

SCHRIFTENREIHE DES SÜDASIEN-INSTITUTS  
DER UNIVERSITÄT HEIDELBERG

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MOSHE YEGAR

THE MUSLIMS OF BURMA

A Study of a Minority Group

SCHRIFTENREIHE DES SÜDASIEN-INSTITUTS  
DER UNIVERSITÄT HEIDELBERG

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1972

OTTO HARRASSOWITZ · WIESBADEN

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by

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*To Edna*

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## ABBREVIATIONS

AFPFL	Anti-Fascist Peoples' Freedom League
BMC	Burma Muslim Congress
BMO	Burma Muslim Organization
BMS	Burma Moslem Society
GCBMA	General Council of Burma Moslem Associations
<i>JBRS</i>	<i>Journal of the Burma Research Society</i>
MFA	Mayu Frontier Administration
NUF	National United Front
RUMSA	Rangoon University Muslim Students Association
TUCB	Trade Union Council of Burma

## INTRODUCTION

In June, 1960, I was sent to Burma to serve as a Second Secretary at the Embassy of Israel in Rangoon. Permission was granted me by the Hebrew University, Jerusalem, to submit a thesis on the subject "Muslims in Burma" for my M. A. degree.

The history of the Muslim community in Burma has not yet been properly studied. Nor has any member of that community yet bothered to collect the written material that does exist or to obtain oral, eye-witness reports from those who took part in the various activities of the community during the period of British rule and since Burma obtained her independence.

The present study is an attempt to deal with the Muslim community in Burma from the eleventh century up until the year 1962. My main purpose was, first of all, to reconstruct the chronological history of the community and to follow the main trends that characterized that community. I was, however, handicapped by the scarcity of available sources. The major sources for the history of the Muslims in the days of the Burmese kings are the writings of European travelers, of emissaries to the court of Burma, and of missionaries, as well as several general history books on Burma, India and Southeast Asia, scattered throughout which were to be found facts and comments on the Muslim community. I also made use of a series of articles on the Arakan Muslims which appeared in the monthly *Guardian* published in Rangoon by a daily newspaper of the same name. Articles and studies on specific and detailed subjects relating to the period of the kings were found in the *Journal of the Burma Research Society* and in publications of Muslim schools and associations in Burma. Particular significance is to be attributed to a two-part article by Siddiq Khan, published in *Islamic Culture*, Hyderabad (see bibliography). His was the first attempt and as far as I know, the only one so far, to deal with the beginnings of the Muslim community in Burma. Important material is included also in several unpublished works, especially in the lecture which Col. Ba Shin delivered in Delhi in 1961. Other works are mentioned in the bibliography.

The richest sources and the most varied ones are those dealing with British rule in Burma. In addition to reports of travelers and the memoirs and recollections of British administrative officials and newspapers, there is a mine of information in official publications of the British government: The *Gazetteers* of the districts of Burma, census reports, and the reports of the various enquiry committees that the British frequently sent to all their colonies.

Various publications and documents – annual reports, magazines, unpublished letters, and other papers – in the possession of some individuals in Rangoon which were placed at my disposal made it possible for me to reconstruct the history and activities of Muslim organizations in the period between the two world wars and since the independence of Burma. I was unsuccessful in obtaining several original documents bearing upon the important Muslim organization that held the annual Education Conferences between the World Wars. I have tried to reconstruct the missing data from other sources and from oral reports.



On developments within the Muslim community in the period following World War II, there are available several official government publications, many articles and informative newspaper articles, and especially the publications of the Muslim organizations and their institutions, their annual reports, yearbooks of educational institutions, and the like. Here, too, I filled in the missing links with personal communications from Muslims and non-Muslims. Wherever possible, I verified the information gathered; some of the people interviewed supplemented their conversations with memoranda prepared especially for me. In dealing with the postwar period I concentrated mainly on the political issues, not only because the availability of source material imposed it upon me but also because political issues were the main concern of the Muslim community at that time.

In an attempt to become more clearly acquainted with my subject of research, I visited as frequently as possible Muslim mosques, schools, cemeteries, and the Muslim Hospital in Rangoon, and I participated in Muslim functions of all kinds both in Rangoon and up country in the area around Mandalay and the Shan states. I found hospitality and courtesy wherever I went.

At times I draw comparisons between the Muslims and other such minority groups as the Hindus and the Chinese who faced similar problems: assimilation and identity with the Buddhist majority on the one hand and the struggle to maintain their particular heritage on the other. These minority groups exhibit symptoms of nervousness similar to the Muslims as to their place in the society, perhaps justified, and this finds expression in somewhat exaggerated social and religious activity and in the establishment of so large a number of organizations and associations, some of them even fictional. But my main interest centered on the main issues of Muslim life in Burma, the inner struggles of the various groups of the Muslims, the Burmese Muslims versus the Indian Muslims and the struggle of the Burmese Muslims for recognition with the British administration, a struggle that turned out to be much more acute with the leaders of the later Burmese National Movement. In this respect a comparative study of the Muslim community in Burma with the Muslim communities of similar magnitude in Ceylon and the Philippines might have particular interest. This tempting study must eventually be made.

Very little is known as to how deeply the Muslims in Burma were affected by the military rule of General Ne Win who seized power in a military coup in March, 1962, and to what extent their organizational life and religious and cultural activities were affected. There is little doubt that most of the activities of the Muslims and of other minority groups ceased and that the minorities were deprived of what autonomy they enjoyed during the parliamentary regime of U Nu. The emigration of Indians from Burma since March, 1962, has undoubtedly transformed much of what existed before. It is for this reason that I conclude my study with the military coup. From then on a completely new era begins in Burma, not only for the Muslim community of that country but for the rest of the Burmese people as well.

Many of the situations described in the present tense from chapter 2 on should probably be changed to the past tense, but for lack of documented evidence concerning the events that followed the coup, no attempt was made to do so.

The inconsistency in spelling of such words as Moslem/Muslim, Cholia/Chulia, Zerbadee/Zerbadi, and so on, is caused by the fact that each organization adopted its own spelling.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

A few weeks after my arrival in Rangoon, a young man, by the name of Dawood Ginwalla, came to my office at the Embassy of Israel one day to tell me that he had heard of my interest in the history of his people, the Muslims of Burma. He offered his assistance in providing me with necessary contacts, interviewing the leaders of the community and finding documents. For the two and a half years that I spent in Burma, he and his good friend Meer Sulaiman, a historian and a lawyer, did not cease helping and assisting me in all possible ways; they took a deep and personal interest in my research and whatever is achieved in the following pages is no less theirs than mine, although for all the shortcomings I am solely responsible.

My sincere thanks are due to my two patient secretaries in Rangoon, Mrs. Isabel De-Souza and Mrs. Jean Ross-Adjie.

To Professor Gordon H. Luce, former Reader of History at the University of Rangoon, for allowing me to use his excellent private library and for many important suggestions. To his close associate, a noted historian, Colonel Ba-Shin. To the librarians of the University of Rangoon and of the Burma Historical Society.

To my colleague at the Embassy of Israel in Rangoon, Mr. Michael Elizur.

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To my supervisor, the late Professor Uriel Heyd, Hebrew University, Jerusalem, for his many years of constant academic guidance. I am indebted to Mrs. Chan Shapira for the painstaking effort she made in translating, not always an easy text, from Hebrew into English.

But most of all I wish to thank my wife Edna who encouraged this effort from its inception in Burma and through all its stages in Israel and the United States.

They were all of great help. Without their assistance this work could never have been possible. Needless to say none of them is responsible for the contents or for the views expressed.

M. Y. Jerusalem



## Chapter I

### MUSLIMS IN BURMA IN THE DAYS OF THE KINGS

#### *The Beginnings of Muslim Settlement in the Irrawaddy Valley*

The rise of Islam in the Middle East and its rapid spread severed the contact between Europe and the Far East and gave the Muslims the monopoly on Asia's trade with the West. Muslim, Arab, and Persian colonies rapidly spread eastward. As early as the middle of the eighth century the number of Muslims along the southern coastal regions of China had already grown large. The reason for this population movement was not only to be found in commerce. Because of the Shi'a-Sunni conflict, many Shi'a refugees fled eastward and apparently reached as far as Korea. The Persians constituted a sizable part of the Shi'a migration to China<sup>1</sup>, although Persian ships had reached those shores well before the rise of Islam, and through them the Chinese came to know the Arabs and to establish contacts with them in the fourth to the seventh centuries<sup>2</sup>. In the ninth century China enjoyed a period of flowering under the rule of the T'ang Dynasty which fostered close commercial ties with the Abbasid Caliphate; but the Chinese themselves evinced little interest in this trade which in time became a Muslim monopoly at both ends and which in turn brought about an increase in the Muslim population along the coasts of China and the length of her trade seaboard<sup>3</sup>. The period of expansion of Muslim shipping in Asia continued until the end of the fifteenth century. Muslim merchants spread out along the coastal regions of India and the countries to the East; and in several places they even settled down and set up trade colonies. From their center in Bengal they traded with Burma and with the cities of Malabar, with Ceylon, and with Malacca<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> S. Q. Fatimi, "The Role of China in the Spread of Islam in South East Asia" (University of Singapore, 1959), pp. 7-8 (Mimeo.); Hugh Clifford, *Further India: Being the Story of Exploration from the Earliest Times in Burma, Malaya, Siam and Indo-China* (London: Lawrence and Bullen, 1904), p. 16.

<sup>2</sup> S. A. Huzayyin, *Arabia and the Far East: Their Commercial and Cultural Relations in Graeco-Roman and Irano-Arabian Times*, Publications de la Société Royale de Géographie d'Égypte (Cairo, 1962), pp. 151-152.

<sup>3</sup> Fatimi, *op. cit.*, p. 9; G. E. Harvey, *History of Burma: From the Earliest Times to 10 March 1824, the Beginning of the English Conquest* (London: Longman's, 1925), p. 310.

<sup>4</sup> For a detailed description of the Muslim commercial movement, see: M. Siddiq Khan, "Muslim Intercourse with Burma", *Islamic Culture*, X (July, 1936), 416-419, quoting G. Ferrand, *Relations de voyages et de textes géographiques arabes, persans et turcs relatifs à l'extrême orient du VIIIe au XVIIIe siècles* (Paris: Leroux, 1913).

Muslim seamen first reached Burma in the ninth century. As far as they were concerned, the concept "Burma" referred only to the coastal regions of Lower Burma and Arakan<sup>1</sup>. Although geographically on the perimeter of the major trade routes, Burma nevertheless enjoyed rather lively shipping activity which brought in its wake the beginnings of a Muslim settlement. Chinese travelers found Persian colonies on the borders of Burma and Yunan as early as 860<sup>2</sup>. Among the many Muslim travelers who wandered eastward, most of whom hoped to reach China, were several who managed to get to Burma, too. Southern Burma is mentioned in the writings of the Persian traveler, Ibn Khordadbeh, and of the Arab, Suleiman, both of the ninth century; and of the Persian traveler, Ibn al-Faqih, of the tenth century. The Arab historian, al-Maqdisi (tenth century) describes the ramified trade activity conducted the length of the shores of India, Burma, the Malay Peninsula, the East Indian islands, and Ceylon. Since the Burmese were not a seagoing people, it is reasonable to assume that the "Pegu" seamen mentioned in this source refer to the Arab and Persian sailors who settled in the city of Pegu, or their descendants. It would seem that Muslim trade colonies were already established in Pegu by the ninth century and that Arab merchant vessels often visited there<sup>3</sup>.

