

RACISM TO ROHINGYA IN BURMA

AYE CHAN'S "ENCLAVE" WITH "INFLUX VIRUSES" REVISITED (CHAPTER 3)

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"The Burmese military has clearly embarked on a policy of ridding the country of ethnic Rohingyas by any possible means. Official claims that the refugees are "illegal immigrants" - Asia Watch

An enclave is part of a country geographically separated from the main part by the surrounding foreign territory. A great deal of works has been done by the military's civilian collaborators on the province of Arakan (Rakhine province) claiming that there is the existence of an enclave in Burma. Most prominent of the authors is Aye Chan. Aye Chan, a native of Burma's Arakan (Rakhine) province, says there is an enclave in Arakan. (1) His work even outlines the common issues of dispute surrounding the Rohingyas with the Rakhines. This doesn't seem to be an ordinary enclave. This enclave is Aye Chan's portrayal of Burma's Rohingya people in the Mayu frontier of the Arakan state. Aye Chan identifies the Rohingyas as the non-natives of Burma who, he claims, illegally settled in this region of Burma's North-Western province. This paper is a detailed review of the claims.

It is important to understand the issues raised by Aye Chan, for; Aye Chan's article creates trepidation and suggests to the xenophobic Burmese the issues to consider dealing with the Rohingyas, along with a means to address them. Aye Chan's article is popular among xenophobic Burmese people as an intellectual work of excellence. It was also published in several other Burmese journals and is popular among anti-Rohingya ultranationalists.

A review of the work shows, it is a typical reflection of the contemporary state of Burmese scholarship on ethnic minorities. In addition to its Rakhine version of the Rohingya history, genocide readers will find it bearing the warning signs of the Rohingya people's on-going torment in Arakan. Aye Chan's present work is important to consider for its unique version of inter-racial relations of some significance that defy academic understanding of Rohingya history and culture. As we will see below, he has given a scholastic face to his xenophobic work. As part of a growing contemporary Arakanse popular literature, his goal here seems less erudite and more to demonize the Rohingyas to create fear among the Burmese people.

Who are the Rohingyas?

Rohingyas are an ethnic minority of Burma. Due to their racial differences with the Burmans, they were being officially declared by the military junta as the non-citizens of Burma, making them a stateless people. A closer look shows Rohingyas are a racially different non-Mongoloid Burmese people of multi-ethnic Arakan and Aye Chan's work is part of a literature intended to validate Burmese military's official claims that Rohingyas are "foreigners" in Burma.

In his article Aye Chan asks "Who are the Rohingyas?" and continues, "Burma gained independence from Great Britain in 1948 and this issue is a problem that Burma has had to grapple with since that time." (p. 15)

Contrary to his assertion, it is not just the Rohingya issue that has been a subject of debate in Burma since 1948; it is about Burma's ethnic minorities in general and about Burma's official definition of who is the native of Burma and who is not has been the issue of debate. To resolve this and the other similar issues, U Nu, the then elected Prime Minister of Burma recognized Rohingyas as one of the Burmese nationalities. U Nu also named the Rohingya majority

area in Burma's North-West as the Mayu Frontier. It is the military junta of Ne Win that usurped power later that began persecuting them and questioning the status of the Rohingyas.

The author says, "The people who call themselves Rohingyas are the Muslims of Mayu Frontier area, present-day Buthidaung and Maungdaw Townships of Arakan (Rakhine) State, an isolated province in the western part of the country across Naaf River as boundary from Bangladesh. (p. 15)

It is true that Rohingyas are concentrated in the Mayu Frontier. However, they also live in other parts of Arakan. (2) There is even a Rohingya para (village) in Akyab. It seems that at the outset of his article, Aye Chan with a void premise is beginning to isolate Rohingyas into an enclave.

The author states, "Arakan had been an independent kingdom before it was conquered by the Burmese in 1784. Rohingya historians have written many treatises in which they claim for themselves an indigenous status that is traceable within Arakan State for more than a thousand years. Although it is not accepted as a fact in academia, a few volumes purporting to be history but mainly composed of fictitious stories, myths and legends have been published formerly in Burma and later in the United States, Japan and Bangladesh. These, in turn, have filtered into the international media through international organizations, including reports to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (Ba Tha 1960: 33-36; Razzaq and Haque 1995: 15)." (p. 15)

Aye Chan identifies the above-mentioned sources as "treatises," "fictitious books" without detailing the content of the sources either in this article or elsewhere. It appears that his personal opinion is being passed on as simply an expert opinion. He says, "The present paper was written for distribution and discussion at a seminar in Japan. During the seminar, there was a debate between the author and professor Kei Nemoto concerning the existence of the Rohingya people in Rakhine (Arakan). Nemoto, in a paper written in Japanese, agreed with the Rohingya historians that the Rohingyas have lived in Rakhine since the eighth century A. D. The author contests the validity of these claims." (p. 15)

In the above, Aye Chan's stand on contesting the validity of Rohingya's origin in Arakan is clear. But the disconcerting thing is if his paper was written mainly to refute Kei Nemoto's arguments, as he claims, it becomes an academic responsibility for the latter to provide the bibliographical details of Kei Nemoto's paper. Here we are left with Aye Chan as a feisty boxer without the details of the match!

Disparaging Rohingya history

The author says, "In light of this, it is important to reexamine the ethnicity of the 'Rohingyas' and to trace their history back to the earliest presence of their ancestors in Arakan." (p. 15)

In the above, it is not clear "in the light of" what Aye Chan is trying to find the validity of the Rohingya's Burmese ethnicity? In other words, when he is questioning Rohingya's origin, the benchmark of his measurement is not clear. But he continues, "And history tells us that we do not have to go back very far. In the early 1950s that a few Bengali Muslim intellectuals of the northwestern part of Arakan began to use the term "Rohingya" to call themselves." (p. 15)

Aye Chan hesitates to go beyond 1950. One can legitimately question: why? Contrary to Aye Chan's claims, history tells us that the term Rohingya was there before 1950. From the time of Naromikhla (from 1430 when the latter was helped to regain his kingdom from the Burmese) there had been a great degree of contact between Arakan's Mrohaung city and Bengal. Francis Buchanan, a British historian, in 1799 even met people in Burma who identified themselves as Rohingyas. (3) Michael Charney says, "...Rohingya was an invention of the colonial period, is contradicted by the evidence." (4) Obviously, when Aye Chan says "...we don't have to go very far" and claims himself as a historian, denying historical evidence as the above, it is a tendency in history-writing called reductionism. It seems that his understanding of the Rohingya situation is clearly taken in its "face value."

It is important to note that Rohingyas developed from several origins of people mainly from Indo-semitic background. In Aye Chan's opinionated understanding he even neglected the Rohingya origin in the ancient Chandra rule of the "Indian Kulas." Chandra rule demonstrated in the Brahmi-derived Gupta and Debanagri script in Arakan's early history. It was during this time that Arab sailors came in contact with the local Dravidian dark skinned people forming the first nucleus of the Rohingya people. (5) In other words, this was the first wave of the typical Rohingya population formation in southern Arakan.

The other great wave of Rohingya formation was the Bengali and Persian settlements in Arakan through the reigns of Naramaikha's time beginning from 1430. We also see during the 16th and 17th century even a "massive deportations of Bengalis" from lower Bengal to Arakan caused in the increase in the "Kula" people. In this context Jacques Leider notes, "Muslim mercenaries, poets, traders, and officials were few in number when compared to the thousands of slaves established along the Kalander and Lambro Rivers." (6) Evidently, even if poets and officials were few; their influence in the Arakani administration was significant. It is no wonder that these were the times of Alaol and the other Rohingya poets, originating from Arakanese slaves, who were the pioneers of the present Rohingyalish language and its medieval literature.

