do not admit into their country any other tribe than the Christians, who visit it by the sea-route for purposes of trade." Talish "The Feringi Pirates of Chatgaon," 419.

[415]Talish explained in the seventeenth century: "The inhabitants have no definite faith or religion." Ibid., 419.

[416]This was reflected in Manucci's account, Niccolao Manucci, Storia do Mogor or Mogul India 1653-1708, translated by William Irvine (London: John Murray, 1907), 1:374.

[417]As the Alamgirnama states: "Arakan which is the worst and meanest of the places in the world and where infidels reside . . ." Alamgirnama, translated and quoted in M. Siddiq Khan, "The Tragedy of Mrauk-U (1660-1661)," Journal of the Asiatic Society of Pakistan 11 (1966): 208.

the proselytizers of other religions as threats. Catholic missionaries in the 1630s, for example, claimed that Buddhist monks prevented them from entering villages and threatened villagers that if they accepted Christianity, they would be punished by the Buddha:

> [They] determined to impede the entrance of the *Religiosos* into the *poblaciones* [villages] and [to keep them from] treating or speaking to the people, persuading all that [if they listened to the priests] they would be punished by their *Porà* [*Hpara* here refers to "Lord" Buddha] with sickness, hunger, and war and if they did make amends [for having done so] fire would come from the sky and incinerate them all.[418]

Buddhist monks also refused both Christians and Muslims entry to Buddhist pagodas, especially the chief pagoda, the Shitthaung-para, in Mrauk-U.[419] Although we cannot be sure of the source, rumors in Mrauk-U in the 1630s claimed that a Muslim "priest" was conducting human sacrifices outside the royal city.[420]

Of course, by themselves, these are relatively minor indicators of changes in the way in which the Arakanese court was perceived by Muslims and how the Arakanese *sangha* and court dealt with the Muslim (and Christian) world. As I will explain in a later section, however, the hostile view of Arakan among Bay of Bengal Muslims and the strengthening of the Buddhist *sangha's* influence in the royal court came to a head in the

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[418]Manrique, Itinerario, 1:254.

[419]Ibid., 2:29.

[420]Ibid., 1:315-317. Some scholars interpret these accounts as part of the standard hyperbole or the invention of Catholic priests of the period, Jacques Leider, personal communication, Leiden, Amsterdam, June 1998. I suggest that there are elements of these stories which certainly were based on what the Catholic priests involved heard and sometimes saw.

reign of Sanda-thu-dhamma-raza.

7.2 The Decimation of Mrauk-U's Upper Elite Strata in the Late 1630s

There are some indications that intra-elite competition was becoming a problem for the central court as early as 1630. Manrique's credibility is occasionally maligned because he asserted that Thiri-thu-dhamma-raza, fearful for his life, relied upon the guidance of a mystic and human sacrifices to preserve his kingship. Manrique pointed to rumors of Arakanese being dragged from the streets so that their hearts could be used in these rituals.[421] Perhaps Manrique exaggerated what he had heard, but there is considerable evidence that Manrique touched upon actual rumors and activities in Thiri-thu-dhamma-raza's royal city. Arakanese chronicles, for example, see the later years of Thiri-thu-dhamma-raza's reign in terms of a supernatural contest between the 'magical powers' of Thiri-thu-dhamma-raza and his minister Nga-lek-ron versus those of a powerful minister, Nga Kuthala, the *mró-zà* of Laun-kret.[422] Dutch sources also confirm that Nga Kuthala was a threat to the king and perhaps had rebelled on an occasion long before he usurped the throne in 1638.[423]

Nga Kuthala's resource base was, of course, his appanage of Laun-kret, the former royal city of the Arakanese kingdom, although its former splendor had likely dissipated

[421]Ibid., 1:321.

[422]Kawi-thara, "Rakhine Arei-taw-poun," 62a-62b.

[423]Stephan van Galen, personal communication, Bangkok, July, 1998.

significantly by the 1630s. Min-raza-kri had given Laun-kret to a Mon minister whom he

had captured from Pegu in 1600,[424] and Nga Kuthala may have been descended from this

man.[425] If this were so, Nga Kuthala would have represented a new elite family, perhaps

less interwoven into the kinship networks in the constellation of elite families in the

upper strata of Arakanese society. The Arakanese chronicles suggest that Nga Kuthala's

'magic' brought about the death of Thiri-thu-dhamma-raza,[426] and his union with Thiri-

thu-dhamma-raza's widowed queen, Nat-shin-me, induced her to poison her own son,

Thiri-thu-dhamma-raza's heir.[427] Nga Kuthala was then 'selected' in 1638 as king by the

queen and the chief ministers in what appears to have been a *pro forma* affair.[428]

Nga Kuthala's attainment of the central throne caused a panic among Mrauk-U's

upper elites. Important men in the upper elite fled the royal city fearing for their lives.

Thiri-thu-dhamma-raza's trusted minister, Nga Lek-ron, a denizen of the Wimala family

(who, as *ko-ran-kris* had provided critical support for generations of early Mrauk-U

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[424]Mi, "Rakhine Razawin," 179a. For a brief chronology of Arakanese history, see Appendix VII.

[425]The chroniclers, however, tried with considerable difficulty to give Nga Kuthala a likely fictive kinship which tied him to some Arakanese king in the distant past.

[426]Kawi-thara, "Rakhine Arei-taw-poun," 62a-62b.

[427]Aun-doun-pru, "Rakhine Raza-poun" [palm-leaf manuscript, number 6453D] AMs, 1833, p. 59a-59b, Oriental and East India Office Collection, British Library, London, Great Britain; Kawi-thara, "Rakhine Arei-taw-poun," 62b; Inayat Khan, Shah Jahan Nama, translated by A. R. Fuller, W. E. Begley & Z. A. Desai, eds. (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1990), 249.

[428]Ibid.; Kawi-thara, "Rakhine Arei-taw-poun," 62b; and Mi, "Rakhine Razawin," 197b.

rulers), took refuge by becoming a Buddhist monk.[429] The *mró-zà* of Chittagong, Mangat Rai, a relative of Thiri-thu-dhamma-raza's,[430] joined with some elite families which had fled Mrauk-U, and marched on the royal city.[431] Nga Kuthala defeated them, and the *mró-zà* of Chittagong brought an estimated nine thousand followers and soldiers into Banga and submitted to the Mughals in exchange for protection.[432] Other elite men took their chances by hiding in the countryside.[433] As for the previous royal family and its extended kinship groups, Nga Kuthala had them brought at night to the royal palace where the princes, princesses, other royal kinsmen, the royal ministers, and royal commanders were put to death.[434]

Nga Kuthala had himself consecrated as "King Narapati-kri," and ascended the throne with Thiri-thu-dhamma-raza's chief queen.[435] But he faced a critical problem in

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[429]Kawi-thara, "Rakhine Arei-taw-poun," 63a.

[430]One source claims that this man was Thiri-thu-dhamma-raza's son. Kawi-thara, "Rakhine Arei-taw-poun," 62b. Another source says that Mangat Rai was Thiri-thu-dhamma-raza's brother. See Khan, Shah Jahan Nama, 240.

[431]Ibid., 249.

[432]See also Mi, "Rakhine Razawin," 197b.

[433]Kawi-thara, "Rakhine Arei-taw-poun," 63a.

[434]Kawi-thara, "Rakhine Arei-taw-poun," 62b. Another source, however, simply says that Nga Kuthala "disciplined Min-sani's younger brother, relatives, commanders, and ministers," but certainly is treating the purge of the elite in euphemistic terms. See Aun-doun-pru, "Rakhine Raza-poun," 59b; and Khan, Shah Jahan Nama, 226a.

[435]Aun-doun-pru, "Rakhine Raza-poun," 59b

attempting to establish his authority in the kingdom. A substantial number of the Mrauk-U elite families had been decimated or put into exile. These elites had represented the upper tier of patron-client hierarchies through which palace-bound central rulers had contact with the lower strata of Arakanese society, upon which they depended for material and human resources. Dutch sources suggest that Nga Kuthala was paranoid of plots against him (not a surprising fear in a usurper) and that he would remain in isolation in the royal court for months, in the hope of flushing out potential usurpers and enemies amongst Mrauk-U's remaining elites.[436]

Nga Kuthala turned to Buddhism for a variety of reasons. First, Nga Kuthala turned to the *sangha* to provide advisors whom he felt he could trust. He did not rely on the heads of elite clans for his 'inner circle,' but instead established a unique (for Arakan) council of twelve Buddhist monks who advised him on important matters in the kingdom.[437] Second, Nga Kuthala seems to have turned to Buddhism for personal spiritual protection and to strengthen his authority. There is evidence that Nga Kuthala was personally a devoted Buddhist and relied on Buddha images placed in the paddy fields around Laun-kret, for example, to ward off malarial fevers.[438] He also personally

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[436]Subrahmanyam, "Slaves and Tyrants," 228-229.

[437]Kawi-thara, "Rakhine Arei-taw-poun," 63a.

[438]As Forchhammer explains, "King Narapatigyi . . . was recommended by his astrologers to set up a large number of images of Gotama about Launggyet to expel the fever." Forchhammer, Report, 48. As Forchhammer later continues, "South of the enclosure paddy fields begin. Large images of the Buddha . . . seated on pedestals . . . and unprotected by any shelter, stand here and there as melancholy solitary guardians in the open fields . . The statues are imitations of the Mahamuni image and are all of stone." Ibid., 49.

engaged in merit-making activity by making copies of the Tipitika and the Dhamma-thats.[439] Through patronage of monks and monasteries, he portrayed himself as a great donor to the *sasana*.[440] He also reduced Thiri-thu-dhamma-raza's connections with the Buddha by purging the Buddha relics from the pagodas built by Basaw-thiri, an early Mrauk-U ruler and the progenitor of a succession of Mrauk-U rulers who ruled between 1553 and 1638, and placed these auspicious relics in pagodas which Nga Kuthala himself built.[441]

Nga Kuthala, alias King Narapati-kri, instituted a new image for Arakanese kingship. He abandoned the heterogenous symbolism of the early Mrauk-U rulers and focussed the definition of Arakanese kingship more fully upon Burmese-Buddhist style symbolism. He and his successors, for example, ceased to adopt Muslim titles. Further, the stamping of coins with the *kalimah* or Arabic script for Arakanese rulers also disappeared about this time.

As I discussed in the previous section, Arakan's image in Bengal and Dar al-Islam had changed, and, in the present section, I suggested that royal symbolism in the Arakanese court had seemingly turned away from models of rulership that emanated from areas which today we might view as within Dar al-Islam. Religious identities, however, do not seem to have become antagonistic in other spheres of Arakanese life in the royal city

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[439]Mi, "Rakhine Razawin," 197b.

[440]Aun-doun-pru, "Rakhine Raza-poun," 59b.

[441]Kawi-thara, "Rakhine Arei-taw-poun," 64a.

or among the lower social strata throughout the Arakan Littoral. Muslims still held important court posts, conducting business as usual in the royal city, and predominantly Muslim social cells, such as artisan groups and others, went about their daily routines in Mrauk-U for many decades to come. Nga Kuthala's chief motives appear to have been no more than personal ambition, the enhancement of royal authority, and his paranoia regarding Mrauk-U's upper social strata. Thus, although Nga Kuthala contributed to an increasing identification of the royal court with 'things Buddhist' his reign does not mark a watershed in the emergence of antagonistic religious identities.

7.3 Shah Shuja and the Muslim "Other"

Sanda-thu-dhamma-raza (r. 1652-1684) became king of Arakan with the traditional Brahmanical *abhiseka* ceremony, with the queen Ratanapiya in 1652,[442] and he, like his great uncle, Nga Kuthala (Narapati-kri), continued to shun Bengali-Muslim titles. Perhaps in fear of growing Mughal power in Bengal to the northwest, Sanda-thu-dhamma-raza rebuilt the walls and moats of the royal city, which had been built in the reign of his father, Thado-min-tara.[443] Sanda-thu-dhamma-raza's greatest challenge, however, did not come from the Mughals, but rather from a Muslim ruler, Shah Shuja, who came to Mrauk-U attempting to escape Mughal forces in Bengal. Shah Shuja (the "Shek-shuza" of the Arakanese chronicles) and his brother Aurangzeb (the "Raun-hsi" of the Arakanese chronicles) had gone to war with each other in a succession dispute, which began with

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[442]Mi, "Rakhine Razawin," 199b.

[443]Ibid.

Shah Jahan's death in 1658. As the loser, Shah Shuja abandoned Dacca in 1660 and fled to the Mrauk-U court with his retainers, his family, his soldiers, and his war animals.[444]

There was at first no indication that any sort of trouble would emerge from the affair. Schouten, who was in Mrauk-U at this time, says that Shah Shuja intended to stay in Mrauk-U for only a short time until he could get Muslim merchant ships to take him and his retinue to Persia.[445] The Arakanese chronicles claim that Sanda-thu-dhamma-raza treated Shah Shuja with great care and suggest that Sanda-thu-dhamma-raza through this compassion sought to become a *boddhi-sattva*.[446]

Shah Shuja's 1660 arrival in Arakan, however, called into question the authority of the Mrauk-U rulers over their Muslim subjects. After Shah Shuja fled to Mrauk-U and was given refuge there by Sanda-thu-dhamma-raza, the king, rightfully or wrongfully, came to believe that Shah Shuja planned to seize the throne of Arakan for himself. One likely reason for Sanda-thu-dhamma-raza's fear was that Shah Shuja and his "retinue" formed an especially large group for Mrauk-U: "the fleeing prince with all his family and about five hundred of his most faithful men and their families, entered the Realm and

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[444]John F. Richards, The Mughal Empire (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 158-162; and Mi, "Rakhine Razawin," 200a. According to the Arakanese accounts, Shah Shuja hoped to recapture Bengal with Arakanese help (exactly one thousand warboats), seemingly a similar proposal to the one which brought Nara-meik-hla back to the Arakanese throne in 1430 with Bengali help. In return, Shah Shuja was said to have offered his daughter as a concubine to Sanda-thu-dhamma-raza, as well as the twelve Bara Bhunyas (who seem to have broken away from Arakanese rule prior to Sanda-thu-dhamma-raza's reign). Ibid.

[445]Gautier Schouten, Voiage de Gautier Schouten aux Index orientales, commence l'an 1658 & fini l'An 1665 Traduit du Hollandais, quoted in Khan, "The Tragedy of Mrauk-U," 202.

[446]Mi, "Rakhine Razawin," 201a.

advanced towards Aracan [Mrauk-U]."[447] Further, Shah Shuja seems to have bribed or otherwise made alliances with local Muslims in Mrauk-U to further his interests.[448] In a move that angered Shah Shuja, Sanda-thu-dhamma-raza placed Shah Shuja's three daughters in his harem within the royal palace. Sanda-thu-dhamma-raza's actions appear to have stemmed from the traditional Arakanese royal approach of fostering political relationships through the forging of kinship ties. By refusing to voluntarily provide his daughter to the Arakanese king, Shah Shuja was, in Arakanese eyes, asserting his independence from the authority of the Arakanese court. In any event, Shah Shuja, perhaps provoked, 'rebelled' against Sanda-thu-dhamma-raza in 1661 and, while fleeing up the Katsa-bana-di river, disappeared.[449]

All the relevant sources agree that some Muslims attempted to support Shah Shuja and that the Arakanese retaliated (or perhaps had provoked the whole incident) by targeting Muslims for death or prison. As we are told, in retaliation for Shah Shuja's attempted *coup*, the Arakanese sought out anyone in the royal city who wore a beard "in the Muslim fashion."[450] Further, when it appeared that Shah Shuja would flee from

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[447]Schouten, Voiage, quoted in Khan, "The Tragedy of Mrauk-U," 204.

[448]Tavernier, Travels in India, 1:367, 368.

[449]Again, his end is debated. There are various accounts of his being killed by the Arakanese or that he was able to flee to Burma and then on to the southern Philippines. The Arakanese sources, which I take as the more reliable accounts, state that Shah Shuja was killed, with his son, during his flight. Mi, "Rakhine Razawin," 201a.

[450]See D. G. E. Hall, "Studies in Dutch Relations with Arakan," Journal of the Burma Research Society 26 (1936): 25.

Mrauk-U:

> The King of Aracan had sent broadcast orders to find the Prince of Bengal and bring him there, had redoubled the frontier guards, and strongly defended what remained fortified, (put under surveillance) also Maures [Muslims] of the Realm (or) what appeared to be Maure, if he had no passport, all these precautions tended to prevent Chasausa's [Shah Shuja's] invasion.[451]

M. Siddiq Khan has extrapolated from this evidence to suggest that there was a "Muslim revolt."[452] Despite Khan's enthusiasm for such an interpretation, it is certainly not clear that group identities did form along religious lines. The sources which do suggest that this was a kind of "Muslim" and "anti-Muslim" conflict, for example, are Dutch traders,[453] European travelers in India who heard about the Shah Shuja episode second- and third-hand, and apocryphal Muslim accounts. The Arakanese chronicle which refers to "Mughal" subterfuge in support of Shah Shuja or retaliation against the Arakanese court after Shah Shuja's demise, Nga Mi's "Rakhine Razawin," was also written in the mid-nineteenth century by an Arakanese who grew up in an Arakan where Buddhist-Muslim problems certainly had become a significant issue.

I suggest that the conflict involved patron-client loyalties. Because Shah Shuja refused to offer his daughters to Sanda-thu-dhamma-raza as a sign of vassalage or alliance, Shah Shuja was perceived as a threat to Sanda-thu-dhamma-raza's position on the Mrauk-

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[451]Schouten, Voiage, quoted in Khan, "The Tragedy of Mrauk-U," 238-9.

[452]Khan, "The Tragedy of Mrauk-U," 217.

[453]Their perceptions of events were conditioned by Dutch Calvinist problems with indigenous rulers in Java and elsewhere (who were Muslim).

U throne. Of course, since most of Shah Shuja's followers did come from Bengal and were Muslim, it is no great surprise that European observers saw the struggle in "Muslim" and "anti-Muslim" terms. Even Nga Mi's "Rakhine Razawin" hints that patron-client loyalties defined the conflict because it refers to those who burned down the royal palace as "Mughals,"[454] reflecting patron-client ties, rather than as "Mussalmans," which Nga Mi uses to refer to religious and ethno-religious identities. Likewise, it is curious that the torching of the royal palace by the "Mughals" attracts the chronicler's attention, while the Buddhist pagodas which were accidentally burned down (the fire spread from some burning buildings) during combat between some of Shah Shuja's soldiers and the Arakanese has been recorded in European sources,[455] not in Arakanese chronicles. Certainly, had religious identities or animosities been key to this conflict, such events would not only have been recorded, they would have been emphasized.

Thus, although some Muslims in Mrauk-U, such as the poet Alawal, were seized and placed into a royal prison, other Muslims remained as influential and as important as ever in the Arakanese royal court. One Muslim minister retained so much support in the royal court, for example, that he successfully persuaded Sanda-thu-dhamma-raza not to put Shah Shuja's warriors (who seem to have been Muslim as well) to death. Instead, the

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[454]The torching of the royal palace in 1663, which caused the death of the eater of Mrauk-U, Ma-naw-thiri, for example, was blamed in the chronicles on Shah Shuja's Mughal servants. Evidently this fire was so complete, that the palace had to be built anew. See Mi, "Rakhine Razawin," 201b. For the Dutch view, see Hall, "Studies in Dutch Relations with Arakan," 26.

[455]Schouten, Voiage, quoted in Khan, "The Tragedy of Mrauk-U," 227-8.

king spared them and placed them into the corps of *ko-rans* (the royal bodyguard),[456] as was the traditional practice applied to other defeated warriors.[457] The continued importance of Muslim ministers and the introduction of so many Muslim Bengalis into the royal bodyguard does not strengthen the reliability of the Dutch observer Schouten, who wrote about "the natural aversion which [Sanda-thu-dhamma-raza] had for the Bengalis."[458]

Perhaps in an indirect way, this contributed to a gradual rift between Muslims and Buddhist in the royal court. It is interesting that Muslim and Buddhist men distinguished each other by the absence or presence of a beard. As I mentioned above, it appears that some Arakanese identified likely supporters of Shah Shuja by their beards.[459] Early modern Bengali sources also assert that one characteristic of the 'maghs' (their term for Arakanese Buddhists) was their neglect to cultivate a beard.[460] But again, physical adornment also indicates a relatively flexible means of assuming or ascribing identities, political and ethnic as well as religious. As has been argued elsewhere, for example, Mons

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[456]These warriors were famed archers and were known as "ka-man" after the Ka-man bows and arrows whose use they specialized in. These warriors were "given the oath-taking water...[and] they were to stay and stand guard for the king when he moved about." Mi, "Rakhine Razawin," 201a-201b.

[457]Mi, "Rakhine Razawin," 201a.

[458]Schouten, Voiage, quoted in Khan, "The Tragedy of Mrauk-U," 223.

[459]See Hall, "Studies in Dutch Relations with Arakan," 25.

[460]According to one source: "[The Arakanese] religion is distinct from Islam and Hinduism . . . and their males do not keep beard." Salim, Riyazu-s-Salatin, 14-15.

and Burmans in the early modern Irra-waddy consciously re-cut their hair as a sign of changed affiliations or political loyalties.[461] Thus, Mons who supported the 'Burman' court, regardless of their Mon ethnic identity, cut their hair in the 'Burman' fashion and vice versa. Extrapolating from this, the so-called 'Muslim' beard may have been more a sign of submission to a particular patron than a sign of personal religious identity.[462]

7.4 Mughal Conquest of the Northern Littoral

Mughal political expansion removed from Arakan its empire in the north, that is, in Banga and Chittagong. We have already seen that the Mughals brought Banga under their control throughout the first half of the seventeenth century. In 1665-1666, the Mughals took three steps which brought the north under Mughal control: (1) the conquest of the strategic island of Sundiva in 1665, (2) the luring of the Portuguese *harmad* (community) from Chittagong into Mughal service,[463] and (3) the conquest of Chittagong itself in 1666.

Muslim sources tell us that once Arakan had taken Chittagong in the sixteenth century during a period of Muslim weakness in Bengal, the Arakanese shut the land road

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[461]See entire discussion in Victor B. Lieberman, "Ethnic Politics in Eighteenth-Century Burma," Modern Asian Studies 12 (1978): 455-82.

[462] However, this must remain conjecture, because the motives of those from whom we derive the sources for this episode are too unreliable or at least stem from perceptions that may not have been shared by the Arakanese. As I have explained, even the Arakanese source which comes closest to supporting the view of a "Muslim/anti-Muslim" conflict in Mrauk-U over the fate of Shah Shuja can be interpreted in several ways.

[463]Shihabbudin Talish, "The Conquest of Chatgaon, 1666 A.D.," translated by Jadunath Sarkar, Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal 3 (1907): 408.

which connected Banga with Chittagong and Arakan so tightly that "the snake and the wind could not pass through."[464] Hyperbole aside, it is likely true that the Arakanese set up border posts at major potential crossing points on land.[465] Since Arakanese control or influence in Banga depended primarily upon maritime travel, the Arakanese likely did not encourage land travel by building new roads. Also indicative of lowland connections between Chittagong and Banga is that the area in the transitional zone was unsettled, remaining generally a frontier area and a wilderness.

Whatever obstacles remained between Banga and the Arakan Littoral for the movement of peoples between Bengal and Arakan were removed as a result of the Mughal conquest of Chittagong in 1666. The Mughals armed the force they sent against Chittagong with hordes of axes, gathered from throughout Bengal, to build a military road from Banga to Chittagong.[466] Such a road existed from Chittagong to Arakan, but it was only with the Muslim conquest of 1666 that the transitional zone between Banga and Chittagong was really opened up. Muslim sources stressed, for example, that without utilizing the clearing made, passage by land was impossible, due to the "density of the jungle."[467] As the Mughal army advanced, it cleared a path with the axes and built the

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[464]Talish, "The Feringi Pirates of Chatgaon," 421-2.

[465]One account explains that Mughal forces encountered *choquidares* and a garrison in one of the fortresses at Chittagong in 1666. Talish, "The Conquest of Chatgaon," 414.

[466]As Talish explains: "Before this Mir Murtaza had collected many axes at Dacca. From the parganahs too, axes had been brought by issuing parwanahs, so that several thousands of them had been collected. These were sent with the expedition for clearing the jungle." Ibid., 410.

[467]Ibid., 412.

road, established *thanas* (guard posts) at strategic points, and, upon the conclusion of the

campaign, offered local parcels of land to the victorious Muslim soldiers.[468] Thus,

building upon an already established Muslim community, characterized by traders and

sufis, more mainstream Islam (which had developed in Western Bengal) entered

Chittagong. With a road now connecting Banga and Chittagong, the migration of Moslems

into Chittagong and thus into the Danra-waddy zone would have increased.[469] Due to the

inability to supply forces in Ramu for a sustained defense, the Mughals withdrew making

the south bank of the river close to Chittagong their southern boundary.[470]

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[468]As Talish explains: "Buzurg Ummed Khan moved quickly on, carried his entire army over the deep river in a few days, crossed the river of Feni, entered the Magh territory, and advanced cutting the jungle and making a road. According to the Nawwab's command a thanah was established on the river of Feni, under Sultan Beg, mansabdar, with a contingent of horse and foot. . . The jungle was thereafter to be cut along the sea stage by stage . . . These officers started from Noakhali. Ibn Husain with the flotilla soon arrived at the creek of Khamaria, two stages from Chatgaon, and began to cut the jungle before towards Chatgaon and behind towards the advancing army. Farhad Khan, Mir Murtaza and other commanders . . . of the land force too advanced cutting the jungle, and joined hands with Ibn Husain on the 21st January 1666. Buzurg Ummed Khan who was hastening clearing the jungle arrived with the [main] army within three kos of Khamaria." Ibid., 411.

[469]Travel, however, would still have been difficult, at least during some periods in the year. The Mughals foresaw problems in supplying their troops in Ramu from Chittagong and therefore withdrew them. As Talish explains: "As the space between Chatgaon and Rambu is very hard to cross, full of hills and jungles, and intersected by one or two streams which cannot be crossed without boats, and as in the rainy season the whole path is flooded . . ." Ibid., 417.

[470]Ibid. The Arakanese version of this campaign, however, suggests that the Mughal conquest of the northern littoral as a whole was temporary, and a *mró-zà* of Chittagong was reappointed in 1670. Mi, "Rakhine Razawin," 201b-202a. The appointment of the *mró-zà* of Chittagong in 1670, however, may refer to a symbolic investiture of no practical meaning. Another way to view this, however, is as a discursive strategy to convey the meaning of the loss of Chittagong permanently to the Arakanese royal court, while not stating directly that it was lost to the Mughals. The *mró-zà*-ship of Chittagong, for example, was said to have been given to the king's younger brother, who, during the same year, supposedly rebelled against the king. The king waited for his younger brother in the royal doorway with weapons and then struck his sibling dead. As a result of his act of murdering his brother, Sanda-thu-dhamma-raza is said to have cried and went into deep depression. Ibid., 202a. This whole episode may again be a personification of the loss of Chittagong to the royal kingdom and its impact upon the king, Sanda-thu-dhamma-raza. Even were this not the case, the chronicles set the stage for the last few years of Sanda-thu-dhamma-raza's religious patronage, with a saddened and depressed Sanda-thu-dhamma-raza.

7.5 Heightened Royal Patronage of Buddhism under Sanda-thu-dhamma-raza and Ukka-bala

I will suggest a contrast between the degree of royal patronage of Buddhism prior to the 1660s, and that following the 1660s. I think that the events of the 1660s forced the Arakanese court to focus its attention more clearly upon Theravada Buddhist kingship as a way to enhance its authority at a time when its resources ebbed and Muslims at home and abroad seemed to challenge royal authority.

Although reigning over an important Muslim population in the royal town of Mrauk-U, Chittagong, and in villages along the Kalà-dàn River, there is no evidence to suggest that Sanda-thu-dhamma-raza patronized this community. Instead, Sanda-thu-dhamma-raza, like his immediate predecessors, continued to support the Buddhist *sangha* with religious donations, including the repair and construction of religious edifices such as pagodas, ordination halls, and monasteries. Compared to the later years of his reign as we will discuss further below, however, the donation record of Sanda-thu-dhamma-raza's early regnal years was surprisingly slow. In 1657, five years after his assumption of the throne, he rebuilt the royal ordination hall at the Maha-muni shrine only after it had burned down, presumably by accident.[471] It took two more years, and seven years after his assumption of the royal throne, for Sanda-thu-dhamma-raza to erect entirely new religious buildings, the Ratana-san-U cedi and its accompanying royal monastery.[472] We

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[471]Mi, "Rakhine Razawin," 199b.