Southern Burma, or more exactly, the coastal regions of Arakan, the Delta of the River Irrawaddy, Pegu, and Tenasserim, were known to the Muslim sailors of that period who traded in the eastern waters. The first Muslim colonies in Burma were colonies of such traders. Not all of them came by choice; some of them, because of shipwreck, were forced to seek refuge on shore, and remained to settle<sup>4</sup>.

The very first traders to be mentioned in Burmese chronicles, who were assumed to be Muslims, are the two sons of an Arab merchant saved from his shipwrecked vessel on the shores of Martaban. They apparently reached Burma in the year 1055, during the reign of King Anawratha (1044–1077). One of the sons was Shwepyin-gyi and the other, Shwepyin-nge. They became horsemen in the service of the King, but were put to death by his order, when he returned from battle and stopped off at a village not far from Mandalay in order to build a pagoda there. This punishment was meted out to them for their refusal to help in building the pagoda. The local villagers believe that their spirits reside in the pagoda. In the pagoda area the eating of pork is forbidden in reverence to their memory. The Buddhists and the Muslims of the region both celebrate the memory of the brothers to this very day, although on different dates<sup>5</sup>.

The second mention in the chronicles is from the days of King Sawlu (1077–1088) who succeeded his father Anawratha to the throne. In his youth he was educated by a Muslim Arab. On ascending the throne, he appointed the son of his teacher,

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<sup>1</sup> Harvey, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

<sup>2</sup> Fatimi, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

<sup>3</sup> Siddiq Khan, *op. cit.*, p. 417.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 419; Fatimi, *op. cit.*, p. 6; R. B. Smart, *Akyab District Gazetteer*, Vol. A (Rangoon, 1917), p. 86.

<sup>5</sup> Siddiq Khan, *op. cit.*, pp. 411–412; Harvey, *op. cit.*, pp. 24, 27, 31; Khin Khin U, "Marriage in the Burmese Muslim Community", *JBR*, XXXVI, part 2 (Dec., 1954), 33; H. F. Searle, *Mandalay District Gazetteer*, Vol. A (Rangoon, 1928), pp. 85., 89.

Yaman Khan<sup>1</sup>, as Governor of the city Ussa (which is the Pegu of today). Yaman Khan revolted, took the King prisoner, and had him put to death. He marched on the capital Pagan to capture it, but was defeated and killed by Kyanzittha, Sawlu's brother<sup>2</sup>. The nucleus of Muslim settlement in the interior of Burma dates from the reign of Kyanzittha who in his wars took many Indians captive, Muslims among them, and settled them on the land in various places throughout his kingdom.

For the period of the Pagan Dynasty, which ended in the year 1287 with the destruction of the capital, there is no information on the existence of a Muslim community in Burma except for the activities of these few individuals. There are even those who refuse to accept these sources as reliable historical argument, claiming, like Ba Shin that "as far as the seaways are concerned, the ties between Islam and Buddhist Burma were very limited. In the tenth century the Arabs and the Persians knew little about the regions north of the ports of Sumatra, except for the Andaman Islands"<sup>3</sup>. Considering the reports of the Muslim travelers who had mentioned Burma in their writings, and in view of the descriptions by European travelers of later periods who found flourishing Muslim trade colonies in Burma, it would appear that Ba Shin's doubts cannot be accepted. There were Muslims in Burma in the tenth to the thirteenth centuries, but details concerning their numerical strength and their status are not available. Perhaps this lack of source material merely bears witness to the possibility that they just did not constitute an important factor at that time.

In the year 1277 Burma was exposed to another Muslim force from the East, from China. The armies of Khublai Khan which over-ran Burma in that year were Turkish Muslims, under the command of Nasser ed-Din, the son of the Governor of Yunan. The Mongolian rulers of China during that period were not Muslims, although Muslims did occupy important positions in China. This temporary Muslim conquest left no mark upon Burma at all<sup>4</sup>, nor did the conquest that followed in 1283-1284.

The Tartars were content merely to post an occupation force in the city of Bhamo; several years later, in 1285-1287, they attacked Pagan and destroyed it. Thus was the dynasty brought to an end<sup>5</sup>.

European travelers visiting the coastal cities of Burma in the fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries described the colonies of Muslim merchants they found

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<sup>1</sup> Since there is no *r* in the Burmese language, his name is pronounced Yaman Khan (instead of Rahman Khan).

<sup>2</sup> Siddiq Khan, *op. cit.*, 413-414; for details of the revolt, its causes and progress, see W. S. Desai, *A Pageant of Burmese History* (Calcutta: Orient Longmans, 1961), pp. 17-18.

<sup>3</sup> Col. Ba Shin, "Coming of Islam to Burma, down to 1700 A. D.", Lecture before Asian History Congress (Unpublished, New Delhi, 1961). Colonel Ba Shin is a noted historian in Burma and a Muslim.

<sup>4</sup> The opinion of M. K. Rahman in his article, "Burma Muslims", *Annual Magazine*, Rangoon University Muslim Students Association, n. v. (1953), where he claims that the Tartar warriors settled in Burma and that it is they who are the ancestors of the Chinese Muslims (the Panthays) of present-day Burma, is unfounded. See below, p. 7, "Panthay".

<sup>5</sup> Col. Ba Shin, *op. cit.*; Siddiq Khan, *op. cit.*, pp. 414, 419. See also Maung Ko Gaffari, "First Muslims in Burma: Muslims during the Pagan Dynasty", *Muslim Digest* (Durban), IV (May, 1954).

there, and their activity. Athanasius Nitikin, a Russian merchant who traveled in Asia in 1470, described Pegu as a port settled by "Indian Dervishes". In using the term, "Dervishes", he apparently meant Muslims. The English traveler, Ralph Fitch, who visited Burma from December, 1586, to January, 1587, described the trade of its ports thus: "... We went to Dela, which is a pretty city with a fine harbor. Ships sail from there to Malacca, Mecca and many other places ... From Dela we went to Cirion [the Syriam of today], which is a good town with a convenient port leading to the sea, whence many ships arrive from Mecca, Malacca, Sumatra and various other places. There the ships anchor, unload their cargoes and send them to Pegu"<sup>1</sup>. "To Cirion, the port of Pegu, come ships from Mecca with woollens, ivory, velvet, opium, etc."<sup>2</sup> Dela maintained lively commercial ties with Malacca on the one hand and with Mokka on the other up until the middle of the eighteenth century. Even today Muslim villages still exist in Twante, in Syriam and their surroundings, whose beginnings date back to that period<sup>3</sup>. The Portuguese traveler, Duarte Barbosa, who visited India in the years 1501-1516, mentions the commerce carried on between India and Pegu by Muslims, infidels (Hindus?), and Christians. He gives a detailed list of goods and mentions that the ships' route went from China via Molucca, Malacca, Sumatra, Pegu, Bengal, and Ceylon to the Red Sea. Many Muslims live in Pegu. "Moorish" ships export from Pegu sugar, lacquer, and rubies and import cottons, silks, opium, copper, silver, herbs, medicaments, etc. He also mentions Martaban, which then belonged to Pegu, as a city where Muslims live<sup>4</sup>. About Tenasserim, whose importance as a port to southeast Asia increased in the fifteenth century, he says that there are "many Muslim merchants and non-believers. They have many ships which sail to Bengal, Malacca and to many other places"<sup>5</sup>.

Tenasserim and Mergui were also known in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries to European sailors who described them as Muslim cities trading with Malacca, Bengal, and Mecca<sup>6</sup>. Another item of importance in which there was a brisk trade in Burma was the large clay vessels from Martaban and from Pegu, known severally as "Pegu jars" or "Martaban jars" or simply "Martaban". These jars were used on the ships to store water and food. The Arab traveler, Ibn Baṭṭūṭa of the fourteenth

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<sup>1</sup> Courtenay Locke, ed., *The First Englishmen in India* (London: George Routledge, 1930), p. 121.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 129. "Mecca" apparently means the port town of "Mokka". See also Siddiq Khan, *op. cit.*, p. 419.

<sup>3</sup> J. S. Furnivall and W. S. Morrison, *Insein District Gazetteer*, Vol. A (Rangoon, 1914), p. 43; J. S. Furnivall and W. S. Morrison, *Syriam District Gazetteer*, Vol. A (Rangoon, 1914), pp. 26, 38.

<sup>4</sup> J. S. Furnivall, *Europeans in Burma: The Early Portuguese*. Burma Research Society. Fiftieth Anniversary Publications no. 2 (Rangoon, 1960), pp. 61-64. Quotations from the translations of the Barbosa Memoirs by M. L. Dames, published by the Hakluyt Society, two volumes, 1918 and 1921. See also R. C. Majumdar, *The Delhi Sultanate* (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1960), p. 651.

<sup>5</sup> Furnivall, *Europeans in Burma*, p. 65. See also U Myo Min, *Old Burma as Described by Early Foreign Travellers* (Rangoon, 1947), p. 15.

<sup>6</sup> V. C. Scott O'Connor, *Mandalay and Other Cities of the Past in Burma* (London: Hutchinson, 1907), p. 405.

century, and the Portuguese Barbosa of the sixteenth century, both mention the Martaban jars that the Muslim seamen used.

“In the second half of the sixteenth century the importance of the city Bassein rose as a port for the export of wood. Ships loaded up there and carried the timber to Mecca [Mokka?] where the Turks were building their own ships”<sup>1</sup>. In addition to the export of wood, in the fifteenth to the nineteenth centuries, ship-building and ship-repair also developed as an industry in Burma; this owed to the plentiful supply of teak wood. Syriam, and later Dela and Rangoon, became important ship-building centers where vessels were built mostly for Arab and Armenian merchants<sup>2</sup>.

Despite the disruptions caused by the many wars of the Arakan kings, and by the Arakanese and Portuguese pirates against Bengal, regular trade along the routes of Arakan, Pegu, Tenasserim, Malacca, Mokka, the Persian Gulf, and the Maldive Islands continued during later periods as well<sup>3</sup>. Mergui, then ruled by the Siamese kingdom, was an important Muslim trade center during the seventeenth century; “... neither the Burmese nor the Siamese counted for much in the port ... , it was the Mahomedans, chiefly from India, who dominated the commercial situation ... Mergui was Siam’s port on the Bay of Bengal ... dealers lived at Ayudhya, Tenasserim and Mergui, who received from China and Japan goods in demand in India and Persia, or vice versa ... the dealers in this trade were Mahomedans from India and Persia, who had settled in Siam. Neither the Siamese nor the Burmese have ever possessed gifts comparable to the Indians for international commerce and navigation”<sup>4</sup>.

A British trader in Mergui, reporting in 1678, said: “The Mahomedans had worked up the trade with great ability. They controlled flourishing businesses and with their wealth had become so important that they held also the key administrative appointments ... the Governor of Mergui, the Viceroy of the Province of Tenasserim, and the Governors of all the principal towns on the overland route between Tenasserim and Ayudhya were either Indians or Persians”<sup>5</sup>.

These Muslims, mostly from southern India, were not acceptable to the native population. At the end of the seventeenth century, with the coming of the British

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<sup>1</sup> Radhakumud Mookerji, *Indian Shipping* (London: Longmans, Green, 1912), p. 202. See below, “Patkain”.

<sup>2</sup> Siddiq Khan, *op. cit.*, p. 421. Muslims built two ships for King Sane (1698–1714): the “Ilāhī” and the “Sulymāt”. The ship, “Ilāhī” in the year 1712, carried a diplomatic delegation from the King of Burma to the Mogul Emperor. The last King of Burma, Thibaw (1878–1885) had a royal yacht whose crew were Muslims (Siddiq Khan, *op. cit.*, XI [April, 1937], 261; Ba Shin, *op. cit.*). In 1824, during the British conquest of Rangoon, in the course of the first Anglo-Burmese war, the English found a ship in the shipyards of the city equipped with twenty-eight cannons that had been built for the Imam of Muskat. The British confiscated the ship and used it themselves (Siddiq Khan, *op. cit.*, X [July, 1936], quoting A. C. Snodgrass, *A Narrative of the Burmese War*, p. 290).