It is true, "Michael W. Charney, Sanjay Subrahmanyam, Stephan van Galen, Ana Marques Guedes who have all made important contributions during the last fifteen years. Their studies have thrown much light on the economic life of the Mrauk U kingdom, the importance of the slave and rice trade, and the importance of Muslim and Portuguese mercenaries in Arakan. They have shown in particular that when we talk about the presence of Muslims in Arakan and the existence of an early Muslim community, we should not only recall a few poets and ministers at the court of Rakhine, but as well the massive deportations and settlements of Bengalis in Arakan before 1785." (7)

The number of these "Kalah" people settling in the valley of the greatest river of Arakan was so huge that the river "Kaladan", was named after the Kalah or the so-called foreigners. It seems from the 16th century this region became the land of the Rohingyas who originated from Bengali slaves. (8)

Surprisingly, the author, claiming himself a native historian contradicts with the above observations and says, "They [Rohingyas] were indeed the direct descendants of immigrants from the Chittagong District of East Bengal (present-day Bangladesh), who had migrated into Arakan after the province was ceded to British India under the terms of the Treaty of Yandabo, an event that concluded the First Anglo-Burmese War (1824-1826)." (p. 15)

In the above we see Chan's yardstick is that Rohingyas, as "foreigners" in Arakan, created for themselves an enclave within Burma. As foreigners, they are also the "Influx Viuses" needing to be exterminated. In detail, his hypothesis is that Rohingyas settled in Burma after 1824. Not surprisingly, this is also Burma's military government's stand on the Rohingyas. In trying to justify his point he used the qualifier, "indeed" ("They were indeed..."). Here the source of his information is missing when he used the word "indeed" to emphasize. Again, it appears that it is simply his opinion.

As expected, Aye Chan says, "Most of these migrants settled down in the Mayu Frontier Area, near what is now Burma's border with modern Bangladesh." (p.15) In the above when he says "most of these migrants settled down in the Mayu Frontier Area," he supposedly means that not all of Rohingyas are illegal immigrants. If we tentatively accept Aye Chan's argument, we can now argue, are there records of the families of "most of these migrants" to justify this claim? The answer is, of course not. It is a statement based on flimsy premise. A Rohingya from Kyawktaw says "I was born in the village: Ombadi Rwa, under Kyawktaw Township in Arakan State of Burma. My father's name is Rwasugri Hafizur Rahman. My paternal grand father's name is Zabar Mullock who was killed during the pogrom of 1942 in communal violence. My maternal grand father's name is Amiruzzaman. All their graves along with my other forefathers are lying in that village. They also know very well that it is quite impossible for any Bengali settler to settle in a remote and interior area like Kyawktaw and as such it is quite impossible to find out any Bengali settler among the 40-generation predecessors of the people of Kyawktaw which is at a distance of 4 days journey from Bangladesh."(9)

When Aye Chan asserts that Rohingyas are illegal immigrants, I believe Aye Chan here refers to their ancestors having supposedly settled after 1826. In making this type of statement the confusion Aye Chan created here is in his expression that Rohingyas are illegal settlers in Arakan. Contrary to Aye Chan's claim however, Rohingyas are Burmese-born citizens. We now know that based on this same principle of racial categorization, in 1982 the Burmese military government declared the Rohingyas as the non-citizens of Burma. In this allegation, Aye Chan's stand goes in favor of the military's 1982 Constitutional Act which denied Rohingyas's citizenship. It is now clear that the motivation behind Aye Chan's writing this article and the book "Influx Viruses" is to reinforce the military's position that Rohingyas are the noncitizens of Burma.

Again, to further prove his point Aye Chan calls the Rohingyas as "Chittagonians" because he says he finds it in the British colonial records. (p. 15) In this description, we see Aye Chan's double standard. He preferred to call his own community -- Rakhines, identified in the colonial record as "Mugh" meaning the "pirates in the Bay." On the contrary, for the Rohingyas, he found them as "Chittagonians" to justify them as "foreigners." In the colonial record, the term "Chittagonian" for Rohingyas had some colonial ambiguity for identifying them which will be discussed later. Aye Chan's choice for identification of the Rohingyas as being "Chittagonians" -- who are a racially different group from his own -- clearly reflects his ultra-nationalist Rakhine prejudices.

The term Rohingya was in common use centuries ago. But Chan says, "The creators of that term [Rohingya] might have been from the second or third generations of the Bengali immigrants from the Chittagong District in modern Bangladesh." (p. 16)

As opposed to Aye Chan's beliefs, we see Francis Buchanan records "Rohingya" as an ethnonym in 1799, as a dialect that "...is ... spoken by the Mohammedens, who have long settled in Arakan, and who call themselves Roaingia, or natives of Arakan." (10) Michael W. Charney says, "The derivation of Rohingya from Roaingia is very clear." (11) Buchanan's explanation that some Brahmin informants from Arakan called themselves as "Rosawan" and that the Rakhines called the Muslims and the Hindus as "Kulaw, Yakin, or stranger Yakin" prove the existence of the ethnonym predating British occupation of Arakan. (12)

Chan continues, "....however, this does not mean that there was no Muslim community in Arakan before the state was absorbed into British India. When King Min Saw Mon, the founder of Mrauk-U Dynasty (1430-1784) regained the throne with the military assistance of the Sultan of Bengal, after twenty-four years of exile in Bengal, his Bengali retainers were allowed to settle down in the outskirts of Mrauk-U, where they built the well-known Santikan mosque. These were the earliest Muslim settlers and their community in Arakan did not seem to be large in number." (p. 16)

We are puzzled with Chan's statement above! When Bengal army was sent twice; once through Wali Khan and later Sandikhan to help the Arakanese forces to liberate Arakan from Burmese occupation, Chan's wishful thinking took away the 30 thousand soldiers of Wali Khan and the 20 thousand of Sandikhan's army and their local wives and children who settled by the Kalandar River Valley. (13) Aye Chan's assertion is clearly tendentious, intended to intellectually belittling the Rohingyas history. It is no accident of history that based on a similar type of intolerant attitude, during the 1960s the more active Rakhine extremists to get rid of Rohingya history destroyed the historic Sandikhan mosque of Arakan!

Interestingly, the author acknowledges that, "In the middle of the seventeenth century the Muslim community grew because of the assignment of Bengali slaves in variety of the workforces in the country. The Portuguese and Arakanese raids of Benga (Bengal) for captives and loot became a conventional practice of the kingdom since the early sixteenth century. The Moghal historian Shiahabuddin Talish noted that only the Portuguese pirates sold their captives and that the Arakanese employed all of their prisoners in agriculture and other kinds of services (Talish 1907:422)." (p. 16) Chan, however, tries to belittle Muslim influence by saying, "Furthermore, there seem to have been a small group of Muslim gentry at the court. Some of them might have served the king as Bengali, Persian and Arabic scribes. Because the Mrauk-U kings, though of being Buddhist, adopted some Islamic fashions such as the maintaining of silver coins

that bore their Muslim titles in Persian and occasionally appearing in Muslim costumes in the style of the Sultan of Bengal. These were the earliest Muslim settlers and their community in Arakan did not seem to be large in number.” (p. 16)

It is mind-boggling to accept Aye Chan's assertion of the Rohingyas considering the fact that after the second arrival of the Bengal army when Arakan became a province of Bengal, it even began using Muslim coins, the kings used Muslim names and the king paid taxes to the Bengali king. Historically speaking, due to such a Bengali/ Persian and Arabic influence, from this point onward in Arakan we see the rise of two distinct people with two languages; Rakhine and the Rohingya. The Muslim gentry's use of Persian and Arabic in the court was the fore bearer of today's Rohingyalish language, and literature. Poet Alaol and others introduced this new trend in Rohingya literature. Arakan's Rohingyalish received both Rakhine and Bengali influences which ultimately made it different from Chittagonian dialect. Aye Chan seems oversimplified the complexities of Arakan history and says, “Rohingyas are Chittagonian” “illegal immigrants” and “influx viruses.”