[472]Ibid., 199b.

do not find reference to the construction of a specific religious edifice by Sanda-thu-dhamma-raza until 1671, some nineteen years after he assumed the throne. Further, and perhaps more significantly, for the first nineteen years of his rule, Sanda-thu-dhamma-raza seems to have paid no attention to religious donation outside the royal city and the Maha-muni shrine complex.[473]

In the last decade and a half of his reign, after the turbulent 1660s, however, things changed. Members of the royal family stressed their personal devotion to Buddhism. In 1670, Ukka-bala, the son of the head-queen, became a Buddhist monk. Sanda-thu-dhamma-raza's conscientious pursuit of good Buddhist kingship was also recorded in the Arakanese chronicles. He is said to have made a strong effort to keep the ten precepts of good kingship and the four rules of good social relations. Sanda-thu-dhamma-raza made pilgrimages to the Maha-muni shrine from the royal court easier by constructing a path from the eastern gate of the royal palace to the Maha-muni ordination hall in 1671.[474] In that same year, Sanda-thu-dhamma-raza built the Shwei-gu-ha ordination hall and its accompanying monastery as well.[475]

Sanda-thu-dhamma-raza also broadened the geography of his religious patronage. Although the typical royal focus, for several decades, had been upon the royal court and the Maha-muni shrine, Sanda-thu-dhamma-raza made a determined effort not only to

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[473]Sanda-thu-dhamma-raza was in the middle of his boat journey to the Maha-muni pagoda in 1664, when the Mughals took Chittagong. Ibid., 201b.

[474]Ibid., 202a-202b.

[475]Ibid., 202a.

make donations at San-twei, but also to further the spread of Buddhism in the Kunit-kayine ('the seven districts'). In 1683, Sanda-thu-dhamma-raza made a declaration that he would make a great donation to the town of San-twei. Although it is unclear what this donation amounted to, we do know that he took the time to pay obeisance to the Andaw, Nandaw, and Sandaw pagodas. More importantly, in the Kunit-kayine, Sanda-thu-dhamma-raza had Buddhist *cetis* built,[476] presumably the first important ones in the region.

Sanda-thu-dhamma-raza's emphasis on Buddhist patronage continued into the reign of his son, the *ein-shei-min*, Ukka-bala (r. 1684-5). After participating in the traditional brahmanical *abhiseka* ceremony with the queen Thuwanna-kayala, Ukka-bala took the regnal title Thiri-thu-dhamma-raza and entered the royal palace in 1684.[477] Ukka-bala's background in Buddhism was very strong and he, alone amongst his brothers, was specifically given a Buddhist monastic education. He seems to have spent the six years from 1670 to 1676, at which time he was appointed *ein-shei-min*, as a monk. Soon after Ukka-bala began his reign, perhaps predictably, he made religious donations.[478] But other concerns of kingship played upon his mind as well. Ukka-bala seems to have been worried about his place on the throne for, in the same year, he raised as queen the daughter of an important western lord, exiled his uncle, the *mró-zà* of San-twei, to the

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[476]Ibid., 202a, 202b.

[477]Ibid., 202b.

[478]Ibid., 202a-202b.

Kalà-dàn frontier,[479] and engaged in one of the most radical changes in Mrauk-U kingship, a change which I will discuss below.

As I have already explained, the early Mrauk-U kings built their kingdom upon the foundations of maritime resources, and Muslims were major carriers of this trade. Alongside the small numbers of Muslim mercenaries, traders, and exiles of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, Mrauk-U became the home of skilled Muslims taken as captives in raiding in Lower Bengal as well as high status Muslim exiles in the 1660s. By the 1670s, in addition to Muslim ministers and other elites, important Muslim contingents began to dominate the royal bodyguard, the *ko-rans*. It does not seem too extreme to suggest that an increasing Islamization of elite culture and the urban population of Mrauk-U preceded the heightened attention given to Buddhist religious patronage by Mrauk-U kings in the 1670s and 1680s. Similarly, there are indications that royal resources were declining, in part because of the rise of Chittagong as a commercial competitor and in part because of the decline of the Dutch trade with Arakan.

It may seem logical then that Ukka-bala attempted to abandon Mrauk-U and establish a new royal capital. He ordered the construction of the town of Kyeib to serve as the new royal capital. Here, he had an auspicious (*min-gala*) palace built, as well as the Min-gala-U *cedi* and its accompanying royal monastery.[480] Finally, in the later part of 1684, the king ascended the new royal palace. Ukka-bala seems to have been interested in

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[479]Ibid., 202b-203a.

[480]Ibid.

establishing a new court based not upon religious heterogeneity, as was often found in the early Mrauk-U dynasty, but solely upon Theravada Buddhism. This is suggested in part by the people whom the king alienated. We are told in the chronicles, for example, that Ukka-bala did not heed the advice of his brahmanical astrologers and his move to the town of Kyeib ushered in a revolt of the royal bodyguards,[481] whom, as I have explained, now included Shah Shuja's ex-warriors.

Clearer evidence of the nature of Ukka-bala's intentions can be found in his actions after founding the new royal capital. In 1684, when Ukka-bala made the traditional pilgrimage to the Maha-muni shrine, he had the commoners drink consecrated water (drunk as a symbol of loyalty) in front of the Maha-muni image. Ukka-bala thus tied loyalty to his overlordship with Theravada Buddhism. Later in 1684, Ukka-bala ordained one thousand *pa-zin* (fully ordained Buddhist monks) in the royal Low-kama-aun ordination hall. In 1685, Ukka-bala went on another pilgrimage to the Maha-muni shrine and spent three days doing good works and repairing the pagoda.[482]

7.6 Decline of the Central Court and the Rise of the *Ko-rans*

I have already discussed how the political and commercial problems of the 1660s led to a particular reaction by the central kingship. This reaction involved a sudden accentuation of royal patronage of Buddhism by Sanda-thu-dhamma-raza and Ukka-bala. These kings may have either (1) sought to substantiate their authority at a time when

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[481]Ibid., 203a.

[482]Ibid.

other resources ebbed or, out of fear, (2) sought personal security by closer association with Buddhism and the protection it offered. I will now discuss another redirection in developments in the central court. Shortly after Ukka-bala's dramatic step in attempting to shift the royal center to a new town, certain groups based in Mrauk-U retaliated and overthrew him. This reaction in part may have reflected the economic problems facing Mrauk-U as a maritime port dependent upon maritime commerce. For over a decade, the *ko-rans*, the royal bodyguard, exerted an unprecedented influence over the royal court and also further contributed to the court's alienation from outlying areas and peoples in the Arakan Littoral.

The *ko-rans*, likely in conjunction with urban elites unassociated with the inner royal circle, turned against Ukka-bala and played an important role in the royal court over the following few decades. Having reigned for less than two years, Ukka-bala alienated many in Mrauk-U. After Ukka-bala returned from his pilgrimage to the Maha-muni shrine in 1685, the *ko-rans* murdered him as he ascended the Min-gala-wa palace in the town of Kyeib. The *ko-rans* then torched the royal palace, killing many in the royal court, including the queens and female attendants and Ukka-bala's great ministers and commanders (among them the *leira-mran* and the *sit-kè-krī*). The townspeople then looted Ukka-bala's wealth, in silver and gold.[483] The *ko-rans* re-established the royal capital at Mrauk-U and placed on the throne a series of petty rulers under their control.

For over a decade, Ukka-bala's successors did not continue the level of Ukka-bala's

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[483]Ibid., 203a-203b.

donations to the *sasana*. Occasionally, Mrauk-U kings made religious donations, but they were relatively minor.[484] Certainly, none equaled Sanda-thu-dhamma-raza or Ukka-bala as patrons of Buddhism. In 1693, a mission sent from Sri Lanka to request Arakanese Buddhist monks to help revive the religion in Sri Lanka was even turned away without any help.[485] It took a second mission from Sri Lanka, in 1696, to get forty-two Arakanese monks for the effort.[486]

The decline in central patronage of Buddhism after Ukka-bala's death coincided with the increased control and authority of the *ko-rans* in Mrauk-U. The rebellion of the *ko-rans* which led to the death of Ukka-bala and the shattering of his royal court marked the beginning of *ko-ran* dominance in the Arakanese royal court. They became king-makers and the position of the king on the throne depended upon the sentiments of the *ko-rans* at any given time.[487] This was so much the case that one king sat on the throne four different times, another three times, and another twice, within the space of only one decade. Unsatisfied *ko-rans* on several occasions stormed the palace and executed ministers whom they found disagreeable.[488] To win the approval of the *ko-rans*, the

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[484] In 1689, Wara-dhamma-raza built the Mingala royal *cedī* and the Mingala-rama cedi, enshrining relics in the latter in 1690. Ibid., 205a.

[485]Ibid., 205b-206a.

[486]Ibid., 207a.

[487]Aun-doun-pru, "Rakhine Raza-poun," 60a.

[488]In 1687, for example, the *ko-rans* entered the palace and shot and killed Tarapa, the *hsin-kei-kri*, as well as the *leira-mran* and the *lewei-mran*. Mi, "Rakhine Razawin," 204a.

Mrauk-U kings of the late 1680s and 1690s had to provide stipends to them.[489] The *ko-*

rans, on occasion, also pillaged royal storehouses for royal reserves of gold and silver.[490]

When the king could not afford these stipends or had no wealth to provide, the *ko-rans*

seized, or forced the king to provide to them, women of the royal court and harem.[491]

When no wealth or women could be offered, the king was dethroned and replaced by

another.[492]

Unfortunately, the *ko-rans* have left no written record or oral traditions

themselves, so their internal dynamics generally remain a mystery. Thus, we do not know

enough about the *ko-rans* to suggest that they were a unified interest group or how they

might have fit into patron-client relationships within the royal city. The *ko-rans* may

have consisted of rival factions, for example, and some may have been allied to powerful

ministers or rich elites outside the court. We have vague references to groups within the

royal city who competed with the *ko-rans*. When Ukka-bala and much of his royal court

were massacred by the *ko-rans* in 1685, for example, the *ko-ran* candidate for the throne,

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[489]Aun-doun-pru, "Rakhine Raza-poun," 59b. Ukka-bala's successor, Wara-dhamma-raza (during his first of four tenures on the throne), for example, levied taxes upon the country people in order to pay each of the *ko-rans* a salary of four silver *kyats* per month as "warriors-pay." Mi, "Rakhine Razawin," 203b. See also Aun-doun-pru, "Rakhine Raza-poun," 59b, 60a.

[490]In 1687, for example, the *ko-rans* plundered all the gold and silver in the royal storehouses. Mi, "Rakhine Razawin," 204a.

[491]In 1687, for example, the *ko-rans* "took, in order to make them their own wives, the princesses and the court women." Mi, "Rakhine Razawin," 204a.

[492]This occurred when Mani-thu-dhamma-raza told the *ko-rans*, when they asked him for pay: "I have no gold or silver property [to give you]." Mi, "Rakhine Razawin," 205b. See also Aun-doun-pru, "Rakhine Raza-poun," 60a.

Rei-baw-thima, the eater of Taunbek, was shot by "other people who [did] not agree" before he could be placed in the palace.[493] With the exception of the ko-ran torching of Ukka-bala's palace, we do not know who was setting the fires which periodically killed members of the royal family.[494] However, it seems likely to have been either the *ko-rans* or their opponents.

Buddhist monks emerged on occasion in support of the king against the *ko-rans*. They hid wealth from the court to keep it out of the hands of the *ko-rans*. Four monks in 1687 attempted to free Wara-dhamma-raza from *ko-ran* control and were subsequently put to death.[495] The *ko-rans*, perhaps in order to win support from the *sangha*, even placed the *sangha-raja*, the monk Mani-thu, on the throne in the early 1690s. When he too was unable (or refused) to deliver silver and gold to the *ko-rans*, he was dethroned as well.[496]

For a decade-and-a-half, the *ko-rans* struggled with four groups. Within the royal capital, the king and segments of the central elite (the nobles and the warriors) periodically made attempts to extricate the royal court from *ko-ran* control. By the late 1680s, the chronicles refer to the quarreling and warfare between the *ko-rans* and the

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[493]Mi, "Rakhine Razawin," 203b.

[494]In 1685, for example, the queen Min-mra-shin, the concubines, and the female attendants were killed when someone set fire to the royal palace. Ibid.

[495]Ibid., 204b.

[496]Ibid., 205b; Aun-doun-pru, "Rakhine Raza-poun," 60a.

'great warriors.'[497] This continual struggle led to the flight of unhappy members of the central elite to the countryside where they often joined unhappy villagers and their *su-kris*. A second group, consisting of the rural gentry, may have rebelled in attempts to avoid central levies of taxes to pay the *ko-rans* and to make up for lost wealth looted by the *ko-rans* themselves. A third group consisted of the resettled war captives, generally Bengalis and Mons. A fourth group included Muslim artisan and other groups who suffered from excessive taxation in the royal city by the *ko-rans*.

In the late 1690s, the king had joined together with Muslim groups in the royal city who were unable to tolerate any further increases in taxes. The king (and presumably some of his royal servicemen) and the Muslim rebels attacked and eliminated many of the *ko-rans*. Thereupon, the king tried to attract back to Mrauk-U all those who had fled, including upper and lower social strata and Buddhist monks.[498] It was a temporary respite, however, for the royal court could not reverse in any meaningful way the detrimental effects of commercial decline, de-urbanization, and the diffusion of power throughout the Arakan Littoral. Certainly, by the very end of the seventeenth century, the 'kingdom' was again in chaos, accentuated by a rural famine in which both country people and monks alike starved.[499] The population of the royal city began to migrate into the countryside. According to the chronicles, intermediary elites co-habitated with

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[497]Mi, "Rakhine Razawin," 204b.

[498]Aun-doun-pru, "Rakhine Raza-poun," 60b.

[499]Ibid.

queens, military commanders and royal ministers broke off into small alliance-groups, 'bad people' ruined the villages and brought disorder to the countryside.[500]

7.7 Summary

Problems began to emerge from the mid-seventeenth century which shook up the Arakanese kingdom. Although the struggle between Shah Shuja and Sanda-thu-dhamma-raza, the Mughal conquest of Chittagong, and the rise of the *ko-rans* might appear on the surface to indicate a clear and growing rift between Muslims and non-Muslims in Arakan, the reality was much more complex. Certainly, such events have been portrayed in more recent periods as clear signs of religious identities at work, but it is doubtful if such identities were as clear-cut as they have been made to appear. Even in the last half of the seventeenth century, Muslims and Buddhists took sides in conflicts not out of communal identities, but more frequently out of patron-client relationships. The circumstances of specific events, such as the Shah Shuja episode, seem to have made it easy for European observers to see clear religious loyalties at work, but when one looks deeper into the sources, it is apparent that in such cases patron-client relationships crossed religious identities.

The most important developments of the mid-seventeenth century include the short-lived increase in royal patronage of Buddhism, the decline of the royal court, and the devolution of political power and authority into outlying areas in the Arakan Littoral. From the late seventeenth century, the royal center, save for a few short periods,

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[500]Ibid., 61a; and Mi,·"Rakhine Razawin," 209a.

shrivelled in influence and attraction. The seventeenth-century decline in world trade, the loss of Chittagong, the disappearance of the Dutch trade, and the alienation of the royal court from Dar al-Islam all worked to reduce the resources available to the court for redistribution in the form of political and religious patronage. The immediate symptoms of this decline included the rise of the palace guard as king-makers. Its long-term results included a decline in royal patronage of the religion (after the brief 1660s-1680s increase as already discussed).[501] As a result, the center no longer attracted attention and it was no longer able to demonstrate its authority throughout the littoral. In the most embarrassing example of this decline, one Arakanese king, Sanda-wimala-raza (r. 1700-1706), spent several years passed around as a token by various competing strongmen. Finally, one strongman placed him in a bamboo palace in the countryside and ruled in his name.[502]

Thus, for much of the period between the 1680s and 1780s, the Arakan Littoral was in political chaos. This affected Arakanese lowlanders in a variety of ways. First, the royal court could no longer offer protection from, or threaten punitive raids against, either highland or lowland raiders. Second, monasteries and pagodas were deprived of revenues and support, first by the decline of royal patronage and then by the inability of the court to prevent Mon and Bengali communities assigned for their support from moving away and seeking refuge in upriver areas.[503] Third, the insecurity of property and life in a

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[501]Charney, "Crisis and Reformation in a Maritime Kingdom," 209.

[502]Mi, "Rakhine Razawin," 210a-213b.

[503]Charney, "Crisis and Reformation in a Maritime Kingdom," 212.

period when numerous local strongmen were gathering resources to build up local power-bases, not to mention the loss of life in continuous internecine warfare, added to the worries of a people already facing a harsh environment. Fourth, the chaotic political environment kept away potential new maritime traders,[504] which likely reduced the vitality of urban markets and thus the livelihood of villagers who depended upon these markets to sell village crafts and goods.

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[504]Arakan, at least in the early eighteenth century, had the reputation among maritime traders of being in a state of anarchy. See Hamilton, A New Account of the East Indies, 2:17.

CHAPTER 8

WHEN THINGS FALL APART:

THE DEVOLUTION OF POLITICS AND RELIGIOUS PATRONAGE IN THE

LATE SEVENTEENTH AND EIGHTEENTH CENTURIES

For at least a century, from the late sixteenth to the late seventeenth centuries, there is little evidence of inter-religious confrontation between Buddhists and Muslims. During this period, it is true that groups involved in political crises, such as the Shah Shuja episode, could justifiably be characterized as being predominantly Muslim or Buddhist. I am concerned here, however, with conscious religious identities, when people consciously define themselves according to their commitment to one or another religion. The seventeenth century provided many of the critical building blocks for the construction of religious identities: increasing competition by the Buddhist *sangha* and others for declining resources, rural gentry leadership in rural religion, the court's rejection of Bengali-Muslim symbols of kingship and its reliance for its authority on royal patronage of the Buddhist *sangha*, and the convergence of two external religio-cultural zones in the Arakan Littoral, one Muslim-Bengali, and the other Burman-Buddhist. Even so, groups frequently cooperated in the late seventeenth century out of secular interests, such as the union of the Buddhist royal court and Mrauk-U's Muslims (probably traders

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and artisans) against the *ko-rans* (from what we know of them, they were likely predominantly Muslims at the end of the seventeenth century) in the 1690s.

By the end of the eighteenth century, however, some groups in Arakanese society had begun to call for social exclusion on the basis of popular religious affiliation. This went beyond sixteenth century efforts by the *aranya-vasi* monks to persuade the royal court to purify what they viewed as a dissident sect of religious clergy: the *gama-vasi* monks. From 1787, however, the "Rakhine Arei-taw-poun" (popularly known as the "Danra-waddy Arei-taw-poun") composed by a Buddhist missionizing (known as a *sasana-pru* or 'propagator of the religion') monk based in San-twei, emerged as a highly pro-Buddhist and anti-Muslim epic. Among other things, the "Rakhine Arei-taw-poun" cast aspersions on Muslims and warned Arakanese kings of the dangers that the Muslims posed to the "Arakanese" way of life. The Arakanese are Maramas (Mranmas, Burmans), the texts suggests, and, as it continues:

> The Maramas and the Kalàs [the Muslims in this case] are only the same in the way that they are human. They are not the same in their hearts. In the traditional beliefs of the Maramas, they always revere and guard over the three noble-jewels-- Buddha, *dharma*, and *sangha* -- . . . the Kalà convictions are not the same . . . Their belief is as in the Kalà god's book, which says that if one happens to be caught making a gesture of prayer to a holy image or stupa, it commands that his arms be cut off. . . the Marama god's book says that good and noble kings are those who point out to the country people the belief in the noble Buddha . . . the Kalàs entice others to the Kalà beliefs. While the Marama beliefs disappear, and the people come over to the Kalà beliefs, [these] people do not have shame, they do not guard over their race, and their kings do not have Dharma . . . In the kingdoms that [Muslim] kings rule, the rain is not regular, the fruit does not blossom and has no taste, the seasons are not regular, and the four elements are badly shaken. . .[505]

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[505]Kawi-thara, "Rakhine Arei-taw-poun," 40b.

In the nineteenth century, these sentiments began to influence popular notions of group membership. For the nineteenth-century Buddhist lay community, to be Muslim no longer simply meant to worship another god or partake in a different system of religious belief; it additionally meant to be part of another social group which should be excluded rather than included in the local community.

This transformation of religious identity, from religious affiliation to group identity, was rooted in eighteenth-century developments outside the royal court. In this chapter, I attempt to explain how the demise of central royal authority and the devolution of political power encouraged new patterns of rural patron-client relationships and strengthened rural community bonds. This period of 'chaos' was also crucial in strengthening rural notions of religious identity. When the kingdom was periodically and briefly pulled back together by rural strongmen, I argue that their court culture reflected the strengthened religious identities emerging in rural Arakan.

8.1 The Aggrandizement of the Rural Gentry

In the late seventeenth century, little of what had been the kingdom of Arakan remained. Mrauk-U's population dwindled due to a variety of factors, but chiefly due to the economic decline of the royal court, subsequent heavy taxation by the royal bodyguard, and political disorder. The court itself lost its attractive pull. After a decade and a half of *ko-ran* dominance in the royal city, the kingship seemed to lack the prestige and auspiciousness that it once had. Elite families held on to their appanages if they were

able, while elsewhere, local leaders such as *su-kris* and *rwa-kauns* built up local dominions and filled the political vacuum left by the retreat of the royal court's attractive pull.

The *rwa-kauns, krei-kauns, rwa-zàs, krei-zàs,* and *su-kris* (who ruled groups of villages known as "circles") formed a rural gentry who had traditionally served as intermediaries between the villagers and the central court. When the court needed human and material resources from the villages, it turned to the rural gentry to extract these resources in the form of taxes or corvee labor. Likewise, when villagers needed help in dealing with the central court, the rural gentry as good patrons voiced the complaints of their village clients or found other ways to ameliorate the situation, such as rigging local records or misinforming central land inquests and thus reducing the tax burden on the village. The rural gentry in turn lived off village revenues, and the less revenue forwarded to the royal center meant more wealth for themselves. When the royal center was weak, as was the case from the late seventeenth century, human and material resources likely made members of the rural gentry wealthy men while central elites became impoverished from the lack of resources flowing into the royal center from the villages (and, as we have seen, from the decline in maritime trade as well). It is no surprise then, that by the late 1690s, the entire kingdom outside the royal city was in the hands of members of the rural gentry who "acted as kings."[506]

Eighteenth century Arakanese sources suggest that rural gentry played a

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[506]Ibid., 66a.

significant role in establishing the religious identity of Arakanese villagers. These sources

believed that all one had to do was place a Muslim over a Buddhist village and the village

would abandon the ways of Buddhism; likewise a Buddhist *rwa-zà* or other local leader

was necessary to help the village 'keep the faith.' According to Shin Kawi-thara's

"Rakhine Arei-taw-poun," for example:

> The ancient wisemen have written about how the Kalas [Muslims] entice
> [others] to be with the Kala [Muslim] beliefs... After the king says that he will give
> the *mro-zà*-ships, the *rwa-zà*-ships, and the *krei-zà*-ships to the [Muslim] Mra-li,
> there will be many Kala [that is, Muslim] towns and villages in the royal realm.
> Only give the *rwa-zà*-ships and the *krei-zà*-ships to those beings who have the
> same beliefs as ours.[507]

Why this was the case is still unclear.

Perhaps we have here the same phenomenon encountered by Catholic priests in

the early seventeenth century, whereby clients converted to Christianity in the case of a

Christian patron. Catholic priests in Banga and the Arakan Littoral, for example, often

succeeded in introducing Christianity to local communities by first converting elites and

community leaders. Catholic conversion efforts in Arakan targeted the royal court, just as

they targeted central rulers in other domains. The idea was that Catholicism would trickle

down from lord to vassal, from patron to client, just as it did in contemporary Europe.

Conversion also worked from elite to mass, through the hierarchy of the home.[508] By

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[507]Ibid., 40b.

[508]The Catholic priests in the Philippines, for example, persuaded indigenous chiefs to allow the priests to instruct their children, and through them send the Catholic faith into elite households. The monks in the Philippines first worked through the children: "they did not attempt to impose themselves on the elders of the community. What the religious usually requested was that some of the children be committed to their care. The chieftains might shun the monastery for some time, but out of a combination of curiosity and fear they would hand over some of their children to be educated by the religious.

teaching fragments of the Catholic faith to the children of the indigenous elite, the Catholic

priests were able to reach the servants and slaves of indigenous elite households, as well

as the extended families of the slaves so touched.[509] At Hughli, for example, Father

Fernandez, with such a goal in mind, wrote a small catechism and had it translated into

Bengali:

> ... in order that the children coming to school might learn it by heart and afterwards
> teach it to the slaves, or male and female servants, in their home, which they did
> with such fruit that, in a short time, all the people of that colony...had learned the
> Christian doctrine.[510]

The Catholic priests also successfully converted the slaves, as well as their children, of

the Portuguese households.[511]

It seems likely that members of the rural gentry also actively encouraged

conversion to their own faith in terms of Buddhism and Islam. Rural gentry, for example,

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Evangelization followed a standard pattern. The children of the chieftains were first indoctrinated, and then the chieftains themselves were persuaded. With the conversion of the leaders of the community, the baptism of their followers came as a matter of course. Although the indoctrination of ex-pagan adults was conscientiously pursued, it was realized that their adjustment to Christianity would be incomplete. Special attention, therefore, was concentrated on the children. The children proved enthusiastic and effective auxiliaries of the religious in winning over the parents to the new religion, reporting clandestine pagan rituals, and in catechizing the older generation." John L. Phelan, The Hispanization of the Philippines: Spanish Aims and Filipino Responses, 1565-1700 (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1959), 55.

[509]As Father Fernandez explained of Sripur in 1599: "Someone, against all right and law, wanted to enslave for his father's debt a child of honourable birth and good character. I came to his help in good time and taught him the Christian doctrine. He learned it by heart so quickly that, though he began only at the beginning of Lent, he was teaching the servants when Easter drew near, and served the priest at Mass." Fernandez, "Letter," 58.

[510]Du Jarric, "A Missionary Tour of Bengal," 154.

[511]As Farinha noted: "the other Christians...made their confession, some even of their whole life, and many received Holy Communion. The Father baptized many children of the slaves belonging to the Christians in the three Bandels." Farinha, "Journey of Father A. Farinha," 175.

whether *rwa-zàs*, *rwa-kauns*, or *su-krìs*, were intensely interested in the religious obeisance of the communities to which they belonged. The importance of *su-krìs* and *rwa-zàs* during this period and into the nineteenth century in conditioning and fostering religious identities is suggested in stories and accounts from the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.[512]

Members of the rural gentry found Buddhism and Islam especially attractive for a variety of reasons. In a period when the royal court suffered from low prestige and was of little consequence to rural villagers, titles of appointments and centrally-derived regalia likely did not warrant much prestige in the eyes of Arakanese villagers. Since the rural gentry was increasingly able to keep their tax collections without fear of central reprisals or new tax inquests, the rural gentry was likely able to amass significant wealth not only *vis-a-vis* villagers, but also *vis-a-vis* central 'elites.' Although increased wealth could guarantee sufficiently strong patron-client linkages, a moral justification which made sense of their new-found status and hegemony in local social relationships was lacking. Buddhism and Islam offered ways for the rural gentry to justify morally their position in local society and, at the same time, to strengthen the patron-client linkages between themselves and the villagers from whom they drew resources.

Both Buddhism and Islam grant special status to those who devote themselves to the 'religion' not simply through personal piety but also by funding the religious community as a whole. In Buddhism, the construction of rest-houses, the donation of a

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[512]Ibid., 84.

pagoda, or the funding of a monastery all provide means of accumulating merit for the donor. Beyond personal accumulation of merit, however, by supporting the religion, one contributes to its continued existence for its predicted tenure of five thousand years during which time it serves as a vehicle through which other Buddhists can accumulate merit and achieve Enlightenment. This aspect of Buddhism, helping others along the way to Enlightenment, is the basis for the Boddhi-sattva ethic. For the worldly patron of the *sangha*, the donor becomes known by the prestigious title: *sasana-daya-ga* (patron of the religion). It is not surprising, then, that when central patronage (save for a few brief episodes in the eighteenth century) declined, rural gentry stepped in to fill the vacuum of religious patronage in rural Arakan. They constructed temples, funded pagoda and monastery repairs, and supported the *sangha*.[513]

Prestige and strengthened patron-client relationships did not obviate the appeal of the personal accumulation of personal merit (Buddhism), or entrance into Paradise (Islam). When one member of the rural gentry[514] luckily survived a sea campaign in which thousands drowned, for example, he devoted his attentions upon his return to patronizing Buddhism in his home village. He is said to have "built Monasteries, Theins and bridges in Thin-boon-pinze the place of his birth and also at Kywe-Khrandaung, where his wife was

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[513]See one case in Monk of Ra-naun-myin, "Kya Khwetsa," 154. See also the construction of the Zitke-thein in the village of Than-brin-kri by a "nobleman," in Forchhammer, Report, 50.