<sup>3</sup> Mookerji, *op. cit.*, p. 232.

<sup>4</sup> Maurice Collis, *Siamese White* (London: Faber and Faber, 1936), pp. 36–39. Collis served for many years in the civil service of Burma, and is noted for his many books on that country.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 40. The author offers no details at all about the British trader whom he quotes.



and the French to the area, most of the Muslims were removed from office and some were even massacred<sup>1</sup>.

Despite the influential positions of the Muslim traders in the Burmese ports (and in all the ports from the Red Sea to China), stringent regulations were imposed upon them by the Burmese kings. The local governors caused even more difficulties than the kings, through boycotts and other restrictive measures. Nevertheless, considerable communities of Muslim traders concentrated in the coastal towns of Burma. The main reason for this was that, although Burma itself and its commerce were of secondary trading importance, the Burmese ports were important for sea communications, situated as they were on the route of the Muslim ships plying between the ports of the Persian Gulf, the Red Sea, Coromandel, Malabar, Ceylon, the Spice Islands of the Malay archipelago, and China. The annoyances and persecutions of the city and port governors could be mitigated by bribery and gifts. The weather, the winds and the waves forced many ships to seek refuge in Burmese ports. Other ships came voluntarily for fresh food and water or for repairs and many Muslim sailors settled down in the Burmese ports. Ships caught in port before the beginning of the monsoon rains were not able to leave before the end of season; from mid-May until mid-November no trading vessels left Burma. With the passing of the years such long stays contributed toward the increase in the population. Many such Muslims caught in the coastal towns married Burmese women, as did other nationals who had arrived there in similar fashion. The Burmese governors actually encouraged temporarily settled foreigners to marry local women, but when they left, they were not allowed to take their wives or children with them. This custom is mentioned by foreign travelers as late as the eighteenth century<sup>2</sup>.

The descendants of these Arab, Persian and Indian Muslim traders formed the original nucleus of the "Burman Muslim" community which, in the days of the Burmese Kingdom, was known as the Pathee or Kala<sup>3</sup>. As the years passed the

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<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 294. See also pp. 54, 65, 67. Collis describes the district's inhabitants as a mixture of Burmese, Malays, Siamese, Arabs, Chinese, British, Portuguese, and Indians. The Arabs among them are the descendants of traders in Chinese porcelain ware and other merchandise with the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf (Maurice Collis, *Into Hidden Burma* [London: Faber and Faber, 1954], pp. 210, 214, 232).

<sup>2</sup> Siddiq Khan, *op. cit.*, pp. 422-423; D. G. E. Hall, "Studies in Dutch Relations with Arakan, Part I, Dutch Relations with King Thirithudhamma of Arakan", *Burma Research Society Fiftieth Anniversary Publications no. 2* (Rangoon, 1960), p. 72.

<sup>3</sup> The term *kala*, *kla*, *kula* is the Burmese term given to natives of the Indian subcontinent, but in time has come to embrace all foreigners from the West (Col. Henry Yule and A. C. Burnell, *Hobson-Jobson*, new ed. edited by William Crooke [London: John Murray, 1903], p. 495). The Burmese also use the term *kala* to designate Christians; to differentiate between them and the Muslims who are also called *kala*, the Christians were given the name "phringies" or "feringies", a term brought to Burma by Muslims from India (Bishop Bigandet, *An Outline of the History of the Catholic Burmese Mission: From the Years 1720 to 1887* Rangoon: Hanthawaddy Press, 1887, p. 3). The Burmans call their native Muslims "Pathikula" and their Hindus "Hindu-kula" (Yule and Burnell, *op. cit.*, p. 669). From here, it would seem, stem such names as Kaladan, Kalagon, Kalaywa, etc., given to Muslim villages established in the period of the Burmese kings. Europeans were generally spoken of as "kala-phyu" (white Indian). After the British conquest "kala" came to be a nickname of disgrace. At

number of Muslims in Burma increased, partly as a result of the growing numbers of descendants from mixed marriages and partly because of the arrival of growing numbers of Muslim traders and adventurers. There is no evidence that Islam gained a foothold in Burma through conversion, as happened in Malaya and Indonesia; its growth was due solely to immigration and the progeny of mixed marriages<sup>1</sup>.

The continued contact of Muslim traders with Burma from the ninth to the sixteenth centuries did leave some traces. It resulted in the infiltration into the Burmese vocabulary of some Arab and Persian words, mainly in the fields of navigation and trade. Some of these words have no parallel in the Burmese<sup>2</sup>, such as, for example, the title Nakhuda, "Captain", an expression that occurs often in the documents of the East India Company in connection with Burmese ports. Or, the title "Shahbandar", given to senior port officials and meaning "Head of the Port". Throughout the Indian Ocean, this title was given to officials vested with specific authority over foreign ships and traders, who were in fact senior customs officials. In Burmese ports, these positions were mostly held by Armenians and Muslims<sup>3</sup>.

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that time the Burmese stopped differentiating between the various kinds of "kala" and tended to include the Burmese Muslims as well in what had become a generic term; this was most distasteful to the Burmese Muslims since they do not look upon themselves as foreigners (Desai, *A Pageant of Burmese History*, p. 298; U Po Chai, *Ancient History of Burmese Moslems* [Rangoon, n. d.], pp. 13-14).

The origins of the word "Pathi" and its meaning are not known. Prof. G. H. Luce, formerly Professor of History at the University of Rangoon, believes that the word has its origin in the city, Posé (Pasai) in north Sumatra, which in the thirteenth to the fifteenth centuries had been an important commercial trading center, until Malacca usurped its place. Muslim traders from Sumatra plied their trade with Burma and hence the term that embraces Muslims in general. Another theory – that of Ba Shin – is that "Pathi" is a distortion of the word, "Parsi". "Parsi" in Burma was synonymous with "Muslim". In his opinion, this is also the origin of the Burmese "Panthay" which refers to Chinese Muslims living in Burma. "The word *Pan:si* as slave name is met with occasionally in old Burmese inscriptions ... If this word can be identified with the modern Burmese appellation *pan:se* (*panthay*) for the Chinese Muslim, one would like to assume that there were at least the Chinese Muslims in Burma during the later part of the Pagan dynasty" (Ba Shin, "Coming of Islam to Burma"). There is no other evidence to support this supposition on the presence of Chinese Muslims in Burma at so early a date.

In the Shan language, too, the Muslims are called Pasi (Yule and Burnell, *op. cit.*, p. 670).

There is an assumption that Patkain, the former name of the city Bassein, derives from the term "Pathi", and was so called because so many Muslims lived there (Sir A. C. Lothian, *A Handbook for Travellers in India, Pakistan, Burma and Ceylon* [London: John Murray, 1955], p. 562). In recent times a Muslim Communist organization tried to adopt this name anew, calling itself the Pathi Congress, in order to signify that the Muslims of Burma constitute a separate and special national minority (see below, Chapter iii, A).

<sup>1</sup> Siddiq Khan, *op. cit.*, p. 423.

<sup>2</sup> Ba Shin, *op. cit.* He presents a list of 19 Burmese words similar to these which, in his opinion, stem from the Arabic or the Persian.

<sup>3</sup> Siddiq Khan, *ibid.*, pp. 425–426. The author mentions, too, the theory that the port Syriam got its name from Muslim sailors who called it *Sir-i am*, meaning (the river's) *head*.

Another relic of that period is the number of temples built by Muslim sailors in various places along the coasts from India to Malaya. These buildings, known as *buddermokan*, are equally holy to Muslims, Hindus, Chinese, and Buddhists. They were built in memory of the saint Badr al-Din Awliyā', who is said to have appeared during the first half of the fifteenth century<sup>1</sup>. This Badr is worshipped as a spirit (Nat) by the Buddhist, as an inferior god (Deva) by the Hindus, as a spirit by the Chinese, and as a saint by the Muslim. His worship is the same as that accepted throughout the East for spirits and supernatural creatures, revered by the whole population regardless of religion. The worship symbolizes an ancient "universal" belief in the God of the Flood, introduced to Burma by Muslims and mixed with a variety of Hindu, Buddhist and animistic beliefs<sup>2</sup>.

In Burma there are several mosques of this type: One, in Akyab, apparently built in 1756; another in Sandoway, and a third on a small island of the Mergui Archipelago off the Tenasserim coast. Their principal devotees are sailors and fishermen. The architectural style, with minaret and cupola and the niche on the west side (*mihrab*)<sup>3</sup>, synthesizes the Burmese pagoda and the Muslim mosque. There are also graves of saints (*dargāh*) in Sandoway, Bassein, Syriam, and other places which are said to be of other saints and not of Badr al-Din Awliyā'. "The people who revered them hardly know anything about them except that they are the tombs of the Muslim saints of days gone by"<sup>4</sup>.

The Muslim sea monopoly in Asia and the period of Muslim history in Burma reviewed above came to an end at the beginning of the sixteenth century with the appearance of European sailors in the area. The Portuguese came first and after them the Dutch, the British and the French. As these newcomers assumed increasing control over Asian trade, the Muslims' trading positions were gradually usurped until, by the early 1600's, they had lost almost all importance. Nevertheless, in Burma they did continue in certain activities as an independent factor until the British completely consolidated their rule in India, in the nineteenth century.

Until the middle of the seventeenth century the East India Company did not deem it worthwhile to establish a trading post in Burma. At that time the British were satisfied with limited commercial contacts between the Coromandal coast and Pegu and Syriam, parallel to the Muslim trade on that route. In some cases their trade was even conducted by Muslim merchants. The British limited themselves mainly to the business of building and repairing ships and left the trade in rubies, gold, copper, lead, Martaban jars and especially lacquer – the principal goods of Burma – in the hands of Muslim, Armenian, and other merchants. The difficulties imposed on exports by the Burmese kings also contributed to the lack of interest by the British in Burma<sup>5</sup>. In addition to their trading between Burma and India, the Muslim

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The Burmese name for this port city was Than Hlyin. Siddiq Khan himself adds that this assumption has not yet been proven (p. 425).

<sup>1</sup> Sir Richard C. Temple, "Buddermokan", *JBRIS*, XV, pt. 1 (1925), 1-33, a detailed study of the subject. See also Rahman, "Burma Muslims", p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Temple, *op. cit.*

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*; Siddiq Khan, *op. cit.*, p. 425.

<sup>4</sup> Ba Shin, *op. cit.*

<sup>5</sup> D. G. E. Hall, *Early English Intercourse with Burma: 1587-1743* (London: Longmans, 1928), pp. 34, 87, 194; Siddiq Khan, *op. cit.*, XI (April, 1937), 259.

traders also fulfilled communication and messenger duties between the Dutch India Company and the Burmese kings; they supplied the same postal services for the British East India Company<sup>1</sup>.

In 1707, the Arab sailors in Syriam felt strong enough to hold the British vessel "Friendship", belonging to the East India Company, and to attack its sailors. The Company complained to the Burmese authorities in Syriam<sup>2</sup>. The appearance of the steamship put an end to the Muslim sea traffic with Burma, which transferred entirely to Europe, although even then Muslim vessels continued a limited coastal trade between Indian and Burmese ports<sup>3</sup>.

Well before the decline of Muslim shipping, important Muslim trading communities had settled in the coastal towns of Burma. The monk Sangermano who lived in Burma during the years 1763–1807, wrote that "the commerce is entirely concentrated in Rangoon, where it is exercised by the inhabitants, as well as by a number of Mahommedan Moors, some Armenians, few English, French and Portuguese, who have taken up their residence there"<sup>4</sup>.