Ignoring Important Facts about Burmese Invasion of Arakan

The present author in his work also ignores other important issues. He says “During the four decades of Burmese rule (1784-1824), because of ruthless oppression, many Arakanese fled to British Bengal. According to a record of British East India Company, there were about thirty-five thousand Arakanese who had fled to Chittagong district in British India to seek protection in 1799 (Asiatic Annual Register 1799: 61; Charney 1999: 265).” (p. 16)

While Aye Chan reports about the Rakhine exodus to Bengal due to the Burmese invasion of Arakan, he remained silent on the Rohingya exodus during the same event. He has excluded the Rohingyas as if Rohingyas were Budapaya's favorites and nothing happened to them. Whereas Puran, probably a Rohingya (as quoted by Buchanan), says, “... in one day soon after the conquest of Arakan the Burmans 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.” (14) Other Bengali sources report that refugees poured into Chittagong as far as up to the Sanga River in Chittagong. (15)

Chan, quoting Charney, says, “A considerable portion of Arakanese population was deported by Burmese conquerors to Central Burma. When the British occupied Arakan, the country was a scarcely populated area. Formerly high-yield paddy fields of the fertile Kaladan and Lemro River Valleys germinated nothing but wild plants for many years (Charney 1999: 279).”

In Aye Chan's co-authored book, *Influx Viruses*, says, “Many Rakhines, who took refuge in India, began to return to their homeland immediately after the annexation. Most of them began to settle in Sittwe, Kyaukpyu and Thandwe and some people managed to settle in their original native places.” (16) It is true the invasion created such a fear that a great number of people left Arakan. “The population at the time of British occupation in 1826 did not exceed 100,000. In 1831 it amounted to 173,000; in 1839 to 248,000, and in 1901 to 762,102.” (17) It appears that only a fraction of its population returned back to Arakan. What was the population of Arakan at the time of Burmese invasion? From the close contact that Arakan maintained with Bengal for over 3 centuries, it is reasonable to assume that at the time of invasion there could be equal number of Rohingyas and Rakhines in Arakan. This makes sense when we notice that Rohingyas are descended from the aboriginal Dravidian Kula stock, the Arab settlers from the 8th century, the Persian soldiers during the Naramaikhla's time and afterwards, and the massive Bengali slaves exported to Arakan that had culminated to a large “Kula” population in the Kaladan valley of Arakan. It seems clear that with the Rakhines, a large number of Rohingyas also migrated to Chittagong and mingled with the racially similar Chittagonian people.

It is unfortunate that neither the British colonial historians nor any modern Western-scholars of Arakan raised this important issue, causing the Aye Chan's type Rakhine speculation that the rise in the Rohingya population in Arakan was caused by Bengali settlements in Arakan. Bengali sources however, shows that during the genocidal Burmese campaign, a majority of the Arakanese population -- both Rakhine and Rohingya -- escaped from Arakan to Chittagong causing this 'depopulation' of Arakan. Therefore, this massive depopulation cannot be attributed solely to the Rakhine migration to Chittagong; it is also due to the Rohingyas leaving Arakan for a safer place in Chittagong. (18)

Referring to the Chittagong region, just prior to the Burmese invasion, Jacques Leider notes, "Arakan's territorial expansion in the late 16th century came at the price of a large buffer zone that was waste land: the region north of Chittagong up to the Feni River in the Noakhali River; that land was depopulated." (19) Prior to the Burmese invasion, this depopulation in Chittagong was caused by the "Mogh-Portuguese piracy" and Bengali slave trade making Chittagong a wasteland.

During the period of Burmese invasion, the terrified Rakhine and Rohingyas simply crossed the river Naaf and settled in the Chittagong region depopulated due to the Mogh piracy. In order to justify his notion that Rohingyas are foreigners, who had entered Arakan after 1826 as illegal immigrants, Aye Chan says, "... the British policy was to encourage the Bengali inhabitants from the adjacent areas to migrate into fertile valleys in Arakan as agriculturalists." (p. 17) Not surprisingly, Aye Chan notes Rakhine returnees after the British conquest of Arakan but ignores the Rohingyas, and blames the British for allowing return of the non-Mongoloid Rohingyas.

Aye Chan names the Rohingya returnees as the "Chittagonians." This, in spite the fact that, as a result of such a genocidal massacre by the Burmese king, just over four decades earlier, many Rakhines and Rohingyas had settled in the relatively peaceful and fertile southern Chittagong, which is topographically similar to Arakan. Seeing the law and order situation restored within a generation, under the British rule, some Rohingyas, like the Rakhines, out of nostalgia must have returned to their ancestral lands. Aye Chan finds it a problem! Aye Chan says about these migrants: "The migrations were mostly motivated by the search of professional opportunity. During the Burmese occupation there was a breakdown of the indigenous labor force both in size and structure." (p. 17). This 'breakdown' of the labor force can be explained by the fact that Rohingya (generally agriculturists) had left Arakan to settle in Chittagong. Aye Chan identified these returnees as "Chittagonians."

Aye Chan states "At first most of them came to Arakan as seasonal agricultural laborers and went home after the harvest was done." (p. 17) understandably, the oppression by the Burmese rule was so fearsome that some Rohingyas must have returned only as seasonal workers considering the fact that Arakan was still in anarchy and Rohingyas had termed it as a (Mogher Mulluk) lawless society. (20)

There is no doubt that as news of the restoration of law and order spread, many Rohingyas must have gone back to reclaim their ancestral homes. Ignoring this vital information, Aye Chan finds the Rohingyas as "Chittagonians" and bulged the Rohingyas with Indian migrants who migrated to Rangoon in Burma during the British period. Aye Chan says, "... hunger for land was the prime motive for the migration of most of the Chittagonians. The British judicial records tell us of an increase in the first decade of the twentieth century in lawsuits of litigation for the possession of land." (p. 17)

In his attempt to prove Rohingyas as being niggling people, Chan cites the number of litigation as an example. However, seen from another angle, it explains the huge volume of the Rohingya population that left Arakan during the invasion and now as the returnees to Arakan had to go to court to reclaim their property that were already occupied by the Rakhines and other aliens from Burma. In accounting the returnees, the impact of the Burmese invasion and its result in the rise of Arakanese Rohingya population in Chittagong, Aye Chan has neglected the Bengali sources that recorded the accounts of migration to southern Chittagong, When dealing with this key issue, his neglect of the contextual approach created a void in his work and retarded his entire line of arguments.

