



BURMA'S ROHINGYA ORIGIN IN THE ANCIENT KINGDOM OF ARAKAN: UNDERSTANDING THE ARAB - CHANDRA SYNTHESIS

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Abstract (Several issues has come to the surface from the present research on DHANNAWADI and VASALI period of ancient Arakan;

- (1) That DHANNAWADI and VASALI were Indian dynasties with Hindu and Mohayana Buddhist religious followers.
- (2) During the Chandra rule there had been some Arab settlements in Arakan. The language of the Chandras was proto-Chittagonian: Sanskrit, Pali, and Arabic mixed similar to what Buchanon Hamilton found in 1799 with Rohingyas in Burma, also that a similar language was spoken by the Chakmas and Thanchangras of Arakan and Bangladesh, its written form similar to Bengali found in the Ananda Chandra script.
- (3) Beginning from 957 A.D. there had been a huge migration of Tibeto-Burman Theraveda Buddhist population into the plains of Arakan, by defeating the Chandras they took possession of Arakan and the Indian look alike people retreated either toward the Northern part of Arakan or went back to Bengal, making the event its first Indian exodus of Arakaniese people to Bengal.
- (4) In our contemporary period there has been a conscious effort among Arakan's Rakhine crudader like historians to deny and cleanse from history, not only the traces of Indian Hindu or Mohayana civilization but also the traces of Muslim population and their Arab-Chandra synthesis of the Chandras predating the Tibeto-Burman Theraveda Buddhist existence).

The Rohingyas people of Arakan are mostly Muslims with a small Hindu population among them. They are racially Indo- Semitic. They are not an ethnic group developed from one tribal group affiliation or single racial stock. Tides of people like the the Brahmins from India, Arabs, Moghuls, Bengalis, Turks and people from Central Asia, came mostly as traders, warriors and prechers overland or through the sea route to Arakan. Many settled in Arakan, during the Indian Chandra period, mixing with the local people formed the first neclus of the Rohingya people in Arakan. Historically speaking, in their common suffering in Burma, they found an identity now known to the world as the Rohingyas of Arakan. (1)

Part one of this series of articles on Rohingya history is about the first Arab Chandra synthesis; covering from 3rd century CE. to 1406 A.D in chronological order.

3rd Century (CE): "By the 3rd century (CE), the coastal region of Kala Mukh (Arakan) had been settled with the colonists dominating and coexisting warily with the indigenous people. In the sites of major habitation Sanskrit became the written language of the ruling class, and the religious beliefs were those prevalent at that time in south-Asia (or Indian sub-continent). "(2)

4th to 10th century. DHANNAWADI and VASALI (Brahminical and Mohayana Buddhist civilizations)

" As a port city, Vaishali was in contact with Samatat (the planes of lower Bangladesh) and other parts of India and Ceylon (Sri Lanka). Historically, these early rulers came to be known as the Chandras and controlled the territories as far north as Chittagong. "(3)

"The Anand Chandra Inscription, which contains 65 verses (71 and a half lines) and now sited at the Shitthaung pagoda, provides some information about these early rulers. Interestingly, neither the name of the kingdom or the two premier cities – Dhanyavati and Vaishali – is mentioned. This 11-foot high monolith, unique in entire Burma, has three of its four faces

inscribed in a Nagari script, which is closely allied to those of Bengali and north-eastern India. As noted rightly by Noel Singer had it not been for Professor E.H. Johnston of Balliol College, Oxford, who translated the Sanskrit script and the Indian epigraphists before him, the contents of the Inscription which remained inaccessible for well over a thousand years would never have been known. (4)

"The script on the panel on the east face is believed by Johnston to be the oldest. According to Pamela Gutman it was similar to the type of script used in Bengal (Bangladesh) during the early 6th century CE. As to the panel on the north face, Johnston mentioned that several smaller inscriptions in Bengali characters had been added in the 10th century. Gutman however felt that the principal text in this section is of the mid-11th century CE. The panel on the west face, which is reasonably preserved, is believed by Gutman to be of the earlier part of the 8th century. This priceless document not only lists the personalities of each monarch but also some of the major events of every reign." (5)

"So, who is this Ananda Chandra? In verse 64, it clearly says that he was a descendant of the Saiva-Andhra monarchs [presumably of Banga or Bangladesh] whose kingdom was located between the Godavari and Krishna Rivers of Bengal, and close to the Bay of Bengal. The founder of this new dynasty was Vajra Sakti who reigned circa 649-665 CE. His successor was Sri Dharma Vijaya, who reigned from circa 665-701. As noted by Singer, and much in contrast to Rakhine claims, Dharma Vijaya was not a Theravada Buddhist, but probably a Mahayanist. The next in line was Narendra Vijaya who reigned from circa 701 to 704 CE. The next to rule was Sri Dharma Chandra, who reigned from 704 to 720 CE. He was the father of Ananda Chandra who was a magnificent patron of Mahayana Buddhism and Hindu institutions. (6)