Michael Symes, a British representative who came to negotiate with the King of Burma in 1795–96 and again in 1802, noted in his memoirs that Persians, Armenians, and Muslims had divided most of the trade in Rangoon among themselves<sup>5</sup>. The growing necessity to deal with a large number of foreigners, amongst them many Muslims, who had settled permanently in Burma, often moved the government to appoint selected persons of these communities to position connected with the control of trade and the contact with foreigners<sup>6</sup>.

Parallel with their commercial penetration in the coastal towns of Burma, the Muslims also settled in the interior of the kingdom. They came as mercenaries in the service of the Burmese kings and the local lords, or as prisoners of war. The army of King Anawratha (eleventh century) already boasted Indian units and bodyguards, Muslims apparently among them. During his attack on Martaban, capital of the Talaings, King Minkyiswasawke (1368–1401) encountered fierce resistance organized by two Muslim officers who were finally defeated. When Razadarit (1385–1423) besieged Dagon (the Rangoon of today), he succeeded in conquering the city only with the help of Muslim sailors. Razadarit met with difficulties because there were Indian mercenaries, apparently Muslims, also serving the other side<sup>7</sup>. "It is possible that Mahomedan shipmen, when hired to fight, used in Burma on a few occasions towards the end of the fifteenth century something that could be distinguished as a firearm"<sup>8</sup>. From the middle of the sixteenth century to the middle of the eighteenth,

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<sup>1</sup> M. Siddiq Khan, "Captain George Sorrel's Mission to the Court of Amarapura, 1793–4", *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Pakistan (JASP)* (Dacca), II (1957), 132–133; Capt. Hiram Cox, *Journal of a Residence in the Burman Empire and More Particularly at the Court of Amrapoorah* (London: Wassen and Whittaker, 1821), pp. 248, 405; Ba Shin, *op. cit.*

<sup>2</sup> Hall, *op. cit.*, p. 200; Siddiq Khan, "Muslim Intercourse", XI (April, 1937), 258.

<sup>3</sup> Siddiq Khan, *op. cit.*

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 259, quoting from Sangermano, *The Burmese Empire*, p. 176.

<sup>5</sup> Siddiq Khan, *op. cit.*, p. 261, quoting from Symes, *Second Embassy to Ava*, p. 198.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, quoting from *ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> Siddiq Khan, *op. cit.*, X (June, 1936), 426; Harvey, *op. cit.*, p. 112; B. R. Pearn, *A History of Rangoon* (Rangoon: American Baptist Mission Press, 1938), p. 18; H. R. Spearman *British Burma Gazetteer*, Vol. I (Rangoon, 1880), p. 262.

<sup>8</sup> Siddiq Khan, *op. cit.*, p. 426; Harvey, *History of Burma*, pp. 340–341.

Muslim riflemen and artillerymen, together with former Portuguese prisoners, served regularly in the Burmese army, generally in the bodyguard units<sup>1</sup>.

Tabinshweti (1531–1550) conquered the port of Martaban in 1541. Many Muslim residents of the town took active part in the defense against him<sup>2</sup>. In the year 1564 his successor, Bayinnaung (1550–1581), encountered Muslim artillerymen who, together with the Portuguese, were helping the King of Siam to defend his capital Ayuthia against the siege of the Burmese King. In his second war against Siam (1568–1569), Bayinnaung brought his own Muslim and Portuguese artillerymen from India. These latter settled in Burma and married Burmese women<sup>3</sup>.

Generally speaking, the Burmese kings who forced their Buddhist subjects to adhere to Buddhism, were tolerant toward foreigners. Bayinnaung was the first Burmese king to show religious intolerance toward non-Buddhists. In 1559 he saw the Muslim community in Pegu slaughtering goats and fowl. He forbade the practice and forced them to listen to Buddhist sermons. It is possible that he enforced other compulsory measures since there were some Muslims who converted. He also forbade Muslims to slaughter cattle for the "Sacrifice Feast"<sup>4</sup>.

King Alaungpaya (1752–1760) conquered Syriam in 1756; there were many Muslims among his prisoners. They were forced to serve in his army under the command of Europeans, also prisoners. Four years later he attacked Ayudhya but was repelled by European and Muslim artillery ships of the Siamese army that were sailing the rivers around the city. Alaungpaya, too, forbade Muslims to kill cattle<sup>5</sup>.

Muslims attained eminence in the Burmese court not only in military service but also in administrative posts. During the days of King Pagan-Min (1846–1853), a Muslim was appointed governor of Amarapura, then the kingdom's capital. He was vested with wide authority by the king for which he paid large sums of money. This money was then squeezed from the population. After ruling for two years, the governor was executed<sup>6</sup>. British Henry Yule who visited Burma in 1855 wrote that the governor of Pagan was also a Muslim who was executed<sup>7</sup>. Muslim eunuchs, too, were a part of the king's entourage, along with the bodyguards; they also acted as royal couriers<sup>8</sup>. In their contacts with foreign lands the Burmese kings employed the Persian language. For that purpose they kept Muslim interpreters in the capital

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<sup>1</sup> Siddiq Khan, *op. cit.*

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, XI (April, 1937), 256; Harvey, *op. cit.*, p. 157; Sir J. George Scott, *Burma: A Handbook of Practical Information* (London: Alexander Moring, 1911), p. 177.

<sup>3</sup> Harvey, *op. cit.*, p. 169; Khin Khin, "Marriage in the Burmese Muslim Community", p. 33.

<sup>4</sup> Siddiq Khan, *op. cit.*, p. 257; Desai, *op. cit.*, p. 69; Sir Arthur P. Phayre, *History of Burma ... from the Earliest Time to the End of the First War with British India* (London: Grubner, 1883), p. 110; Ba Shin, *op. cit.*

<sup>5</sup> Harvey, *op. cit.*, p. 241; Desai, *A Pageant of Burmese History*, p. 91.

<sup>6</sup> Capt. Henry Yule, *A Narrative of the Mission Sent by the Governor-General of India to the Court of Ava in 1855 ...* (London: Smith, Elder, 1858), p. 167; Siddiq Khan, *op. cit.*, p. 261

<sup>7</sup> Yule, *op. cit.*, p. 228.

<sup>8</sup> Cox, *op. cit.*, pp. 88, 336. King Bagyidaw who was dethroned after the first Anglo-Burmese war, sent a Muslim emissary to the British to ask for their help in regaining his throne. The legal adviser of King Bodawpaya who preceded him had sent the same Muslim on a secret mission to Delhi (Desai, *op. cit.*, pp. 190–191).

and in the principal cities who knew the Persian language well. These interpreters also accompanied Burmese delegations on visits to neighbouring countries<sup>1</sup>. Correspondence between the British and the Burmese during the first Anglo-Burmese war (1824–1826) was likewise conducted in Persian<sup>2</sup>.

Henry Yule provides eye-witness reports on the role of the Muslims in the Burmese army in the middle of the nineteenth century: “The artillery force in *personnel* amounts to 500 men. About eighty of these are natives of India who have settled in Amara-poora. The rest are Burmese, Munnipooris, and *Pathis*, or native Mahomedans. The Munnipooris and people from India receive monthly two baskets of rice; the Burmese have land free of rent; and the *Pathis*, who were enrolled in the corps by the present king, have exemption from certain occasional payments”<sup>3</sup>. Muslims also participated in the fighting of the second Anglo-Burmese war (1852)<sup>4</sup>.

In the days of the penultimate Burmese King Mindon (1853–1878), there were still thousands of Muslims who were soldiers in the king’s army and who held various administrative posts. Muslim infantry and artillery distinguished themselves in the battle of Minhla (1885) against the British, which was followed by the fall of Mandalay<sup>5</sup>.

In the sixteenth century the Burmese kings started settling Muslims in Upper Burma, near Myedu in the District of Shwebo. These villages still exist today. The settlers were mostly Muslim prisoners who had been brought there at various periods. The first groups were Muslim prisoners from among the defenders of Pegu in 1539 and 1599, and from the raids of Arakan by Tabinshweti in 1546 and 1549. King Anaukpetlun (1605–1628) conquered Syriam in 1613 from the Portuguese adventurer De Brito who had tried to proclaim himself king of the city. The Portuguese and the Muslim soldiers, as well as the sailors who were for the most part Muslims who had come to help De Brito, were taken prisoner and were then settled in Myedu and elsewhere in the neighbouring districts – Sagaing, Yamethin, and Kyaukse. They received lands as payment for their services to the king. They had regularly to supply 150 musketeers to the palace guard and this service was passed on by inheritance<sup>6</sup>. King Sane raided Sandoway in 1707 and brought several thousand Muslim prisoners to Myedu. In 1708 a group of 3000 Muslim refugees from Arakan settled in the region. They were distributed among the districts of Shwebo, Yamethin, and Taungoo, and were also forced to supply palace bodyguards as payment for

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<sup>1</sup> Michael Symes, *Journal of his Second Embassy to the Court of Ava in 1802*, ed. D. G. E. Hall (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1955), p. 403; Scott, *op. cit.*, pp. 152–243.

<sup>2</sup> Desai, *op. cit.*, p. 155.

<sup>3</sup> Yule, *op. cit.*, p. 247.

<sup>4</sup> Maung Ko Gaffari, “The First Muslim Community of Rangoon”, *Guardian Monthly* (Rangoon), VII (Oct., 1960), 45. In this war the Muslim-Arakanese unit was outstanding, under the leadership of Abd al-Karim known by the alias U Bo Maung Gale. He was taken captive by the British but received an honorary title from them.

<sup>5</sup> A highly detailed account of the place of the Muslims in the last years of the Kingdom of Burma is to be found in U Ba U, [*Mandalay Centenary: History of Burmese Muslims*] (Mandalay, 1959) (Burmese.)

<sup>6</sup> Siddiq Khan, *op. cit.*, pp. 257–258; Harvey, *op. cit.*, pp. 189, 348; Ba Shin, *op. cit.*; R. S. Wilkie, *Yamethin District Gazetteer*, Vol. A (Rangoon, 1934), p. 44; A. Williamson, *Shwebo District Gazetteer*, Vol. A (Rangoon, 1929), p. 64.

the land they received<sup>1</sup>. Another group of Muslims from north India settled in the districts of Shwebo and Yamethin during the days of King Alaungpaya (1752–1760). They came to offer military service<sup>2</sup>. The Burmese took care to distribute the Muslim settlers in small groups and in many villages so as to prevent the formation of a strong Muslim force which might constitute a threat to the kingdom. The Muslims of these regions and their descendants are to this day called Myedu Kala or Kulabyo (apart from the name Pathee, given to Muslims in Burma in general). In the population census taken during British times the Myedu Muslims were registered as a separate group. (See Appendix A).

The Muslims quickly assimilated into their Burmese surroundings, gave up their own language, customs and dress, but retained their religion<sup>3</sup>. By the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth there were already Muslim communities of considerable size in all the principal cities of Burma. They generally lived in separate quarters for foreigners called *kaladan*, “foreign dwellings”. They were controlled by special officials bearing the title *Kalawun*. On the whole, the foreigners enjoyed wide religious tolerance. The Burmese were not interested in their internal organization nor in their religious lives, nor did they try to convert them to Buddhism. Many churches and mosques were built without any interference wherever there was a foreign community. These facts aroused the attention and interest of travelers visiting Burma in the nineteenth century<sup>4</sup>.