Aye Chan fails to use cross-cultural references and cross checking of data to verify the records in its totality. These make his research incomplete. It appears that the contradictions in his claims are clouded by his willful omission of the Rohingya side of the story. Aye Chan's most striking omission is that while he remains critical of the Rohingyas, he remains silent about the Burman colonial settlement in Arakan during the same period, which shows his racial favoritism to the Burmese settlers but remains xenophobic in accounting the Rohingyas issues.

Aye Chan also ignored few other details. His main concern was the increase in the Rohingya population during the British period. Other than Rakhine and the Rohingya returnees, the increase in Muslim population could be attributed to the fact that Rohingyas living in agricultural societies had practiced polygamous marriages that must have led to an increase in the child birth which was not the case with the Rakhines.

In proving his hypothesis, Aye Chan often displayed other contradictions. He himself mentioned that the British census included Arakanese Muslims in some accounts as "Indians" and in some other accounts as "Chittagonians." It is an irony that Aye Chan used such faulty categorizations of the 18th century to identify Arakanese people of our modern times by race and religion to determine their native status and their citizenship rights. In all this, Aye Chan's misadventure seems to be that, he is as trying to find a pin (the illegal Rohingya) in a haystack.

Aye Chan's Religious Xenophobia

To create a victim's complex among the Rakhines, Aye Chan now eulogizes the alleged discriminatory policy by the British. He says, "...British administration to a certain extent gave the Muslim village communities religious and cultural autonomy. How the new comers from the Chittagong District set up their village communities in the frontier area. They occupied the villages deserted by the Arakanese during the Burmese rule and established purely Muslim village communities." (p. 19) What is surprising is that Aye Chan didn't want to understand that there could be the displaced Muslim villagers who had returned back and obviously on their return they were not going to build pagodas in their villages. It is a simple truth that Christians would build church, Buddhists pagodas, and Muslims mosques in their localities. Aye Chan didn't clarify how making mosques can make the Muslims "purely Muslim communities."

1942 Japanese Occupation of Arakan and the Birth of Rohingya Tragedy

If the Burmese invasion of Arakan in 1784 and the subsequent British colonial occupation from 1826 were not enough to create misunderstanding among Arakanese people, the 1942 Japanese occupation and the race riot was the last straw to break the camel's back. It led to the birth of Rohingya tragedy. Aye Chan relates, "The Japanese air force attacked Akyab on 23 March 1942 and the British moved their administrative headquarter to India on March 30. The administration by martial law began in Akyab District on 13 April 1942 and with this racial tension burst to the surface, giving way to the public disorder (Owen 1946: 26)." (p. 22) He continues, "Regarding the beginning of the ethnic violence in Arakan, Moshe Yegar wrote that when the British administration was withdrawn to India in 1942 the Arakanese hoodlums began to attack the Muslim villages in southern Arakan and the Muslims fled to the north where they took vengeance on the Arakanese in Buthidaung and Maungdaw townships (Yegar 1972:67).

However, an Arakanese record says: When the British administration collapsed by the Japanese occupation, the village headman of Rak-chaung village in Myebon Township and his two younger brothers were killed by the kula (Muslim) villagers. Although the headman was an Arakanese, some of the villagers were kulas. The two Arakanese young men, Thein Gyaw Aung and Kyaw Ya, organized a group and attacked the kula villages and some inhabitants were killed (Rakhine State People's Council 1986:36)." (p. 21)

In the above Aye Chan quotes the notorious Rakhine State People's Council as a biased source that identifies the Rohingyas as the Kulas. Aye Chan continues, "It is certain that hundreds of Muslim inhabitants of Southern Arakan fled northward, and that there were some cases of robbing the Indian refugees on the Padaung-Taungup pass over the Arakan Yoma mountain ranges after the retreat of the British from the Pegu Division and southern Arakan." (p. 22)

If the above version is true, Aye Chan's original hypothesis that Rohingyas are Chittagonian Bengalis has been contradicted by his own description. The displaced Rohingyas in the north seem to be not from Chittagong, but from southern Arakan. Reporting the impact of the 1942 events, Aye Chan relates, "But the news of killing, robbery and rape was exaggerated when it reached Burma India border (Ba Maw 1968: 78). The British left all these areas to the mercy of both Burmese and Arakanese dacoits." (p. 22)

Surprisingly, when Rakhines commit genocide, to Aye Chan, they are only dacoits, not the Fascists. The fact of the matter is that genocide was committed by the ultra-nationalist Arakanese army with its local followers who were "the leaders of ANC (Arakan National Congress), formed in 1939 ... that ... formed a de-facto government, before the Japanese troops and Burma Independence Army (BIA) reached there." (p.21)

Throughout his essay, Aye Chan shows that Rakhines were the main victims. The question to Aye Chan is: how is this possible when the British withdrew from Arakan and the Rakhine leaders were in charge of Arakan under the Japanese Fascist army? Contrary to this, we see, the Fascist Rakhine leaders were busy inciting their followers. Yes, as evident in Germany and in former Yugoslavia, the 1942 is a single event that displaced Rohingyas from the South to the northern Arakan, in the Mayu Frontier, which Aye Chan erroneously calls the "illegal enclave."

Aye Chan says, "The events during the war contributed the Chittagonians' fervent sense of alienation from the heterogeneous community of the Arakan. Anthony Irwin called the whole area a 'No Man's Land' during the three years of Japanese occupation (Irwin 1946:27). Irwin elucidates how the ethnic violence divided the Arakan State between Arakanese and Chittagonians: "As the area then occupied by us was almost entirely Mussulman Country... (from) that we drew most of our "Scouts" and Agents. The Arakan before the war had been occupied over its entire length by both Mussulman and Maugh (Arakanese). Then in 1941 the two sects set to and fought. The result of this war was roughly that the Maugh took over the southern half of the country and the Mussulman the North. (Irwin 1946: 86)." (P.23)

Xenophobia

Burmese traditional culture enshrined by the military and its collaborators are characterized by xenophobia. Typically, Aye Chan relates the Muslim community of Arakan. "The village committee authorized by the Village Amendment Act of 1924 paved the way for the Imam (moulovi) and the trusteeship committee members of the village mosque to be elected to the village council. They were also allowed to act as the village magistrates and shariah was somewhat in effect in the Muslim villages (Charter 1938:34-38). At least the Islamic court of village had the jurisdiction over familial problems such as marriage, inheritance and divorce. There was no internal sense of unrighteousness and presence of nonbelievers in their community, and accordingly they believe no internecine struggle was for the time being necessary. However, the ethnic violence between Arakanese Buddhists and those Muslim Chittagonians brought a great deal of bloodshed to Arakan during the World War II and after 1948, in the opening decade of independent Burma. Some people of the Mayu Frontier in their early seventies and eighties have still not forgotten the atrocities they suffered in 1942 and 1943 during the short period of anarchy between the British evacuation and the Japanese occupation of the area." (p.20)

While Aye Chan recognizes the 1942 massacre, he doesn't recognize its victims being the Rohingyas. Contrary to Aye Chan's, some conservative estimates put the figure of Rohingya death over 40 thousand. (21) Aye Chan's argument shows him as an anti-Rohingya collaborator of the military government policy and its xenophobic interpretation of history. In Aye Chan's demonstration of events, casual readers of 1942 event might confuse scholarship with propaganda.