[514]He became Sanda-wizaya-raza's captain and then *ta-bain-kri* in the 1710s. Monk of Ra-naun-myin, "Kya Khwetsa," 153-4.

born."[515] It seems fairly certain that his good fortune and his religious piety were related, indicating that he connected protection with Buddhist devotion. Further, it indicates that this man, who came from rural Arakan, likely reflected the religious notions of the rural gentry, who equated religious piety with their construction of Buddhist edifices and other works of merit in rural locations.

Over the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, as the rural gentry began to accumulate more power, wealth, and status than they had in the past, they increasingly attempted to build up power-bases from which to expand or even take the royal capital. The first outlying warlord of the period was the 'minister' Nanda-si-thu, who managed to bring the 'south' (likely the Arakanese kingdom south of Danra-waddy) under his control. Although he was able to dethrone the Arakanese king and install his own candidate on the Mrauk-U throne in 1698, he was defeated in battle by a rival 'minister' the following year and his influence waned.[516] Another member of the rural gentry, the *kaun* of a community of toddy-palm cultivators, defeated the rival *rwa-kauns*, *krei-kauns*, and *su-kris* in the first decade of the eighteenth century, finally took Mrauk-U itself, and emerged as King Sanda-wizaya in 1710.[517]

8.2 When Things Fell Apart: Rural Rebellion and Warfare in the Arakan Littoral

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[515]Ibid., 154.

[516]Mi, "Rakhine Razawin," 209b.

[517]Kawi-thara, "Rakhine Arei-taw-poun," 66a.

The decline of central kingship and royal material redistribution (upon which patron-client relationships depended and thus held things together) encouraged rural rebellion and warfare. My argument is that warfare and rebellion in rural Arakan during this period created a confusing and dangerous human environment in three ways: (1) without fear of central reprisals, captive communities abandoned their own villages and pillaged other villages during their migrations to escape central control; (2) villages passed hands frequently from one local strongman to another and military competition among rural elites likely led to the exploitation of local villages for much needed resources; and (3) a weakened central court and a rural elite preoccupied with indigenous internecine warfare made villages easy prey for highland raiders. All this, I will suggest, may have fostered feelings among rural Arakanese that things had fallen apart and something was needed to provide security and protection.

Migrations by dislocated communities brought problems to rural villages, especially in Danra-waddy. The chronicles suggest that the chief culprits were Bengali and Mon communities which had been resettled in the Arakan Littoral,[518] but likely indigenous communities were involved as well. As these communities moved about, they lived off the land and of course, any villages they happened to run across. By the late seventeenth century, such communities had little to fear in the way of central reprisals, as the central court could exert very little coercive force outside the confines of the royal city. Even then, the royal court could not protect the royal city from the Mon and

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[518]Mi, "Rakhine Razawin," 206a, 206b, 208a, 208b, 209a.

Bengali communities who took Mrauk-U briefly in late 1696 and early 1697.[519]

Generally, the countryside became confused with a scattering of the population. By 1698,

the chronicles record, violence in the countryside had become endemic with gangs of

country people fighting each other so that no one was able to move about.[520]

Another way in which rural Arakanese villages suffered from the decline of the

royal center was the increasing competition among local strongmen throughout the rural

landscape.[521] As mentioned above, the central court could offer little protection to rural

Arakanese communities. The protection of outlying villages was thus entirely in the

hands of the *rwa-* and *krei-kauns* or *zàs* and the villagers.[522] To build up outlying power-

bases, rural gentry-warlords exploited the villages under their control for resources, both

human and material. This also included raiding neighboring villages.[523]

The lack of protection from the royal court also made rural Arakanese villages

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[519]Ibid., 208b-209a.

[520]Trading was also said to have resulted in quarrels when people tried to sell things. Mi, "Rakhine Razawin," 209a-209b; See also Aun-doun-pru, "Rakhine Raza-poun," 61a.

[521]Sometimes the chronicles provide detailed information concerning the build-up of these local powerbases, but often they are referred to simply as "rebellions."See general condition due to rebellions in the first decade of the eighteenth century in Monk of Ra-naun-myin, "Kya Khwetsa," 153. See rebellion at Padin in the 1710s in ibid., 153. See the rebellion in the "south" near Rama-waddy by Mahabala and Pha Nyo in the 1750s in ibid., 158; see the 1750s rebellion on Gun Kyun at the Leimro in ibid., 158.

[522]When Mons and Bengalis pillaged the village of Mi in 1697, for example, no help for the village came from the royal court. Retaliation against the Mon and Bengali rebels was left entirely in the hands of the *rwa-zà* of Mi. Mi, "Rakhine Razawin," 209a.

[523]See general description of the first decade of the eighteenth century in Monk of Ra-naun-myin, "Kya Khwetsa," 153. See the rebellion from Gun Kyun at Leimro in the 1750s, in which "the country was thrown into disorder. Bands of rebels looted and pillaged the villages," in ibid., 158.

vulnerable to hill tribe raids. The 'Shans' (used by the Arakanese as a generic term for all easterners when their identity was unclear),[524] for example, raided the lowlands twice in 1691, killing four hundred people.[525] In 1698, the Chin-lins raided the lowlands for captives to sell, presumably in Burma.[526] There is also evidence that raids by hill tribes contributed further to rural migrations, as Arakanese villages tried to move out of reach of hill-tribe raiding.

8.3 Natural Chaos

Two kinds of natural disasters may also have encouraged feelings of disorder and danger amongst rural Arakanese in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The first kind of disorder, partly human-caused, was indirectly related to the previous section. Famine and disease, while not directly caused by humans, was inadvertently encouraged by agricultural dislocation and migrations throughout various parts of the littoral. The second kind of disaster, not caused by political disorder, included natural disasters such as cyclones, major floods, and earthquakes. Coupled with the dangerous human environment (*vide* Section 8.2), in Arakanese eyes the picture of disorder must have transcended the political realm of human activity and now encompassed the supernatural realm as well.

The Arakanese suffered a major famine at the close of the seventeenth century.

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[524]Jacques Leider, personal communication, Bangkok, July, 1998.

[525]Mi, "Rakhine Razawin," 205a.

[526]Ibid., 209b.

From 1698, monks and rural Arakanese alike starved,[527] and the Arakanese countryside

was littered with the dead and the dying. As one source explains:

> The whole country starved and in the chasms, ravines, and valleys, on the
> surface of the ground, and in the routes and roads, [the people] died like piled up
> corpses. Their bodies drifted in the water also. . .[528]

Although alterations in rainfall patterns (i.e. drought) are suggested as the cause of this

particular famine,[529] for similar famines, agricultural dislocation in the late seventeenth

and eighteenth centuries was probably also to blame. Agricultural dislocation during this

period had many causes. First, war captive communities abandoned their settlements.

During their movement around Danra-waddy or on their way back to Bengal, these

communities seem to have lived off the land and the villages they came across. Second, hill

tribe raids not only extracted agricultural cultivators from the Arakan Littoral, but they

also frightened others off. Third, military contests in rural areas not only killed off many

villagers and destroyed villages, but when local strongmen overexploited local villages,

these villages had good reason to supply agricultural surplus to those outside the village.

Although famine is not completely a function of human activity, the kinds of human-

caused problems I have just discussed may have contributed greatly to it.

Disease likely owed much to rural dislocation for several reasons. The massive

movement of peoples around Danra-waddy, for example, created an ideal vehicle for the

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[527]Aun-doun-pru, "Rakhine Raza-poun," 60b.

[528]Mi, "Rakhine Razawin," 209b.

[529]Aun-doun-pru, "Rakhine Raza-poun," 60b.

spread of disease. Many areas of the Arakan Littoral were plagued by malaria and other diseases, for example, and people moving through these areas during migrations or when they attempted to hide from hostile neighbors, highland raiders, or exploitative strongmen would have been exposed to severely debilitating diseases. Famine would have led to poor nutrition and thus reduced immunities to disease.[530]

A second category of disaster occurred during this period. As I explained in the second chapter, the Arakan Littoral was prone to major natural disasters. An especially frequent series of natural disasters in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, however, occurred for unclear reasons. A hurricane and an earthquake which "destroyed" Chittagong in 1676, for example, likely affected Danra-waddy as well.[531] Earthquakes also shook the coasts, including Arakan, around the Bay of Bengal in 1678.[532] Further, major earthquakes frightened the king into having himself reconsecrated twice in the 1750s.[533] Another major earthquake shook Arakan so badly in 1761 that   many

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[530]The chronicles report an outbreak of measles in 1686. Disease carried off King Mettarit in 1742. Nara-abara-raza's immediate successor, Thirithu-raza was carried off by smallpox after a reign of three months in 1761. Mi, "Rakhine Razawin," 204a, 222a, 226a-226b.

[531]According to the entry for 21 November 1676 in the Streynsham Master's diary, Chittagong had been "lately destroyed by a Hurricane [and] an earthquake." Master, Diaries, 2:40.

[532]"By advices from Tanassaree . . . Pegu, Arracan and Bengale, the Earthquake which happened the 28th January last [1678], happened allsoe in all them places and upon all the coast of Chormandell at one and the same minute of time." Ibid., 2:182.

[533]Nara-abara-raza was extremely conscientious about supernatural phenomena and the religion. Twice, after major earthquakes hit Arakan during his reign, for example, Nara-abara-raza had the *abhiseka* ceremony performed again and his place on the throne reconsecrated. Mi, "Rakhine Razawin," 225b, 226a.

Buddhists *cetis* and pagodas crumbled and were ruined.[534] It is likely that, as natural disasters and warfare plagued the people of Arakan and those with whom they had contact, the world may have seemed to be coming to an end.

Such events were traditionally interpreted by the Arakanese as signs that there was something wrong with the universal balance, that the religion would come to an end, or that spiritual beings were upset. The weak central court was an easy scapegoat for this chaos and the supernatural consequences. The Arakanese thus turned to new centralizing rulers who could restore order to the kingdom and to the universe. If one could not be found in Arakan, as I will explain, the Arakanese looked beyond the littoral for a new home, or for a new ruler who could return order to the littoral.

8.4 Forging New Communities

The decline of the Mrauk-U court as an attractive center meant that communities in the Arakan Littoral looked elsewhere, and in a number of directions, for security against the chaotic human and climatic-geographic environment. Some sought security and protection through religious devotion. Others fled to more stable polities outside the Arakan Littoral. A third option was to support local strongmen who appeared capable of providing order to the Arakan Littoral or at least the local area. Finally, when nothing else worked, Arakanese began to seek external rulers to save their world. This was especially true of Arakanese Buddhists who sought help from the Irra-waddy Valley. I will explain that each of these options began to reflect and in turn reinforce religious and quasi-ethnic

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[534]Ibid., 226b.

identities.

8.4.1 Flight and External Religious and Cultural Influence

The Arakanese also had another option, one that was frequently taken. One could, for example, flee to more stable polities outside the Arakan Littoral. There is a problem, however, in determining the nature of this kind of flight. It seems fairly clear, for example, that Muslim Arakanese generally fled to the northern littoral and Banga, while Arakanese Buddhists fled to the Irra-waddy Valley. At first glance, then, one might suggest that the destination was based upon cultural or religious affinities. We do not have any evidence, however, to support this contention. As I explained in previous chapters, for example, Muslim communities predominated in Danra-waddy, where access to the northern littoral and Banga was relatively easy. Likewise, Arakanese Buddhists, concentrated mainly in eastern and southern Danra-waddy, as well as in Rama-waddy, Dwara-waddy, and Mekha-waddy, all had much easier access, via passes through the Arakan Roma, to the Irra-waddy Valley. Determining why one destination was more attractive than another -- culture, religion, or rejoining families, and so on -- is not a project which the available sources allow us to pursue. All that can be said here is that flight to the north or the east was one option for the Arakanese, that Muslims generally went north-westward,[535] and Buddhists generally went eastward (for whatever reason), and that by doing so they interacted more intimately with other Muslim or Buddhist cultures.

Bengali Muslims assigned as monastery slaves or as cultivators of monastic glebe

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[535]Ibid., 209a; Roberts, "Account of Aracan," 157, 158, 159, 160.

lands often fled their assignments. In 1723, for example, the Bengalis who had been placed

under an *ahmu-daw* at the Andaw, Sandaw, and Nandaw pagodas in San-twei, rebelled

and fled to Burma (perhaps to Bassein to find a boat home?).[536] During political crises in

Arakan as well, many of these captives found their way back to Banga.[537] In 1777, for

example, a group of twenty-seven Bengalis returned to Chittagong from Arakan, and from

them we have a glimpse at the manner in which former captives returned to Bengal:

> [they] took the opportunity to seize on a boat, and to make their escape in
> it. They proceeded in the boat for one day, and then quitted the boat, they landed in
> a woody and uninhabited part of Rakheng, and continued their route on the banks of
> small rivers, to avoid wild beasts and impenetrable woods--They were seven days
> travelling from Rekheng to Islamabad [Chittagong] . . .[538]

We know, however, that this movement occurred in both directions and for

different reasons. Out of the 1775 group of two thousand refugees who fled from Arakan,

for example, about one-quarter had not originally been carried off to Arakan as slaves, but

went there voluntarily to escape *zamindar* excesses within the borders of the English East

India Company's possessions around Chittagong. Furthermore, once resettled out of

Arakan, eight hundred soon returned to Arakan and did not come back.[539]

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[536]Mi, "Rakhine Razawin," 217a.

[537]We have the case of a Bengali Muslim taken from Backergunge in 1764 Roberts, "Account of Aracan," 157. In 1775, a group of two thousand Bengalis escaped from Arakan, led by a Bengali official of the Arakanese court named Tahes Mahmud. This group then settled in villages just across the Naf at Ramu. Ibid., 159-160.

[538]Ibid., 158.

[539]Ibid., 160.

8.4.2 Religious Devotion and Millennialism

One attempt to find security was through religious devotion. Popular millennial movements developed in the Arakan Littoral at the end of the seventeenth century out of such an attempt. While Muslims built mosques or occupied former monasteries and pagodas, Buddhists turned to new millennial movements which focussed upon the end of the religion.

Arakanese Buddhism experienced a surge of devotion during the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. As I have mentioned, "Rakhine Arei-taw-poun" may reflect late eighteenth century concerns and understandings of how things worked in his compilation of this 'national epic.' Because of this, we have to use the "Rakhine Arei-taw-poun" with care, but more importantly, it is a valuable source for Buddhist monastic perceptions of life in late eighteenth century Arakan. In messages embedded in some of the apocryphal 'sayings' or advice to Arakanese kings, Shin Kawi-thara, the Buddhist monk and author of "Rakhine Arei-taw-poun," attributes the spread of popular Buddhism in rural Arakan to three agents: the king, charismatic monks and mystics, and community. I will discuss the role played by kings later in this chapter. At this point, I will focus upon Shin Kawi-thara's interpretation of the role played by mystic monks and communities in spreading Buddhism.

Popular millennial movements claimed that the Nat king (Sakra) was coming to punish the wicked. According to one prediction that spread throughout the villages, Sakra came to judge the people and for some:

Those who do not practice the good ways such as refraining from eating meat and fish, and observing faith, charity, and the precepts will die and disappear, and then they will arrive in hell.[540]

Fear of this event drove many villagers to seek out meritorious acts which might save them. The fowl which the villagers raised, for example, were set free. Further, fear of the omen fostered greater devotion to Buddhism: "In every village, the people built rest-houses and pavilions and observed the eight precepts."[541]

The agents of millennial Buddhist movements in rural Arakan are still a mystery. But we do have clues. One of the "Rakhine Arei-taw-poun's" stories, for example, involves a charismatic Buddhist monk from the Irra-waddy Valley who came to Arakan and attracted a rural following. He took up residence on a mountain and the people of the local area began to provide him with regular donations. The monk was able to convince the local *rwa-zà* that he followed the eight precepts and this news spread to the royal capital.[542] The court did not get involved and the monk remained locally-significant until it turned out that this 'foreign' monk had ulterior motives for his proselytization. According to Shin Kawi-thara's "Rakhine Arei-taw-poun:"

Before long, this *rahan* ruined the cedis and stupas which were in the Amara Valley, and he took all the gold and silver [in them] which had been donated by earlier kings and he fled. The people [of the area] pursued him and caught him when they met him on the Amara Valley road . . . and then they sent this monk and the

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[540]Mi, "Rakhine Razawin," 210a.

[541]Ibid., 210a.

[542]Kawi-thara, "Rakhine Arei-taw-poun," 39b.

silver and gold as tribute to the king.[543]

This story tells us about the ways in which rural Arakanese were drawn to such wandering monks in the eighteenth century.

During this period, Muslim mosques also sprang up throughout Danra-waddy (but not, it seems, elsewhere in the Arakan Littoral). I have already mentioned mosques built by Muslim traders or mercenaries, such as the Buddermokan on the coast and the Santikan mosque built in the royal capital. In some cases, Muslim Arakanese also renovated abandoned monasteries or pagodas and turned these into mosques as well. Although our sources are vague on the subject, Muslim mosque-building may have been more extensive, for early nineteenth century European accounts suggest that there were additional mosques, presumably in rural Danra-waddy.[544]

I stress the importance of mosque building in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Arakan because the mosque serves not only as the place of worship for Muslims, but also as a potential center, though perhaps thus far unrealized, for the formation of a Muslim

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[543]Ibid., 40a.

[544]As Comstock explained in the 1840s, " a few mosques are found here and there . . ." Comstock, "Notes on Arakan," 240; Other tentative support for this view comes from Mohammed Yunus' research. Yunus claims that in addition to the Magya or Musa mosque built in Maungthagon village to the northeast of Mrauk-U (fourteenth century), and the Sandikhan mosque in Mrauk-U, several other major mosques were built after the mid-seventeenth century. Shah Shuja, for example, built the Shuja mosque at Mintayabyin in Mrauk-U in 1661. In 1668, another mosque, the Alam Lashkar mosque, appeared in Pan Mraung village. Two other mosques followed in the late seventeenth century: the Qazi mosque and the Musa Dewan mosque, both in Danra-waddy. Further, there may have been other mosques. Yunus argues that when Burman soldiers occupied the Arakan Littoral in 1784-5, they razed many mosques and madarassahs and built Buddhist edifices on their foundations. Yunus, suggests that this may explain why plaques referring to Allah in Arabic have been found in some Buddhist pagodas in Danra-waddy. Yunus, History of Arakan, 85-86. In any event, the view that Muslim mosque-building was extensive does not stand on Yunus' research alone, and I have already referred to other evidence which is consonant with Yunus' findings.

community. In other words, the mosque has social as well as religious functions. The heightened pace of mosque-building in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Danra-waddy appears to indicate that Muslim devotionalism was on the rise.

8.4.3 The Rural Gentry as New Centralizers

During this period, Arakanese also supported local strongmen among the *rwa-kauns*, *rwa-zàs* and *su-kris*, who appeared capable of providing order to the Arakan Littoral or at least the local area. In the first decade of the eighteenth century, for example, "[t]he terror of the people was great and each took refuge and placed himself under the protection of one leader or another."[545] When members of the rural gentry seized control of the royal court, they ruled in forms with which they were familiar in their community. This meant that Arakanese Muslims who took control of the court used the vocabulary and conceptions of Bengali sultan-ship, while Arakanese Buddhists were more recognizable as *dhamma-rajas* (Buddhist kings).

Sanda-wizaya-raza, the former *kaun* of the toddy-palm community mentioned earlier, patronized Buddhism to a degree which had not been encountered since Sanda-thu-dhamma-raza almost a half-century earlier. The Arakanese chronicles reflected this, in the usual hyperbolic fashion, by ascribing to him the establishment of eight hundred monasteries, eight hundred ordination halls, and eight hundred pagodas, together with slaves for the upkeep of the *sangha*. All this, it was said, was to "spread the royal merit"

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[545]Monk of Ra-naun-myin, "Kya Khwetsa," 153.

throughout the kingdom.[546] That Sanda-wizaya-raza took his devotion to Buddhism personally is partly indicated by the fact that he entrusted the care of his son to a monk, the *hsaya-daw* of Winei-rei. Certainly, the establishment of a Buddhist *cedi* and an ordination hall in Min-don during his invasion of Burma in 1719 is also in part a reflection of the degree of his interest.[547] It may also be possible that Sanda-wizaya-raza commissioned appanage grantees to convert the populations of their domains to Buddhism.[548]

According to a poem written by a Buddhist monk of Ra-naun-myin in the 1760s and the mid-nineteenth century history compiled by the Arakanese Buddhist Nga Mi, when a Bengali (and perhaps Muslim) came to the throne, he ruled in ways which were different from the expectations which Buddhists had of their king. One Bengali, Gadra, seized the royal throne in 1737. From Nga Mi's and the Monk of Ra-naun-myin's descriptions, Gadra could have been either a Hindu or a Muslim, the only certain thing is that he was, or was descended from, a Bengali. When Charles Paton wrote his survey of Arakanese history in the early nineteenth century, based upon unspecified Arakanese manuscripts and likely oral histories as well, Gadra had become most certainly a

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[546]Mi, "Rakhine Razawin," 214b.

[547]Ibid., 216a, 216b.

[548]When Sanda-wizaya-raza gave one man the eater-ship of Dan-lwei, for example, he also gave him the mandate to "make the wild and the rough civilized." Ibid., 216b.

Muslim.[549] Gadra had been the *kaun* or head of a Bengali community close to the

highlands. After a raid on the settlement by Chin tribesmen in 1737, Gadra led his people

to Lei-mró creek and then to Mrauk-U. There, he joined forces with sixty Muslim

seafarers, from whom he seems to have acquired muskets. When Gadra attacked the royal

city, the king was evidently killed and Gadra assumed the throne.[550] Gadra made himself

ruler not with a traditional Arakanese title but as a sultan, calling himself Kala-Thuratan-

raza ("King Sultan of the Indians").[551] He then attracted Bengalis around his banner and

tracked down opponents to his rule throughout Danra-waddy.

If we accept the Buddhist accounts of his rule, for no Bengali (whether Muslim or

Hindu) accounts have emerged, Sultan Gadra's reign correlated with several new, or

newly-accentuated, developments in Danra-waddy. In the royal city and those parts of

Danra-waddy under his control, for example, Gadra allowed the removal of the "golden

images" (the Buddha images) from the monasteries and the ordination halls, reflecting the

Muslim proscription of idolatry. Instead of images, Gadra's followers placed Bengali

(probably Muslim) 'teachers' into these former monasteries and ordination halls.[552] Gadra

then transferred ownership of these places to the *hsayas*, with whom Gadra also closely

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[549]Paton, in his survey of Arakanese chronicles, refers to this man as "a Musselman, named Kala." See C. Paton, "Historical and Statistical Sketch of Aracan," Asiatic Researches 16 (1828): 364.

[550]The king, Sandawizayaraza (r. 1737), at first took shelter in the Shitthaung monastery but then came out to do battle with his Muslim attackers. Mi, "Rakhine Razawin," 221a.

[551]Ibid., 221b.

[552]Arakanese chronicles refer to four such teachers: Kaun-daga, Maw-la, Pauk-kyi, and Thu-thi-beid-na. Ibid., 221b.

associated his rule. According to the Buddhist accounts, these four *hsayas* became close associates with the sultan, eating with him and becoming his friends as well as his subordinate leaders (*bos*). The Buddhist accounts (again written some time after the events discussed here) also claim that outside the royal capital, Bengalis (and the implications are that they were Muslim) throughout the kingdom took up arms in Gadra's defense, carrying about swords and spears.[553]

The Buddhist accounts imply that Gadra was overthrown as part of a popular backlash against his overwhelming support of Muslims in Danra-waddy and his alienation of Danra-waddy's Buddhist population. The treatment of Buddha images, of course, may have raised concerns among Buddhist monks. According to a poem written in 1765 by a Buddhist monk (commissioned by the Rama-waddy *mró-zà* under King Abaya-maha-raza), for example, Arakanese Buddhists viewed Gadra's actions in Mrauk-U as acts of violence and "destruction by fire and sword."[554] Further, these sources imply that Gadra's edicts may also have played a role. Presumably the Muslim prohibition against eating pork alienated other Arakanese. As the chronicles relate: "when they lacked meat, the ministers and soldiers . . . joined together and encircled the sultan [in order to] fight him."[555] The Monk of Ra-naun-myin also suggests that at least some Arakanese believed that the Buddhist religion was in danger and that the Bengalis had to be driven from the

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[553]Mi, "Rakhine Razawin," 221b.

[554]Monk of Ra-naun-myin, "Kya Khwetsa," 157-8.

[555]Mi, "Rakhine Razawin," 221b.

kingdom.[556]

Thereupon, Bengalis living upriver on the Kalà-dàn river "played the war drum and struck the fighting gong," as they descended the river on their way to the royal court to provide support for Gadra. After Gadra heard about the defeat of these Bengalis, he abandoned the throne and fled up the Kalà-dàn river. Presumably he planned to join the Bengali rebels, but he was caught on his way by villagers and sent back to the royal court where he was executed.[557] Purportedly, the expulsion of the Bengalis was accompanied by their massacre and "in their retreat thousands lost their lives."[558]

Much of the 'Sultan Gadra' episode has been characterized by perceptions rooted in the antagonism between Buddhist and Muslim communities in the nineteenth century, but the Monk of Ra-naun-myin's account, written only a few decades after the events described, indicates that at the very least contemporaneous (or nearly so) Buddhist monks attempted to convince Arakanese Buddhists that there was a difference between 'they' (the Bengalis and/or Muslims) and 'we' (Arakanese Buddhists). The central issue that emerges in the Buddhist accounts discussed above was royal patronage. In the past, the critical competition was characterized by the sectarian split between *aranya-vasi* and *gama-vasi* monks (*vide* Chapter 4). Now, Buddhist monks envisaged the critical competition as lying outside the *sangha*, between Buddhists and Muslims (there are no

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[556]Monk of Ra-naun-myin, "Kya Khwetsa," 158.

[557]Mi, "Rakhine Razawin," 221b, 222a.

[558]Monk of Ra-naun-myin, "Kya Khwetsa," 158.

available sources which allow us to determine if this was true the other way around; that is, if Muslim clergy or others saw the Buddhist *sangha* as a serious competitor for patronage).

After the 'Sultan Gadra' episode, some Buddhist elites (many perhaps in association with monks), encouraged a closer identification between the kingship and Buddhism. After deposing Gadra, for example, Buddhist members of the court, installed Mettarit (r. 1737-1742), purportedly a conscientious Buddhist.[559] The Buddhicization of kingship heightened in response especially to supernatural signs. A series of earthquakes in the late 1740s frightened another ruler, King Nara-abara-raza (r. 1742-1761) into having himself reconsecrated twice (thus he went through three coronation rituals).[560] Nara-abara-raza's most significant response, however, involved an attempt to connect the Arakanese court with Buddhism more strongly than it had been in the past. In 1747, for example, he broke with the previous royal practice of leaving the Para-kri image, the great Buddha image, at the pilgrimage site. Sending his elder brother to the town of Kyauk-pantaun, the great Buddha image (not the Maha-muni image) was brought back to the royal court and was placed in the *pyathad* room of the southern palace where the king resided. Here, Nara-abara-raza worshipped the image. As the chronicles record, "the preceding kings had worshipped this holy Maha-kri image without taking it [but] from

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[559]As the chronicles record: "he indulged and took delight in the three baskets: Pitsathi, Atathi, and Dathathitin. He strived very much in carrying out the good works of royal merit which included donations. He tried to arrange rewards and support so that the *sasana* would shine, be pleasant, and prosper." Mi, "Rakhine Razawin," 222a.