A case of Muslim persecution during the reign of Bodawpaya (1782–1819) stands out against this background of tolerance. There are two versions of the story: One, that recounted by an Englishman called Gouger who was imprisoned in Burma for two years during the reign of Bagyidaw (1819–1837)<sup>5</sup>, successor to the Bodawpaya mentioned above; the other, according to the tradition of the Myedu Muslims themselves. According to Gouger, the king was once suddenly overcome by religious doubts and decided to examine the truth of Islam. He invited the dignitaries of the large Muslim community in Ava, the capital: “... to their consternation, the flesh of the hated animal was placed ready-cooked before them, and they were commanded, without further ceremony, to fall-to at once ... they did all partake of the abominable pig, and His Majesty’s doubt remained unsatisfied.”<sup>6</sup> As against this version, the Myedu Muslim tradition has it that the Moulvis refused to partake of the flesh of the pig and were executed forthwith<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Wilkie, *op. cit.*, pp. 44–45; Williamson, *op. cit.*, p. 64; Ba Shin, *op. cit.*

<sup>2</sup> Meer Sulaiman, “Muslims in Burma: 1872–1931”, *Islamia School Annual*, I (March, 1935), pp. 35–39; Siddiq Khan, *op. cit.*, p. 257.

<sup>3</sup> Wilkie, *op. cit.*, pp. 44–45, 106–107; Williamson, *op. cit.*, p. 64.

<sup>4</sup> Symes, *op. cit.*, pp. 160, 215; see also Siddiq Khan, *op. cit.*, pp. 261–262.

<sup>5</sup> The American missionary, Adoniram Judson, described Bagyidaw also as one who despised Muslims (Desai, *op. cit.*, p. 113).

<sup>6</sup> Henry Gouger, *Personal Narrative of Two Years’ Imprisonment in Burmah* (London: John Murray, 1860), p. 97; Harvey, *op. cit.*, pp. 276–277, copies this version, and adds dramatic details about the threat of the king that he would have the Muslims put to death: “They looked at the pork, they looked at the king, they thought of the executioner’s sword outside, and they ate the pork. So evidently there was nothing in Mohamedanism and His Majesty continued to build pagodas.” Harvey gives no source for this addition.

<sup>7</sup> Siddiq Khan, *op. cit.*, p. 263. A legend alive to this day among the Muslims of the region

A detailed description of the Muslims in Amarapura, doubtless typical of the Muslim communities in Burma in the nineteenth century, is found in the memoirs of Captain Henry Yule, secretary to Major Arthur Phayre who was Commissioner of Pegu (conquered by the British during the second Anglo-Burmese war). In 1855 Yule was sent to the King of Ava as Minister of the British Governor General of India:

There are in Amarapoorā some fifteen or sixteen houses of Moguls, as they are called, engaged in trade with Rangoon and Calcutta. These are Mahomedans of Western Asia, generally originating from the cities of the Persian Gulf and sometimes even from Bokhara<sup>1</sup>.

The Muslim community congregated mainly in a special ward in the city, though many of its members are also diffused among the miscellaneous population.

These people, called in the Burmese language *Pathee*, are numerous in Amarapoorā; so much so that a respectable Indian Mussulman, not deficient in sense, saw nothing absurd in telling me that there were 20000 families of them in the city. Probably 8000 or 9000 *souls* would be a better guess at their numbers.

There are some few Burmese converts to Mahomedanism, generally from the influence of a Moslem husband or wife; converts not being molested in any way by the Government. But the majority of the professors of this faith are supposed to be of Western descent. Some families believe themselves to have been settled in Burma for five or six hundred years; other are descended from Mussulmans of India or Western Asia, whom chance or trade has brought hither as voluntary emigrants in later years; other from Mahomedans of Aracan or Munnipoor, and perhaps Kachar<sup>2</sup>, forcibly deported by the Burmans during their inroads into those countries. But all having intermarried with the natives they are undistinguishable at sight from other Burmans, except those whose family migration is of late date, and who possess, it struck me, a very peculiar and distinct physiognomy.

They wear the Burman dress, speak the Burman language, and are Burmese in nearly all their habits. Their women of all ranks go unveiled, and clothe as scantily as the rest of their countrywomen. For the sanctity of the *purda*, elsewhere so unflinching an accompaniment of Islam, is here entirely unknown.

Their marriages are generally regularly contracted, according to the Mahomedan form of *nikah*. But the engagement, instead of being made after the fashion of India and all Western Asia, through parents or go-betweens, is arranged in the good old English manner between the parties principally concerned, and the lady's parents are not consulted till the important question has been put and answered satisfactorily. This system of things seemed to the Hindustani Mahomedans of our escort grossly indecorous and heretical.

Most of the people can repeat their prayers in Arabic; without understanding them, indeed: but this would apply as truly to nine-tenths of the Mahomedans of India. They are pretty regular in attending the Friday prayers in the mosques,

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tells that the bodies were not buried for several days. A great storm blew up and caused the king to regret his deed. He called the Muslims to him and commanded them to bury the bodies. They are buried in Amarapura and are considered "mujahids" (martyrs).

<sup>1</sup> Yule, *op. cit.*, pp. 141 seqq.

<sup>2</sup> The region of Assam in India.



but the daily *namāz* is little regarded. There is said to be one Moulvee in the city who occasionally preaches, or expounds in the vernacular.

The Burmese practice of tattooing the thighs and loins is unusual among the Mahomedans, but some of them do give into this also. Most commonly too they pluck out the hairs of the beard, as the Burmans do, until they become old.

As might be expected they are very ignorant sons of the Faith, and in the indiscriminating character of their diet are said to be no better than their neighbours; so that our strict Mussulmans from India were not willing to partake of their hospitalities.

The Moguls and others, who at the present day settle in the country; intermarrying with these people, speedily sink into the same practical heterodoxies. But nothing in the life and conversation of their Burmese co-religionists seemed so offensive to the Mahomedans of our escort as the free dress and habits of the women, who are said to be even admitted to prayer in the same mosques with the men. These habits were such a gross violation of all Moslem propriety, that no man, they considered, was fit to lead the devotions of a congregation of believers who allowed such laxities in his family.

Most of the Mahomedans of Amarapoorā, so far as they know anything about the matter, are Soonnīs; but there are some Sheeas, and these have an Imambara for the deposit of the Tazeeas, or gay shrines, carried about by that sect on their great festival of the Mohurrum.

Every indigenous Mussulman has two names ... As a son of Islam he is probably Abdul Kureem; but as a native of Burma, and for all practical purposes, he is Mounḡ-yo or Shwepo.

In passing along the streets occupied by these people we could not have recognized anything to distinguish them from the other Burmans, had it not been for the little naked urchins who, seeing us to be foreigners, and probably accustomed to regard most foreigners as brethren in the faith, used to run out after us merrily shouting "Salām Alikām!".

Mahomedans are found sparsely in the rural districts as well as in the capital, and have occasionally their humble mosque, where five or six families are found together.

The number of their mosques in the capital has been stated to me variously from forty up to one hundred and twenty. I believe the former to be near the truth<sup>1</sup>.

Most of these mosques must be very insignificant structures, but as they often closely resemble one class of flat-roofed Burmese idol-houses, they may easily be passed without notice. The largest mosque is a brick building of considerable size in the main street of the western suburb. With its detached minār it forms a very curious and tasteful adaption of Burmese architecture to a foreign worship showing a good deal of variation from the usual details in bolder and more relieved scroll-work, etc., but all very successfully executed in plaster. Internally the building is a square ball, the roof being supported by numerous timber pillars. The usual niches at the *Kibla* end of the building are adorned with mirror and gilding, in something of the Burmese style. The top of the minār is a beautiful

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<sup>1</sup> For purposes of comparison: from 70 000 to 80 000 Muslims live in Rangoon today and they have about forty mosques to serve their needs!

canopy of carved teak, shaped like an imperial crown. Beside it stands a high mast, intended probably for illumination, but bearing a considerable resemblance to the sacred flagstaves of the Buddhists, and evidently the result of a hankering after pagan adornments<sup>1</sup>.

There is no doubt that similar Muslim communities existed in most other cities of Burma<sup>2</sup>. The first mosque in Rangoon was apparently built in 1826, after the signing of the Yandabo agreement at the end of the first Anglo-Burmese war. It was destroyed in 1852 when the city was conquered for a second time by the British. Arakanese Muslims who settled in the city at that time built the "Arakanese Mosque" which is the oldest one standing in the town today. The mosque of the Sufi order Tawajjah was also built during the same period<sup>3</sup>.

King Mindon (1853–1878), known to be tolerant and charitable toward other religions, built two churches and a missionary school for the Christians and helped the Muslims to build mosques. He decided to build a hostel in Mecca for the comfort of Burmese Muslim pilgrims and at his own expense sent Burmese Muslims with money to erect the building which exists to this day<sup>4</sup>. When he died, representatives of all the foreign communities, including Muslims were invited to pay him homage as he lay in state<sup>5</sup>.

In the last period of Burma's history prior to the British conquest, from 1795 until the fall of Mandalay in 1885, the Muslims were active in state affairs between the British and the Burmese kings. During those years, several diplomatic missions were sent to the Burmese kings from the Governor General of India, for the purpose – not achieved – of strengthening friendship ties with Burma. These overtures were resisted by the population of the Burmese ports, especially by the Muslim and Armenian traders who feared British competition. The Muslims led a fierce anti-British propaganda campaign claiming that the Indian experience proved that British trading would be followed inevitably by military conquest. All the British representatives who visited Burma complained of harrassment by Muslim traders.

Captain Hiram Cox, sent to the Burmese capital in 1796 as representative of the Governor General of India, complained of anti-British intrigues by various court circles, Muslims among them, and of the imprisonment of an English trader<sup>6</sup>. He was also told "that the king had lately given the exclusive privilege, or monopoly, of the trade of Rangoon to a native Mahomedan, who had left court five or six days before my arrival; and that his majesty was somewhat embarrassed by my coming on that account. I had heard of the intrigues of this Mahomedan before I left Rangoon this was one violation of the promised freedom of trade"<sup>7</sup>. The name of that Muslim

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<sup>1</sup> Yule, *op. cit.*, pp. 150–152.

<sup>2</sup> Captain Hiram Cox, who visited the city Prome as early as 1797, wrote: "a large proportion of the inhabitants I was told were Mahometans" (Cox, *Journal of a Residence*, p. 28).

<sup>3</sup> Maung Ko Gaffari, "The First Muslim Community of Rangoon", p. 45.

<sup>4</sup> Khin Khin Su, "The Acculturation of the Burmese Muslims" (Unpublished master's thesis, Rangoon University, 1960), p. 9; Siddiq Khan, *op. cit.*, pp. 264–265; U Ba U, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

<sup>5</sup> Desai, *op. cit.*, p. 220.

<sup>6</sup> Cox, *op. cit.*, pp. 273, 301, 314–315, 365.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 57.

was Boodhan. British traders and other foreigners asked Cox for "British protection" and support in their claims against the special trade concessions granted to Boodhan<sup>1</sup>.

On his first mission to Burma in 1795–1796, Michael Symes complained of various Rangoon traders, amongst them Muslims, who were trying very hard to push the British out of Burma. In Amarapura he discovered that Armenians and Muslims were attempting to undermine his mission and besmirch his reputation. The Muslims claimed before the king that it was not befitting his honour to confer with a representative sent by a Governor General instead of by the British king. They even advocated that the Burmese and Indians join forces in order to expel the British. It was the Muslims who spread rumour that a French fleet was on its way to Burma and that the end of British rule in India was imminent<sup>2</sup>.

Symes also encountered Muslim enmity during his second mission to the Burmese court at Ava in 1802. The Muslims kept the Burmese king informed of events in India and of the difficulties encountered there by the British. On December 1, 1802, Symes wrote in his diary that "two principal merchants, one Muhammad Shoffie, the other Jacob Aquizar, declare themselves ready to advance money to promote the French interests" against the British. Symes thought that "it cannot be denied that the King is strongly prejudiced against the English nation, and on the contrary much inclined to the French ... The Moormen (Indian Mahomedan traders), more than any others, instil into his mind and foment these sentiments ... the counsels of the Moormen have made a strong impression on the minds of the King and his eldest son"<sup>3</sup>.