Stretching Imagination

"One

of the underlying causes of the communal violence was the Zamindari System brought by the British from Bengal. By this system the British administrators granted the Bengali landowners thousands of acres of arable land on ninety-

year-leases. The Arakanese peasants who fled the Burmese rule and came home after British annexation were deprived of the land that they formerly owned through inheritance.” Aye Chan says (p. 20) To put Aye Chan’s argument in context, generally speaking, British Zamindari system had not been known as a pro-people system. Zamindars were the agents of the British masters. Since there were Zamindars from both Rakhines and fewer from the Rohingyas, the negative impact of this system by Rohingyas themselves could not have been more than their Rakhine counterparts on the Arakanese society.

Aye Chan continues his anti-Rohingya grievance: “Most of the Bengali immigrants were influenced by the Farai-di movement in Bengal that propagated the ideology of the Wahhabis of Arabia, which advocated settling ikhwan or brethren in agricultural communities near to the places of water resources. The peasants, according to the teaching, besides cultivating the land should be ready for waging a holy war upon the call by their lords (Rahman 1979: 200-204).”

What is the purpose in the use of this paragraph from Fazlur Rahman to explain the religious trends in Arakan? My research on Aye Chan’s work reveals his lack intellectual honesty. In the above quote, Aye Chan misuses the source to prove his point. Firstly, Fazlur Rahman didn't say anything about Arakanese Muslims or about their Faraidi movement or their Ikwan connection because there was no such thing. The fact of the matter is that unlike the Wahabi movement in India, Faraidi movement was largely a homegrown movement against the oppressive Zamindari system in Bengal. Then, it appears that Aye Chan’s motivation has two dimensions, using a Muslim writer as a source to show Aye Chan’s cross cultural expertise on the subject and secondly to portray Islam as being dangerous. As we have come this far, based on the above, we are beginning to question Aye Chan’s credibility as a historian.

More Stretching of Imagination

Aye Chan continues his stretching of imagination: “For the convenience of Chittagonians seasonal laborers the Arakan Flotilla Company constructed a railway between Buthidaung and Maungdaw in 1914. Their plan was to connect Chittagong by railway with Buthidaung, from where the Arakan Flotilla steamers were ferrying to Akyab and other towns in central and southern Arakan.” Here no citation of reference was provided. Since such plan was not mentioned anywhere, whether there was an actual plan, couldn't be ascertained. Under the circumstances, it appears to be a Rakhine xenophobic gossip, recorded by Aye Chan as fact. In addition, such a plan couldn't be true for other reasons that the distance between Arkan and Chittagong city is over 300 miles. Chittagong, due to its mountainous terrain, and numerous rivers and their tributaries, until today, the railway didn't expand over more than 18 miles from the city of Chittagong to the south. Clearly, there is a difference between ghost writing and history writing!

Aye Chan says, “In the period of the independence movement in Burma in 1920s and 1930s the Muslims from the Mayu Frontier were more concerned with the progress of Muslim League in India.” Again no source of Aye Chan’s information is provided to prove the trend. But what is evident in a similar situation in India was that the Ulama in India sided not with the Muslim League but with the Congress. In the absence of a source for Aye Chan’s information, his hypothesis appears to be no more than what is based on his anti-Muslim built-up prejudices.

Aye Chan describes, “[A]lthough some prominent Burmese Muslims such as M.A. Rashid and U Razak played an important role in the leadership of the Burmese nationalist movement. In 1931, the Simon Commission was appointed by the British Parliament to enquire the opinion of Burmese people for the constitutional reforms and on the matter of whether Burma should be separated from Indian Empire. The spokesman of the Muslim League advocated for fair share of government jobs, ten percent representation in all public bodies, and especially in Arakan the equal treatment for Muslims seeking agricultural and business loans (Cady 1958: 294).” Contrary to Aye Chan’s perception, this must be a good thing by the Rohingya minorities to ask for their rights which he found absurd. Instead of that the more relevant question to be asked, did the party want to separate Arakan from Burma? The answer is a clearly no. So, if it was not to create fear and cause incitement among the Rakhines, why is it necessary for Aye Chan to use this type of anti-Rohingya argument in the first place?

Aye Chan's Rohingya as the Illiterate Brute

Aye Chan says, "In education, the Chittagonians were left behind the Arakanese throughout the colonial period. According to the census of 1901 only 4.5 percent of the Bengali Muslims were found to be literate while the percentage for the Arakanese was 25.5. Smart reported that it was due to the ignorance of the advantages of the education among the Chittagonian agriculturists. Especially Buthidaung and Maungdaw were reported to be most backward townships because the large Muslim population in that area mostly agriculturalists showed little interest in education." (p. 20) Here, Aye Chan is contradicting himself again. In the above, he first makes the Rakhines victims in the hand of Muslim Zamindars. Then again he is saying that Muslims remained backward. The point is: if the British helped Muslims with Zamindari system at the expense of the Rakhines, how come Muslims remained so backward compared to the Rakhines. In Bengal, where there was also the Zamindari system and most zamindars were Hindus, the latter excelled over the Muslim majority. Here in his description, if Muslims were favored by the British as Chan has mentioned before, Muslims were supposed to excel but now he is saying Muslims remained backward.

It is not hard to understand what Aye Chan has been trying to advocate to his Arakanese and the Burmese audience. It could simply be his conclusion that Muslims were illiterates, and therefore brutes/ fundamentalists, and the trouble-makers to his peaceloving and respectable Rakhine gentleman. Unfortunately, his use of this type of assertions in a seemingly academic paper put together in spurious relationships can easily deceive casual readers of Arakan history.

Aye Chan the Linguist

Aye Chan relates, "In 1894 there were nine Urdur (sic) schools with 375 students in the whole district. The British provincial administration appointed a deputy inspector for Muslim schools and in 1902 the number of schools rose to seventy-two and the students increased to 1,474 (Smart 1957: 207-209). Consequently, more Arakanese and Hindu Indians were involved in the ancillary services of the colonial administration." (p. 21)

Aye Chan claims that he is a linguist. But the language he is referring to is not "Urdur" but "Urdu." Aye Chan says, "Towards the middle of twentieth century, a new educated and politically conscious younger generation had superseded the older, inactive ones. Before the beginning of the Second World War a political party, Jami-a-tul Ulema-e Islam was founded under the guidance of the Islamic scholars. Islam became the ideological basis of the party (Khin Gyi Pyaw 1960: 99)." (p. 25)

What does Aye Chan mean by "superseded the older, inactive ones"? If they were inactive how could they be important? What were they doing when remained inactive? Surprisingly, in identifying this, Aye Chan didn't mention the other Rohingya political parties and their individual ideological trends among the Rohingyas, except the one he found important useful for his explanation; Jami-a-tul Ulema-e Islam to foment anti-Muslim prejudices amongst his followers. This shows his agenda against the Rohingyas.

Aye Chan says, "During the early post-war years, both Arakanese and Bengali Muslims in the Mayu Frontier looked at each other with distrust. As the British Labor Government promised independence for Burma, some Muslims were haunted by the specter of their future living under the infidel rule in the place where the baneful Arakanese are also living." (p. 23) The constant anxiety of living in a land that is characterized by intolerance against minority Muslims is understandable. But for Aye Chan to reinforce the prejudices with a loaded word "infidel" as if it is an Arakanese Muslim community's own version of the Rakhine is hypocritical.

Rohingya Frustration and Alienation

Aye Chan in his analysis of the topic goes back to the events of 1942 in a zigzag fashion. He says, "An All Arakan Conference was held in Myebon on 1 April 1947 and about ten thousand people from all parties in Arakan attended. U Aung San was openly assailed to his face as an opportunist by some people attending the conference, using

rebellious slogans (British Library, London, India Office Records M/4/PRO: WO 203/5262). U Seinda with the communists behind him moved forward to the rebellion. Actually, Thakhin Soe's Red Flag Communists took advantage of the misunderstanding between U Seinda and AFPFL. It was in fact an ideological struggle in the AFPFL, the national united front of Burma that was under the leadership of the charismatic leader U Aung San.