[560]Ibid., 225b, 226a.

the reign of Nara-abara-raza, the kings took, held, and worshipped it."[561] Nara-abara-raza

also constructed good works of royal merit.[562] These included an ordination hall in the

village of Bya-tei and a *cedi* west of the royal city along with the donation of glebe land to

support it. According to the Arakanese chronicles, Nara-abara-raza held a great festival on

the day of the ordaining of each novice monk.[563]

The last of the strong central rulers of Arakan was Abara-maha-raza (r. 1764-

1773).[564] After a fire destroyed the Maha-muni ordination hall in 1764, he took great care

in rebuilding it.[565] Upon its reconstruction, Abara-maha-raza embarked on a great

pilgrimage to the complex:

> The great king, Abara-maha-raza, while escorted by the royal consorts, the queens,
> the *ein-shei-min*, the royal ministers and commanders, and the people of the
> country, rode in a golden royal float and went to the ancient city of Danra-waddy.
> After he arrived, the king ascended the Min-gala royal palace. When the king
> worshipped at the holy image Maha-muni, he arranged great celebrations. After the
> king made a great donation, he returned to the golden royal city.[566]

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[561]Ibid., 223a.

[562]He is also said to have been attentive to all the requirements of being a King of Dharma. Ibid.,
224a, 226a.

[563]Ibid., 226a.

[564]He had been the *mró-zà* of Rama-waddy, a region which seems to have been the best power-
base of the eighteenth century. He had the *abiseka* ceremony performed with the queen Saw-shwei-kyi-awei
in 1764, and he assumed the throne. Ibid., 228b.

[565]Ibid., 228b; Monk of Ra-naun-myin, "Kya Khwetsa," 153.

[566]Mi, "Rakhine Razawin," 228b.

8.4.4 Order from the Outside

While it is true that eighteenth century Arakan had several strong 'unifying' kings, between them were other kings who did not maintain brief resurgences in central authority. During these periods of central weakness, Arakanese began to seek external rulers to save their world, especially Arakanese who sought help from the Irra-waddy Valley. Outlying leaders seem to have felt that something in Arakan was not working correctly. Shortly after the 1761 earthquake in Arakan, four outlying Arakanese leaders travelled to Ava and asked the reigning Kòn-baun monarch for war-aid. Ava then sent an expedition across the Arakan Roma. The commanders of the Arakanese force sent to block their way in the mountains, however, took the wise step of bribing the rulers of the Chin hill tribes and in the end the Burman force was soundly defeated.[567]

There are hints that ethnic identities in Irra-waddy Valley, which had been strengthened during the conflict with the Mons in the 1740s and the 1750s, were carried into Arakan. One of the strongest hints comes from episodes in which Burmans who came to the Arakan Littoral at different times and for different reasons joined together. One of the Arakanese who had called for Ava's help in the first place was the *bo* (a captain of one hundred men in Burmese military terminology, but the term, as used here, also referred to an autonomous, often self-appointed local power-man) Nga No, the self-made ruler of Myanaun. Nga No reorganized the Burman survivors of the 1761 Kòn-baun expedition against Arakan into an army at Kama-kyin-yin-nyin and waited for three

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[567]Ibid., 227a.

months. Nga No's Burman army raided Arakanese villages and took Arakanese captives whom Nga No sent as slaves to Upper Burma.[568]

Nga No was joined by Nga Toun-aun, another Burman strongman. Nga Toun-an was one of the Burman refugees who had fled to Arakan in 1754, but who did not return to the Irra-waddy Valley when the Ava-Hantha-waddy War was over. The Arakanese king, Nara-apara-raza, gave him the *rwa-zà*-ship of Hnan-kyei-taun in 1754 and the villages that Nara-apara-raza had constructed for the Burman refugees at the Pyain and Pi creeks. Nga Toun-aun, however, rebelled against the Arakanese court, stole the women of Arakanese court ministers, regarding them now as "Burman possessions," and joined up with Nga No in the south. When Kòn-baun levies were unable to get through the Arakan Roma mountains to aid them, Nga No (and presumably Nga Toun-an as well) fled into the Irra-waddy Valley.[569]

8.5 Summary

In this chapter, I have attempted to explain the relationship between the decline of the attractive center and rural change in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. As I explained, this period was especially chaotic as the kingdom, quite literally, fell apart. The human environment became disordered and threatening to rural villagers in the face of encroachments by neighboring villages, exploitation by rural strongmen, and hill tribe

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[568]Ibid., 227b.

[569]The Arakanese licked their wounds and did not pursue the fleeing Burmans, believing that with the fighting over, if they provoked a quarrel, the Burmans would return. Mi, "Rakhine Razawin," 227a-227b.

raids. This situation was worsened by dramatic natural events, including disastrous storms, disease, and famine. Other supernatural 'signs' in the natural environment, such as earthquakes, added considerably to the concerns of rural Arakanese.

Rural Arakanese reacted to the dangerous human and natural environment in a number of ways. There were, however, four key reactions. First, some Arakanese devoted themselves more to gods or religious movements which offered protection or salvation. Second, some Arakanese fled the kingdom, or what had been the kingdom, altogether. Third, Arakanese threw their support to particularly strong or charismatic local leaders who promised to bring order back to the world. Finally, concerned Arakanese sought rulers from outside the Arakan Littoral to reestablish order in the natural and human environment.

In one way or another, all four options helped to influence the direction of religious change in rural Arakan. A turn to religion for safety meant increased religious devotion, the popularization of particularly attractive millennial movements, or a rejection of earlier gods in favor of new, seemingly more powerful ones. Flight also affected religious change by either moving certain segments of the littoral's population or by carrying back to the littoral religious ideas from outside the littoral when and if the refugees returned. Finally, the support of new centralizers, whether at home or outside the littoral, often brought religious change according to the faith of the re-centralizer.

CHAPTER 9

THE BURMANIZATION OF ARAKAN, 1780S-1820S

Throughout the eighteenth century, especially in the 1780s, the Burman kingdom in the Irra-waddy Valley attempted to foster another kind of identity among the Arakanese: the Burmese-Buddhist identity. This identity was long in the making. The Arakanese and the Burmese, for example, had long shared the same language. More than this, the movement of monks and people back and forth across the Arakan Roma had fostered the sharing of culture and religion. Objects of power and symbols of authority had also been exchanged, sometimes voluntarily, sometimes by force. In short, even before the Burman conquest in 1784-5, Arakan and Burmese culture had interacted for centuries.

With the Burman conquest in 1784-5, however, the Burmans removed the key symbols of autonomous Arakanese society and religion. In the process, the religious map of the Arakan Littoral was changed immeasurably. Arakan lost not only its great religious patron, the central ruler, but also the Maha-muni image. The Arakanese *sangha* was subordinated to and, in some ways, replaced by the Burman *sangha* organization and authority. Burman missionary monks then spread Burman-defined Theravada Buddhism throughout the Arakan Littoral. Burman-Burmese texts replaced indigenous ones.

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In many ways, however, Burman rule delayed the emergence of a Burmese-Buddhist identity in Arakan. Burman attempts to extract resources from the Arakan Littoral drove tens of thousands of Arakanese north of the Naf River, and thus out of Burman Arakan. Further, when complications arose over revenue disputes, the Burman-installed intermediary elite, in essence a new urban and rural gentry, experienced rapid turn-over. Over-taxation by the new gentry and the short tenures of this class in rural Arakan likely reduced opportunities for significant patron-client relationships between the indigenous population and the class which had for the past century provided religious leadership as patrons of monks and donors to the religion. The Burman practice of 'reducing' previous forms before erecting new ones also meant that the *sangha* and Buddhist infrastructure torn apart so quickly in 1785-1787 would take decades to revive. In short, Burman-defined Buddhism was now more of a direct influence than it had been prior to Burman rule, but it was still a slow influence, in the context of an indigenous *sangha* which was turned upside down.

9.1 Burman Interest in the Arakanese and Arakanese Buddhism

Ù Kalà compiled his Maha-yazawin-kyì ("Great Chronicle") in the 1710s, just a few decades prior to the demise of the Restored Toungoo dynasty in 1756. From Ù Kalà, we get a picture of late Restored Toungoo interest in its neighbor to the west. The themes regarding Arakanese-Burman relationship that were developed and recorded in Ù Kalà, would be carried through into the Konbaung dynasty in the late eighteenth century.

In Ù Kalà's chronicle, the most important theme regarding Arakan was that

Arakan was a Buddhist kingdom and that it was not very different from the Burman kingdom in the Irra-waddy Valley. Ù Kalà, for example, made no reference to Arakanese royal patronage of other religions or even of the usage of Bengali-style (Islamic-style) regnal titles by early Mrauk-U rulers. Generally, Ù Kalà fails to mention the Muslim population of the Arakan Littoral, although he must have been aware that they were there. Nor does one find a single reference to the *ko-rans*. Ù Kalà continually reiterated the cooperation between the Buddhist kings of Burma and of Arakan, based upon a mutual respect for each other, and he underplayed disputes. Ù Kalà stressed previous Burman rule in Arakan perhaps to justify in advance Burman interference in Arakan when the Arakanese could not manage themselves.

Although Restored Toungoo rulers left Arakan very much to itself during the seventeenth century (after 1613), in the early eighteenth century their interest in the religious affairs of their neighbor revived. According to the Arakanese chronicles, in 1705, in the midst of the give-and-take between region-wide political disintegration and reintegration, the Avan king sent a commander, Nyo-rit, on a fact-finding mission to Arakan because the "royal bodyguards . . . were acting disrespectfully to the lord of the country [the king of Arakan]."[570] At the command of the king of Ava, this expedition was followed later in 1705 by correspondence between Thaka-ra, the *mró-wun* of Prome, and the (Arakanese) *su-krì* of Lam-bu. The King of Ava was interested in determining

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[570]Nga Mi, "Rakhine Razawin," 212b. His expedition generally failed as a fact-finding mission, but Nyo-rit did defeat some local *su-krìs* and brought back Arakanese villagers to Burma, resettling them in a new village in Shwei-kya-kyek in Burma.

whether or not "there were men of wisdom and skilled in the Buddhist Tipitika in the country of Arakan."[571] The *su-kri* of Lam-bu returned a letter to the *mro-wun* of Prome suggesting that Arakan's problems were over.[572] Ava was not satisfied with the answer and launched a small-scale and unsuccessful invasion which took place in 1707 with San-twei as the first target. [573]

In 1710, Burma continued its efforts to gain a footing in Arakan. The King of Ava sent an envoy to Arakan stating that he "has heard that there was no king in the country of Arakan and asking if the people of Arakan would like it if he repaired the great Buddha image [the Maha-muni]."[574] Danda-bo-min took this as a threat and declared himself king Sanda-wizaya-raza (r. 1710-1731).[575] In any case, the King of Ava had implied that he wished to take the role of king of Arakan, especially so since he offered to take over the maintenance of the Maha-muni shrine.

Even during the problematic eighteenth century, Burmans were not able to deal with Arakan unilaterally. Arakan initiated raids into the Irra-waddy Valley as well and thus provided some justification for Burman interference in the affairs of the Arakan

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[571]Ibid., 213a.

[572]Ibid., 213a. Perhaps this referred to the embryonic reintegration of the littoral under Danda-bo-min. Or, perhaps, it was a lie since the *su-kri* may have feared a loss of autonomy after the assertion of Avan control over the littoral.

[573]The *mro-za* of San-twei, Zeira-pru, successfully resisted and defeated the Burmans. Ibid., 213b.

[574]Ibid., 214a.

[575]Ibid.

Littoral in later decades. In 1719, for example, Sanda-wizaya-raza organized an army and marched against Burma, gathering more war levies from Arakanese villages along the way. In the Irra-waddy Valley, Sanda-wizaya-raza temporarily took the towns of Min-don and Prei (Prome). While there, Sanda-wizaya-raza snubbed the role of the King of Ava as the patron of Buddhism within his own realm by building the Aun *ceti* and a royal ordination hall in the town of Min-don.[576] In 1744, Nara-abara-raza also arranged a royal expedition and sailed against Lower Burma for loot and slaves.[577] The results of the expedition seem to have been satisfactory, and the Arakanese sailed away with a few upper gentry whom they had captured, as well as Mons and Burmans gathered from Bassein, Yangon, Dana-pyu, and Hen-zada. In 1745, the Arakanese raided Lower Burma again.[578]

Increasing Burman interest in the Arakan Littoral was not simply court-centered. Burmans who fled periodic disorders in the Irra-waddy Valley also sought refuge in the Arakan Littoral. There are many examples of early modern Irra-waddy Valley peoples seeking refuge in the Arakan Littoral, such as the flight of Mons during the reign of Nan-dá-bayin at Pegu.[579] Burman refugees did so as well. In 1754, for example, after the fall of

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[576]Ibid., 216a.

[577]The reasons for the timing are not difficult to find. In the 1740s, the Irra-waddy Valley was preoccupied with a war raging between the last vestiges of the Restored Toungoo Dynasty in the north and the revived kingdom of Hanthawaddy in the south. Until the 1750s, most of the fighting occurred in Lower Burma. Thus, disorder and easy accessibility invited sea-expeditions by the Arakanese. Ibid, 222a.

[578]Ibid., 222b, 223a.

[579]Pierre du Jarric, "The Jesuits on Pegu at the End of the XVIth Century," translated by Father A. Sauliere, Bengal Past & Present 14 (1917): 78.

Ava to Mon forces, Burmans fled to Arakan, perhaps in fear of Mon reprisals. Nara-abara-raza provided the refugees with food and supplies. He also built for them new villages along the Pyain and Pi creeks. Although many of these Burman refugees went back to Upper Burma after the Irra-waddy Valley was reunified under Alaùn-hpayà, the founder of the Kòn-baun dynasty, many Burmans remained in Arakan permanently.[580]

9.2 From Attraction to Rule: The Political Impact of Burman Expansion into Arakan, 1784-5

After 1784, the organization of power in the Arakan littoral changed. Previously, Arakanese kings had held their kingdom together through attraction. While encouraging support for the court through material redistribution and patron-client relationships, royal authority was also instilled in the countryside through religion. Arakanese kings, as I have discussed, embedded their authority in the physical symbols of local religious frameworks through religious patronage. The Burmans, however, changed the organization of power in post-conquest Arakan. The Burman court, far from the Arakan littoral, did not rule through attraction, but rather through direct rule backed by coercive force. Less concerned with attraction than with administration, the Burman rulers of the Arakan littoral brought the Arakanese *sangha* within the Burman *sangha* organization and put an end to the tax-free status of local religious worship. In this section I will explain how the Arakan littoral was denuded of its attractive center, which was replaced by more thorough-going and direct forms of administration.

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[580]Nga Mi, "Rakhine Razawin," 225a.

9.2.1 Dismantling the Attractive Center

The kingdom of Burma invaded the kingdom of Arakan in late 1784.[581] Burman

forces, led by the Burman *ein-shei-min* came by land and sea, and quickly defeated

Arakanese forces in Dwara-waddy, Rama-waddy, and Mekha-waddy.[582] As Burman

forces seemed irresistible, Arakanese *krun-zàs* (island-eaters) in the countryside

submitted along with their men to the Burman prince.[583] After a complete defeat of

Arakanese forces commanded by the Arakanese king and his *leira-mran* and *leiwei-mran*,

the Arakanese king gathered his queens and palace women and went into hiding.[584] The

conquest was completed in early 1785, and ten thousand musketeers were stationed in

Mrauk-U to maintain Burman authority. Shortly thereafter, the Arakanese king and his

court were captured as well.[585]

9.2.2 From Attraction to Political Centralization

[581]Kawi-thara, "Rakhine Arei-taw-poun," 75a. The Burman invasion army is said to have consisted of 33,000 men in addition to horses and war-elephants. For details of the invasion forces see U Tin Maun Maun, Kòn-baun-zet Maha-ya-zawin-taw-kyì (Yangon: Hantha-waddy Press, 1968), 2:1-2; Royal Order, 15 September 1784, in Than Tun, ed., The Royal Orders of Burma, A.D. 1598-1885 (Kyoto: Kyoto University Center for Southeast Asian Studies, 1983), 4:378; Royal Order, 19 September 1784, in ibid., 4:379; and Royal Order, 16 October 1784, in ibid., 4:388-395.

[582]Maun, Kòn-baun-zet, 2:3-5.

[583]The *krun-zà* of Kyak-sin island, Lei-kraw-taun-kei, and the eater of Ra-moun island, the *ta-bain-kri*, both submitted to the Burman invasion army and joined it with their levies. They provided tribute to the Burman *ein-shei-min*, and in return received regalia befitting their administrative rank. Ibid., 2:5.

[584]Ibid., 2:5-8; Royal Order, 26 January 1785, in Tun, Royal Orders, 4:411.

[585]Maun, Kòn-baun-zet, 2:8, 9; and Royal Order, 26 January 1785, in Tun, Royal Orders, 4:411.

While the Arakanese kings had ruled through attraction, Burman rulers changed the nature of political control in the Arakan littoral. Burman rule, for example, became more direct and exacting in the late 1790s.

The Burmans completed the conquest of Arakan by obliterating Arakan's royal and religious center. The Burmans took back with them the king, queens, royal children, other members of the royal court, *mro-zàs*, royal service groups, and tens of thousands of other people, including Mrauk-U's Muslim artisans and soldiers.[586] In the Burman capital, the Arakanese royal family and their household servants were detained permanently in a royal monastery to the south of the Burman royal palace. Afterwards, there was a continuing concern that no members of the royal family, other significant courtiers and ministers, and their relatives should return to Arakan. There are several royal orders indicating this, for example, including one ordering officers in the Arakan littoral to conduct interrogations to ferret out such scions of the former court and to deport them to the Burman court.[587] The Burman forces then targeted Arakan's religious symbols, including the image of Arimettaya, which the Burmans interpreted as an image

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[586]Maun, Kòn-baun-zet, 2:9; and Yunus, History of Arakan, 92. Some Arakanese soldiers, deported to the Irra-waddy Valley, became laborers for the Shwe-maw-daw pagoda, but were released several years later, and allowed to return to Rama-waddy. Royal Order, 2 January 1788, in Tun, Royal Orders, 5:331; Other service groups, such as a group which was now assigned to draw water for the royal palace at Amarapura, remained behind in the Irra-waddy Valley and were still there, at least until the late nineteenth century. Report on the Settlement Operations in the Sagaing District, Season 1893-1900 (Rangoon, Superintendent, Government Printing, Burma, 1903), 4.

[587]Royal Order, 4 February 1789, in Tun, Royal Orders, 5:436.

of Gautama Buddha, at Maha-muni.[588] The bronze Ayudhya images taken from Lower

Burma in 1599 were also included on the list of important symbols to be removed to

Burma.[589]

The Burmans altered the nature of political rule throughout the Arakan Littoral by

replacing local elites with Burman-appointed ones. The Burmans, for example, removed

elite appanage-grantees, *mró-zàs*, who ruled in lieu of provincial governors, from rural

political arrangements.[590] They were replaced by the less-privileged or empowered *mró-*

su-kris. Instead of the Arakanese court, the Burman court became the new royal center

and between the court and the *mró-zàs*, a new political intermediary, the *mró-wun*, was

added.[591] The Burmans reorganized the Arakan Littoral into four areas, following

traditional Arakanese conceptions of region: Danra-waddy, Dwara-waddy, Rama-waddy,

and Mekha-waddy.[592] Local leaders in these regions now received insignia from the

Burman court.[593]

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[588]Maun, Kòn-baun-zet, 2:8-9.

[589]Ibid., 2:9.

[590]Ibid.

[591]"Ran-ma-wadi Myó," 91; Royal Order, 4 March 1785, in Tun, Royal Orders, 4:441; and Royal Order, 24 July 1787, in ibid., 4:546.

[592]Popularly known as Rakhine-Danra-waddy, Than-twei, Ran-byi, and Ma-naun. Maun, Kòn-baun-zet, 2:9.

[593]Royal Order, 24 July 1787, in Tun, Royal Orders, 4:546; and Royal Order, 28 March 1788, in ibid., 5:421.

At first, the Burmans seem to have imposed few additional demands upon Arakan's rural population. Traditional taxes remained at previous levels, and religious lands were still tax-free. Under the first Burman-appointed *mró-wun*, no tax had to be paid at all.[594] Stories of Burman brutality during the conquest, such as the murder of forty thousand Arakanese on the first day of the conquest, appear to have developed a decade and a half later, reflecting the then current complaints against the Burmans, and applied retroactively to the invasion.[595]

Over the following decade, Burman rule became more direct and exacting in rural Arakan. Under the successors of the first *mró-wun*, for example, the Burmans began to assess taxes throughout the Arakan Littoral. Traditional taxes became more regularized and applied on a per-house basis, and the level of taxation increased dramatically. Religious institutions, festivals, and worship that were previously untaxed, were now taxed.[596] The reasons for the increase in revenue-demands seem to have been that the Burman kingdom was preparing for an invasion of Thailand and needed levies and other resources from the Arakan Littoral.[597] Further, the Burman extraction of resources from

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[594]"Ran-ma-wadi Myó," 91.

[595]Buchanan relates at the end of the eighteenth century: "in one day soon after the conquest of Arakan the Burmas put 40,000 Men to Death; that wherever they found a pretty Woman, they took her after killing the husband; and the young Girls they took without any consideration of their parents, and thus deprived these poor people of the property by which in Eastern India the aged most commonly support their infirmities." Buchanan, Francis Buchanan in Southeast Bengal, 82.

[596]"Ran-ma-wadi Myó," 91-92.

[597]As one account stressed in 1800: "The cause of this alarming emigration is attributed solely to the views of Burmah, which is making the most vigorous preparations for carrying on a war against the Siamese. The heavy levies and excessive contributions which the government of Burmah imposed on the

the Arakan Littoral during this period did not simply affect the general population.

Burman-appointees in the Arakan Littoral seem to have been living too well off "central"

taxes and in 1795, a royal order was issued providing an extremely large fine (ten times

the disputed revenues) upon the *mró-wun*, the *sit-kè*, and the *mró-su-krì* of Mrauk-U.[598]

9.2.3 Religious Centralization and Control

Culminating a century of Restored Toungoo and Early Kòn-baun interest in the

religious affairs of the Arakan Littoral, the Burman court advertised their justification for

the 1784 invasion in terms of restoring order to Arakan in order to help the religion

(*sasana*) prosper. The *sasana* in the Arakan Littoral, the Burmans claimed, was

'ruined.'[599] Royal orders emanating from the Amarapura court explained that "bad

people" hindered the Dharma of the land, and they had to be captured so that the religion

could "shine."[600] Whether this was a genuine concern or a simple justification for royal

expansion is not something that we can determine from the sources available. However,

one likely reason for the Burman conquest was the acquisition of additional resources. In

any case, these twin interests, resource extraction and support for the *sasana*, became

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inhabitants, led to the above remarkable movement. Penalties and severe corporeal punishment drove the miserable multitude from their abodes . . ." "Chronicle for March 1800," Asiatic Annual Register 1 (1799): 61. The italicization for emphasis is mine.

[598]Royal Order, 6 July 1795, in Tun, Royal Orders, 5:578.

[599]"Rakhine Razawin-ngei," [palm-leaf manuscript number 3413], AMs [no date], p. 4b, Oriental and India Office Collection, British Library, London, Great Britain.

[600]Royal Order, 16 October 1784, in Tun, Royal Orders, 4:392.

intertwined in Burman rule over Arakan. The Burman court tried to centralize Arakanese religion under their authority in various ways, most of all by Burmanizing Arakanese Buddhism through Burman monks, texts, and a *sangha* organization that reached from Arakanese villages to the royal Burman court at Amarapura. Thus, just as political centralization tied Arakan to the Burman court, the Burmanization of Buddhism in Arakan also occurred under royal Burman auspices.

In the early years of Burman rule in Arakan, several measures were taken to spread Burman-defined Buddhist cultural norms in the Arakan Littoral. During these years, for example, the Burman court dispatched missionary monks from the Irra-waddy Valley in cycles (the first three in 1785, 1787, and 1788).[601] Some sources stressed the 'ethnicity' of some of these missionary monks, such as the first deputation of five Buddhist monks, by including the affix of 'Barama' (Burman) to their titles.[602] A 1785 inscription by Bò-daw-hpayà, suggested that in this and other ways, he was emulating Asoka.[603] Bò-daw-hpayà's missionary monks were clearly *gama-vasi* monks, as one royal order indicates that their monasteries would be "*gama*," that is, they would be built in the villages and hamlets of the Arakan Littoral.[604] A group of missionary monks sent

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[601] Bò-daw-hpayà's inscription of 1785 in Tun Nyein, ed., Inscriptions of Pagan, Pinya, and Ava: Translations, With Notes (Rangoon: Superintendent, Government Press, 1899), 24; Royal Order, 3 January 1788, in Tun, Royal Orders, 4:332; and Nga Mi, "Rakhine Razawin," 252b.

[602]"Rakhine Razawin-ngei," 4b.

[603] Bò-daw-hpayà's inscription of 1785 in Nyein, Inscriptions, 23-24.

[604]Royal Order, 25 July 1787, in Tun, Royal Orders, 4:548.

to Arakan in 1788 indicated that the Burman court was not just interested in Danra-waddy: half the monks were destined for Rama-waddy as well.[605] Local officials were to aid the missionary monks to their appointed areas and were also to aid the monks after they had finished the term of their mission in Arakan.[606] Monks who spent the year in the Arakan Littoral, particularly in Danra-waddy and Rama-waddy (which were probably the most populated centers in the Arakan Littoral), were rotated after Buddhist Lent and replacement monks were sent to take their place.[607] Buddhist monks continued to arrive from Burma at least until 1840, a decade-and-a-half after the end of Burman rule.[608]

The Burman court also ordered its intermediaries in the Arakan Littoral to support the missionary monks from Burma by building monasteries for them. The monks decided for themselves the locations in the villages and hamlets where they wished to have their monasteries built, they consecrated the ground, and then local officials demarcated the selected ground and built the monastery.[609] The Burman court also had rebuilt or "repaired" the preexisting Buddhist edifices which seem to have fallen into

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[605]Royal Order, 3 January 1788, in Tun, Royal Orders, 4:332.

[606]Ibid.

[607]Royal Order, 3 October 1787, in Tun, Royal Orders, 4:614.

[608]G. S. Comstock, "Journal," Baptist Missionary 20 (1840): 74.

[609]Royal Order, 25 July 1787, in Tun, Royal Orders, 4:548.

decay, such as the Buddhist pagodas at San-twei.[610] An ordination hall was established,

in which a new corps of indigenous novice monks was ordained under Burman-monk

auspices.[611] The new *mró-wuns*, along with *su-kris* and *rwa-kauns*, also continued their

patronage of Buddhism. The most impressive of the town of Ram-ree's monasteries, for

example, was built by an indigenous member of the rural gentry who eventually attained

the post of *myo-wun*.[612] The *mró-wuns* and other members of the gentry class were

responsible for the bulk of royal pagoda- and monastery-building during the period of

Burman rule.[613]

The Burman court, however, also took steps to derive revenues from religious

worship in the Arakan Littoral. To understand why this was significant -- it indicated

increased royal authority in religion -- we should look back for a moment at the

Arakanese approach to religion and taxation in the pre-Burman period. Arakanese kings,

as I have explained, attempted to surmount the geographic and demographic difficulties of

holding the Arakan Littoral together under their rule by associating their authority with

local religious edifices and the patronage of local religious intermediaries. Since this meant

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[610]Royal Order, 18 August 1787, in Tun, Royal Orders, 4:573.

[611]"Rakhine Razawin-ngei," 5b.

[612]Foley, "Geological and Statistical Account of the Island of Rambree," 204.

[613]As one account explains of the town of Ram-ree in Rama-waddy, for example, "the large tanks, Kus, and Kioums now seen at Rambree, were either constructed by the Mey-o-wuns, or by those who held situations of emolument, under them." Foley, "Geological and Statistical Account of the Island of Rambree," 204. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the *sit-kei*, U Shwe Bu, constructed the Para-hla pagoda in Sand-twei. Forchhammer, Report, 62.

that Arakanese rulers had to maintain a good relationship between local religious institutions and communities, they went out of their way to ensure their support. Thus, Arakanese kings granted various religions privileges which encouraged their support of central authority. Religious worship, festivals, and temples (along with their slaves and *glebe* lands) associated with the *nats* and the Buddha were free of taxes.[614] A moderate payment of tribute to the king at New Year's and at the end of Lent, however, was expected. Although taxes were applied to Muslim or Hindu worship by the 1780s at the latest,[615] these were moderate and were likely later innovations which perhaps reflected the emphasis on Buddhism by the royal court after the mid-seventeenth century.

Although the Burman court also relied on religious patronage to legitimate its rule in the Arakan Littoral, it was sufficiently secure politically to challenge the traditional privileges provided by Arakanese kings to religious worshippers. Under Burman rule, for example, Arakanese who worshipped *nats* were required to pay a tax of one silver *dinga*.[616] *Glebe* land belonging to Buddhist monasteries and pagodas now required the payment of a tax as well.[617] Further, the payment of tribute at New Year's and Lent now became a tax which was three times higher than the traditional level of payment. The

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[614]For *nat*-worship, for example: "Those who believe in *nats* and *nat*-possessed persons could freely worship and make offerings to nats. Tax was not paid on these activities. "Ran-ma-wadi Myó," 91. On tax-free status of Buddhist *glebe* lands and pagoda slaves, see ibid., 90.