Muslim anti-British propaganda did not diminish even after the defeat of the Mahrattas and the Pindars in India in 1818 and 1819, nor even after the defeat of the Burmese themselves in the first Anglo-Burmese war in 1824–1826. The East India Company was pre-occupied in warring against the Afghans in 1839–1840; this circumstance was exploited by the Burman Muslims who tried to damage British prestige at the Burmese court.

Major Burney, the Company's representative in Ava from 1826 to 1840, reported on a conversation he had with the king in 1830 and summed up as follows: "Whilst he is in this humour, he will be more likely to be instigated by his flatterers and the Mahomedans, our bitter enemies at this Court, into ordering measures which may impose upon us the necessity of going to war"<sup>4</sup>. During the Afghan Wars, Major Burney reported: "In Burma however, and particularly at the capital, rumours of British disasters in Afghanistan began to be spread by Mahomedans as early as April, 1839, when the British armies were meeting with nothing but success everywhere, These false reports were dinned into the King's ear ... Aga Hassan, the King's Indian doctor, and certain others were pouring into the King's ears accounts of our disaster in every direction ... One Ally Khan informed (April, 1839) the King, and the report was solemnly confirmed by a Burmese Mahomedan named Babi, that 100 Europeans, with their ears removed, had been sent away by the Afghans, that Calcutta was deserted, and all officers, with the exception of one clerk,

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<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*; see also Scott, *op. cit.*, p. 225; Siddiq Khan, *op. cit.*, p. 259.

<sup>2</sup> Scott, *op. cit.*, p. 210; Siddiq Khan, *op. cit.*, pp. 263–264.

<sup>3</sup> Symes, *op. cit.*, pp. 235–236; see also: *Ibid.*, p. 198.

<sup>4</sup> W. S. Desai, *History of the British Residency in Burma, 1826-1840* (Rangoon: University of Rangoon Press, 1939), p. 110.

had proceeded towards the north to assist in the defence of the country. His Majesty enquired what the number of British troops stationed on the Burma frontiers was, and on Babi telling him that it was no more than 6400, His Majesty remarked, "Well, that is not many at any rate". Babi added that the British had not another man to spare to send against Burma"<sup>1</sup>.

The Muslims also spread the rumour that Dost Muhamad of Afghanistan had sent a letter to the King of Burma, describing his own operations and suggesting a triple alliance between Afghanistan, Burma and Nepal to fight the British and expel them<sup>2</sup>.

Although the king's representative in Rangoon tried to explain to the king that the rumours spread by the Muslims about the British defeat in Afghanistan were untrue, it seems that the king, having plans of his own to fight the British, was quite pleased to hear such reports<sup>3</sup>. The Burmese kings did not show much understanding in international relations nor did they assess correctly the British force against which they were daring to fight. Most of the reports and rumours they received came from Muslim and other sources entertaining fierce hatred for the British, who were using their influence to push the country into hostilities<sup>4</sup>. Muslim activity was largely responsible for the obstinacy of the Burmese kings in their contacts with the British, in addition to their own desire for revenge after the defeat of the 1824-1826 war. The second Anglo-Burmese war broke out in 1852 and resulted in Lower Burma being conquered by the British. This new area, together with Arakan and Tenasserim which had been annexed by the British at the end of the first Anglo-Burmese war, constituted the Burmese Province subject to the central rule of the British in India.

The Burmese had not learned their lesson; influenced by the Muslims, they disrupted the diplomatic mission headed by Major Arthur Phayre which came to Ava in 1855<sup>5</sup>. Yule, Phayre's secretary, wrote: "The feeling both of the Armenians and Moguls in Ava appears to have been always one of bitter jealousy and dislike to us. In our absence, they felt themselves the representatives of Western knowledge and civilization, but by our presence they are cast into the shade, and resent it"<sup>6</sup>. The third Anglo-Burmese war was fought in 1885 resulting in the rest of Burma being conquered by the British.

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<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 402-403.

<sup>2</sup> Siddiq Khan, *op. cit.*, pp. 264-265.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*; Desai, *op. cit.*, p. 436.

<sup>4</sup> B. R. Pearn (*A History of Rangoon* [Rangoon: American Baptist Mission Press, 1939], p. 151) tells about a Muslim merchant, Mirza Muhamad Ali, who informed the Burmese Governor of Rangoon that the British intended to invade; see also Gouger, *op. cit.*, p. 131.

<sup>5</sup> Yule, *op. cit.*, p. 79.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 142.

## *Muslim Settlement in Arakan*

The Arakan District, extending some 350 miles along the eastern shores of the Bay of Bengal, is cut off from Burma by a range of near impassable mountains which were an obstacle against permanent Muslim conquest but permitted occasional inroads and contacts between Bengal and Burma. The northern part of Arakan, today called the "Mayu District", was the point of contact with East Bengal. These geographical facts explain the separate historical development of that area – both generally and in terms of its Muslim population – until it was conquered by the Burmese Kingdom at the close of the eighteenth century.

In addition, from the very beginning of Muslim commercial shipping activity in the Bay of Bengal, the Muslim trading ships reached the ports of Arakan just as they did the ports of Burma proper. And as in Burma so, too, in Arakan is there a long tradition of old Indian settlement.

Bengal became Muslim in 1203, but this was the extreme eastern limit of Islamic overland expansion (although the Malay peninsula and the Indonesian archipelago were Islamized much later by missionaries and merchants who came by sea). In northern Arakan close overland ties were formed with East Bengal. The resulting cultural and political Muslim influence was of great significance in the history of Arakan<sup>1</sup>. Actually, Arakan served to a large extent as a bridgehead for Muslim penetration to other parts of Burma, although the Muslims never attained the same degree of importance elsewhere as they did in Arakan.

The influence of Bengal on Arakan was negligible up to 1430. This independent kingdom turned westward, toward Bengal, as a result of the growing power of the Burmese Court of Ava. In 1404, the King of Arakan, Naramekhla (1404–1434), was forced to flee the Burmese to Gaur, capital of the Bengal Sultanate, which 86 years earlier had already become independent of the Mogul Emperor in Delhi. Ahmad Shāh, Sultan of Gaur, welcomed the refugee. Naramekhla remained at the court of Gaur, where he served as an officer in Ahmad Shāh's army and fought in his wars. In 1430, Ahmad Shāh's successor, Nādir Shāh, granted Naramekhla's request and gave him an army under the command of a general named Veli Khān, in order to regain his throne. This general betrayed him, but some time after that Naramekhla succeeded in reconquering Arakan with the help of a second army supplied by Nādir Shāh. Upon his return, Naramekhla founded a new city, Mrohaung (also called Mrauk-U), which remained the capital until 1785 when Arakan was conquered by Burma. Naramekhla's Muslim soldiers who came with him from Bengal, settled in a village near Mrohaung and built the Sandikhlan mosque, which still exists today. Muslim influence in Arakan, then, may be said to date from 1430, the year of Naramekhla's return. As a result of the close land and sea ties between

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<sup>1</sup> D. G. E. Hall, *A History of South-East Asia* (London: Macmillan, 1958), p. 328.

the two countries which continued to exist for a long time thereafter, the Muslims played a decisive role in the history of the Arakan Kingdom<sup>1</sup>.

Narameikhla ceded certain territory to the Sultan of Bengal and recognized his sovereignty. As proof of his vassalage and despite being Buddhist, he and his heirs took Muslim titles in addition to the Arakanese titles. He also introduced Nādir Shāh's system of coins bearing the *kalima* as used in Bengal since the Muslim conquest of 1203. Later on he struck his own coins which had the name of the king in Burmese letters on one side and his Muslim title in Persian on the other<sup>2</sup>. Arakan was thus subject to Bengal until 1531<sup>3</sup>. Her kings received their Muslim titles from Bengal sultans. Nine vassal kings received Muslim titles<sup>4</sup>. Even after becoming independent of the Bengal sultans, the Arakan kings continued the custom of using the Muslim title in addition to the Burmese or Pali title. This was because they not only wished to be thought of as sultans in their own right, in imitation of the Moguls, but also because there were Muslims in ever-larger numbers among their subjects<sup>5</sup>. Court ceremonies and administrative methods followed the customs of the Gaur and Delhi sultanates. There were eunuchs, harems, slaves and hangmen; and many expressions in use at court were Mogul. Muslims also held eminent posts despite the fact that the kingdom remained Buddhist<sup>6</sup>.

The Arakan Kingdom was closely connected with the Muslim territories to the west in other ways as well. After the death of Narameikhla, Arakan started expanding northward and there were regular Arakan forays and raids on Bengal<sup>7</sup>. Early in the seventeenth century the Portuguese reached the shores of Bengal and Arakan. At that time, too, the raiding Arakanese ships reached the source of the Ganges. They came into contact with the Portuguese and permitted them to establish bases for

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<sup>1</sup> R. C. Majumdar, *Hindu Colonies in the Far East* (Calcutta: General Printers and Publishers, 1944), pp. 202, 205–206.

<sup>2</sup> M. S. Collis and San Shwe Bu, "Arakan's Place in the Civilization of the Bay", *JBRJ*, XV, no. 1 (1925), 39–43; Harvey, *History of Burma*, pp. 138–139; Siddiq Khan, *op. cit.*, XI (April, 1937), 248–249; Hall, *op. cit.*, pp. 329–330; Ba Shin, "Coming of Islam to Burma".

<sup>3</sup> Hall, *op. cit.*, p. 330; Ba Shin, *op. cit.*; Harvey, *op. cit.*, p. 140; Siddiq Khan, *op. cit.*, p. 250.

<sup>4</sup> (1) Min Khari (1434–1459), Ali Khan; (2) Basawpyu (1459–1482), Kalamasya (Kalima Shah); (3) Dawlya (1482–1492), Mokhusya (Mahammad Shah); (4) Basawnyo (1492–1494), Mahamosya (Muhammad Shah); (5) Yanaung (1494), Norisya (Nuri Shah); (6) Salingathu (1494–1501), Sakkokdolasya (Sheik Abdulla Shah); (7) Minyaza (1501–1523), Illisya (Ilias Shah); (8) Minsaw-o (1525), Jalasya (Jalal Shah); (9) Thatasa (1525–1531), Ilisya (Ali Shah) (Ba Shin, *op. cit.*).

<sup>5</sup> The independent Arakan rulers who still used Muslim titles were Minbin (1531–1553), Zabauk Shah; Minapalaung (1571–1593), Sikander Shah; Minyazapyi (1593–1612), Selim Shah; Thirithudama (1622–1638), Selim Shah II (Sir Arthur P. Phayre, *History of Burma ... British India* [London: Trübner, 1883], pp. 77–78, 173; Ba Shin, *op. cit.*; Siddiq Khan, *op. cit.*, pp. 248–249; Collis and San Shwe Bu, *op. cit.*, p. 43; Harvey, *op. cit.*, p. 140; Hall, *op. cit.*, p. 330; Sebastian Manrique, *Travels of Fray ... 1629–1643*, Vol. I, *Arakan* [Oxford: Hakluyt Society, 1927], p. xxii).

<sup>6</sup> Ba Shin, *op. cit.*; Siddiq Khan, *op. cit.*, p. 250; Collis and San Shwe Bu, *op. cit.*, p. 42; U Myo Min, *op. cit.*, pp. 73–74.