On the other side some Arakanese intellectuals led by U Hla Tun Pru, a Barrister-at-Law, held a meeting in Rangoon and demanded the formation of "Arakanistan" for the Arakanese people (British Library, London, India Office Records, M/4/2503). All these movements of the Arakanese might have alarmed Muslims from the Mayu Frontier. In the wake of independence most of the educated Muslims felt an overwhelming sense of collective identity based on Islam as their religion and the cultural and ethnic difference of their community from the Burmese and Arakanese Buddhists." (p. 24)

As a matter of fact, alienation and panic was not only amongst Muslims from My frontier, it was all over Arakan. It was such a panic and a general sense of suffering on the rank and file members of the so-called "Kulas" (the Muslims of Arakan) that during the 1950's it led them to identify themselves with a common secular name "the Rohingyas of Arakan." While the name "Rohingya" was already existent in Arakan, it was now officially adopted for Muslims by their leaders to fight xenophobia and to state clearly that they will not settle for a derogatory term -- "Kolas" (Negros).

Aye Chan says, "At the same time, the Arakanese became more and more concerned with their racial security and ethnic survival in view of the increasingly predominant Muslim population in their frontier." (p. 24) Indeed, among the Rakhines, during the Anglo-Burmese war (1824-1826) the ultra-nationalist sentiment began to grow to the point that after the First World War, the colonial given name Mugh was officially changed into the present name "Rakines". Lately, with the help of the Burmese government, the province was also renamed as the Rakhine state; as if Rohingyas do not exist. The city's Rohingya name Akyab was also changed into Sittwe and Rohingya historic places were even demolished to confirm that Rohingyas are simply "foreigners" in Burma. While this Rakhinization continued on one hand, on the other hand, intellectuals like Aye Chan and their nonintellectual followers even comically exclaim that they have never heard of the name Rohingya before the 1950s; therefore, to them Rohingyas must be foreigners!

In pulling down the pillars of communal tolerance, Aye Chan in biting disposition states, "The ethnic conflict in the rural areas of the Mayu frontier revived soon after Burma celebrated independence on 4 January 1948. Rising in the guise of Jihad, many Muslim clerics (Moulavis) playing a leading role, in the countryside and remote areas gave way to banditry, arson and rapes." (p. 25) This accusation is libelous, and not surprisingly, thus, that Aye Chan fails to provide a reliable source for his information. He, however, quotes Moshe Yegar who "wrote that one of the major reasons of Mujahid rebellion was that the Muslims who fled Japanese occupation were not allowed to resettle in their villages (Yegar 1972:98)." (p. 25)

Can we blame the Rohingyas under the prevalent circumstance? Their situation was complicated by 1942 riot. The denial of their ancestral land-claims in the south made Rohingyas desperate, leading up to the rebellion against the institutional racism. In this, unlike Aye Chan, Yager as a historian records Arakan as a source of one of the refugee producing areas in South-East Asia, In contrast, Aye Chan identifies the Rohingyas simply as the "Chittagonians" creating an "Illegal Muslim enclave" in Burma to justify the continued genocide.

Arakan's distant past shows Arakan is both at the same time an extension of Burma and also Bengal and the Rakhines and the Rohingyas are the expressions of its past. Now that the xenophobic Burmese military rules Arakan, it denies one part of Arakan history; the Rohingya history. It shows that in this crossroads of South Asia and South East Asia, whenever there is a repressive xenophobic regime in Burma, Rohingyas continues to migrate to Chittagong. Even today, there are 20, 000 registered Rohingya refugees in Chittagong. In this tragic triangle, we see when a Rohingya from Arakan crosses the Burmese border to Chittagong and becomes a refugee in southern Chittagong; he is identified by the Burmese military and their collaborators (Aye Kyaw of the ANC and Aye Chan likes) as simply the

Chittagonians. In times of stability, when such a Rohingya goes back to Arakan to reclaim his property, he is seen as the “dangerous Chittagonian” and are normally either killed or put in jail or pushed out of Arakan as a “foreigner.”

So, xenophobia followed by repression on the Rohingya prolongs the flow of the refugees to Chittagong. The author says, “The Mujahid uprising began two years before the independence was declared. In March 1946 the Muslim Liberation Organization (MLO) was formed with Zaffar Kawal, a native of Chittagong District, as the leader. A conference was held in May 1948 in Garabyin Village north to Maungdaw and the name of the organization was changed to “Mujahid Party.” (Department of Defense Service Archives, Rangoon, DR 491 (56)).”

Aye Chan, to reinforce his stand, continues, “Jaffar Kawal became the commander in chief and his lieutenant was Abdul Husein, formerly a corporal from the Akyab District police force (Department of Defense Service Archives, Rangoon, DR 1016). The Mujahid Party sent a letter written in Urdur (sic) and dated 9 June 1948 to the government of Union of Burma through the sub-divisional officer of Maungdaw Township. Their demands are as follows (Department of Defence Service Archives, Rangoon: CD 1016/10/11):

1. The area between the West Bank of Kaladan River and the east bank of Naaf River must be recognized as the National Home of the Muslims in Burma.
2. The Muslims in Arakan must be accepted as the nationalities of Burma.
3. The Mujahid Party must be granted a legal status as a political organization.
4. The Urdur (sic) Language must be acknowledged as the national language of the Muslims in Arakan and be taught in the schools in the Muslim areas.
5. The refugees from the Kyauktaw and Myohaung (Mrauk-U) Townships must be resettled in their villages at the expense of the state.
6. The Muslims under detention by the Emergency Security Act must be unconditionally released.
7. A general amnesty must be granted for the members of the Mujahid Party.”

As mentioned earlier, there was a general discontent. However, the question that Aye Chan didn’t answer is: why was there a general discontent? Why even the local police felt alienated? It must be a result of gross injustices done to the Rohingyas? While the demands seem legitimate, neither the Burmese military nor the Arakanese dominant, the Rakhines, felt it necessary to fulfill their demands. During U Nu's time attempts were made to integrate the Rohingyas and they were recognized as one of Burma's nationalities. But after the 1962 military coup of Ne Win, Rohingya rights were being violated and the rule by fear and force continued.

As if the 1942 event was not enough, the military’s oppression from 1962 culminated into the total denial of the Rohingyas as the citizens of Burma, It is known that when ethnic cleansing madness begins it affects innocent people more than criminals. But the biggest culprits in such situations are not the ordinary people who also participate in genocide, it is the inciters. Here in Arakan, it was some Western-trained Arakanese xenophobes who remained the brain behind the violence.

Aye Chan relates, “In the two years following the decision to nationalize the retail trade, some 100,000 Indians and some twelve thousand Pakistanis left Burma for their homeland. The flow of Indians returning to India as a result of these policies began in 1964 (Donison 1970: 199-200). But the Muslim agriculturists from Northern Arakan, most of them, holding the national registration cards issued by the Department of National Registration in the post-war decade, were not concerned with the event and remained in the frontier areas till the Citizenship Law of 1982 was enforced in 1987.” (p. 26)

To Aye Chan “Muslim agriculturists from Northern Arakan, most of them, holding the national registration cards issued by the Department of National Registration” were not yet Burmese and as the “illegals” in the “enclave” should have left Arakan! But the point is, when it takes less than a decade by Burmese (like Aye Kyaw) living in the West to become citizens of western countries, why should such people object at Rohingya’s Burmese citizenship in

their ancestral land? When the democratic government of U Nu issued the National Registration Cards to the Rohingyas, if it is not racism, what makes the NRC invalid and requires amending the citizenship law by the military government?