Arakani researcher San Shwe Bu thinks the Chandras were from Hindu dynasty but later on like in Bengal converted to Mahayana Buddhism. According to him the king and the people both were of Indian origin. The coins of Wasali had the image of Siva engraved on it. M.S. Collins says, "The coins of Wasali were in pure Brahminical tradition." (7) The Indian Chandra aristocracy called the ancient dark skinned people of Arakan with the derogatory name the Rakkhasas (Kula). These were the indigenous people of Arakan.

What was the language of these people? The language of the Chandras was proto-Chittagonian: Sanskrit, Pali, and Arabic mixed. See the "The Anand Chandra Inscription. There is no trace of Burmese or Rakhine Mogh script on it. According to Dr. Emil Forchhammer, a Swiss Professor of Pali at Rangoon College, and Superintendent of the newly founded Archaeological Survey (1881): "The earliest dawn of the history of Arakan reveals the base of the hills, which divide the lowest courses of the Kaladan and Lemro rivers, inhabited by sojourners from India... Their subjects are divided into the four castes of the older Hindu communities..." (8)

788 A.D. During the reign of Arakani Indian Chandra King Mahat Sing Daya's time recorded in the royal chronicle that several Arab ships wracked on Ramree Island. "Survivors were sent to Arakan proper and settled in villages." (9) Similar Arab settlements were recorded in the other parts of southern part of Chittagong of what is now Bangladesh.

785-957 Arab traders began to settle both in Arakan and Chittagong. Inter mixture with the local population no doubt led to the growth of the first Chandra-Rohingyas of Arakan. During this time, in both Arakan and Chittagong, the influence of Sanskrit, Pali, Arabic, Persi, combined together eventually formed the Chandra-Rohingya dialect which is similar to the Chittagonian dialect with their slight variations. The same dialect is also spoken by the Chakmas, and the Tanchaingyas of Chittagong Hill Tracts. Despite their racial differences their linguistic similarities show they must be the citizens of ancient Chandra kingdom.

During the 9th Century there was records of Chandra invasion of Chittagong. Hindus of Chittagong believe that the name Chittagong was derived from the original Sanskrit name "Chatta gram" into "Chaitigaon." However, the Arakani historians claim that the name Chittagong was originally given by an Arakanese mongoloid king. It says, an Arakani king erected a pillar at Chittagong in the 9th century A. D. with a remark "to make war is improper." Interestingly, during this time a Chandra king (not a Mogh king) ruled Arakan. It is hard to believe, because there was no Rakhine /Mogh kingdom in Arakan yet. At this time, Arakan was ruled by Chanda king Shoe Ratan. The language of the king was not the Burmese Moghhi "Tsit-ta-gungin", "to make war is improper" seems was made up later on. "To make war improper" seems more like the declaration of a peace treaty between two parties than as it was originally presented as the declaration of victory by an Arakani king. Under the circumstance of the nonexistence of Burmese language in Arakan at the time, instead of the Burmese "Tsit-ta-gungin", it would seem that the Chandras's Sanskrit expression "Shoukeet Thakom" (Choutagon, in English meaning you live in peace) The latter expression in Chittagonian or in Chandra-Rohingya language seems historically more consistent. One might wonder how this misinterpretation of a huge magnitude "Tsit-ta-gungin", "to make war is improper" remained as truth for so long.

Many of the contemporary research on Arakan show that after the event of 1784 Burmese invasion of Arakan, Burmese king took the Arakani chronicles to Burma proper. To Burmanize Arakan, we know the Arakani Sanskrit chronicles were rewritten in Burmese along with a tendentious interpretation of events entered into the present Arakani history.