<sup>7</sup> Majumdar, *The Delhi Sultanate*, pp. 203, 211–212.

their operations and also granted them commercial concessions. In return, the Portuguese helped to defend the Arakan boundaries. In 1576 Akbar the Great, Emperor of Delhi, was efficiently ruling Bengal so that Arakan was now facing the Mogul Empire itself and not only Bengal. The Portuguese knowledge of firearms and artillery was more advanced than that of the Moguls, and Arakan profited much thereby<sup>1</sup>. Joint Arakan-Portuguese raids on Bengal continued until the end of the eighteenth century and ceased entirely only with the strengthening of the British naval force in the Bay of Bengal.

The capture and enslavement of prisoners was one of the most lucrative types of plunder. Half the prisoners taken by the Portuguese and all the artisans among them were given to the king; the rest were sold on the market or forced to settle in the villages near Mrohaung. A considerable number of these captives were Muslims<sup>2</sup>. In addition to the Muslim prisoners and slaves brought to Arakan from Bengal and even from North India, many more came to serve as mercenaries in the Arakanese army, usually as the king's bodyguard.

The main source of information on that period is the Portuguese traveler, the Augustine monk Sebastian Manrique, who was in Arakan from 1629 to 1637. Using not only his own memoirs but also ancient Arakanese sources placed at his disposal, Manrique in his book describes the arrival of Muslim prisoners, and Muslim army units at the king's court; he mentions important Muslims who were holding key positions in the kingdom and comments on the foreign trade colonies – mostly Muslims – which existed in Arakan. The prisoners were brought from Bengal in Portuguese and Arakanese ships, some of whose sailors were themselves Muslims – a fact that did not trouble them in their profession, not even the fact that enslaving a Muslim stands in contrast with the Muslim Law, the Shari'a. Manrique gives a detailed description of such a Muslim prisoners' convoy which he accompanied. He even tried – without success – to convert the Muslims to Christianity<sup>3</sup>. Some of these captive slaves were settled in special areas guarded by Muslim soldiers.

The Arakan king of that period, Thirithudamma (1622–1638) had a Muslim counsellor or doctor. Manrique describes him as follows: “A false prophet of the Maumetan faith, who in promising to render him [the king] invisible and invincible, undertook that he should obtain the vast Empires of Delhi, Pegu, and Siam, besides many other similar inanities ... [the Muslim doctor] having twice visited the hateful Mausoleum ... was held to be a saint by these Barbarians”<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Collis and San Shwe Bu, *op. cit.*, p. 42; Maurice Collis, *The Land of Great Image* (New York: New Directions Paperbook, 1958), p. 92.

<sup>2</sup> Siddiq Khan, *op. cit.*, p. 251; Harvey, *op. cit.*, pp. 143–144. Whereas the Muslim slaves retained their religion, the captive Hindus hastened to assimilate among the Buddhists of Arakan (Ba Tha [Buthidaung], “Slave Raids in Bengal or Heins in Arakan”, *Guardian Monthly* [Rangoon], VII [Oct., 1960], 25–27).

<sup>3</sup> A conversation which Manrique had with one of the captives, and which he later recorded from memory, contained a good many Arabic and Persian words and expressions: *qitabo*, *kitāb* (book); *nimosa*, *namāz* (prayer); *Nassaran*, *nasrāni* (Christian); *Hagarene* (the descendants of Hagar); *masjid* (mosque); *xabas*, *shābāsh* (Persian) (excellent); *Ala charimo*, *Ala merban*, *Allah karim*, *Allah mibrban* (God is pitiful, God is merciful) (Manrique, *op. cit.*, pp. 101–102).

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 351–352. The “hateful Mausoleum”, where Muhammad is buried is at Medina.

Manrique witnessed the king's crowning ceremony in which Muslim units also filled an important function. The parade was opened by the Muslim cavalry unit of Rajputes from India led by its commander the *lascoursil* (cavalry leader). With him marched the eunuch sword-bearers. "This man, who was of Maumetan race and sect, was dressed in green velvet ornamented with plaques of silver, mounted upon a superb white horse from Arabia ... This Agarene commander led six hundred horsemen in those squadrons: the first composed of Mogors, who, confident of future bliss in the paradise of their false prophet, were clothed in silks of various textures, but all green in colour. They carried gilded bows decked out with green, slung on the left shoulder. On the left side they also had slung from their cross-belts, handsome quivers, while curved scimitars, plated with silver, hung from their belts. All the horses in the Agarene squadron were clothed in green silks of various kinds"<sup>1</sup>. The representatives of the Muslim units as well those of other religions such as the Portuguese officers or the Christian Japanese mercenaries in the king's service, were not allowed to enter the pagoda for the crowning ceremony itself<sup>2</sup>.

Some years later, in 1600, the Mogul prince Shāh Shujā' fled to Arakan. This important event brought a new wave of Muslim immigrants to the kingdom and also caused political changes. The episode has been described by many historians. Its exact details are not known and the several versions differ. Not all historians mention their sources<sup>3</sup>. As early as 1639, Shāh Shujā', the second son of the Mogul Emperor Shāh Jahan, was designated deputy of the King of Bengal. In 1657 the Emperor fell gravely ill and it was rumored that he had died. The struggle for succession between the sons began immediately; Aurangzeb won, dethroned his father in 1658 and declared himself emperor. Shāh Shujā' continued his fight but was finally defeated in 1660. Since he did not succeed in establishing his rule in Bengal, he fled, together with his family and bodyguard (the number of his followers varies in each version), from Dacca to Chittagong. Sandathudama, King of Arakan (1652-1687), granted him permission to continue to Mrohaung on condition that his followers surrender their weapons. He appeared there on August 26, 1660, was welcomed by the king and given a dwelling near the town<sup>4</sup>.

There are two sources of the period describing the events in Arakan that followed. One is the French physicist Bernier who was in India during 1658-1667 and wrote

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Manrique confuses Medina and Mecca, the place of regular pilgrimage. With reference to the Muslim merchants in Arakan, headed by a "Captain" of the same religion, see *ibid.*, p. 208.

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 373; see also U Myo Min, *op. cit.*, p. 47.

<sup>2</sup> Manrique, *op. cit.*, p. 388; see also Harvey, *op. cit.*, p. 145.

<sup>3</sup> The story of Shah Shujā' appears, sometimes in different versions, in the following sources: Ba Shin, *op. cit.*; Rahman, "Burma Muslim"; H. R. Spearman, *British Burma Gazetteer* (Rangoon, 1880), I, 293-294; Hall, *History of South East Asia*, pp. 338-341; Desai *A Pageant of Burmese History*, pp. 61-63; Harvey, *op. cit.*, pp. 146-148; Siddiq Khan, *op. cit.*, pp. 253-254; Phayre, *op. cit.*, p. 178; Ba Tha (Buthidaung), "Shah Shuja in Arakan", *Guardian Monthly* (Rangoon), VI (Sept., 1959), 26-28; J. C. Powell-Price, *A History of India* (London: Thomas Nelson, 1955), p. 342; Sir George Dunbar, *A History of India from the Earliest Times to Nineteen Thirty-Nine* (London: Nicholson and Watson, 1939), pp. 259-260; S. W. Cocks, *A Short History of Burma* (London: Macmillan, 1910), pp. 203-204.

<sup>4</sup> Hall, *History of South-East Asia*, pp. 338-339.



about the Shāh Shujā' episode from hearsay. He himself mentions that he heard various versions and does not know which is the true one. According to Bernier, Shāh Shujā' asked for temporary asylum in Arakan

and a passage to *Moka*, when the favourable season arrived; it being his wish to proceed thence to *Meca*, and afterward take up his residence in *Turkey* or *Persia*. The [Arakanese] King's answer was in the affirmative, and expressed in the kindest terms ... Month after month passed; the favourable season arrived, but no mention was made of [the promised] vessels to convey them to *Moka*, although *Sultan Sujah* required them on other terms than the payment of the hire; for he yet wanted not *roupies* of gold and silver, or gems. He had indeed too great a plenty of them: his great wealth being probably the cause of, or at least very much contributing to, his ruin ... the King turned a deaf ear to his entreaties ... and made a formal demand of one of his daughters in marriage. *Sultan Sujah's* refusal to accede to this request exasperated him to such a degree that the Prince's situation became quite desperate. What then ought he to do? To remain inactive was only quietly to await destruction. The season for departure was passing away; it was therefore necessary to come to a decision of some kind ... there are many *Mahometans* mixed with the people [of Arakan] ... *Sultan Sujah* secretly gained over these *Mahometans*, whom he joined with two or three hundred of his own people, the remnant of those who followed him from *Bengale*; and with this force resolved to surprise the house of the King, put his family to the sword, and make himself sovereign of the country. This bold attempt ... had ... a certain feasibility to it, as I was informed by several *Mahometans*, *Portuguese*, and *Hollanders*, who were then on the spot. But the day before the blow was to be struck, a discovery was made of the design ... The Prince endeavoured to escape into *Pegu* ... He was pursued and overtaken, within twenty-four hours after his flight: he defended himself ... but at length, overpowered by the increasing host of his assailants, he was compelled to give up the unequal combat ... No much particulars, on which much dependence may be placed, are known of *Sultan Sujah* ... I have heard three or four totally different accounts of the fate of the Prince... But whatever doubts may be entertained of the fate of *Sultan Sujah*, there are none as to the catastrophe which befell his family. When brought back, men, women, and children were all thrown into prison, and treated with the utmost harshness. Some time after, however, they were set at liberty, and used more kindly: the King then married the eldest Princess ... While these events were happening, some servants of *Sultan Banque* joined the *Mahometans*, of whom I have spoken, in a plot similar to the last. The indiscreet zeal of one of the conspirators ... led to the discovery of the design on the day on which it was to be executed. In regard to this affair, too, I have heard a thousand different tales; and the only fact I can relate with confidence is, that the King felt so exasperated against the family of *Sujah* as to give orders for its total extermination. Even the Princess whom he had himself espoused, and who, it is said, was advanced in pregnancy, was sacrificed according to his brutal mandate. *Sultan Banque* and his brothers were decapitated with gruesome-looking axes, quite blunt, and the female members of this ill-fated family were closely confined in their apartment, and left to die of hunger<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> François Bernier, *Travels in the Mogul Empire, A. D. 1656-1668*, trans. Archibald Constable, ed. Vincent A. Smith (2d ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1916), pp. 109-115.

The second source of the period is the archives (*Dagbregister*) of the Dutch East India Company in Batavia<sup>1</sup>. The Company's representative and director of the Dutch trading post who was in Mrohaung at the time, reported the events to Batavia. He too was not an eye-witness but wrote according to rumors heard in the city. He describes the warm welcome given to Shāh Shujā' by the Arakan king and his promise to supply the refugees with ships to take them to Mecca. Eight months passed and the promise had not been kept. According to the Dutch representative the reason for this was that "King Sanda Thudama asked Shah Shuja for a daughter in marriage... Shah Shuja proudly refused to submit to what he regarded as a grave dishonour, and as a result friendly relations ceased between him and the King"<sup>2</sup>. This incident was preceded by an event not mentioned in any source other than the *Dagbregister*. The report tells of an additional group of Muslims who came to Arakan to join Shāh Shujā'. The ensuing clash between them and some Arakanese ended with the execution of the Muslim group. "And he was only dissuaded by his mother and some of the grandees from visiting Shah Shuja with the same treatment"<sup>3</sup>. In his letter the Dutch East India Company representative states that Shāh Shujā's followers were murdered on February 7, 1661, because the prince "intended to escape from the King's palace and conquer the kingdom of Arakan for himself". During these events all foreigners and all Muslim trading vessels were sent away from India so that they would not know what was happening. The Dutchman also gives two versions of Shāh Shujā's death: One, that he was killed during the first battle; the second, that he escaped, was later captured and stoned to death by his pursuers<sup>4</sup>. The *Dagbregister* of 1664 reports that, following upon the second plot of Shāh Shujā's sons in 1663, two years after the first plot, "the sons of Shāh Shuja and everyone found wearing a beard in the Moorish fashion had been beheaded"<sup>5</sup>. On the other hand an Arakanese source of that period tells that Shāh Shujā' was only too happy to give his daughter to the king of Arakan in gratitude for the asylum granted; however when he saw that he had lost the Mogul throne, he decided to conquer Arakan and make himself king with the help of his own soldiers, the Muslim soldiers in the king's army and the local Muslim population. The plot was uncovered; he fled to the hills, was captured and executed<sup>6</sup>. The historian Sir Arthur P. Phayre thinks that the Arakanese Chronicles conceal their king's ugly behaviour, and emphasize the prince's abortive experiment to capture the palace by neglecting to mention the preceding provocation of not providing the promised ships, the king's request to have one of Shāh Shujā's daughter's in marriage and his wish to molest the prince's riches<sup>7</sup>. Phayre quotes no source for this opinion, which is apparently only his personal point of view, but a decidedly acceptable one.