It seems that it is not the Rohingya's origin in Arakan that is the issue here but it is the military government's genocidal strategy to get rid of an undesirable group – the Rohingyas. Aye Chan's present work confirms the situation and seems to weather a continuing existence of genocide in Arakan.

Aye Chan says the story

Aye Chan says, "By this law those Muslims had been treated as aliens in the land they have inhabited for more than a century. According to the 1983 census report all Muslims in Arakan constituted 24.3 percent and they all were categorized as Bangladeshi, while the Arakanese Buddhists formed 67.8 percent of the population of the Arakan (Rakhine) State (Immigration and Manpower Department 1987: 1-14)." (p. 27) He cites the census by the military government that considers Muslims as only 24.3% and they are all considered Bangladeshis; it doesn't cover close to a million Rohingya refugees scattered across the globe. Compared to the military's labeling of all the Arakanese Muslims as Bangladeshis, indeed, Aye Chan's portrayal of the hypothetical Rohingya "enclave" with "influx viruses" in the Mayu frontier seems quite liberal in comparison!

Aye Chan says, "In the abortive 1988 Democracy Uprising, those Muslims again became active, hoisting the Rohingya banner. Subsequently when the military junta allowed the registration of the political parties they asked for their parties to be recognized under the name "Rohingya." Their demand was turned down and some of them changed tactics and formed a party, the National Democratic Party for Human rights (NDPHR) that won in four constituencies in 1990 elections as eleven candidates of the Arakan League for Democracy (ALD) were elected to the legislature." (p. 27). Contrary to Aye Chan's portrayal of the Rohingyas in this and in his other articles as being dangerous Muslim people, the Rohingya's election participation and the result shows that they are a democratic-minded people. They are for negotiated settlement of their problems. It shows that after all Burmese Buddhist people don't have to fear the Rohingyas because they are neither "foreigners" nor dangerous.

Aye Chan says, "However, the Elections Commission abolished both the ALD and the NDPHR in 1991. Some of the party members went underground and into exile. Recently, the main objectives of the movement of some groups have been to gain the recognition of their ethnic entity in the Union of Burma and to obtain the equal status enjoyed by other ethnic groups. But some elements have adopted the radical idea of founding a separate Muslim state. The following are the Rohingya organizations currently active on the Burma-Bangladesh border (Mya Win 1992: 3):

1. RSO (Rohingya Solidarity Organization)
2. ARIF (Arakan Rohingya Islamic Front)
3. RPF (Rohingya Patriotic Front)
4. RLO (Rohingya Liberation Organization)
5. IMA (Itihadul Mozahadin of Arakan)"

Aye Chan again is using xenophobia as a trick. He says, "Some elements have adopted the radical idea of founding a separate Muslim state." When I checked the details, I found Aye Chan showing the case as if this was a trend during the 1990s but in reality it was not. Today most Rohingyas are in favor of their reconciliation and justice through

democratic reform in Arakan. Contrary to the current trend, Aye Chan in his work gives us the notion that Rohingyas are some radical elements and their presence is as if "viruses" in Arakan who are required to be destroyed or will eventually destroy the Arakanese Burmese people. This type of dehumanizing literature by so-called academics

reminds us of the early signs of genocide in Germany, in the former Yugoslavia, and recently in Rwanda and the literature written by intellectuals in those countries to incite the general public, so as to take up action against its targeted minority.

Fear of Democratic Reform and the End of Rakhine Supremacy

Aye Chan says, "Their leaders began to complain that the term "Chittagonian Bengali" had arbitrarily been applied to them. But the majority of the ethnic group, being illiterate agriculturalists in the rural areas, still prefers their identity as Bengali Muslims. (p. 27) Aye Chan's source of this information is not from a reliable survey. He is wrong in his observation, for he himself said that the Rohingya parties wanted recognition under their name - Rohingya - which was denied to them by the junta. My general observation of Aye Chan's work is that no doubt he has a hypothesis. But to prove it, he even strips the source, and suppresses core evidence to make it look credible.

Aye Chan says, "Although they have showed the collective political interest for more than five decades since Burma gained independence, their political and cultural rights have not so far been recognized and guaranteed. On the contrary the demand for the recognition of their rights sounds a direct challenge to the right of autonomy and the myth of survival for the Arakanese majority in their homeland." (p. 28) It is known that when the legitimate demand for the recognition of the minority rights is seen as "a direct challenge," it triggers genocide. Here Aye Chan is right: Rohingya's demand for their rights is a direct challenge "to the right of autonomy and the myth of survival for the Arakanese majority in their homeland." Whose homeland? Isn't Arakan supposed to be the homeland of its people?

The ultranationalists like Aye Chan dreams of the revival of an independent kingdom that was lost to the Burmese. Rakhine's autonomy from Burma is a minimum gain and guarantee for them; whereas a democratic reform and the establishment of a modern sense of equality and justice will take away such a privileged position from the Rakhines as the absolute owners of Arakan. Aye Chan's conclusion that if Rohingyas are tolerated, Rakhines have to share the scarce resources with the Rohingyas is clear. Ashin Nayaka, an Arakani monk in encouraging the ultra-nationalists wrote in the forward section of the book *Influx Viruses* the same: "Rohingya movements have been accompanied by certain dangers and challenges, particularly for the Arakan State and beyond." (22)

Undoubtedly, most of the ethnic/ racial troubles originate from an unwillingness to share resources and the myths of a glorious past allow them to demonize the minorities with the myth of being "foreigners." So Aye Chan's "influx viruses" in the "Enclave" are simply a myth of a Rakhine survival strategy reinforced by the military government. Aye Chan says, "A symbiotic coexistence has so far been inconceivable because of the political climate of mistrust and fear between the two races and the policy of the military junta." (p. 26)

There is no doubt that there is a problem between the two races - Rakhine and the Rohingya - in this meeting point of South Asia and South-East Asia. But when Aye Chan understands this, ethically speaking, himself as an educationist, he should not have taken up academic tools to fool people to preach the xenophobic survival myth for his Rakhine race. While the military's practice of "how to lie convincingly for years helps" in the construction of falsehood through xenophobia, Aye Chan's use of intellectual tools to understand Rohingya history as well doesn't help in the construction of knowledge. Aye Chan denies the birth right of the Rohingyas by concluding, "The Muslims from the other parts of Arakan kept themselves aloof from the Rohingya cause as well. Thus the cause of Rohingyas finds a little support outside their own community, and their claims of an earlier historical tie to Burma are insupportable." (p. 28)

Aye Chan's article "Enclave" portrays a politically defined superior Rakhine country gentleman living in peace and serenity in Arakan with its glorious past. Here with a future democratic reform, he sees the racially different Rohingya posing a dangerous threat -- a threat from an enclave just near the international border, if not taken seriously, will destroy their lost Arakan's glory.