957-1430 MONGOLOID BURMESE MOGH INVASION OF ARAKAN: RISE OF THE RAKHINE MOGH

(Arakan's two solitudes: Rakhine in the South and Rohingya in the North. Mongoloid invasion of Arakan and the beginning of "Kula" (Chandra Rohingya) exodus to North Arakan and Chittagong.) (11)

957 A.D. Something happened in the year 957 A.D. and historians' record this as a significant date when Tibeto-Burman people in large numbers entered Arakan and took its control by defeating the Chandra Mahayanas Buddhists, imposing their Theravada Buddhism, the latter was adopted from the Mons in the South who in their turn took it from Sri Lanka. Similar changes didn't happen in Bengal. (10) In Bengal, most Mahayana Buddhists were converted to Islam by Sufi mystics. With the fall of Arakan to the Tibeto-Burmans, the Chandra Indians were either pushed to the north of Arakan or some even left Arakan for Bengal. Around this time, the defeated Chandra Royal family was found to settle in Chittagong proper. The Dev Pahar, in Chittagong city named after Dev Chandra was the site of this new Mahayana Buddhist kingdom. (12)

In North Arakan, mostly Chandra Hindus (lower casts also known as the Rakkhas) slowly adopted Islam converted by the already existing Muslims of Arakan and most Buddhist elites perhaps joined the Tibeto-Burman Theravada group or perhaps a defeated small number of Buddhist adopted Islam. Arakan became on one hand Theravada Buddhist with largely Tibeto Burman stock, later came to be known as the "Mog/ Mug" / Rakhines and the others were Rohingya Hindus and Muslims. Moghs settled in the south and Muslims, Hindus of Indian look alike people settled in the North. During the Chandra times and to its end in Arakan, we see the traces of Arabic names such as Rambree, Sufi sites on Myu Mountain tops, and Badre Patis in the Northern part of Arakan.

From the 11th century, clearly with the Tibeto-Burman rule, Arakan began to have two solitudes, Rakhine Mogh and the Rohingya Muslims but Arakan began to look East to its mongoloid Buddhist neighbors only until the year 1430; the year Arakan's king Noromi Kla would be deposed by Burmese invasion and he would take shelter in Gaur of Bengal.

Revisionist History Writing and Rakhine Crusader like Activism: Ethnic cleansing of the Arakani Indo semantic traces

A footnote to the above discussion that Rakhine ultranationalists in their attempts to purify Arakan of Muslim traces for their only Buddhist mongoloid race prove that the Buddhist civilization was there for the past 3000 years, and even Buddha visited Arakan and the Mohamuni was made in Buddha's presence. In this ethnocentric attempt, they are not only getting rid of Muslim names from Arakan sites in Mrohaung city and in its vicinity, in doing anti Indo semantic ethnic cleansing, by getting rid of both Hindu traces and the Mahayana Buddhist traces from Dhanwadi and Vasali kingdom sites in favour of the Theravada Rakkhapuri ultra nationalist Buddhism.

In his book, Vasali and the Indianization of Arakan, Noel Singer notes, "Dhanyavti and Vasaishali on which stood Hindu temples, now been taken over by Buddhists. There is a tendency to transform Hindu gods into Buddhist deities." "Regretably, despite Rakhine determination to eradicate Brahmanic evidence, this is unlikely to happen for a considerable time." (13)

Their narrative about the Rohingyas (Hindu-Muslim) of Arakan by the Rakhine xenophobes "starts with the British colonization of the territory in 1826 after the first Anglo-Burma War of 1824-26, as if Rohingyas had no past connection to the soil of Arakan." (14) In this propaganda campaign, there are several Rakhine crusader like historians; they are Kanbawza Win, Aye Chan, Maung Maung, and U Khin Maung Saw. One such historian is also San Tha Aung. Noel Singer remarks: "whose vehement claims that the inhabitants of the kingdom throughout its history were devout Theravada Buddhist, it should be noted that Svarga, the Hindu paradise, and not a Buddhist one was indicated in the inscription." He "investigated the document further in the 1970's apart from his biased version his labors failed to produce any new revelations." (15) No doubt, the works of these tendentious Rakhine historians belittling the Rohingya presence in Arakan must have played a significant role in the present ethnic cleansing of the Rohingya people in Arakan.

1044-77 Rise of Burmese pagan king Anawratha in Burma proper with Theravada political Buddhism, "reduces North Arakan" from a kingdom to a province of Burma.

1044-77 Rohingyas (Arakani Hindus and Muslims) left Arakan for Chittagong. Chakma Royal history says that in this war against the Burmese, Chakmas sided with the Bengalis (the Chandras) but were defeated.

1287 - Mongols under Kublai Khan conquer Pagan. Arakan revives again as a kingdom.

1406 Burmese King Min Khaung Yaza invades Arakan and Noromi-kala the king of Arakan along with his followers took asylum at Gaur court of Bengal. The Sultan welcomed Noromi kla to serve as an officer in the army.

1431 Noromi Kla was helped by the Bengal Sultan with General Wali Khan leading 20, 000 troops to restore him to throne of Arakan, at the same time Arakan became an autonomous province of Bengal, paying taxes to the Sultan.