[615]Ibid, 91.

[616]Ibid., 92.

[617]This tax was paid at the rate of "1 silver *din-ga* per yoke of buffalo working forty quarter baskets sowing." Ibid.

taxes paid for Muslim or Hindu festivals (it is unclear which) were dramatically increased from 112 *kyats* of silver *dinga* to 124 silver *dinga* (the *kyat* and the *dinga* are monetary units).[618]

In 1785, the Burmans also removed the Maha-muni image to Upper Burma.[619] The Burman ruler now connected the Maha-muni image with his kingship by having Burman inscriptions rewritten including in their prologues a reference to himself as the builder of the Rakhine-Maha-muni *cedi*.[620] Some Arakanese, however, interpreted the capture of the Maha-muni image and its removal from the Arakan Littoral as the loss of a spiritual protector.[621]

There seems to have been little or no immediate reaction by rural Arakanese to Burman efforts to 'purify' the *sasana*. The surprisingly low percentage of Muslims (twenty percent) in the Arakan Littoral found by the British at the close of Burman rule may indicate either that Muslims fled to Bengal or converted, but we have no specific evidence of this. It may be conjectured that a large portion of Arakan's Muslims were carried off to Burma when the Burmans removed tens of thousands of Arakanese from

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[618]Ibid., 91-92.

[619]Maun, Kòn-baun-zet, 2:8-9; Bó-daw-hpayà's inscription of 1785 in Nyein, Inscriptions, 24; "Rakhine Razawin-ngei," 4b; and Nga Mi, "Rakhine Razawin," 248b-249a.

[620]Royal Order, 22 August 1785, in Tun, Royal Orders, 4:474.

[621]In the late eighteenth century, for example, lamented that the fifth Buddha no longer lived in Arakan, but they knew not where he was. Buchanan, Francis Buchanan in Southeast Bengal, 69. Today, the Maha-muni image has become for Theravada Buddhists the symbol of the loss of Arakanese independence.

Mrauk-U, especially artisans and other skilled labor groups who had continued to live in

the royal city since the late sixteenth or early seventeenth centuries. On the other hand,

Muslims may also have fled, along with Arakanese Buddhists, several years after the

commencement of Burman rule in the Arakan Littoral. These latter migrations, however,

do not seem to have been inspired by Burman religious edicts. Rather, tens of thousands

of Arakanese emigrated because of increased taxation and labor demands which took

several years to be felt in Arakan. Perhaps twenty to twenty-five percent of Arakan's

population moved north of the Naf River.[622] Religious identity does not seem to have

played a determining role in the migrations, as both Buddhists and Muslims fled the

Burman invasion.[623]

9.2.4 Colonizing Tradition

Part of the Burman colonizing project involved bringing Arakanese history under

Burman authority. This included gathering up and removing Arakan's history as contained

in its *pesa* (palm-leaf) manuscript chronicles.[624] In place of previous history and

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[622]As English East India Company officials at Chittagong reported in 1800: "We have received intelligence, that a very extraordinary and unexpected emigration has taken place of the *people* of Arracan into the Chittagong District. We are assured by private letters, that no less than 35,000 *persons* have fled...and sought protection in Chittagong . . ." "Chronicle for March 1800," 61. The italicization for emphasis is mine. In 1798, Buchanan heard that the Ramu valley was home to fifteen thousand Rakhine who had fled the Burmese, and they lived on land granted to them at the mouth of the Razoo river. Buchanan, Francis Buchanan in Southeast Bengal, 50-51.

[623]Ibid., 31.

[624]As Phayre explained: "On the Burmese conquest of the country, the ancient chronicles were sought after with avidity, and destroyed or carried away, in the hope apparently of eradicating the national feeling. These efforts were, however, futile, many of the ancient books were secretly preserved, or carried away by the owners on their emigration to the adjoining British territory, where many chiefs anxiously watched for an opportunity to recover their country." Phayre, "On the History of Arakan," 23.

traditions, Burman rule in Arakan was accompanied by new myths, or the reconfiguration of older ones, which sought to explain the unification of two Burmese-speaking peoples and to legitimate the Burman annexation of the Arakanese Littoral.

One myth, the Kan-raza myth, seems to have emerged from this attempt. According to this myth, King Maha-jambudipa-dha-raja, the founder of Ta-kaun (the ancient homeland of the Burmans), had two sons. After the death of the king, in order that each son should have his own kingdom, Kan-raza the elder gave up his throne to his younger brother, Kan-raza the younger, and migrated to the west. There, Kan-raza the elder is said to have founded the ancient city of Danra-waddy and established it as his capital.[625] The usefulness of this story as a legitimatizing myth is obvious. The story appeared in late eighteenth-century Burman court treatises such as Shin San-dá-lin-ka's Mani-yadana-poun[626] and was incorporated into the Hman-nàn Maha-yazawin-taw-kyì in the early nineteenth century.[627] It does not appear, however, in pre-conquest Burman chronicles and court treatises. Ù Kalà's chronicle, for example, from which the Hman-nàn Maha-yazawin-taw-kyì almost verbatim drew the bulk of its coverage of early Burma,[628] mentions nothing of this myth. Likewise, pre-conquest Arakanese chronicles are silent. As I have argued elsewhere, this kind of myth-making regarding Arakan was part of a

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[625]Shin San-dá-lin-ka, Mani-yadana-poun (Rangoon: Hantha-waddy Press, 1901): 6.

[626]Ibid.

[627]See Hmannan Maha-ya-zawin-taw-kyì (Meiktila: Ma E. Tin Press, 1936), 1:154-55.

[628]Lieberman, Burmese Administrative Cycles, 297-298.

larger Burman colonial project in post-conquest Arakan, which included not only this sort of myth-making, but also the destruction or devaluation of Arakanese traditions which failed to provide a connection between the Arakanese and the Burmans.[629]

9.3 Summary

A Burmese-Buddhist identity slowly had begun to emerge in the Arakan Littoral throughout the eighteenth century. As I will explain in the next chapter, however, this emergence did not begin to pick up speed until the last-half of the nineteenth century. Burman rule after the Burman conquest in 1784-5, accentuated this influence, but it likely did not accelerate its progress to any meaningful degree. For the Burman court, to rule Arakan meant first reducing its political and religious infrastructures. It is true that the Arakanese royal center was replaced by the royal center in Upper Burma, the Arakanese *sangha* was supplanted by a *sangha* organization that emanated from Upper Burma, and annually-replaced contingents of Burman missionary monks helped to encourage the spread of Burman-defined Theravada Buddhism throughout what had been the Arakanese kingdom. But the 'replacement' itself required decades for local acceptance. Even then, tens of thousands of Arakanese had fled Arakan and remained outside of the direct influence of the Burman court. From this 'external' community came numerous raids which almost succeeded in toppling Burman rule in Arakan.

Still, the legacy of Burman rule in Arakan was that it helped certain developments

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[629]Michael W. Charney, "Texts, Identities, and Cultural Legacies: 'Rahkaing' and 'Myanma' in Nyaungyan and Konbaung Court Treatises and Chronicles," a paper delivered at the International Conference of Asian Studies, Leiden, The Netherlands, 28 June 1998.

which encouraged, once Burman rule had ended, the long-term emergence of a Burman-Buddhist identity for some Arakanese. First, by the end of Burman rule, a Burman-Buddhist rural gentry was firmly established in rural Arakan (or at least much of it), and their position in local society, as I will explain in the next chapter, continued during the early decades of British rule. In short, the rural gentry had provided religious leadership for local communities since the late seventeenth century, and this role was resumed by the Burman-installed rural gentry. Second, however slowly the Buddhist *sangha* in Arakan recovered from the early years of Burman rule, by the end of this period local Buddhist communities in Arakan were tied to a *sangha* organization that reached to Upper Burma (and this continued even into British rule), and local monks were those who had received ordination under the auspices of Burman missionary monks or their indigenous successors.

CHAPTER 10

ONE LAND, TWO PEOPLES:

THE EMERGENCE OF RELIGIOUS COMMUNALISM IN NINETEENTH CENTURY ARAKAN

In the eighteenth century, religious identities themselves do not seem to have been crucial to encouraging collective action. Certainly, the Arakanese Buddhists in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries produced histories of Arakan which viewed relationships between Muslims and Buddhists anachronistically. Although religious identities existed, weaker for some and stronger for others, there is not a good deal of evidence to suggest that most groups in Arakanese society linked community membership to religious identity. Indeed, in several important events, the migrations out of Arakan in the 1790s (which is why, in the previous chapter, I talked about Arakanese migrations in the 1790s, rather than, for example, a 'Muslim' migration) and the revolt of Chin Bran in the 1810s, there is little or no evidence of religion in prompting support from one's fellow religionists.

Gyan Pandey's assumption that "religion in pre-modern societies is not a surrogate for anything else,"[630] may not apply entirely to premodern Arakan, as religious

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[630]Pandey, Construction of Communalism, 82.

patronage (of Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam) was one means by which early modern

Arakanese rulers fostered local recognition of their royal authority. Even so, there was

something about the nineteenth century in Arakan that fostered sentiments among the

Arakanese that they were part of a greater religious community, or 'imagined' religious

community, that transcended the village or local kinship group.[631] In this chapter, I seek

to answer the question why Arakanese Buddhists and Muslims began, in the nineteenth

century (and the twentieth), to take actions based upon communal (hence, not simply

individual) religious identities.

British colonial rule and changes in settlement patterns in the Arakan Littoral

during the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries are partly to blame. As I will explain,

the British, via administrative reform, gradually eroded the relationship between patron

and client in rural Arakan, at the circle- and village-level. British colonial rule also helped

to accentuate such cleavages between Buddhists and Muslims, by identifying religious

sites as either Muslim or Buddhist and granting their caretaker-ship on the basis of one or

the other religious affiliation. The British also favored Muslims in their agricultural

policies, because they felt that Muslims were superior to Buddhists as agriculturalists. In

most cases, the British did not intend to encourage religious communal splits, but their

colonial policies had that effect.

Other factors also played an important role. Over-population and over-cultivation

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[631]I use 'imagined' here in the sense that Benedict Anderson uses it when he applies the term to nationalism: "It is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion." Benedict Anderson, Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism, rev. ed. (London: Verso, 1991), 6.

in Rama-waddy and western Danra-waddy began to force cultivators off of the land and this development was aggravated by Chittagonian and Burman immigration throughout the nineteenth century. When land plots subdivided and unusual landlord-tenancy relationships emerged, agriculturalists had to work collectively to survive. When migrating western Danra-waddy Muslims and Rama-waddy Buddhists moved to the new agricultural frontier in eastern Danra-waddy, they had to work collectively to open up the land and prevent flooding. Evolutionary ecology similarly stresses the role of group formation in competition for limited resources. At the same time, the usual way of organizing collective action, the patron-client relationship, was weakened during British rule. In place of the relationship between the *su-kri* and the village, rural Arakanese formed community bonds encouraged by the "imagined communities" suggested by rural Buddhist monks (and, in the case of Muslims, *mullahs*). Religious identities thus moved to the fore-front as the best way to strengthen group solidarity. As I will explain, the role of religion as a group identity was emphasized in group-bonding activities such as rural education and agricultural festivals.

10. 1 Continuity and Change of the Rural Gentry

Britain took over the administration of Arakan after the First Anglo-Burmese War (1824-5), as a prize and as a buffer zone for its possessions in Bengal. Arakan was at first placed under the Governor-General of India, then the Government of Bengal, and in 1828,

the Commissioner of Chittagong supervised a Superintendent of Arakan.[632] Two

considerations conditioned English rule in Arakan. First, the British wanted to derive

revenues from the province. Second, they wanted to govern Arakan as cheaply and with

as little expense as possible. After early experiments with extreme revenue demands (the

revenue system of 1827-1828), the British decided to lessen its tax burdens on the

Arakanese and to encourage cooperation with established rural elites, that is, the rural

gentry. As I shall explain, the British at first played less of a direct role in the

administration of Arakan than the Burmans had, and their demands upon the general

population were less severe. In order to rule cheaply the various religious communities in

the Arakan Littoral, the Company, in one sense, behaved much like the pre-mid-

seventeenth century Arakanese court. At a general level, no religion was promoted over

another. Instead, the British sought severally the support of Arakan's various religious

communities without alienating any.[633]

Under British rule, of course, the *mró-wuns* and other Burman-appointed

authorities were removed as the ruling elite. Beneath this ruling, town-centered, elite,

however, the gentry in Arakan continued to make up the upper strata of rural life during

early British rule. The administrative history of Arakan under the British is complex and

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[632]J. S. Furnivall, Colonial Policy and Practice: A Comparative Study of Burma and Netherlands India (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1948), 29.

[633]In education, for example, the English East India Company continued its hands-off approach to religion. In the two urban schools it established in 1838, one in Akyab and the other in Ramree, although by the 1850s only the Ramree school remained. In these schools, the Company did not encourage Christianity, and permitted the use of Burmese-language texts which included Buddhist topics. As one account explains: "Christian books are systematically withheld from the English classes, and the teachers are forbidden to communicate to their scholars the religion; at the same time, in some schools, all books in the vernacular language are heathen . . ." Comstock, "Account of Arakan," 243-4.

confusing, partly because the British confused some rural elites as analogues to certain kinds of elites in Bengal. British officials in the 1820s, for example, thought that the *su-kris* literally owned their circles as estates, the *su-kris* being nothing less than Burmese analogues to Bengali *zamindars*. British officials then put these 'estates' up for sale to the highest bidder (in money and a contract for annual deliveries of salt), who would retain or gain the title of *su-kri*. When the new *su-kris* could not make their deliveries they fled and the system broke down. In 1828, the British reversed their policies, old *su-kris* were returned to the circles and the British allowed them many of the privileges that the rural gentry enjoyed during the period of Burman (and Arakanese) rule.[634]

Save for the brief period of misguided British policies regarding rural administration from 1825 until 1828, as discussed above, the *su-kris* and *rwa-kauns* continued to possess significant wealth *vis-a-vis* the general rural population. Under early British rule, the *su-kris*, *rwa-kauns*, and other rural authorities paid no tax and kept a prescribed percentage of village tax collections (in Mekha-waddy in the 1840s, for example, *su-kris* kept twenty percent, *rwa-kauns* four percent, and the *rwa-kaun*'s assistant kept one percent).[635] The wealth of the rural gentry was also evident to the general population in a number of ways. *Su-kris* could afford to send their children to schools in district capitals to study English, the new administrative language in British

[634]Tydd, Burma Gazetteer: Sandoway District, 51-2.

[635]Edward P. Halstead, "Report on the Island of Cheduba," Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal 10 (1841), 352; In Danra-waddy in the 1850s, the respective percentages were 15%, 4 %, and 2 %. Comstock, "Account," 252.

Arakan.[636] *Su-kris* had large houses and considerable livestock.[637] *Su-kris* were also

notorious for keeping (and thus affording) many wives.[638]

Su-kris continued in the nineteenth century, as they had in the eighteenth century,

to encourage their own image as generous benefactors and patrons of either Buddhism or

Islam. In the southern Arakan littoral (Dwara-waddy, Mekha-waddy, and Rama-waddy),

for example, the *su-kris* were known as the most devoted Buddhists.[639] Some *su-kris*

even gave up their *su-kri*-ship and became monks in their later years.[640] In the case of one

young *su-kri*, upon returning from school in the district capital and succeeding his father

as *su-kri* of Mekha-waddy in the late 1830s, he built and donated a Buddhist monastery.

In his daily life, he also strictly observed Buddhist admonitions against eating food which

included milk and eggs and other animal products. One has to wonder, however, whether

he only adhered to these eating regulations when he was in the proximity of villagers: once

on a European vessel, he had few problems eating salted pork.[641]

Muslim *su-kris* in Danra-waddy also played key roles in maintaining Muslim

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[636]Halstead, "Report on the Island of Cheduba," 429.

[637]See examples in Foley, "Geological and Statistical Account of the Island of Rambree," 36.

[638]Ibid., 36; Comstock, "Account," 245; Halstead, "Report on the Island of Cheduba," 420.

[639]In 1841, for example, the *su-kri* of Cheduba was described as the "most zealous adherent of Boodhism" in his circle. Ibid., 429.

[640]Ibid., 431.

[641]Ibid., 429-430.

religious edifices. In 1834, the British gave to Hussain Ali, the *su-kri* of Bhuda-maw, custodianship of the Buddermokan in Akyab. This grant was reaffirmed in 1841, and the position became hereditary: Hussain Ali died and was replaced as custodian by his son, Abdullah, and after Abdullah's death, by Abdullah's sister, Mi Moorazamal (represented as custodian by her husband Abdul Marein).[642]

We saw that the rural gentry survived both the period of Burman rule and the 1830s and early 1840s under British rule. Over the mid-nineteenth century, however, British colonial authorities again took a series of measures that gradually reduced the relevance of the rural gentry in traditional patron-client ties in rural Arakanese communities. In the past, patron-client ties between the rural gentry and villagers had offered the chief means in rural Arakan to organize collective action to meet community (or the gentry's) needs. The decline of *su-kri* (and *rwa-kaun*) wealth began with more effective supervision and inquests by British authorities than had been the case in Burman Arakan.[643] As British colonial regulations altering the rural gentry status became more severe (for the rural gentry), the rural gentry gradually lost their prestige and influence in local communities. There was physical evidence of this decline in the prosperity of the rural gentry in the 1830s. As one account explained:

> The change of rule had produced a change in [a particular *su-kris'*] circumstances, and the net amount of percentage [15%] he now realized during the year will not perhaps exceed 400 rupees, probably not one-tenth of what he was

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[642]Forchhammer, Report, 60.

[643]This is implied in Foley, "Geological and Statistical Account of the Island of Rambree," 90.

accustomed to receive during the period of Burman sovereignty in Arracan. Every thing around me too plainly betrayed the existence of this decline of fortune. The stockade that surrounded his compound was gradually giving way under pressure of age ... The *Sogree,* said one of his dependents, cannot now afford to maintain that character for hospitality which once belonged to him; he cannot even provide for his most faithful followers . . .[644]

The end of the account quoted above explains that the decline of *su-krì* wealth also meant a decline in his ability to redistribute some of this wealth to his clients. This is important: the impoverishment of the *su-kris* as well as the decreasing usefulness of the *su-krì* in providing protection to villagers from central tax collections, weakened the strength of *su-krì*-villager bonds.[645]

The effects of British regulations in the mid-nineteenth century moved beyond the mere impoverishment of the *su-kris.* Although *su-krì*-ships had been hereditary in practice in the pre-British period, the British began to set higher minimum qualifications for appointments as *su-kris* which the children of *su-krì* families were often unable to meet. Hence, *su-krì*-ships increasingly went to "outsiders," and additional onerous duties placed upon *su-kris* by colonial authorities left newcomers no time to bother with village administration (and hence, little time for forming patron-client ties).[646] According to one

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[644]Ibid., 89.

[645]I interpret colonial complaints of problems in the past (it is unclear how long they went back) of the "dilatoriness and inefficiency of the thugyis and *thugyisayès* both in preparation of the assessment-rolls and in the collection of the tax combined with a lack of constant supervision" as an indication that *su-kris* were protecting villagers from over-assessment or their inability to pay taxes when such taxes were due. I admit that these statements are open for other interpretations. See Report on Revision of Soil Classification and Land Revenue Rates in the Kyaukpyu District, Season 1898-99, 9. Of course, colonial authorities steadily worked against the ability of *su-kris* to aid villagers in the way I have discussed above.

[646]Tydd, Burma Gazetteer: Sandoway District, 52.

colonial report in the late 1880s, the *su-kris* had "no influence over" the people.[647] *Rwa-kauns*, likewise, were appointed by colonial authorities and were given specific duties as a kind of rural police paid by the colonial regime. As Tydd explains, "the influential leader and local administrator of the village community had disappeared."[648]

10.2 Competition for Agricultural Land

In the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, a factor basic to the relationship between the Arakanese and their natural environment changed. In Chapter 2, for example, I suggested that the Arakan Littoral was characterized by a low population base relative to arable land. In the nineteenth century, however, population growth was rapid, as indicated in table 3, and the ratio of land to people reversed.

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[647]Report on Revision of Soil Classification and Land Revenue Rates in the Kyaukpyu District, Season 1898-99, 9.

[648]Tydd, Burma Gazetteer: Sandoway District, 52-3.

Table 3

Population Growth in the Arakan Littoral From 1832 to 1872, Based Upon Data
Provided in the Census of 1872

Year	Danra-waddy	Zone Rama-waddy & Mekha-waddy	Dwara-waddy
1832	109, 645	66, 173	19, 280
1842	130, 034	80, 072	27, 660
1852	201, 677	107, 785	42, 866
1862	227, 231	122, 273	32, 481
1872	271, 099	144, 251	51, 312
Total Increase	155%	118 %	166%

In Chapter 2, I argued that the chief tension in agriculture at the beginning of the early modern period was that of the attractiveness of flood-plains settlement in Danra-waddy and less productive but safer lands and more predictable climate further inland (in Danra-waddy), or generally in Rama-waddy, Mekha-waddy, and Dwara-waddy. Since large-scale Arakanese captive-raiding continued throughout much of the eighteenth century, this tension must still have been the case, perhaps up to the Burman conquest of 1784.

Burman rule from 1785 to 1825 affected the distribution of people in the Arakan Littoral in a variety of ways. First, the Burman regime drew heavily upon Arakan's

material and human resources. This appears to have been the primary cause of the

massive migrations of Arakanese to points north of the Naf River and in English East

India Company lands in the 1790s. The result was the depopulation of eastern Danra-

waddy, especially on the Lei-mró river. Even as late as the 1880s, the Taw-dan, Lei-mró,

Mrauk-U, and Yala East circles, what together had formed essentially the 'core' of the

Arakanese kingdom's population in Manrique's time, now were the only areas in Danra-

waddy open for agricultural cultivation. As one colonial record explains:

> The cultivable area has been fully taken up except in the Tawdan, Lemru,
> and Yala East circles, and in the Myohaung township there is a considerable area
> now under grass and small tree jungle which was cultivated when Myohaung was a
> large city and the capital of the kingdom of Arakan.[649]

Second, Burman migrations from the east also brought new communities to Mekha-

waddy and Dwara-waddy, both of which already had a low threshold for population

growth (due to poorer soils and difficult geography and topography). At the same time,

there is no evidence of depopulation in the Kalà-dàn Valley (the central river valley of

western Danra-waddy).[650]

During the early decades of British rule, the Kalà-dàn river valley quickly became

over-populated and over-cultivated. In the 1830s, for example, one account explained of

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[649]Report on the Settlement Operations in the Akyab District, Season 1887-88, 1-2. Other
evidence also points to the depopulation of the area. According to Forchhammer, for example, after the
Burman invasion, the northern Danra-waddy Valley: "all the shrines situated in the valley to the north of
Mrohaung have been abandoned and totally neglected since the Burman invasion . . The old monasteries
have all disappeared . . . the numerous wells and tanks are in a dilapidated condition . . ." Forchhammer,
Report, 36.

[650]We have almost no information for this period regarding the agricultural lands along the Kalá-
dan River, but I conjecture that Muslim settlement there in the eighteenth century and at the beginning of
British rule suggests a continuity of these communities throughout Burman rule.

the Kalà-dàn River: "villages were found thickly studed along both banks of the river [and] [t]he cultivation was extensive."[651] By the 1880s, Kalà-dàn River communities had completely brought all arable land under cultivation.[652] Further, as a result of centuries of cultivation, the soils on both banks of the Kalà-dàn River were "much exhausted."[653] As a result, in the nineteenth century, the eastern Danra-waddy (the Lei-mró River valley) and not western Danra-waddy (the Kalà-dàn River valley) was the Arakan Littoral's most significant area for the extension of human settlements and agriculture. Even so, western Danra-waddy was the first area of entry by Chittagonian Muslims who entered Danra-waddy from the north. Chittagonian Muslims immigrated into Arakan because they could get "higher wages and better living, than they could procure in Chittagong."[654]

Like Western Danra-waddy, Rama-waddy also became overpopulated and over-cultivated in the nineteenth century. As J. S. Furnivall noted in Colonial Policy and Practice, his seminal comparative study of the emergence of colonialism in Burma and Indonesia, "the distinctive feature of the agricultural economy of Arakan, was that here, *as in no other part* of Burma . . . the growth of population led to a minute subdivision of

[651]R. Boileau Pemberton, Report on the Eastern Frontier of British India (Gauhati, Assam: Department of Historical and Antiquarian Studies in Assam, 1966), 94.

[652]Implied in Report on the Settlement Operations in the Akyab District, Season 1887-88, 1.

[653]Report on the Settlement Operations in the Akyab District, Season 1887-88, 3; Report on the Settlement Operations in the Akyab District, Season 1887-88, 8.

[654]Comstock, "Account," 228.

the land into tiny parcels."[655] The subdivision of cultivated lands (already suffering from

some of the poorest soils in the Arakan Littoral) in Rama-waddy,[656] due to

overpopulation,[657] contributed to an impoverishment of the people of Rama-waddy *vis-

a-vis* those of other districts of Arakan.[658] As one colonial report explained: "Cultivation

has reached its limit. The population of the tract is dense, most of the people are poor,

and the holdings very small."[659] Any surplus left over was either stored up for the rainy

season or used to repay loans at exorbitant interest rates.[660]

Rama-waddy agriculturalists responded to overpopulation and subdivision of

agricultural lands in several ways. Some Rama-waddy agriculturalists migrated

permanently to new lands in Danra-waddy, temporarily as hired labor in order to pay

colonial taxes, or sold their livestock in order to make ends meet. While indebted

cultivators in Danra-waddy usually had taken out loans for cattle and reaping (hiring labor

for the harvest), those in Rama-waddy did so to pay taxes and for basic necessities such

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[655]Furnivall, Colonial Policy and Practice, 102. Italicization for emphasis is mine.

[656]As one source explains: "The holdings are minute, and are again subdivided among a number of sub-tenants or co-heirs . . . " Report on Revision of Soil Classification and Land Revenue Rates in the Kyaukpyu District, Season 1898-99, 10.

[657]According to one colonial report: "It appears that the holdings in Ramree and Cheduba islands are diminishing in size year by year as the population increases." Ibid., 15.

[658]Ibid., 7. As the colonial report further explained: "the population is so dense that there can hardly be any surplus produce for sale." Ibid., 9.

[659]Ibid., 17.

[660]Ibid., 10.

as food and clothing. As a result, some Rama-waddy Buddhists became smugglers and gamblers and seem to have been one source of crime in rural Arakan. Other Rama-waddy Buddhists became migratory workers,[661] competing with Chittagonian Muslim labor in Danra-waddy and with Burmese labor in San-twei and Cheduba. It is interesting to note that *su-kris* in Rama-waddy were criticized by the colonial government in the late nineteenth century for being "too familiar with the people" and for being lazy in preparing tax rolls and in collecting taxes: this may indicate *su-kris* who sought to protect local villagers in bad times, or, perhaps, that *su-kris* no longer had very much influence in the villages.[662]

In the nineteenth century, two competitive agricultural frontiers thus were taking shape rapidly in eastern Danra-waddy. First, Chittagonian migrants and local Muslims (the communities descended from captive Bengali communities of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries) were moving eastward, beyond the Kalà-dàn River valley and into eastern Danra-waddy.[663] Second, Rama-waddy Buddhist cultivators had moved beyond Rama-waddy and were settling in eastern Danra-waddy as well.[664]

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[661]Ibid., 7, 10.

[662]Ibid., 9.

[663]H. B. Walker, "Journey on the An Pass," in Records of the Intelligence Department, Fort Dufferin, Mandalay, Upper Burmah, 1890-91 (Rangoon: Superintendent, Government Printing, n.d.), 12.

[664]In the late 1880s, Rama-waddy villages "sprinkl[ed]" Danra-waddy. Report on the Settlement Operations in the Akyab District, Season 1887-88, 2.