Conclusion: Behind the Mask of the Devil

As an educationist, Aye Chan doesn't like to appear as a street fighter, so he is fighting against the Rohingyas with the mask of the devil, showing an attitude of internal arrogance through his pen. Works like Aye Chan's justify army's brutal action to restrict movement on the Rohingyas, ban marriage, impose extreme surveillance and enforce Rohingya's suffering through starvation in villages which are more like the concentration camps as if they are dealing with "aliens," "foreigners", or even "viruses." Aye Chan seemed to be trapped in his imaginary "enclave" he wanted to build to facilitate the military to act on the Rohingyas like "...hyenas on Africa's Serengeti picking off old and sick gazelle or wilder beast and making a meal," in this case help the military continue its genocide in Arakan.

From the above review of Aye Chan's description of Rohingya history, the following themes are rather evident:

1. Muslims and Rakhines were divided on racial-religious lines;
2. Muslims fleeing from the south to the north of Arakan and to Bangladesh has been a historical trend; therefore, Rohingyas can not be Chittagonians;
3. The increase in the population in the north of Arakan seems to be a result of the
4. internal Rohingya migration from the south, thus, disproving Aye Chan's original
5. hypothesis that Rohingyas are the "Illegal Bengalis."

However, a revisit to Aye Chan's imaginary enclave with "Influx Viruses" shows that the enclave is there only in Aye Chan's imagination. His dehumanizing work shows his analytical failures in his mixing of ethnic politics with scholarship. Contrary to Aye Chan's findings, the present research found Rohingyas only as any other human beings demanding protection from the Burmese democracy movement leaders and from the international community to live their lives in the land of their forefathers.

As we came to the end of the wrangle, I am confronted with the old question, what it is that turns "neighbors against neighbor?" It is an irony that Aye Chan was a native of the Mayu frontier. The answer is not easy even when you turn to the wise and ancient Greek philosopher Heraclitus. He had warned "one ought not talk or act as if he was asleep."

Surely Aye Chan was not asleep when he made the xenophobic and inciteful arguments in his work, so the warning doesn't apply to him. It appears that he consciously made the above arguments. However, what is perfidious is that Aye Chan's cleverly constructed work can raise the eye browse of casual readers on the question of the indigenouness of Rohingya people, and can serve as a handy tool for inciting Arakanese ultra-nationalists and xenophobic military to exterminate more Burmese Rohingyas. But to a historian, his findings could at best be seen as an exhilarating wild-goose chase, culminating in xenophobic dead end. Wiliam James rightly said: "A great many people think they are thinking when they are really rearranging their prejudices." (23) In this review of Aye Chan's essay it is clear that Aye Chan remained thoroughly prejudiced and only tried to rearrange the Arakanese prejudices against the Rohingyas. ##

From Abid Bahar's published book: *Burma's Missing Dots*

Abid Bahar, Montreal: Flapwing Publishers, 2009. P.23-42

If you want to know more about Rohingyas please do not miss his book "Burma's Missing Dots" dedicated to Rohingya history of Arakan, Burma.

Endnotes :

- (1) Aye Chan, "The Development of a Muslim Enclave in Arakan (Rakhine) State of Burma (Myanmar)" in U Shw Zan and Aye Chan's *Influx Viruses, The Illegal Muslims in Arakan*. New York: Arakanese in the United States, Planetarium Station 2005), 14-33. The book was published in the United States. It was also published on line website. <http://www.rakhapura.com>, 2005, accessed on November 20, 2005. "Aye Chan is a native of Arakan State in Burma. He studied Japanese language at Osaka University of Foreign Studies and oriental history at Kyoto University. His field of study is Pre-modern history of Burma. During his twenty years of teaching at Rangoon University (Burma), Bard College (NY, USA) and Kanda University of International Studies, Japan, he published articles in Southeast Asian Studies (Tonan-Ajia Kenkyu), SOAS Buletin of Burma Research and Journal of Siam Society." He claims himself as a Burmese democracy movement leader.
- (2) In July 2007, I have interviewed some Rohingya refugees in Japan and some others who arrived from Rangoon to attend the "International Conference on Problems of Democratic Development in Burma and the Rohingya People" in Tokyo, held on July 16, 2007. In my trip to Bangladesh, in July 2007, I also interviewed some other Rohingya refugees. I have interviewed them for this research
- (3) Francis Buchanan. "A Comparative Vocabulary of Some of the Languages Spoken in the Burma Empire." in SOAS Bullitin of Burma Research 1.1 (Spring 2003), 40-57; Also in Willem van Schendel (Ed.) "Francis Buchanon" in South East Bengal (1798); his journey to Chittagong, the Chittagong Hill Tracts, Noakhali and Comilla. Edited by Willem van Schendel. Dhaka: University Press Ltd. 1992. Also in Michael Charney, "Buddhism in Araka: Theories of Historiography of the Religious Basis of Ethnonyms" (an unpublished paper) in the Forgotten Kingdom of Arakan From Dhanyawadi to 1962: A conference Organized by the Institute of Asian Studies, South Asian Centre, Chulalongkorn University, 2005.
- (4) Michael Charney, "Buddhism in Araka: Theories of Historiography of the Religious Basis of Ethnonyms," 2005, p. 53.
- (5) R. B. Smart. *Burma Gazettier: Akyab District Vol.1.A*. Rangoon: Burma Governmen Printing and Stay., 1957), p.19.
- (6) Jacques P. Leider, "Arakan Studies: Challenges and Contested Issues, mapping a field of historical and Cultural research, (an unpublished paper) "in *Forgotten Kingdom of Arakan From Dhanyawadi to 1962*, 2005, p.15.
- (7) Ibid
- (8) Abu Anin, *A Study on the Issue of Ethnicity in Arakan, Myanmar*, http://www.kaladanpress.org//index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=866&Itemid=36, Accessed on November 10, 2007.
- (9) S.W.A. Rahman Farooq. "Pls speak first against any injustice <sfarooq678@yahoo.com>" *The Council for Restoration of Democracy in Burma (CRDB)* " <rohingyasrdbinfo@gmail.com> Sat, 22 Dec 2007 06:30:50
- (10) Francis Buchanan. "A Comparative Vocabulary of Some of the Languages Spoken in the Burma Empire." Pp.40-57; Also Willem van Schendel (ed.) "Francis Buchanon in South East Bengal (1798) His journey to Chittagong, the Chittagong Hill Tracts, Noakhali and Comilla." Also in Michael Charney. "Buddhism in Araka: Theories of Historiography of the Religious Basis of Ethnonyms" in the *Forgotten Kingdom of Arakan from Dhanyawadi to 1962*.
- (11) Michael Charney. "Buddhism in Araka: Theories of Historiography of the Religious Basis of Ethnonyms."
- (12) Francis Buchanan. "A comparative Vocabular of Some of the languages Spoken in the Burma Empire." P.55. Also see Willem van Schendel (ed.) "Francis Buchanan in South East Bengal (1798): His journey to Chittagong, the Chittagong Hill Tracts, Noakhali and Comilla," p. 55.

- (13) Mohamed Ashraf Alam." THE ROHANG (ARAKAN)," Arakan Rohingya National Organization, 2006. http://www.rohingya.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=20&Itemid=3, accessed on November 12, 2007.
- (14) Buchanan , "A comparative Vocabular of Some of the languages Spoken in the Burma Empire," 1992. p.82.
- (15) Abdul Haque Chawdhury. Chattagramer Ittihas Prosongo (the old Society and Culture of Chittagong), part 2, Chittagong: Chawdhury 1975 in Bengali, p.2.
- (16) U Shwe Zan and Aye Chan's Influx Viruses: The Illegal Muslims in Arakan. P. 4.
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