(Continues to Part 2)

ENDNOTES:

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22. <http://danyawadi.wordpress.com/2012/07/07/religiously-motivated-racism-and-the-ongoing-rohingya-genocide-in-burma/>;
23. <http://danyawadi.wordpress.com/2012/07/07/religiously-motivated-racism-and-the-ongoing-rohingya-genocide-in-burma/>;

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<https://www.kaladanpress.org/index.php/report/rohingya/3526-a-brief-history-of-arakan-from-kingdom-to-a-colony.html>



A Brief History of Arakan : From Kingdom to a Colony

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On December 31st 2011, Arakanese Diaspora marked its 227th anniversary of the fall of the famous Arakanese medieval kingdom. Arakan's powerful kingdom was established by King Naromikhla. Arakanese nationals didn't forget that in 1784 Burmese king Budapaya sent a large army led by his son who mercilessly razed the city to ground and took away the Arakanese symbol of pride - the Mohamini to the Burmese heartland. It was a genocide pure and simple; it was also the end of a kingdom which was known far across the land upto Europe. It was a kingdom that was built by artisans that Noromikhla brought from Gour of Bengal. It was a liberal, civilized kingdom and its citizens prided themselves to be called as the citizens of the great Mrohaung city. The ruling people were known as the Moghs now Rakhine Mogh and others were called as the Kula (Hindus and Muslims) now Rohingya.

In our time, the splendor of Arakan, its people, glorious architects and foreign visitors were all gone, what is left is only its ruins and memories. Arakan continued to have its kingdom for centuries but the end was sudden. It first lost its colonies to the Moghuls then its heartland to the Burmese. The end came as if like a landslide. Till today Rakhine Moghs and Muslims ponder and eager to know why? What went wrong? Some blame that it was its lack of unity.

The beginning of the end came when Arakanese king assured the Governor of Bengal Shah Suja to come to take asylum in Arakan but on his arrival seeing his immense wealth, and his young daughters he wanted to possess them. When Suja refused, the entire family and the associates were mercilessly killed using axe. The Arakanese queen mother previously warned the king that this act might invite disaster on the kingdom. The king didn't comply. The queen mother was a devout Buddhist and a historian who also knew that when the founder of the kingdom (Naromikhla) needed a shelter, it was Bengal where he was given a safe heaven. Not only that Bengali king helped Naromikhla to recover his kingdom twice, first by sending General Wali Khan then by General Sindhi Khan. She thought killing Shah Suja was a bad example set by the king.

The king also earned his fame for collecting revenue by piracy on lower Bengal with help from the Portuguese pirates. Moghul Emperor Aurangozev wanted to bring an end to these illegal activities by the king. His forces driven the Mogh pirates out from lower Bengal.

The pirates came back home with their marauding hooligan culture. Instead of a Buddhist faith in nonviolence, anarchy and lawlessness and killing were brought into its core cultural belief system. They found their scapegoat in the Muslim population. The Arakanese Moghs finding the end of piracy now engaged themselves in harming its non-Buddhist citizens. Thus, began the Rohingya Muslim tragedy in Arakan. Alaol, the Arakanese Muslim poet had to escape Arakan to settle in Chittagong during this period.

Beginning of the Rohingya influx to Bengal

In the Arakanese society where Muslims used to be the king-makers now after the return of the pirates, they are seen as suspects and on a regular basis they were driven out of Arakan. Every year Muslims would migrate to Southern Chittagong to escape Mogher Upodrop (the lawlessness of the Moghs).

This state of anarchy and the division in the Arakanese society was closely observed by the Burmese king across the Arakan Yoma. There were Mogh spies of Budapawa in whose alliance a date was set on the calendar. It was December 31, 1784 AD slated to bring the end to the Arakanese kingdom. A large number of people both Buddhist, Hindus and Muslims fled and took shelter in Chittagong. The invasion cost both the Buddhist and Muslims to lose their very own Arakanese kingdom. After the tragedy of Shah Suja and Burmese invasion of Arakan, the flow Mogh, Muslim and Hindu refugee movement continued to Chittagong and Chittagong Hill Tracts on one hand, on the other, Muslim migration to Arakan was brought to a complete halt. Ever since Muslim population hardly wanted to settle in the "lawless Arakan." Even during the British period, beginning from 1824, Arakan, the deserted land of the Mogh and the Muslims while some people (Mogh and Muslims) returned back to repossess their lands and others simply preferred to work as the "seasonal workers."