10.3 British Colonial Favoritism in Land Settlement

The British had come to distrust the Buddhist cultivator class of Danra-waddy as

trouble-makers (led by even more troublesome Buddhist monks), who found too much

comfort in opium and indolence.[665] As for Buddhist Arakanese from the middle and

southern Arakan Littoral (that is, Rama-waddy, Dwara-waddy, and Mekha-waddy), so

the British claimed, some were hard-workers especially endowed with the abilities

necessary to ensure agricultural productivity and strong sense of community, but most

were given to crime and increasingly to the habit of opium-smoking.[666]

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[665]As the settlement report for Akyab district suggested, the (Buddhist) Arakanese were given to alcoholism and opium-smoking and: "Throughout the district villages are found either divided into factions or at feud with neighbouring villages. The pôngyi [Buddhist monk] is generally at the bottom of the quarrel." Ibid., 2, 5. The institutional British colonial view of Buddhist Arakanese is reflected in Smart's early twentieth century remarks that: "[T]hey are extravagant and hire more labour than is necessary rather than do a fair share of work for themselves. Among the many reasons brought forward by the Arakanese for not doing manual labour are that no two Arakanese can agree among themselves or trust each other and no one will take orders from another . . . [t]he [Buddhist] Arakanese not having been accustomed to hard manual labour for generations cannot and will not do it now." Smart, Burma Gazetteer: Akyab District, 85.

[666]According to one colonial gazetteer: "Opium-smoking is freely indulged in by a good many of the people, as in Akyab, and as a consequence the support of life is a struggle to them." Report on the Settlement Operations in the Sandoway District, Season 1897-98 (Rangoon: Superintendent, Government Printing, 1899), 4. As a less sympathetic colonial report claimed of the general (and Buddhist) population of two Rama-waddy districts (Ramree and Kyaukpyu): "They are more addicted to the use of opium than to drunkenness. The percentage of opium-consumers is perhaps greater in Kyaukpyu than in any other district of Burma. There is no enterprise among them and most of them are not at all ambitious. They are indolent and apathetic, obstinate and rude in their manners, hot tempered, but cowardly. Generally speaking, they lead a life of rude and lazy content with no wish to better their condition, and many of them are paupers." Report on the Revision of Soil Classification and Land Revenue Rates in the Kyaukpyu District, Season 1898-99, 7. Furthermore, "Abuse of opium and love of showy dress are the two factors which have been at work towards the ruin of the people of Ramree and Cheduba islands," Ibid, 16. The settlement operation report for Akyab district feared the migration of Buddhist Arakanese from Rama-waddy into Danra-waddy: "it is to be feared that many bad characters from the numerous Ramree villages in the district would be on the side of disorder," Report on the Settlement Operations in the Akyab District, Season 1887-88, 5. Another settlement report concluded of an Arakanese district on the outer fringe of Rama-waddy: "being near to Ramree township [Rama-waddy], [it] is often haunted by bad characters of that quarter — robbery, dacoity, and murder prevailing here, and a reckless disregard for human life being shown when plunder can be had." Report on the Settlement Operations in the Sandoway District, Season 1897-98, 4. Smart suggested "[The Arakanese from Rama-waddy] are more industrious than the [Danra-waddy] Arakanese . . . When labour has to be engaged they prefer to employ their own kind to Chittagonian Coolies . . Their village-sites are well selected, carefully laid out with usable roads . . . the people trust each one another and [Rama-waddy-Arakanese-populated] villages generally give one the impression of a well-established

Out of a perceived threat from the "Buddhists," identified in colonial reports repeatedly as "Mugs" (a term borrowed from Bengali Muslims), British colonial administrators developed prejudices in favor of Muslims as an efficient and (compared to the Rama-waddy 'Mugs') a docile cultivator class. The British colonial administrators thus turned a yearning eye to Danra-waddy's Muslim population, specifically, the large Muslim cultivator class who had already proven themselves in British eyes (in the extensive cultivation evident in western Danra-waddy) as superior cultivators and the only hope for turning unopened fields into rich agricultural districts from which rice and hefty colonial revenues could be drawn.[667] As one colonial report suggested: "[Muslim] Bengalis are a frugal race, who can pay without difficulty a tax that would press very heavily on the [Buddhist] Arakanese."[668] Thus, colonial reports argued against repairing canals to open up 'waste lands.' Instead, colonial authorities felt that Bengalis should be enticed to settle the area through low taxes and short periods of tax exemption: "the land would be reclaimed by Bengalis without the necessity for spending money on a canal, which would at best be a doubtful speculation."[669]

By the end of the nineteenth century, it appeared that eastern Danra-waddy, like

community." Smart, Burma Gazetteer: Akyab District, 86.

[667]As the Akyab settlement report observed: "The Bengalis are a frugal, hard-working people, not addicted like the Arakanese to gambling, drinking, and opium-smoking, and their competition [as cultivators] is gradually ousting the Arakanese." Report on the Settlement Operations in the Akyab District, Season 1887-88, 2.

[668]Ibid., 21.

[669]Ibid., 2.

western Danra-waddy, was on its way to becoming predominantly Muslim. Muslims from Chittagong seem to have formed the most significant part of Mrauk-U's population in the 1890s. Colonial reports also expressed surprise at the large-scale settlement of the Lei-mró river valley by Muslim communities. As H. B. Walker, in a report in the records of Fort Dufferin's Intelligence Department, observed during his journey from Min-bra to Mrauk-U in 1890-91: "Though we were in Arakan we passed many villages occupied by Mussalman settlers or descendants of [Muslim] settlers and many of them Chittagonian."[670] Between the 1901 and 1911 censuses, the townships of Myohaung (Mrauk-U) and Minbya (Min-bra) at either end of eastern Danra-waddy, like Maungdaw to the far northwest (the entry point of Chittagonian Muslims), showed the highest rate of population increase, presumably due to the immigration of Muslim agriculturalists.[671]

At the level of the Arakanese Littoral as a whole, several indices are available for the population change occurring over the last half of the nineteenth century. As table 3 suggests, the number of those who identified themselves as Muslim, whether born in Arakan or immigrants, was rapidly overtaking that of those who identified themselves as Arakanese and Burmese (meaning together, in this context, Buddhists). Further, the number of those who called themselves 'Burmese' grew rapidly. This is especially important since, between 1901 and 1911, the number of those who identified themselves as Arakanese actually decreased (as opposed to significant increases in the 'Muslim' and

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[670]Walker, "Journal on the An Pass," 12.

[671]Smart, Burma Gazetteer: Akyab District, 82.

'Burmese' categories). One reason for this is that the Arakanese Buddhists had begun to identify themselves as Burmese,[672] suggesting that the Burmese-Buddhist identity fostered before and during Burman rule continued to have meaning (and increasing importance it seems) for many Arakanese.

Table 4

Arakan's Population by Religion, 1872-1911 [673]

Year Pop.	Total Pop.	Muslims		Buddhist	
		Pop.	% of Total	Arakanese Pop.	Burmese
1872	276, 671	58, 255	21	171, 612	4, 632
1901	481, 666	154, 887	32	239, 649	35, 751
1911	529, 943	178, 647	34	209, 432	92, 185

10.4 Necessity of Collective Action

This competition for land likely led to the formation of community ties out of mutual interests and inter-dependence in developing the land and defending it from late-comers. I think that this situation is best viewed through a model often used to examine prehistorical developments, but which seems to be just as appropriate here:

> Evolutionary ecology . . . suggests that increasing competition for resources serves as a catalyst for group formation . . . cooperation in groups arises from mutual self interest . . . group formation (in agriculture) provides more labor, which often allows for more intensive practices and a higher net gain for all members.

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[672]See observation in ibid., 84.

[673]Adapted from ibid., 83.

However, agriculture also requires a long-term commitment in order to be productive, and if group size grows too large the net gains for each individual will drop and groups will dissolve.[674]

A logical extension of this is that such groups, given their mutual inter-dependence and the long-term nature of their mutual investment in the land and each other, will likely defend each other from displacement by outsiders. This was certainly the case among such groups in the Arakan Littoral. Once tenants established themselves as cultivators in a local community, communities worked together to prevent their replacement by newcomers. As one colonial report explains:

> The feeling against the ejectment of tenants on these grants is said to be very strong, and in one instance in which a grantee ejected the tenants and made the land over to strangers the local feeling was so hostile to the strangers that they were afraid to take possession of the land.[675]

Thus, once tenants had formed a community (or came to be tenants as a community), the land was effectively alienated from newcomers. This may also be indicated in the case of Muslim 'latecomers' in Rama-waddy. The Muslim descendants of Shah Shuja's followers, the Kaman-sas, for example, who had been transplanted to Rama-waddy in the late seventeenth century, had formed, throughout the eighteenth century, a royal service group of archers, accompanying the king (under Arakanese rule), or the mró-wun (under Burman rule) on his rounds through the country. Freed from these responsibilities, they did not

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[674]Julie S. Field, "Natural and Constructed Defenses in Fijian Fortifications," Asian Perspectives 37 (1998), 35.

[675]Report on the Settlement Operations in the Akyab District, Season 1887-88, 2.

become agriculturalists. Instead, they emerged by the mid-1830s as a class of "weavers

and dyers" in their own quarter of the town of Ramree, in southeastern Rama-waddy.[676]

Within over-populated and over-cultivated zones, collective action was a

necessity as well to make do with lessening amounts of arable land. Again, however, there

was no landed class in Arakan equivalent to the zamindars in Bengal. Landholdings were

generally small and the concepts of landlord and tenant meant different things in Arakan

than they did elsewhere. The compilers of the Census of 1872, for example, complained

that: "The number of tenants . . . can hardly be accepted as representing what is generally

understood by the term; occasionally we find one man owns the land, another the

buffaloes or bullocks, and the produce of the field is divided."[677] In such situations, I

conjecture, both the so-called tenant and landlord would benefit, like groups competing

for new land (discussed above), from cooperation and relationships which made collective

action easier.

10.5 Collective Action

Beyond the eroding patron-client ties between the rural gentry and the villagers,

there were few other relationships which offered an easy way to organize collective

action. Perhaps the only other group capable of cutting across village communities, and

indeed, of penetrating rural Arakanese villages were rural religious clergy, who were

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[676]Foley, "Geological and Statistical Account of the Island of Rambree," 202-203.

[677]"Appendix 1: Arakan Division," 18.

certainly more numerous than the *su-kris* had been. In the mid-nineteenth century, for example, there were at least six hundred Buddhist monks and perhaps one hundred Muslim *mullahs*.[678] But British favoritism in the case of Muslim cultivators and the protection offered to minority religious communities in colonial centers such as Akyab meant that Muslim collective action in the nineteenth century was peculiarly directed towards projects (agricultural works for example) which did not run amiss of colonial authorities.

The Buddhist *sangha* also had a strong institutional basis for collective action in Buddhist villages in rural Arakan but, for reasons discussed below, had reasons to be hostile to colonial authorities. Burman rule had fostered close connections between Arakan's *sangha* and that of the Irra-waddy Valley (*vide* Chapter 9). It is not surprising, then, that Buddhist monks provided leadership throughout the nineteenth century in disputes between villages and resistance against colonial rule. But more than this, rural Arakanese Buddhist communities responded to the calls of Buddhist monks to collective action to tackle issues that were not necessarily relevant at the local level.

One *sangha* vision of an ideal Buddhist Arakanese society emerges from the "Rakhine Arei-taw-poun." Shin Kawi-thara, a Buddhist monk in Dwara-waddy at the end of the eighteenth century, mapped out his vision of the "greater Buddhist community" of Arakan and the Irra-waddy Valley as essentially Theravada Buddhist and Burman (that is,

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[678]Ibid., 239-240. Specifically, there were 214 Buddhist monks who served as teachers to 1,066 students, 45 secular Buddhist teachers with 337 students, and 119 Muslim teachers with 404 students. Ibid., 242.

the Buddhist Arakanese are Mranmas) in this text. Further, the "Rakhine Arei-taw-poun," is strongly anti-Muslim (*vide* Chapter 9). It also stresses the superiority of the Burmese language. In one apocryphal tale included in the text, the Ruler of Rum (that is, the Ottoman Sultan), who is a worshipper of "Lord Khoda" (Khoda being God in Persian, as He is known also to Bengali and Arakanese Muslims) personally comes to Arakan in recognition of the prosperity brought by Buddhist rule, studies the Burmese language, and leaves his son behind, who also takes up the study of Burmese.[679] Generally, this text stresses that it was the rule of a *dhamma-raja* which ensured the land's prosperity and the survival of the religion. This text was extremely popular in nineteenth century Arakan (as it is today). In my research into Burmese-language chronicles, by far the most frequently encountered Arakanese history has been the "Rakhine Arei-taw-poun." Especially from the late 1830s, the text of the "Rakhine Arei-taw-poun" itself has been copied under many titles, all of which imply that it is *the* history of the Arakanese.[680]

Similar monastic visions of the need for a Buddhist king in Arakan prompted Arakanese villagers to resist colonial authorities and eject them from the Arakan Littoral. As John Cady suggested, in his attempt to connect a major revolt in Arakan in 1836 to broader trends that included Lower Burma as well:

> British authority, of course, failed to qualify as a promoter of Buddhism. The repeated outbreak of rebellions in the British-governed Arakan and Tenasserim

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[679]Kawi-thara, "Rakhine Arei-taw-poun," 39b.

[680]Some my copies of the text of the "Rakhine Arei-taw-poun," for example, are entitled simply "Rakhine Razawin" ("The History of Arakan") or "Danra-waddy Arei-taw-poun." Some copies, however, are entitled more auspiciously as the "Maha-razawin-daw-kri" ("The Great Auspicious History of Arakan").

coastal divisions in the 1830's arose less from economic or governmental grievances than from convictions that an indigenous ruler was required to restore the Buddhist faith.[681]

The new settlements of Arakanese villagers from Rama-waddy and Dwara-waddy (Mekha-waddy seems to have been excluded as there was yet no land crisis there and hence few emigrants to eastern Danra-waddy) in Danra-waddy (most certainly eastern Danra-waddy) were much more devoted to their Buddhist monks than were the pre-existing Buddhist communities of Danra-waddy. As some colonial authorities observed:

> The settlers from Kyaukpyu [Rama-waddy] and Sandoway [Dwara-waddy] districts and the [new] arrivals from Burma proper are clearly distinguishable from the [settled, Buddhist] Arakanese in the matter of religion. Their [the newcomers'] pôngyis [monks] are well cared for and housed and the religious buildings are kept in repair. Whereas Arakanese villages give one the impression that the people live an endless sort of existence the life in Yanbyè [Rama-waddy] villages appears much more real.[682]

Although there were certainly Buddhist monastic schools in the royal city for elites in the early seventeenth century,[683] we only get a clear picture of such schools in rural Arakan in the early nineteenth century.[684] In the early nineteenth century, Buddhist monastic schools were widespread in rural Rama-waddy and Mekha-waddy. Such monastic schools offered not only the introduction to the rigorous discipline of monastic

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[681]John F. Cady, A History of Modern Burma (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1958), 9.

[682]Smart, Burma Gazetteer: Akyab District, 85.

[683]Manrique, Itinerario, 1:194.

[684]The development of these schools may owe much to the spread of village monasteries into the countryside in the late seventeenth century, but there is insufficient evidence to make this assertion.

life, if only for a short time, but also encouraged the spread of literacy in Burmese through writing and reading exercises.[685]

Buddhist monastic education affected the rural population spatially and socially: monastic schools in large villages strengthened the Buddhist presence in rural areas and also provided a uniform influence upon elites and non-elites in such villages and towns. Within village communities, and across villages throughout rural Arakan, Buddhist monastic schools brought rural Arakanese together, forming a broader sense of religious community by cutting across differences in status and wealth. As one observer noted in the early nineteenth century: "[n]o distinction is made between the children of the rich and the poor: both are treated alike and receive a similar education."[686] Outside the towns and major villages, "every village has attached to it [a monastery] and a school room, to which occasional visits are paid by itinerant priests."[687]

Arthur Phayre, the Commissioner for Arakan, pushed for a change in data-collection regarding education and literacy in Burma, by suggesting that Buddhist monastic schools should be included under 'education' (although unstated, presumably Muslim schools were included as well).[688] Prior to this change, the British assumed that

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[685]Halstead, "Report on the Island of Cheduba," 423; Foley, "Journal of a Tour Through the Island of Rambree," 31.

[686]Ibid.

[687]Halstead, "Report on the Island of Cheduba," 423.

[688]Report on the Census of British Burma taken in August 1872, 24.

those who had not been to Western schools were uneducated and illiterate. When monastic education was included, however, the education and literacy rates for Burma jumped to astoundingly high levels. Under the new guidelines, Rama-waddy had the highest rate of literacy and education in Lower Burma. According to the Report on the Census of British Burma (1872), ninety-one percent of males over the age of twenty in Rama-waddy had been instructed, while in Rangoon, as an extreme example, only one male in ten fit the same category.[689] As table 4 indicates, both Buddhist and Muslim males in Arakan generally had very high rates of education and literacy, especially when compared with other areas of Burma (Prome and Toungoo as two examples).

Table 5

Rates of Education and Literacy Among Buddhist and Muslim Males Over the Age of Twelve in Arakan and Selected Areas of the Irra-waddy Valley (Census of 1872)

Zone	No. Total	Buddhist Males No. Educated	% of Total	No. Total	Muslim Males No. Educated	% of Total
Danra-waddy	64, 549	31, 938	49	22, 979	11, 589	50
Rama-waddy	43, 076	38, 665	90	1, 409	1, 244	88
Dwara-waddy	14, 807	4, 174	28	733	62	8
Prome	82, 345	21, 558	26	457	146	32
Toungoo	109, 508	13, 338	12	209	71	34

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[689]Ibid.

The rate of education in Rama-waddy, if one considers that there was only one small colonial school of less than a hundred students in Ramree, is important because it strengthens my assertion that there was a close connection between Buddhist monks and rural Arakanese Buddhists in Rama-waddy. Large numbers of Arakanese having been educated in Buddhist monasteries means that large numbers of Arakanese also came into contact with Buddhist monks, formed the typically strong and personal bonds with the monks as *hsayas*, and for at least part of their lives, became part of the Buddhist monastic world.

The importance of Buddhist monks and Buddhism as the basis of group-bonding is also suggested in the way in which agricultural festivals in Buddhist villages had emerged as Buddhist festivals. By the early nineteenth century, at the latest, the role played by Buddhism in rural agricultural festivals was considerable.[690] Further, Burmese and Arakanese informed each other's perceptions of Buddhist festivals and what they symbolized. Agency may be attributed to the celebrants themselves, as nineteenth century Arakanese crossed the Arakan Roma to participate in such festivals when they took place just inside the Irra-waddy Valley.[691] These festivities culminated in obeisance to the Buddha, a Buddha image, or to a Buddhist monk. Although the yearly boat-races are a common feature of life throughout Banga and the Arakan Littoral (among Muslims in Banga as well), Buddhist Arakanese associated these boat-races with Buddhism. Villagers

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[690]As I explained in an earlier chapter, there were indications as early as the sixteenth century that Buddhism was beginning to play a role in rural agricultural festivals.

[691]Walker, "Journey on the An Pass," 9.

coupled these boat-races in the April water festival, for example, with offerings to the

Buddhist monks and the ritual bathing and adornment of the image of the Buddha, as we

find in early nineteenth century Rama-waddy.[692] I stress that the above rural festival

incorporated two special elements of rural Buddhism into the festivities: a rural monk and

a Buddha image.

Buddha images are also part of the First Festival of Lights in October, and the

festival is said to replicate the Buddha's return to earth briefly, a few years after his

Enlightenment. The Buddha first went to Tavatimsa, heaven in the Buddhist cosmology,

where he spent Lent "expounding the intricacies of Buddhist metaphysics and ontology

(abhi-dhamma) to the gods." Thereupon, he descended to earth guided by miraculous

torches which lit his way. Thus, in the festival as it is practiced today, oil lamps are

burned in front of Buddhist images and shrines, and candles or electric bulbs illuminate

homes and secular buildings as well.[693] As the celebration emerged in the countryside,

however, other activities were involved, which specifically focussed upon images of the

Buddha: "A temple is erected at the centre of the labyrinth, and within it are four images

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[692]Foley, "Journal of a Tour Through the Island of Rambree," 25; As Foley describes this race: "The Léh-prinedee is the boat-race . . . a number of boats assemble in a broad creek, and start for a certain place, each striving to outstrip the other. The boats are impelled with oars, and those that are light and well manned, have a surprising speed on the water. The shouts of the rowers, the strains of wild music, and the gay appearance of the boats decked out at the stem with branches of plantain trees and garlands of flowers, give a most pleasing and striking effect to the scene. Returned to the place from whence they started, a donation in money, or a piece of silk, is generally presented to the winner by the master of the ceremonies. Nautches and entertainments succeed the boat-race, and the festivities are closed with offerings to the priests and the Rautoo [the Buddha image], who is on this occasion carefully washed and adorned." Foley, "Journal of a Tour Through the Island of Rambree," 24-5; This role for Buddhism continued to expand and contemporary behavior during the festival in Burma has also come to include worship in the monasteries and pagodas during the entire three days of the celebration. Spiro, Buddhism and Society, 221.

[693]Ibid., 225.

of the Buddha . . . to which the passengers severally make obeisance . . ."[694]

The October-November ceremony of Kahteing is another Buddhist festival that stresses an association between villagers and rural Buddhist monks. It is literally a robe-offering ceremony, for as its name suggests robes were offered to the monks. The festival was popularized by the *padesa* (ပဒေသာ), or wishing tree. Donations by the villagers to the Buddhist monastery are hung on this mystical tree to be plucked down by the monks.[695] This festival was certainly popular in rural Arakan in the early nineteenth century,[696] as were many others which, again, connected the villager to the Buddhist monks or to the image of the Buddha.[697]

10.6 Changes in Religious Patronage

Over the nineteenth century, local patron-client relationships in local communities had begun to break down. The rural gentry had successfully survived the Burman and the

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[694]As Foley further explains: "By way of celebrating this festival, a labrynth is constructed by means of bamboo fences, so placed, as to make the path very narrow and intricate from the numerous turns it takes. People of both sexes, and of all ages, flock to this place in the evening, dressed in their smartest clothes; old as well as young thread the labrynth, enjoying the fun that is occasioned by their several mistakes in endeavouring to get out of it. . ." Foley, "Journal of a Tour Through the Island of Rambree," 25; Ukka Bran's late sixteenth century poem, did not emphasize the elements of Buddhism associated with this festival, although his description of lamps and other elements clearly indicates that he and Foley are describing the same festival. Bran, "An Arakanese Poem of the 16th Century," 227.

[695]Spiro, Buddhism and Society, 227.

[696]Foley, "Journal of a Tour Through the Island of Rambree," 25.

[697]One more religious observance, for example, seems to have been adopted by rural Arakanese. This was the periodic ritual fast followed by worship of the Buddha images in the monasteries and donations to the monks in the months from July until October. By the early nineteenth century, rural Arakanese populations also observed this ritual. As Foley explains: "The people fast for a few days in each month, and proceeding to the Kioums, dressed in their smartest attire, prostrate themselves before the Phraa, and make suitable offerings to the priests." Ibid., 25.

British regime changes and, into the nineteenth century, they remained the font of religious patronage in the local community in rural Arakan (*vide* Chapter 9). Out of an attempt to improve revenue collections, however, the British colonial administration took a series of steps which broke down patron-client bonds in the village. As a result, gentry-villager patron-client relationships, one important means of group-formation in order to achieve collective action, was removed or made less effective. The rural gentry also declined as a source of religious patronage from the mid-nineteenth century, replaced by groups of villagers and the new elites emerging in the colonial administrative centers.

Under the British, rural gentry-status gradually ceased to be the chief means of attaining prestige in rural Arakan. One route, of course, had been to gain positions of authority and wealth, such as by attaining a position as a *su-kri*, a *rwa-kaun*, and so on. Islam and Buddhism in Arakan, however, also offered unique and increasingly important ways to improve one's status. In both, for example, donors to the religion are accorded honor and prestige by the religious community. In the case of Buddhism in 1840s Mekha-waddy, for example:

> The construction of . . . wells, traveller's houses, or the keeping of any of these in repair, renames the party undertaking them, and he is thenceforth only known by the honorable title of the 'well digger,' the 'road maker,' the 'house builder,' [and so on].[698]

There is a good deal of evidence that such titles were commonly affixed to one's name.[699]

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[698]Halstead, "Report on the Island of Cheduba," 432.

[699]Forchhammer, Report, 9.

Becoming a donor to the religion could thus confer status to anyone, elite or non-elite. In

the nineteenth century, 'middle class' urban artisans and weavers rather than rural gentry

took the lead in sponsoring the repair of Danra-waddy mosques and to fund permanent

caretakers for the mosques' upkeep.[700]

Villagers also seem to have displaced *su-kris* as the primary donors to the

religion.[701] For villagers, general subscriptions in the late nineteenth century offered an

increasingly important way to donate to the religion without incurring prohibitive debt.

There are numerous examples that such general subscriptions became important by the

last half of the nineteenth century.[702] One inscription from 1848 indicates just how

cooperative religious patronage had become:

> [A]n umbrella . . . was constructed by Maung Lu Molu, who was paid Rs.
> 100 for its workmanship. It was brought to its destination by a steamer and its
> donors, A Po Kyet, Po Kwe Bu, U Tup Bru, Maung Myat E, Maung Schwap,
> Maung Shwe Eit, Maung Waing, Maung San Min, Maung Shwei Hlaing, Maung . . .
> together with their families proceeded to cover the ti with gold at their own expense

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[700]Muslim tradesmen in Mrauk-U, for example, sponsored the repair of the Santikhan mosque, also in Mrauk-U. Having taken it under their 'custody,' a permanent Muslim caretaker was left on its grounds. Ibid., 39.

[701]In the last half of the nineteenth century, Kamaun-dat villagers built a "small monastery near the Kado shrine where a" monk lives during the rainy season. The villagers of Pa-taw, also in the late nineteenth century, repaired the Ukin-daw ceti a few miles from their village. In the late nineteenth century, in Minbya, villagers of the Athaya, Ngapi-ing, and Talin-kri villages built their own pagoda for the purposes of worship. Forchhammer, Report, 52-54.

[702]The general population of the town of San-twei and of the village of Andaw took responsibility for the upkeep of the Andaw pagoda around 1880. The townspeople of San-twei also sponsored the repair of the Sandaw ceti in Dwara-waddy in 1849 and in 1876, and they also repaired the Nandaw *ceti* in San-twei in 1849 and 1878. In 1879, Ma Myat U, the widow of a donor to the religion, Zayataga Maung Chin Daung, who lived in Mawleit village sponsored the gilding of the Urritaun *ceti*. In 1882, 10,000 rupees were raised through general subscription to put a new *hti* the Urritaun *ceti*. Further: "Since then funds are constantly being collected to defray the expenses of paving the platform with bricks, erect a wall around the temple court, and to construct new stairs leading from the foot of the hill to the summit." Forchhammer, Report, 56, 57, 61-3.

and with the money obtained by subscription from others who were anxious to acquire merit. A great festival was held lasting three days: feast, dance, mirth and song amused the whole town . . .[703]

Not only was a popular basis for patronage of Buddhism forming, but Buddhist Arakanese had begun, as I mentioned earlier, to 'imagine' a greater Buddhist community. One important indication that Buddhist Arakanese had come to view themselves as part of a larger Buddhist community beyond their local community involved the distribution of their religious patronage. Arakanese Buddhists, for example, increasingly sponsored the repair of temples far from their home community.[704] The evidence of nineteenth-century Buddhist Arakanese crossing over the Arakan Roma to participate in Buddhist festivals in the Irra-waddy Valley[705] also suggests that Arakanese rural perceptions of 'We' now transcended the past divisions between the Arakan Littoral and the Irra-waddy Valley.

10.7 Communalism

In the nineteenth-century Arakan Littoral, both Buddhist and Muslim communities clearly saw themselves as apart from each other. From a survey of the data for villages and the declared religious affiliations of Arakanese within these villages, I

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[703]Ibid., 62.

[704]In the mid-1850s, for example, two merchants from Akyab, Maung Maung and Maung Shwe Po, sponsored the reconstruction of the Maha-hti pagoda far away in eastern Danra-waddy. In 1866, a Shan from Kambuza, Zaya Maung Shwe Hmôn, came to Mrauk-U with his family to repair the Maha-muni image house (even though the image itself was long since gone). Finding that he had not brought sufficient money for the repairs, he turned to the wun-dauk who gave him additional money. When even this was insufficient, he turned to the general Buddhist community of Danra-waddy: nine additional donors gave money which was pooled and placed under the care of Zaya Maung Shwe Hmôn who completed the repair work shortly afterwards. Ibid., 9, 46.

[705]Walker, "Journey on the An Pass," 9.

found that the overwhelming majority of Arakanese villages in 1891 appear to have been

religiously endogamous. This could mean many things, village headmen may have been

interviewed and claimed a group religious identity, or villagers may have felt peer pressure

to appear like everyone else, or, more likely, that community was now defined by

religion. Generally, it is unclear who the actual census-takers were, the 1872 census, for

example, relied upon a vast array of local indigenous 'officials,' sometimes assisted by

European officers.[706] Census-taking itself may also have strengthened these bonds: by

asking for specific answers to the question of what one's religion was, colonial census-

takers implied that religion was a matter of one-or-the-other. Census-taking was, after all,

a matter of clarifying and dividing.

Social exclusion (and inclusion) based upon religious identity is an important part

of communalism. Muslims in Danra-waddy, descendants of those captured from Banga in

the Luso-Arakanese raids of the seventeenth century (and by the Arakanese alone in the

eighteenth century), may have been doubly excluded by the Buddhist Arakanese

population: first, because they were not Buddhist, and second, because they were

descended from 'slaves.'[707] But separatism and social exclusion did not necessarily rest on

low hereditary status. Instead, the boundaries of 'we' and 'they' were drawn according to

membership in one or another religious community. Baptist missionaries in 1840s Arakan

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[706]Report on the Census of British Burma Taken in August 1872, 4.

[707]There was some discrimination in Danra-waddy in the nineteenth century against those descended from the captives (likely Bengalis) of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.'As Halstead explains: "[There are] feelings of prejudice against the eating and drinking with those who are descendants from the captives of former wars, to whom the most menial offices are assigned." Halstead, "Report on the Island of Cheduba," 431.

were greeted with such assertions:

> Some of the Buddhists present were very eager for dispute. 'Jesus Christ did not come to the Arracanese; he came to your race, and you worship him; we worship Gaudama, and the Mussulmans Mahomet,' said one.[708]

Although Muslims treated the ideas of Christian proselytizers with greater tact, perhaps because of Christianity's and Islam's shared prior text, Muslims usually showed no interest in conversion.[709]

The clearest sign that religion had come to define community membership came from attempts to prevent members of one community or another from 'going over.' Both Muslim and Buddhist communities did so by threatening social exclusion to those who sought to change their religious identity. According to one Buddhist who expressed interest in Christianity, for example, he refused to do so because it would invite social exclusion from his community and "shame."[710] Since the loss of a productive member of a community might be the end result of social exclusion, religious communities in Arakan first sought other means, such as peer pressure to prevent religious change before it occurred. As one account explains:

> I have heard that whenever any person expresses an opinion at all favorable to the religion of Christ, he is immediately surrounded by hard-headed and hard-hearted Buddhists, who strive to persuade him not to think for a moment of changing his

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[708]Comstock, "Journal," 162.

[709]Ibid.

[710]According to one account: ". . . our scholar . . . said after worship that he firmly believed there is an eternal God, but his shame and fear of persecution prevented his becoming a Christian." Ibid., 163.

religion.[711]

In one sense, Western missionary attacks upon Buddhism and Islam, then, were attacks upon the community, since they questioned the basis of community bonds in nineteenth century Arakan. It is no surprise then that such Western missionary attacks were greeted by group resistance in arguments and debates against Christianity, if not shouts and jeers.[712] I conjecture that resistance to the Western missionaries further contributed to the accentuation of group religious identities and perhaps an involution of religious belief. In Arakan, as was the case elsewhere in Southeast Asia, Western missionaries made little progress among either Muslims or Buddhists. As I have attempted to explain in this chapter, the lines of communal membership on the basis of religious identities or, rather, communalism had been drawn.

10.8 Summary

In this chapter, I suggest that religious communalism and separatism in nineteenth century Arakan were clarified by competition on the agricultural frontier. Over-population and over-cultivation in western Danra-waddy and in Rama-waddy led to the immigration of rural Buddhists and Muslims into eastern Danra-waddy. Whether struggling to open up new lands or finding ways to cooperate and thereby survive on smaller strips of agricultural land, such as in Rama-waddy, rural Arakanese turned to their

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[711]Comstock, "Journal," 74.

[712]Comstock, "Journal," 76, 164.

religious teachers and guides: the *mullahs* or the Buddhist monks. The chief reason that rural Arakanese looked hardly anywhere else was related to colonial policies which undermined the ability of the rural gentry and Arakanese villagers to maintain patron-client relationships through which collective action had been fostered in the past. Few institutional relationships other than religious leaders existed in rural Arakan. Further, Buddhist monks had their own reasons to influence local communities. These motives were mapped out in 'histories' provided by Buddhist monks such as Shin Kawi-thara. The reliance upon the community for survival meant that forms of community bonding, such as monastic education (for Buddhists) and religious celebrations became important arenas for the formation of group identity. Changes in religious patronage patterns also indicate that religious donations had become group projects which envisaged not just the local community but the greater religious community.

CHAPTER 11:

CONCLUSION

This dissertation has attempted to make three general arguments concerning religious change in early modern Arakan. First, both the Buddhist-traditionalists and the Muslim-traditionalists anachronistically attribute contemporary religious identities to the Arakanese from the beginning of the early modern period (and before). Looked at from a different angle, religious identities developed over time and along an uneven trajectory throughout the early modern period in Arakan. I argue that some reasons for this were the Arakanese royal court's long-term indifference to the religious identities of rural Arakanese, sectarian competition within the Arakanese *sangha*, and the multiplicity of available religious models. Second, religious identities became conjoined with belonging-ness to different cultural zones. I argue that this development was due in large part to patterns of captive-raiding, migrations, and the expansion of two external states, the Mughal and Burman empires into the Arakan Littoral. Indeed, by 1785, the Arakan Littoral was effectively divided in two, northern Arakan being absorbed by an essentially Muslim and Indian polity, and central and southern Arakan by a Theravada-Buddhist, Irra-waddy Valley based polity. I have focussed more heavily upon the merger between the Arakanese and Irra-waddy Buddhist cultures in this dissertation, but I have also tried

to indicate the ways in which Bengali captives gradually Islamized throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Third, I argue that communalism, pitting Buddhist against Muslim, represented a watershed in, not a natural progression of, developing religious identities in Arakan in the nineteenth century. British rule, often unconsciously, contributed to some extent to this development. Pre-colonial patron-client ties, the former means of collective action, were pushed into the background by the alienation of the rural gentry from the village. In their place, Buddhist monks and monasteries, in short Buddhism, were important media for the negotiation of community identities. I also suggest (although it is beyond the scope of this dissertation to demonstrate fully) that Muslim *mullahs* and Islam may have played similar roles.

As I explained at the beginning of this dissertation, when Forchhammer wrote his 1892 report, he could not have known what other meanings could be assumed in the following century from his association of Arakan with Palestine. But when it came to the emergence of religious communalism in nineteenth century Arakan, Forchhammer, as a colonial archaeological officer, was no innocent party. He, like other colonial officials, discovered, categorized, and 'clarified' Arakan according to their vision of the Arakanese past. Religious edifices had to be Buddhist or Muslim, not both, just as rural cultivators, for the purposes of the colonial censuses, had to be defined according to one religious identity or another (it is interesting that there was no "unknown" or "undecided" category for religious affiliation). Still, British colonialism, however much it clarified and antagonized, was only a small factor in the emergence of religious communalism in

Arakan.

Religious communalism primarily developed out of community-bonding and the pursuit of community leadership in the attempt by rural Arakanese to survive over-populated and over-cultivated agricultural zones or the competition for new lands on the open agricultural frontier. I have argued that in Arakan a transition occurred in agriculture and local patterns of collective action. In the past, the open agricultural frontier was located in the uncertain lands of western Danra-waddy and the more secure agricultural zone of the southern Arakan Littoral. By the nineteenth century, however, this situation had changed: over-population and over-cultivation in western Danra-waddy and the southern Arakan Littoral, worsened by the emergence of rapid sub-division of land plots, forced many cultivators to look for work and land elsewhere. Eastern Danra-waddy was the obvious destination, as it had been depopulated during Burman rule and its agricultural fields laid fallow for decades. Competitive agricultural frontiers and the opening (or re-opening) of new lands require collective action out of mutual interests. The traditional means of forging collective action; patron-client ties, and especially those between the rural gentry and villagers, however, were broken down by colonial administrative reforms aimed at penetrating the rural revenue-collection system.

Villagers thus relied upon the 'community' which arose from village Buddhism (and, in the case of Muslims, rural Islam) with the rural monastery and the rural *sangha* as its center (as in the case of the mosque and the *mullahs* in rural Islam in Arakan). Arakanese villagers cooperated in general subscriptions to make donations to the *sasana*,

group-bonding activities such as popular festivals gradually became Buddhist festivals, and monastic schools informed villagers that their communion in obeisance to the Buddha and his teachings was more important than the social differences (such as wealth and status within the village) outside the monastery. This sense of community had few institutional competitors, as I have explained, as patron-client ties suffered from colonial interference and the absence of a royal court in Arakan in the nineteenth century. Further, rural monks actively promoted this sense of community, out of a broader monastic agenda; for some monks, this meant the pursuit of an ideal Buddhist society in greater Burma ruled by a Buddhist king. In any case, *gama-vasi* village monks had always depended strongly upon village donations, and with the royal court gone and the rural gentry diminished in wealth, the vitality of the *sangha* depended wholly upon villager support.

The majority of this dissertation has tried to explain how the Theravada Buddhist religious identity, like that which made rural monks important leaders in rural communities, emerged. By contrast with the prevailing literature on early modern Arakan, I argue that both Theravada Buddhist and Muslim religious identities are relatively recent developments (post-fifteenth century) when compared with the much earlier development of these identities suggested by Buddhist-traditionalist and Muslim-traditionalist scholars of premodern Arakan. Both identities took centuries to develop (and unevenly at that) and take hold among much of the general population.

I argue that the Theravada Buddhist identity developed from a complex

intersection of different social, economic, and political factors. The religious identity itself emerged unevenly among different groups of Arakanese. Sometimes religious influences were promoted or accepted for superhuman protection against seemingly insurmountable threats in this life. At other times, and among other people, religions were useful for attaining what today we might define as secular goals: strengthening political authority or improving social prestige.

I did not find a good deal of evidence to emphasize Horton's "intellectualist" or Reid's 'mobility' theories as explanatory devices for religious change in early modern Arakan. It is true that exposure to the royal city, a 'window' to Theravada Buddhist advertising, had some influence as one of a significant number of factors. But increased super-village mobility alone does not really explain why the Bengali captives who came to Mrauk-U did not become Buddhist, and it does not explain why populations such as that of interior Rama-waddy, with decades of isolation from the royal city, emerged as the most strongly Buddhist population in the Arakan Littoral by the end of the nineteenth century. One would have supposed, for example, that if Horton's "intellectualist" model were applied to early modern Arakan, one would see the strongest Buddhist impact in Danra-waddy, among ostensibly 'Buddhist' villages near and in constant interaction with the royal city, Arakan's Buddhist center. This was not the case. Further, although Reid's "mobility" and Horton's "intellectualist" approaches may seem to explain religious change from so-called 'animist' cultures to the text-based 'universal' religions (Christianity, Islam, Buddhism, and so on), their validity is effectively unverifiable in a religiously-diverse case

such as that of early modern Arakan. In other words, Horton's and Reid's models by themselves do not explain why people in the same environment, in the same period, and subject to the same exposure to different religious models develop different religious identities.

Determining why some communities adopted Theravada Buddhism to different degrees than others (determined by the range of social activities that Buddhism influenced), I think, is a far more important question than why Theravada Buddhism simply developed as a religious identity. My answer to this question, for Arakanese Theravada Buddhism, is that religious communalism works not only to identify community membership according to religious identity, but also encourages a kind of "religious involution." The factors I pointed to in Chapter 10, such as the Buddhicization of agricultural festivals, the rural patronage of monks, and the importance of monastic education, all of which helped develop a sense of community through association with Buddhism, also deepened the influence of Buddhism upon daily life in the village. In this way, communalism may not be necessarily a natural outgrowth of religious identity-formation, but religious communalism can further religious-identity formation.

This is the appropriate time to address additional, more specific questions. I fully admit that Arakan represents only one of a plethora of local situations which may have deviated from general patterns of religious change and the emergence of Theravada Buddhism. But I also stress that examinations of such local cases reveal, as I have found here, two weaknesses in some studies with a broader focus: (1) assumptions that the

enforcement of religious orthodoxy and religious exclusion was a necessary concomitant of strengthening royal centers during the early modern period and (2) assumptions that the spread of Islam and Buddhism represented wholly separate and unrelated phenomena. I will address each of these issues in turn.

First, I suggest that one weakness of prevailing scholarship on the emergence of Buddhism in Southeast Asia, again, is the *assumption that the enforcement of religious orthodoxy and religious exclusion was a necessary concomitant of strengthening royal centers during the early modern period.* Both Victor Lieberman and Anthony Reid have suggested, for example, that the early-modern central courts in mainland Southeast Asia (with the exception, of course, of Neo-Confucianist Vietnam) coupled statecraft with the enforcement of Buddhist religious orthodoxy. Lieberman's argument is based upon his analysis of the political expansion of the Burman kingdom and the spread of Burman culture and religion throughout the Irra-waddy Valley from the beginning of the early modern period up through the nineteenth century. Examining Burma as one of three 'hegemon' states (the other two being Thailand and Vietnam) that basically swallowed up the numerous smaller polities of the early modern period by the 1830s, Lieberman attempts to identify developments which made its expansion easier and long-lasting (the contemporary Burmese-speaking, Theravada Buddhist state known as Myanmar, for example, is the legacy of pre-twentieth century Burman state-building). One of these developments was royal patronage of Theravada Buddhism, its continuing interest in monastic 'purity' (and thus centrally-defined Theravada Buddhist orthodoxy), and the

encouragement of the eradication of other religious beliefs throughout the Irra-waddy Valley.[713] Reid extended similar sentiments to mainland Southeast Asia as a whole, citing evidence from Burma, Ayudhya (Thailand), Cambodia, and Laos. He suggests that the "Sri Lankan school of Buddhism [Theravada Buddhism] appears to have been imposed as a state religion by great empire-builders well before the age of commerce."[714]

In Arakan, however, royal enforcement of Theravada Buddhist orthodoxy and royal encouragement of religious exclusion were symptomatic of a weakening, not a strengthening royal court. In other words, in Arakan we find a polar opposite to the case of the Irra-waddy in the relationship between the royal court and the religion in the context of state formation: the Arakanese royal court favored religious heterogeneity and tolerance when it was strong and turned to religious orthodoxy and religious purification (or exclusion) when it was weak. Even prior to the decline of the court in the late seventeenth century, Min-raza-kri's purge of the *gama-vasi* monks, at a time when his court was at its lowest ebb, was a strong hint of the *realpolitik* of the royal relationship with the religion. Another example is Nga Kuthala's promotion of Buddhism and the abandonment of 'Muslim' Bengali regnal titles and coinage, which I understand to be rooted in his insecure position on the throne: he had massacred the previous royal family

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[713]Lieberman focusses his argument upon Burma in Lieberman, "Was the Seventeenth Century a Watershed in Burmese History?," 242-246. For a broader and more nuanced discussion of Lieberman's argument, see idem., "Local Integration and Eurasian Analogies," 513-514. This view is also held by scholars of other mainland Southeast Asian 'core' states. See, for example, Yoneo Ishii, "Religious Patterns and Economic Change in Siam in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries," in Southeast Asia in the Early Modern Era: Trade, Power, and Belief, Anthony Reid, ed. (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1993): 180-94.

[714]Reid, Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce, 2:192.

and its chief elite clients; even the Dutch were struck by Nga Kuthala' extreme paranoia afterward (*vide* Chapter 7). In the reign of Sanda-thu-dhamma-raza, we again find that the interest of the royal court in Buddhism grew in proportion to the defeats and the damage it suffered. Sanda-thu-dhamma-raza devoted himself to extensive patronage of Buddhism (as did his son and successor Ukka-bala) only after he had lost the northern littoral to the Mughals and faced a real or perceived challenge to his authority by Shah Shuja.

Why the difference between Arakan and kingdoms east of the Arakan Roma in the relationship between the royal court and the *sangha*? This is a complex question, and I have not attempted to provide in this dissertation a comparative study of the emergence of Theravada Buddhism in Burma and Arakan. I can, however, offer several suggestions which may be tested in later research. First, as I suggested in Chapter 4, Theravada Buddhism dominated the religion of the Arakanese royal court after the beginning of the fifteenth century, but, prior to that time, Theravada Buddhism was only one of a number of religious influences. It is likely, then, that strongly-defined and socially-entrenched Theravada Buddhism was an earlier development in the Irra-waddy Valley than in the Arakan Littoral. If we perceive statecraft, as I have religion, as something which evolves and develops, then we should probably look at Irra-waddy Valley statecraft and Arakanese statecraft (and thus the relationship between the royal court and religion) as different developments. Second, the Arakanese court was intimate with a more religiously-heterogenous world. I anticipate that some critics will point to the strength of the Irra-waddy Valley's trade connections with a similarly heterogenous maritime world.

My response would be that, however heterogenous the Irra-waddy Valley's trade connections, my initial observation considers additional spheres of interaction. The Arakanese court not only traded with more or less Muslim or Hindu, or at least non-Buddhist cultures, but also ruled over and raided such cultures throughout the early modern period. While the Arakanese court dealt on a regular basis with the extremely diverse (culturally and religiously) polities which rimmed the Bay of Bengal, the Burman court usually interacted with courts and peoples whose cultures and religions were similar in many ways to their own (strongly Buddhist and animist, Tibeto-Burman speakers and Tai-speakers, roughly equivalent to the premodern cultural milieu of Upper Burma). Even then, the center of gravity for trade and other cultural interactions in Upper Burma was not in the royal court, but in the lesser courts of provincial governors near the coast in Lower Burma, or on the northeast frontier with China.

As a result of the focus upon the court, and court-supported monastic sects, the prevailing literature also neglects the role of village monks as critical players in the emergence of Theravada Buddhism. As I have explained at several points throughout this dissertation, *gama-vasi* village monks played a pivotal role in promoting Buddhism in rural Arakan and sometimes had to fight royal interference to do so. We do not yet know the full impact of the Burman missionary monks and Burman monastic reform in Arakan after 1784. It is likely, however, that many of the pre-1785 *gama-vasi* monks remained as they were in Arakanese villages after being re-ordained. In any event, in the nineteenth century, village monks were more important than they had ever been, as I have explained,

when they offered Arakanese villagers a way to cope with the changing economy and society of the British colonial period.

Second, the prevailing literature also assumes that, for Southeast Asia, the *spread of Islam and Buddhism represented wholly separate and unrelated phenomena*. This assumption led Reid to consider the spread of Christianity and Islam as a similar development,[715] while considering the emergence of Theravada Buddhism as a case apart: the "progress of Theravada Buddhism cannot be explained in the same terms as that of Islam."[716] Reid's observation is contingent upon understandings of the emergence of Theravada Buddhism and Islam that are generally foreign to the Arakanese context. (1) He draws his sources for the spread of Islam from the archipelagic world. As we have seen, the spread of Islam in Arakan was not entirely, if at all, the work of Muslim traders and *sufis*. Instead, the emergence of Islam in Arakan was an overland phenomenon, carried by captives and reinforced by *mullahs* in the context of agricultural communities trying to survive in a harsh natural environment. (2) His understanding of Theravada Buddhism in mainland Southeast Asia also draws only upon evidence from societies east of the Arakan Roma. This oversight means that Reid's interpretations of Theravada Buddhism in mainland Southeast Asia are biased by the evidence and the secondary scholarship he works with.

In this dissertation, I have attempted to indicate how one might view the

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[715]See Reid, "Islamization and Christianization in Southeast Asia," 151-179; and Reid, Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce, 2:132-192.

[716]Reid, Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce, 2:192.

emergence of Theravada Buddhism and Islam in the Arakan Littoral as different outcomes of a similar process. It is true that Islam and Buddhism influenced different populations in two different areas of the Arakan Littoral, and that these populations came to the Arakan Littoral in different ways (Islam influenced captive Bengalis most, while the pre-existing populations of Arakan Littoral emerged primarily as Theravada Buddhists by the nineteenth century). On the other hand, the roots of these religious identities were the same: the need to cope with environmental dangers, the important role played by rural clergy (monks and *mullahs*) often with no support from the central court, the same recognition of supernatural forces in the local landscape, and efforts to make Islam or Buddhism relevant to the local landscape through stories which anachronistically 'traditionalized' these religions. In the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, religious devotion was one way to cope with political and social disorder, and both Muslims and Buddhists sought escape from the littoral or support of local strongmen for security against the dangers of the human world. Finally, in the nineteenth century, and in the face of severe over-population and over-cultivation of agricultural lands and competition for lands on the new eastern Danra-waddy agricultural frontier, Arakanese Buddhists and Muslims connected Islam and Buddhism with community identities when the traditional means of collective action in rural Arakan, patron-client ties in particular, were less effective.

I also suspect that further research, not prejudiced in favor of the picture of a strong and well-established Buddhist orthodoxy in early modern Southeast Asia (a picture

ultimately rooted in the self-perceptions of Buddhist monastic writers), may reveal that the case of Arakan represents a broader pattern relevant to many other areas of mainland Southeast Asia.[717] I would suggest that the research by Richard Eaton strongly supports the contention that the case of religious change in early modern Arakan represents a broader pattern which connects the Arakan Littoral with Bengal. Although I explained in an earlier chapter that Eaton's specific model for the Islamization of Bengal on the agricultural frontier does not explain the case of religious change in Arakan, this difference was one of different institutional relationships and different political contexts.

At this point, I should briefly sum up Eaton's basic argument as it relates to the present discussion. Eaton argues that Bengal's rural gentry (the proprietary *zamindar* class) were not concerned so much with the religious beliefs of tenants, so long as their lands were brought under cultivation. The Mughal overlords of Bengal, however, expressly connected land grants to patronage of Islamic institutions when they made grants to Muslim *zamindars* and required no support for religious institutions when these grants were made to non-Muslim *zamindars*. Since more land grants overall were made to Muslims than non-Muslims, this meant that in most land-grants Muslim religious institutions had an economic basis to thrive in most agricultural communities in rural Bengal. The real work of community building, however, was left to autonomous Muslim religious leaders, working among communities whose religious identities were extremely fluid, but who granted prestige universally to 'holy men' of any religious mold. Thus

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[717]Cambodia and Ayudhya, for example, had substantial Muslim populations, so much so that seventeenth-century Persian traders thought that Lower Burma was ruled by Muslims, while Ayudhya consisted of a Muslim population ruled by a gentile king.

communities emerged around these prestigious holy men, chiefly Muslims supported by the majority of the Mughal land-grants. Eaton then applies a model similar to that of Horton to explain how Islam gradually moved into the indigenous religious framework.[718]

At a general level, analogies can be drawn between Eaton's Islamization of the Bengal frontier and my argument for religious change in Arakan. There is, for example, a rough analogy between (a) the effect of the indifferent zamindaris of rural Bengal and (b) the effect of the alienation of the rural gentry from Arakanese villagers in nineteenth century Arakan upon those villagers (who needed to encourage collective action to meet the demands of agricultural development in a harsh natural environment). What is important here is that Eaton tied the emergence of Islam in rural Bengal to the role of rural religious clergy and religious edifices as centers of emerging agricultural communities on Bengal's agricultural frontier. I have argued something similar for the case of Arakan. In both cases, in the absence of strong rural gentry connections with villagers through personal ties and reciprocity a sense of community identity formed around the activities of rural religious clergy centered on rural religious institutions (the mosque and the pagoda or monastery). I think, however, that Eaton failed to emphasize a key element in the attraction of this community-building for rural agriculturalists, in part because he underestimated the severe agricultural dislocation in southeastern Bengal which would offer a parallel to the rural situation in Arakan. I think this factor is important because it stresses the need by villagers for religious community-building, as opposed to a model

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[718]Eaton, Rise of Islam and the Bengal Frontier, 265, 268-9, 302-03.

which views a more gradual and unconscious (on the part of the community members-to-be) development of agricultural communities.

I suggest that Eaton may have underplayed the critical role of Arakan in the fortunes of Banga's agricultural populations. One reason that southeastern Bengal (including Banga) was an agricultural frontier in the full sense attributed to it by Eaton was the constant raiding of Banga by Luso-Arakanese pirates. As I explained in Chapter 6, Luso-Arakanese captive-raiding severely depopulated Banga and, according to the descriptions cited in that chapter, kept Banga relatively depopulated and 'dangerous' well into the eighteenth century. Riverine communities in Banga were continually broken up, as were local families, patron-client networks, and caste-groups. Indeed, this was the expressed reason for Mughal expansion into the northern Arakan Littoral in the first place. Afterward, the Chittagong area was the primary target, and similar deprivations continued. This situation in Bengal was probably as severe as the political disintegration of the Arakan Littoral from the late seventeenth century until the Burman conquest in 1785. There was thus an ever-present need for the means to provide mutual security. Early modern Arakanese met this need, if they did not flee to other areas, by turning to their local patrons, the rural gentry, for leadership and protection. Since Eaton does not discuss this particular concern, he can hardly be expected to explain how this need might have been met in southeastern Bengal. I suspect that Eaton would agree that rural Bengalis would have turned to strong local patrons and, failing that, perhaps the community-building efforts of Muslim leaders and rural Muslim institutions. In other words, could

this be the critical time when Islam became important for the erection of community bonds in southeastern Bengal?

Eaton's argument is stronger, I think, when he stresses the indifferent nature of *zamindars* to the religious identity of their tenants. This is where I find an analogy between the Arakan and Bengal cases and the reason for the differences in terms of periodization. In Bengal, *zamindari* religious indifference to rural Bengalis meant that Bengalis who needed collective action to open up the agricultural frontier of southeastern Bengal (and, perhaps, the need for mutual security) were especially attracted to the community-building efforts of Muslims and Muslim rural institutions. Faced with a harsh natural environment and the dangers of the ever-present Luso-Arakanese pirates, and a distant and uninvolved proprietary class, the community bonding offered by Islam must have been very appealing. Thus, in southeastern Bengal the emergence of Islam as a community-identity accelerated from the seventeenth century. In Arakan, however, other means of forging collective action and protection such as patron-client ties with the more involved rural gentry were available well into the nineteenth century.[719] Although Theravada Buddhist influence in rural Arakan had been growing, again especially from the seventeenth century, it does not seem to have acquired the same sense of 'community' that it began to have for rural Arakanese villages in the nineteenth century.

Certainly, we can find evidence for the Arakan Littoral that rural Arakanese

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[719]This view is echoed in Gyan Pandey's discussion of the construction of communalism in northern India. Pandey stresses that prior to the mid-nineteenth century, northern Indians had a variety of social institutions through which they could achieve goals which required collective action: caste, the village, and so on. Religion was not, according to Pandey, an important means for collective action until relatively late in Indian history. Pandey, Construction of Communalism, 199.

worked and bonded not through religious identities, but rather through patron-client ties right up to the end of the eighteenth century, at least. This can be illustrated by a glance at Francis Buchanan's description of the chief and retinue of one village in the northern Arakan Littoral then under Mughal control, but the chief in question was descended from one of the Arakanese royal court's vassals when that court was at its height. As Buchanan describes the Buddhist patron and his clients, using the vocabulary of fixed relationships that were likely more fluid than they appear:

> He has about twenty Hindoo Servants, and still more Mohammedans, his Dewan or Minister being of that Religion. The Domestic who takes care of his table is a Rajbunjee. . . Besides his numerous family, he has a great number of Ma-ra-ma [a Buddhist, Burmese-speaking people, claiming affinity to the Burmans] slaves, that is, persons of the tribe who incur Debt to go to him, and say, if you will discharge my Debt, I will become your slave.[720]

As I explained in Chapter 10, these kinds of relationships, a religiously and heterogeneously diverse group of clients organized around a rural gentry patron, evaporated over the course of the nineteenth century. Religious identity, and thus differences between religious identities, became more conscious. When religious consciousness was articulated in the process of organizing villagers for cooperative efforts, religious identity and community became intertwined.