In Arakan today, unlike King Naromikhla's tolerance to diversity, the ultranationalist Rakhine Moghs using Islamophobia and a race card against the Rohingya people now triumphed into power. Through propaganda in Arakan and Burma, Muslim Rohingyas were made to believe as the "illegal immigrants from Chittagong." There is only despair and there is no unity in the Arakanese civil society. We collectively wonder why?

In 2011, Ko Tin Wai, an organizer for the event of 227 anniversary of the loss of the kingdom said, "Arakan was a sovereign country... Since then, our people have fallen in one colony after another. Even though Burma regained independence in 1948, our land is still a colony under Burmese rulers. Our people call it a hidden colony. Because of this, we came to in front of the UN building to demand decolonization of our land."

He said, "We have no right to use our own natural resources for our state development. The Burmese government sells the gas to China and there is not any reserve or revenue for our state. It is colonial-style exploitation by the Burmese government." True, Burma is grabbing Arakanese land and natural resources and its Buddhist population helplessly wonders why. "Ko Zar Ni, an Arakanese leader in Malaysia who led a ceremony in Kuala Lumpur, said, "The Burmese government has no concern for Arakan as a state of Burma and it rules our state as if it is a territory like a defeated colony because there is much discrimination and no equal rights. Because of this we need to fight unitedly against the imperialism practiced by Burma's central government."

"U Pho Hla, chairman of the Arakan freedom movement, urged the people of Arakan to unite in fighting against the Burmese junta in order to reach the national goals of Arakan. He also remarked to attendees that Arakan lost its sovereignty in 1784 as a result of disunity among the Arakanese people, so Arakanese today must unite in achieving their goals. He added that without unity, "we cannot achieve our goal."

In emphasizing the Arakanese unity Arakan observers wonder, is it the unity within the Buddhist majority, or in the society in general? To bring unity among its people, Rakhine Moghs have lately changed their name from Mogh to Rakhine. They also unilaterally changed Arakan's historic names into Rakhine-Mogh sounding names. And every trace of Muslim names were removed. It was done as if there were no Muslim existence in Arakan. The Muslim Rohingyas are only foreigners or even "Influx Viruses." The existences of Muslim presence in names were removed such as Arakan, Akyab, Kaladan, Kalapanjar etc. Muslims in 1978, 1992-93 were exterminated in large numbers. Some historic mosques were razed to the ground. Historic Sufi centres, Jame mosques were turned into Burmese military camps. Muslim man was restricted from movement, marriage and having children were restricted by law. In his article "The Burma I love" Aye Kyaw confessed that he convinced the Burmese military junta to officially declare the Arakanese Rohingya Muslims as non-citizens of Burma.

While during the late medieval period, Arakan ruled the Bay through alliance with the Portuguese to carry on slave trade, now in alliance with the much-hated Burmese military it carries out the ethnic cleansing and genocide on the Rohingya people and grabbing their lands.

Contrary to its medieval time of glory and splendor, now the name Arakan has become notoriously famous for producing refugees. While Burmese military does the dirty laundry for the ultranationalist Rakhine Moghs like Aye Kyaw, Aye Chan or Ashin Nayaka to exterminate the Rohingyas, the former finding no unity in the Arakanese society among its people, extracts its rich resources and takes it to Burma; it is as if Burma robs Arakanese Mohamuni repeatedly and will continue to do so for lack of unity among its people.

Historically speaking, mentioned earlier Arakan's end came at the heel of a historic murder; a senseless killing, the slaughter of Shah Suja and his family. Thus, Arakanese Buddhist people's historic loss of their kingdom should not be blamed on the Burmese king but on the loss of Arakanese Buddhist's supreme civilizational values (first established in Arakan by king Naramikhlā) He wanted people to be gentle, kind to their fellow citizens, and to show tolerance to differences. In not learning to gain the lost values, we wonder how much more is there for Arakan and its citizens to lose? A Rohingya dead body of Rohingya boatpeople, floating on the shore of Arakan, crows landing on it, Imum Ahamed in exile in a poem he wrote remembering the loss of his home and citizenship rights and reminiscing the loss and his nostalgia to return back to his village and the prospect of it perhaps has the answer. Here Arakanese Buddhist majority will have to decide whether they would like to allow Imum Ahamed to return to his village, whether they would like to handover Aye Chan to the ICC like Maloslovick was handed over (by Serbia) and make a transition in Arakan from a Mogher-mulluk (lawless land of the Moghs) into a civilized, united Rakhine and Rohingya people's Arakan! The international community aware of the ongoing genocide in Arakan is impatiently eager to know when those changes will be made!

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Source: <https://www.kaladanpress.org/index.php/report/rohingya/3526-a-brief-history-of-arakan-from-kingdom-to-a-colony.html>