I thus suggest that the patterns of religious change and the emergence of religious communalism in the Arakan Littoral fit general patterns that connect Arakan with Bengal. As I have suggested earlier, these patterns may also be true of other areas of Southeast Asia. Further research is necessary, however, before this assumption can be tested with

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[720]Buchanan, Francis Buchanan in Southeast Bengal, 89.

any degree of reliability.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX I

INDIGENOUS PERSPECTIVES: A CASE FOR THE ARAKANESE CHRONICLES

The historiography of religious change and identity in the Arakan Littoral goes

back to at least the early seventeenth century and likely earlier, depending upon whether

or not one accepts the Maha-zeiya-thein texts as actual late sixteenth and early

seventeenth century accounts.[721] Earlier sources do exist, but it is only in the *razawins*

and a few Catholic accounts that an attempt was made to delineate and temporalize

religious change in the Arakan Littoral. The *razawins* are often maligned, however,

because of their integration of somewhat mythological popular oral traditions, their

mistakes in dating particular events, and a range of other shortcomings.[722] These

criticisms are generally valid to a degree, but they have sometimes been overemphasized

in a perhaps unconscious attempt to judge early literature according to their applicability

to recent goals, thus taking them out of the context in which they were written, and in

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[721]These are two of the composite texts of "Rakhine Min Raza-kri Arei-taw Sadan." Although the Maha-zeiya-thein texts are dated 1582 and 1605, respectfully, we have only a copy of the copy read by the court reader Sanda-wimala in 1775.

[722]The more recent contributions to this critical literature include Aung-Thwin, Myth & History in the Historiography of Early Burma; and U Hla Pe, Burma: Literature, Historiography, Scholarship, Language, Life, and Buddhism (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1985), 55-56. for a conditional acceptance of the chronicles, suggesting that the chronicles become more accurate as the material presented approaches the razawin-writers own time, see Victor B. Lieberman, "How Reliable is U Kala's Burmese Chronicle? Some New Comparisons," Journal of Southeast Asian Studies 17 (1986): 236-55. The literature on the inadequacies of the chronicles *vis-a-vis* inscriptions is of course quite old and extensive having an apotheosis in the writings of the great epigraphist, G. H. Luce. For an interesting view, however, supporting the chronicles, see Maung Htin Aung, A History of Burma (New York: Columbia University Press, 1967), 343-344, 346-347f; and idem, Burmese History Before 1287: A Defense of the Chronicles (London: Asoka Society, 1970). For a defense of Luce and the inscriptions in response to Maung Htin Aung, see Pe, Burma, 47-8.

which they should be read.[723] Further, the early inscriptions are hardly a reliable "litmus test" for accuracy, especially for earlier periods when inscriptions are supposed to be especially useful, as many inscriptions were rewritten in the late eighteenth century, if not earlier, changing both the content and the character of the information provided according to later concerns and realities.[724] We may never know how much information was discarded in such episodes of epigraphic canonization.

All *razawins* are not, and were not meant to be, however, 'histories' in the sense that this term carries today.[725] Many *razawins* were instead intended to convey lessons and meanings to guide rulers.[726] In doing so, the authors of the *razawins* used much literary license with their portrayal of events and the role of 'historical actors' in them to stress what was important in indigenous society. Influenced by an Indian tradition from which this style of literature was derived, based as it was in a cyclical view of time and

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[723]Michael Aung-Thwin, "The Myth of the 'Three Shan Brothers' and the Ava Period in Burmese History," Journal of Asian Studies 55 (1996): 883-898.

[724]As the royal order of 22 August 1785 records, some inscriptions would be replaced with new ones bearing new material such as the hailing of the king as the "ရခိုင်မဟာမုနိဘုရား:စသည်များ: လှဋ္ဌာသောစေတီများ:လှဋ္ဌာသောကျောင်း:တော်ဒါယကာလည်:ဖြစ်တော်မူ၏ ၊," reflecting the fact that the king that same year had brought the Mahamuni image to Burma after the 1784-5 conquest of Arakan by the Burmese. See Royal Order, 22 August 1785, in Tun, Royal Orders, 4:474. Luce also suggests that we should reject the so-called 'copies.' See Luce, Phases of Pre-Pagán Burma, 1:37.

[725]U Hla Pe has a more limited definition of *razawin*, as the recording of facts and events surrounding the kings of Burma. As he explains: "The term ["ya-zawin"], an adaptation from Pali rajavamsa, means 'lineage of the king.' It deals mainly with the king: his birth, princehood, accession to the throne, his queens and children, the incidents and events in which he is involved, his works of merit and finally, his loss of power or his death. This rhythm is sometimes punctuated by the founding of a royal city, and the division into periods is by dynasties." Pe, Burma, 35.

[726]Ibid., 38, 54.

nature, *razawin* writers believed that the values and lessons of their time were just as present in the past as they were in their time. It is not surprising, then, that accounts of thirteenth and fourteenth century events in Arakan are strangely similar to specific episodes of Arakanese history which can be verified with sixteenth and seventeenth century European sources.[727] Such similarities were not coincidental or even accidental, but rather legitimized a world-view which stressed the intersection of linearity and cycles or, rather, Aung-Thwin's "spirals."[728]

While this aspect of the *razawins* makes them difficult to use in constructing a completely factual historical narrative, if such a narrative is ever possible for any period or for any place, it also makes the *razawins* more useful for our purposes here. Subrahmanyam has approached sources similar to the *razawins*, for example, as a window into the minds of indigenous actors in historical events that are too often primarily or exclusively framed by European source material. As Subrahmanyam explains, defending the use indigenous literature such as a Malay account of the Portuguese at Melaka written perhaps a century and a half after the events it describes:

> First, they often contain information of a sort wholly unavailable in contemporary Portuguese documentation: Leonard Blussé's analysis of the Yueh-chien pien shows, for example, that Chinese officialdom in the late sixteenth century included men who . . . had every desire to build contacts with foreigners, and that this influenced their policy decisions in respect of trade concessions. With the very best of will, the historian could never have arrived at this fact on the basis of Portuguese or Dutch sources . . . many . . . examples can be brought out to show

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[727]This phenomenon has also been noted for Ù Kalà's chronicle. See ibid., 56.

[728]Michael Aung-Thwin, "Spirals in Early Southeast Asian and Burmese History," Journal of Interdisciplinary History 21 (1991): 575-602.

how Asian sources often give us useful 'facts' where the European materials are silent. But going beyond this, there is also the issue of the perspective embodied in different texts, whether 'true' or 'false' in terms of their facts. In a recent defence of Fernão Mendes Pinto's writings, scholars have pointed out that even though he often presents information that is patently erroneous, he also presents a unique moral critique of Portuguese actions in Asia: his account hence cannot be ignored, or relegated to the dustbin of historiography.[729]

As examples of indigenous thinking in the late sixteenth to nineteenth centuries, the

Arakanese *razawins* and related texts are perhaps as close as we can get to evidence of

indigenous perspectives during this period. The chronicle account of the Mro-Vesali

synthesis, played out in a series of sexual episodes between the last Vesali queen and four

successive Mro chieftains, may not tell us much about what really happened in the tenth

century in the Danra-waddy zone, but it does tell us a great deal about early modern

Arakanese perspectives on cultural heterogeneity and change, the legitimation of kingship,

lowland-highland interaction, and a host of other topics for which we otherwise would

hear no indigenous voices.

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[729]Sanjay Subrahmanyam, The Portuguese Empire in Asia, 1500-1700: A Political and Economic History (London: Longman, 1993), 7.

APPENDIX II

NOTES ON THE EARLY MIGRANT PEOPLES OF THE ARAKAN LITTORAL

The Mro (ြ) people of today are generally settled in the Chittagong Hill Tracts

of southeastern Bangladesh. In the early twentieth century, those who considered

themselves to be Mros only numbered about fourteen thousand in the Akyab District,[730]

although substantially more Mros live in southeastern Bengal today.[731] There appears to

be some evidence to support the suggestion that the Mros migrated into the Arakan

Littoral from the Irra-waddy valley very early in the Vesali period, or they may have

preceded it.[732] There is some debate as to the origins of their language, but Luce's view

seems to be the most likely, suggesting that it is "an independent early Tibeto-Burman

language, grafted, it seems, on an early Tibeto-Burman stock." [733] Much of what we hear

of the Mros in the Arakanese chronicles relates chiefly for the Vesali period, when they

evidently moved down through the Danra-waddy zone and entered Vesali, intermixing

with Vesali's population. The chronicle accounts, for example, suggest that a Mro

migration into the lowlands from the upriver creeks brought about a Vesali-Mro cultural

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[730]Luce, Phases of Pre-Pagán Burma, 1:90.

[731]They numbered approximately 22,000 by 1981. See Willem van Schendel, "The Invention of the 'Jumma': State Formation and Ethnicity in Southeastern Bengal," Modern Asian Studies 26 (1992): 95, note 1.

[732]Gutman, "Ancient Arakan," 10; and Luce, Phases of Pre-Pagán Burma, 1:92.

[733]Ibid., 1:94.

synthesis.[734] Daw Thin Kyi has suggested that the population of Vesali itself was Mro

and Sak, but I cannot determine the source of her assertion. Perhaps she is referring to the

cultural synthesis I have suggested above.[735] Although Ủ Kala included the Mros in his

understanding of the western vassals of the kingdom of Pagan, who broke away from

Pagan's political orbit in the late thirteenth century,[736] this by itself is not reliable. Nor

should we accept, I think, Luce's speculation that the references to the Mron in the

Burman inscription of 1442, refer in actuality to the Mros. Luce suggests that because the

inscription of 1442 referred to the Mron and not to the Mro, that it must have meant the

Mro.[737] Had Luce examined the Arakanese chronicles, however, he would have known

that the Arakanese sources distinguish the Mro from the Mron, and that the Mron in this

case actually refers to a people by that name in the northern Arakan Littoral who are still

there today. The Mros have traditionally been associated with the Mi River, but lived

along other streams further to the south as well.[738] The Mros are not, and were not,

however, wet-rice agriculturalists, practicing swiddening instead.[739]

Another people, the Sak (Burmese သက် or Thet), whom Luce suggests were and

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[734]Sithugammani-thinkyan, "Rakhine Razawin," 16b.

[735]For Daw Thin Kyi's conjecture see Kyi, "Arakanese Capitals," 5.

[736]Kalà, Maha-ya-zawin-kyi, 1:307.

[737]Luce, Phases of Pre-Pagán Burma, 1:94-5.

[738]Burma Gazetteer: Northern Arakan District, 11.

[739]Gutman, Ancient Arakan, 10; and Luce, Phases of Pre-Pagán Burma, 1:95.

are Tibeto-Burman speakers,[740] once occupied much of northern and central Burma in the

pre-Pagan era in Burma, although small groups remain spread around in isolated areas.[741]

Place-names and titles of ministers in early Pagan suggest that some sort of conflict

between the Sak and the Burmans may have occurred.[742] It has been suggested that some

of the Sak may have migrated into the Arakan Littoral in the tenth century, perhaps after

earlier migrations into Danra-waddy (Gutman conjectures that these may have occurred in

the sixth or seventh centuries).[743] Inscriptions suggest that some Sak, however, may

have remained on the Irra-waddy, south of Pagan, at least as late as the early twelfth

century.[744] Burman chronicles tell us that the Sak were located in the Arakan Littoral by

the late thirteenth century at the latest,[745] which corresponds to the Arakanese chronicle

account of large numbers of Sak being captured and resettled in the Arakan Littoral as the

result of Arakanese raiding to the west of the Irra-waddy in the 1260s. Such a view may

have some credibility, as a Burman inscription of 1442 lists the Sak as one of the peoples

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[740]Ibid., 1:43.

[741]Ibid., 1:39; and Gutman, "Ancient Arakan," 12, 14.

[742]Luce, Phases of Pre-Pagán Burma, 1:40; Ù Kalà has provided a legendary account of the Sak in his chronicle, which suggests that after the division of the Irra-waddy valley peoples, into Kan-rans, Pyus, and Mranmas, the Pyus themselves went to war amongst themselves and split into another three divisions, one being that of the Sak. Ù Kalà, Maha-ya-zawin-kyì, 1:134.

[743]Gutman, "Ancient Arakan," 15.

[744]Luce, Phases of Pre-Pagán Burma, 1:39.

[745]Ù Kalà implies that the Sak had settled in the Arakan Littoral by the thirteenth century and during this time were vassals of Pagan, but refused to send tribute and broke out of Pagan's political orbit in the late thirteenth century. Kalà, Maha-ya-zawin-kyì, 1:307.

overlorded by the Arakanese king during the days of the Pagan kings.[746] In any event, most of the forebears of the Sak apparently have been absorbed by neighboring populations or have migrated out of the Danra-waddy plains altogether.[747] During the early modern period, the Sak moved northwestward, but still within the Danra-waddy central zone. Their number today, for example, is roughly two thousand in Southeastern Bengal.[748]

In the mid-nineteenth century, the Lin-ke (လင်္ကဲ) still lived on the upper reaches of the Kalà-dàn River, primarily along its western bank.[749] In the 1830s, the Lin-ke still raided other tribes for captives.[750] In response to lowland retaliatory expeditions, this time under the British, the Lin-ke abandoned their villages and fled further northward into the Chittagong District. The Lin-ke of this period worshipped four *nat* spirits. The Lin-ke also practiced swidden-agriculture. Economically, besides slave-raiding, the Lin-ke depended upon iron and salt from neighboring tribes, selling their slaves to some of them

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[746]Luce, Phases of Pre-Pagán Burma, 1:94.

[747]Harvey even suggested that the Sak were actually the Chins. See Harvey, History of Burma, 3.

[748]Some scholars, however, have connected them with the Chakmas, which would make their numbers appreciably larger. By 1981, for example, Southeastern Bengal was home to 2,000 Theks, and 260,000 Chakmas, amongst other groups. See Schendel, "Invention of the 'Jumma'," 95, note 1.

[749]Phayre, "Account of Arakan," 706-707.

[750]See reference to such an attack in October, 1838 in ibid., 708.

as well.[751]

Another people, the Kan-ran (ကန်ရံ, modern Burmese ကမ်းဎ), present an enormous difficulty for the study of early Arakan. Much of this difficulty stems from the fact that the Kan-ran *per se* are no longer extant under that name and that the chronicle accounts imply that the Kan-ran were associated closely with the Arakanese.[752] Harvey took this literally and suggests that the Kan-ran may have actually been the Arakanese.[753] But this view, however, assumes that the Arakanese, under different names at different times, were a single people. This is likely incorrect, although it would not be out of place to suggest that perhaps the Kan-ran contributed to the population who eventually became known as the Arakanese. Further, we have no evidence beyond the references in the chronicles to make any meaningful suggestions.

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[751]Ibid., 708, 709.

[752]U Kalà tells us that the Kan-rans and the Pyus were at war with each other in very early times, and the Kan-rans fled. We also have what I believe is clearly an interpolation into an extent legend either before it reached Ù Kalà, or included by him in his codification of Burman chronicles and histories, which describes the Kan-rans as people of the Kunit-khayine. At a later point, the Kan-rans were associated with the vicinity north of Srikshetra (later, Prome), in the Irra-waddy valley. Here, they were said to have emerged from the same group as that from which the Pyus and the Mranmas sprang. Thereupon, Ù Kalà continues, the Pyus and the Kan-rans went to war with each other again and the Kan-rans lost, fleeing, but returned to ruin the Pyus shortly afterwards. Kalà, Maha-ya-zawin-kyi, 1:115, 134.

[753]See Harvey, History of Burma, 3.

APPENDIX III

AN EXAMPLE OF AN ELITE LINEAGE IN THE MRAUK-U COURT

The following list comes from the records of an elite family whose members

maintained a very long tenure over the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries over the *ko-ran-kri* court minister-ship.[754]

Title	Family Relationship	Court Post	Appanages
(1) Widora	----	'Great minister' to King Thuriya-dipati	
(2) Zeiya-batta	son of (1)	*ko-ran-kri*	
(3) Wimala	son of (2)	*ko-ran-kri*	
(4) Dhamma-thauka	son of (3)	*ko-ran-kri*	
(5) Maha-pyinnya-kyaw	younger brother of (4)	*ko-ran-kri*	Chittagong
(6) Kinnyo/Maha-zeiya-theinka/ binnya-wuntha	son of (5)	*ko-ran-kri*	Chittagong
(7) Pra-thata	son of (6)	*ko-ran-kri*	
(8) Zeiya-thaddayei- tha-kyaw-htin	son of (7)	*ko-ran-kri*	
(9) Maha-that	son of (8)	*ko-ran-kri*	
(10) ?	brother-in-law of (9)	*Atwin-daw- shwei-daik-hmu*	Mro-thet
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(final) Razaka-thinkyan	descendant	*ko-ran-kri*	

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[754]"Rakhine Min Raza-kri Arei-taw Sadan," 40a-40b.

APPENDIX IV

LIST OF LAUN-KRET KINGS[755]

Arakanese Kings			Pagan Familiars	
Regnal title	Pre-/Post-regnal title	Regnal dates	Regnal title	Reign dates
1. Alau-ma-pru		(1237-1243)	-	-
2. Raza-thu-kri		(1243-1246)	-	-
3. Saw-lu		(1246-1260)	Saw-lu	(1077-1084)
4. Uzzana-kri (or Saw-mun-kri)		(1260-1268)	Uzzana I	(1250-1254)
5. ?	Nan-kra-kri	(1268-1272)	-	-
6. Min-bilu		(1272-1276)	-	-
7. ?	Si-thabin	(1276-1279)	-	-
8. Min-hti		(1279-1385)[756]	Hti-lo-min-lo	(1210-1234)
9. Uzzana-nge		(1385-1387)	Uzzana II	(1325-1369)
10. Thi-warat		(1387-1390)	-	-
11. Thin-hse		(1390-1395)	-	-
12. Min-raza-thu		(1395-1401)	-	-
13. Theinka		(1401-1404)	Theinka	(726-734)
			Nara-Theinka	(1170-1173)
14. Saw-mun		(1404-1433)	Saw-lu	(1077-1084)
			Saw-hnit	(1298-1325)

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[755]For Arakanese kings, I have relied upon Mi, "Rakhine Razawin." For Pagan kings, I have relied upon Harvey, History of Burma, 371.

[756]The lengthy reign of this ruler is somewhat of a mystery. Further research is needed before we understand which kings actually ruled during this period.

APPENDIX V

AN ESTIMATE OF DANRA-WADDY'S POPULATION BASE IN THE EARLY

SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

I attempt here to arrive at a rough estimate, or rather a ceiling, for the likely population range of Danra-waddy during the seventeenth century. Our most reliable figures begin with the British survey of 1842. According to this survey, the population of the province of Arakan (roughly the same territory as that of the four classical zones—Danra-waddy, Rama-waddy, Dwara-waddy, and Mekha-waddy combined) amounted to about 250,000: 136,000 in Danra-waddy and 121,000 in the remainder of the province.[757] In 1828, Paton estimated that there were about 100,000 people in the province of Arakan, but I am fairly certain that he was referring only to Danra-waddy, which was then considered to be Arakan proper.[758] Further, the rate of increase from 100,000 in 1828 to 121,000 fourteen years later in 1842, does not seem unreasonable. So I suggest that the 100,000 figure is acceptable as a rough estimate of the population of Danra-waddy at the beginning of British rule.

This general figure must be considered alongside the depopulation of Danra-waddy which occurred during the initiation of Burman rule. According to Burman sources,

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[757]These figures were provided in Comstock, "Notes on Arakan," 249.

[758]It is referred to as Rakhine-Danra-waddy in Maun Kòn-baun-zet, 2:9.

the Burmans deported about thirty thousand Arakanese.[759] We must also add perhaps thirty-five to forty thousand Arakanese who migrated into Bengal after Burman taxes became excessive in the late 1790s.[760] Whether or not the Arakanese who were deported, killed, or emigrated came from Danra-waddy or Arakan as a whole is not known, but the overwhelming majority likely came from Danra-waddy, which of course was home to the royal capital. If we accept the high end of these estimates, Danra-waddy probably had a population of about 170,000 or so in 1784.[761]

Also consider that numerous factors may have neutralized the effect of natural increase upon Danra-waddy's population. It is likely that, over the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, natural population increase was balanced out to a considerable degree by the effects upon the adult population of warfare, disease, drought, and migration. Even if these factors did not have this effect, the rate of increase could not have been very high. A high birthrate, for example, would have been considerably leveled by a high rate of infant mortality. Further, we have no signs from the early seventeenth century that Danra-waddy's population, outside the royal city, was very high.[762] If we consider the

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[759]Maun Kòn-baun-zet, 2:9; there were unlikely rumors of the Burmans putting forty thousand Arakanese to death on the first day of their occupation. Buchanan, Francis Buchanan in Southeast Bengal, 82. I think these actually refer to the deportees.

[760]"Chronicle for March 1800," 161.

[761]Certainly natural increase, however, would have raised the population level from 1784 to 1828, hence reducing the 1828 component to this estimate.

[762]Although one European observer provided the likely vastly exaggerated figure of 160,000 for the population of the royal city. Manrique, Itinerário, 1:192. This was not based on statistics, however, being only an estimate he or his associates made.

figure for the number of people in Danra-waddy in 1784, it can probably be accepted as a likely ceiling for an estimate of Danra-waddy's indigenous population in the early seventeenth century. I doubt if it could have exceeded this mark, especially since the 1784 estimate includes that element of the population contributed by the Bengali deportees. Thus, I suggest that the ceiling for Danra-waddy's population in the early seventeenth century was at most about 170,000.

APPENDIX VI

DUTCH SLAVE SHIPMENTS FROM ARAKAN[763]

Date	Via Ship	Male	Female	Undisclosed	Total
1623	-	-	-		less than 100
1624-5	-	-	-		544
1626 (March) *Arent*		-	-		35
1633	2 ships	-	-		possibly 300
1635	-	-	-		290
1636 (March) *Bommel*		-	-		210
1637 (February) *Oostcapelle*		61	18	2	81
1637 (February) *Otter*		70	37	13	120
1637 (March) *Godt loff*		-	-		80
1637 (January)*Wessanen*		-	-		15
1641 (January)*Cabo de Rama Punto Gale*		-	-		160
1641 (March) *Oudewater*		-	-		170
1642	-	133	92		225
1642 (May) *Gracht*		-	-		141

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[763]Sources used for this table are Subrahmanyam, "Slaves and Tyrants in Mrauk-U," 213-253; Hall, "Studies in Dutch Relations With Arakan," 1-31; and Raben, Batavia and Columbo, 120.

1642 (May)	*Neptune*	-	-	325
1643 (March)	-	—	—	200
1643 (October)	-	317	283	600
1645 (February)	*Snoeck*	-	-	145
1647	-	-	-	1,046
1653 (April)	*Os*	-	-	68
1657	*Trouwe*	-	-	163
1661 (March)	*Hasselt*	185	15	200
1661 (March)	*Hollandse Remedie*	-	-	146
1663 (January)	*Arnemuyden*	-	-	255
1663 (March)	*Enckhuyszen*	-	-	49
1664 (April)	*Hasselt*	-	-	150
1665	*Cattenburg* *Mees* *Enckhoorn*	-	-	180
1665	*Bleijswijck*	-	-	66

APPENDIX VII

CHRONOLOGY OF ARAKANESE HISTORY[764]

788-957	High period of the town and culture of Vesali
800s-900s	Approximate time of important migrations of some peoples into the Arakan Littoral from the Irra-waddy Valley
957-1270	Period of political decentralization in the Arakan Littoral
1270-1406	Laun-kret period in Arakanese history
1404-1406	Nara-meik-hla's reign as the last of the Laun-kret kings
1406-1430	The Burmese and Mons compete for control over the Arakan Littoral fostering chaos throughout Arakan and prompting the flight of the last Laun-kret king, Nara-meik-hla, to Bengal.
1430-1603	Early Mrauk-U period
1430	Nara-meik-hla returns from Bengal and reestablishes his rule in central Danra-waddy
1433	Nara-meik-hla's new royal capital, Mrauk-U, is completed
1437	Mrauk-U brings town of San-twei under control
1514	Mrauk-U briefly taken by the Sak
1531-1553	Reign of Min-ba-kri marks the beginning of a "golden age" in the early Mrauk-U period
1532	Mrauk-U campaign into Banga
1534	Portuguese raid on Mrauk-U repulsed

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[764]Based upon lists provided by Harvey, History of Burma, 371-372 and the Arakanese chronicles. For a list of the Mrauk-U kings, see Appendix VIII.

1545, 1546   Tabin-shwei-hti invades the Arakan Littoral

1571-1593   Reign of Min-palaun sees the integration of Chittagong and the northern Arakan Littoral into the Mrauk-U kingdom

1590   Sak revolt

1598-1607   The Arakan Wars consisting chiefly of Arakanese campaigns in Lower Burma

1598-9   The Arakanese, in cooperation with armies from Toungoo, besiege the First Toungoo capital at Pegu, in Lower Burma

1599   Arakanese fight the Thais for control of eastern Lower Burma

1601-1607   The Arakanese fight a losing battle against the Portuguese upstart, De Brito, who had been placed to guard the port of Syriam which the Arakanese had taken in Lower Burma.

1602   Min-raza-kri raids the Portuguese *bandel* at Chittagong

1603-1785   Late Mrauk-U period

1607   An Arakanese armada is destroyed off the Lower Burmese coast by De Brito's forces, ending any serious Arakanese military or political presence in Lower Burma

1609-1617   The Portuguese under Tibao establish a "pirate" kingdom on Sundiva Island which threatens the Arakanese port of Chittagong and Arakanese shipping in the Bay of Bengal

1611   Mrauk-U campaign against the Mughals

1612-1622   Reign of Min-kaun in Mrauk-U, rebuilds Arakanese kingdom

1615   Attempted Portuguese attack on Mrauk-U

1617   Min-kamaun destroys the Portuguese kingdom on Sundiva Island

1622-1638   Famous reign of King Thiri-thu-dhamma-raza

1625	Arakanese raid on Dacca
1626	Arakanese raid on Lower Burma
1638	Nga Kuthala assumes the throne at Mrauk-U
1652	Sanda-thu-dhamma-raza succeeds to the throne of Arakan
1660	Shah Shuja arrives in Arakan
1661	Shah Shuja's "rebellion"
1664	Rebellion in Mrauk-U
1665	The Mughals take Sundiva Island
1666	The Mughals take Chittagong
1685	Ukka-bala murdered
1693	Religious mission from Sri Lanka
1696	Subsequent religious mission from Sri Lanka
1710	Sanda-wizaya crowned in Mrauk-U
1719	Sanda-wizaya-raza invades Burma
1737	Gadra takes the throne
1744, 1745	Nara-abara-raza raids Lower Burma
1761	Great earthquake in Arakan
1764-1773	Reign of Abara-maha-raza, the last of the strong Arakanese kings
1784-5	The Burmans invade and take over the Arakan Littoral, ending indigenous rule in Arakan
1785	Maha-muni image moved to Mandalay

1787   Shin Kawi-thara composes "Rakhine Arei-taw-poun"

1824-1825   First Anglo-Burman War

1826   Arakan ceded to the British, end of Burman rule

APPENDIX VIII

THE MRAUK-U KINGS[765]

Title   Regnal Dates

A. Early Mrauk-U Kings

Title	Regnal Dates
Nara-meik-hla	1430-1434
Mîn-khari/Ali Khan	1434-1459
Ba-saw-pru/Kalimah-shah	1459-1482
Dau-lra	1482-1492
Bá-sau-nro	1492-1494
Ran-aun	1494
Sálin-ga-thu	1494-1501
Mîn-raza	1501-1523
Ká-zá-pa-ti	1523-1525
Mîn-sau	1525
Ka-tha-da	1525-1531
Mîn-ba-kri	1531-1553
Mîn-tek-hka	1553-1555
Mîn-sau	1555-1564
Sakra-wá-ti	1564-1571
Mîn-palaun	1571-1593
Mîn-raza-kri	1593-1612

B. Late Mrauk-U Kings

Title	Regnal Dates
Mîn-kamaun	1612-1622
Thiri-thu-dhamma-raza	1622-1638
Mîn-sánei	1638
Narapati-kri (Nga Kuthala)	1638-1645
Thadò	1645-1652
Sanda-thu-dhamma-raza	1652-1674
Ukka-bala-raza	1684-1685
Wara-dhamma-raza	1685-1692
Mani-thu-dhamma-raza	1692-1694
Sanda-thuriya-dhamma-raza	1694-1696

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[765]Based upon lists provided by Harvey, History of Burma, 371-372 and the Arakanese chronicles.

Nawráta-zau	1696
Marop-piya	1696-1697
Kálá-mandap	1697-1698
Nara-di-pati	1698-1700
Sanda-wimala-raza	1700-1706
Sanda-thuriya	1706-1710
Sanda-wizaya	1710-1731
Sanda-thuriya	1731-1734
Nara-di-pati	1734-1735
Nara-pawara	1735-1737
Sanda-wizaya	1737
Gadra	1737
Mettarit	1737-1742
Nara-abara-raza	1742-1761
Thiri-thu	1761
Sanda-parama	1761-1764
Abara-maha-raza	1764-1773
Sanda-thumana	1773-1777
Sanda-tha-ditha	1777-1782
Thamada	1782-1785

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