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<sup>1</sup> The British historian D. G. E. Hall worked on a portion of the material in these archives and published the results in "Studies in Dutch Relations with Arakan, Part II, Shah Shuja and the Dutch Withdrawal in 1665", *Burma Research Society Fiftieth Anniversary Publications* no. 2 (Rangoon, 1960).

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 88-89.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 90.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 91-92.

<sup>6</sup> G. E. Harvey, "The Fate of Shah Shuja, 1661", *JBR*, XII (Aug., 1922), 107-112

<sup>7</sup> Phayre, *History of Burma*, p. 178.

Those of Shāh Shujā's soldiers who escaped the massacre were later admitted into the king's bodyguard as a special archers unit called Kamans or Kamanci (from the Persian: bow, *kamān*; bowman, *kamānchi*). Immediately after Shāh Shujā came to Arakan, Aurangzeb demanded of the Arakan king that he deliver the fleeing prince and his family into his hands. Aurangzeb had been quite prepared himself to murder his own brother, but became angry when the Arakan king dared to harm a member of the royal Mogul family. He decided to use this as an excuse to put an end to the Portuguese-Arakanese pirate raids on the East Bengal coast. In 1665 to 1666 a large Mogul force attacked the Portuguese and Arakanese, demolished their settlements in Sandwip, destroyed their navies and conquered Chittagong and Ramu. During their retreat to Mrohaung, Arakanese army units were also attacked by the local Muslim population, descendants of the Muslim slaves who had been settled on the land<sup>1</sup>.

This defeat spelled the end of the power of the kingdom of Arakan. The death of Sandathudama in 1684, marked the beginning of a period of anarchy and riots in the kingdom during which the Muslim Kaman units played a decisive role as makers and displacers of kings. These units were being continually reenforced by fresh Afghan mercenaries from North India. From 1666 until 1710 the political rule of Arakan was completely in their hands. Ten kings were crowned and dethroned – and usually murdered – by them during that period. In 1710 King Sandawizaya (1710–1731) succeeded in gaining the upper hand over them, and most of the Kamans were exiled to Ramree. Their descendants live in Ramree and in a few villages near Akyab and still bear the same name to this very day. Their language is Arakanese and their customs are similar to Arakan customs in everything except religion-Islam<sup>2</sup>. The census of 1931 registered a total of 2686 Kamans<sup>3</sup>.

In 1785 the Burmese conquered Arakan and annexed it to Burma. There was also a Muslim unit, "Myedu", in the Burmese standing army posted to Sandoway. Their descendants, few in number, live there still, and cannot be distinguished from their Burmese and Arakanese neighbours, but by their religion and religious habits<sup>4</sup>. All these events in Arakan caused certain population movements eastward. Among these there were also Muslims who came to serve the Burmese Ava Kings<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Siddiq Khan, *op. cit.*, p. 254; Harvey, *History of Burma*, p. 147; Powell-Price, *op. cit.*, p. 342; Dunbar, *op. cit.*, pp. 259–260.

<sup>2</sup> Hall, *History of South-East Asia*, p. 341; Harvey, *History of Burma*, p. 148; Cocks, *A Short History of Burma*, pp. 203–204; Desai, *A Pageant of Burmese History*, pp. 62–63; Ba Tha, "Shah Shuja in Arakan", pp. 26–28. "Long residence in this enervating climate and the example set them by the people among whom they have resided for generations have had the effect of rendering these people almost as indolent and extravagant as the Arakanese themselves. They have so got out of the habit of doing hard manual labour that they are now absolutely dependent on the Chittagonian coolies to help them over the most arduous of their agricultural operations, ploughing, reaping and earthwork" (Smart, *Akyab District Gazetteer*, pp. 86–87). Similar opinions were shared by British administrative personnel in other parts of Burma as well. Comments to this effect are to be found in many *Gazetteers* and other official documents.

<sup>3</sup> Burma, *Census of India, 1931*. Vol. XI. *Burma*. Part I. *Report*, Compiled by J. J. Bennison (Rangoon: Superintendent, Government Printing and Stationery, Burma, 1933), p. 230.

<sup>4</sup> W. B. Tydd, *Sandoway District Gazetteer*, Vol. A (Rangoon, 1912), p. 19.

<sup>5</sup> Ba Shin, *op. cit.*

It is not possible today to differentiate among the various Muslim groups or between them and the Buddhist-Arakanese, among whom they live. The Arakanese Muslims are Sunnites despite the preponderance of some Shi'ite traditions among them<sup>1</sup>. Under their influence many Muslim customs spread to the Buddhists, such as, for example, a veil for the women similar to the *purdab*<sup>2</sup>. Today the Arakanese Muslims call themselves Rohingya or Roewengyah<sup>3</sup>. This name is used more by the Muslims of North Arakan (Mayu region) where most of the Muslims – approximately 300 000 – are concentrated<sup>4</sup>, than by those living near Akyab.

Writers and poets appeared amongst the Arakanese Muslims, especially during the fifteenth to eighteenth centuries; and there were even some Muslim court poets at the courts of the Arakanese kings<sup>5</sup>. These poets and writers wrote in Persian and Arabic or in the mixed language, Rohingya, which they developed among themselves and which was a mixture of Bengali, Urdu, and Arakanese. This language is not as widespread today as it was in the past and it has been largely replaced by Burmese and Arakanese. These artists also developed the art of calligraphy. Some manuscripts have been preserved but have not yet been scientifically examined. Miniature painting in Mogul style also flourished in Arakan during this period. The Muslims who came to Arakan brought with them Arab, Indian, and especially Bengalese music and musical instruments. Persian songs are sung by Arakanese Muslims to this day<sup>6</sup>.

That is how the Rohingas preserved their own heritage from the impact of the Buddhist environment, not only as far as their religion is concerned but also in some aspects of their culture.

This chapter described the beginnings of Muslim settlements in the Delta and the Valley of the Irrawaddi and Arakan. While it is worthy of note that Muslims fulfilled official tasks in the royal courts, in the administration, in the army, and in various economic activities, it should be emphasized that members of other minority communities, too, fulfilled such tasks in Burma and in other neighbouring countries. It was not an unusual phenomena in southeast Asia until the colonial European powers moved into that area. Many Hindus, for instance, served as astrologers for the kings. European or Japanese mercenaries fought in southeast Asia armies, especially with the artillery units. In Thailand some Europeans reached top administrative posts. In that respect the places some Muslims occupied in Burma prior to the advent of the British fitted into the accepted pattern.

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<sup>1</sup> See, for instance, Rahman, "Burma Muslims", pp. 1–3.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> The meaning of the term is "the dear ones" or "the compassionate ones", and there are those who believe that it is a mutilation of the words, *rwa-haung-ga-kyar*, "tiger from the ancient village", which means "brave" and is the name given to the Muslim soldiers who settled in Arakan (Ba Tha [Buthidaung], "Rowengyees in Arakan", *Guardian Monthly* [Rangoon], VII, [May, 1960], 33–36).

<sup>4</sup> Ba Shin, *op. cit.*, in accordance with the official Bulletin of the Directorate of the Frontier Area Administration, 1961.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* In the second half of the eighteenth century and at the beginning of the nineteenth, poets and writers appeared, too, among the Burman Muslims. One of these, named U Nu, wrote books in the Burmese language dealing with Islam (Ba Shin, *op. cit.*).

<sup>6</sup> Ba Tha (Buthidaung), "Rowengya Fine Arts", *Guardian Monthly* (Rangoon), VIII (Feb., 1961), 20–22; Rahman, *op. cit.*

## *Why Burma Did Not Become Muslim*

The very first centuries of Islam saw Muslims settling in Burma, but their numbers have always been small within the general populace. No Muslim military attempt was ever made from without to conquer Burma, nor was any missionary operation ever mounted from within. Several reasons can be cited in explanation:

*The geographical factor.* "Burma's mountain bastions presented formidable obstacles to overland invaders, and the great invasions that changed the face of Asia were approaching their furthest limits when they finally reached Burma. The conquests of the Mongols and the Manchus in China and Central Asia; the Turkish, Mongol, and Moghul invasions of India; all these waves of domination rolled towards South East Asia, but spent their force before penetrating Burma's jungles and hills"<sup>1</sup>. This sort of thing happened at the beginning of the thirteenth century and thereafter in Muslim Bengal, which could not muster sufficient strength to serve as a base for the invasion of Burma. Muslim India was constantly involved in international quarrels and conflicts. Efforts at invasion were foiled, and the wars with the kingdoms of Arakan and Burma never exceeded the limits of incursions or frontier battles.

*The commercial factor.* Burma did not constitute a challenge nor an attraction in the same way that Malaya and the Indonesian Islands did, places to which the conquerors and the missionaries came in the wake of the traders and the sailors. The Muslim trade activity in Burma was marginal and insignificant compared with the important and lively commerce between Indonesia and Malaya on the one hand and India and the Middle East on the other.

*The religious factor.* This is possibly the most important of all. Not only were Malaya and Indonesia of prime importance commercially for Islam; they also presented a certain measure of religious "emptiness". The various Hindu and Buddhist sects that were rife there had deteriorated and become petrified. They had dwindled to nothing more than status religions, so to speak, of the courts and of the ruling cliques in the respective kingdoms, and did not filter down to the masses who were thus quite ready to embrace Islam when it came<sup>2</sup>. Such was not the case in Burma (nor in the other countries of the region which were of the same Buddhist sect as Burma: Ceylon, Thailand, and the countries of Indochina). At the end of the twelfth century, Buddhism began to be accepted as the truly popular religion in Burma (as well as in neighbouring countries), and not just a religion imposed upon the people by the court. True, Buddhism was not made the state religion in a formal manner, but it was nonetheless the national religion in that the vast majority of the population embraced it as their faith. The king was traditionally held to be the Protector of Buddhism. Official policy was to maintain the existing Buddhist system

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<sup>1</sup> Hugh Tinker, *The Union of Burma: A Study of the First Years of Independence* (2d ed.; Oxford University Press, 1959), p. 338.

<sup>2</sup> Hall, *History of South East Asia*, p. 131.

– the Hinayana (or the Theravada). Public opinion was against conversion; much support was derived for this attitude by the large number of Buddhist monks who supplied the spiritual supervision of the people<sup>1</sup>.

This policy in no way hindered the kings of Burma in their tolerance toward strangers, who enjoyed complete freedom in the practice of their own religions. They were even permitted to marry Buddhist women and to raise their children according to the tenets of their own religion. The Muslim foreigners who settled in Burma usually took Burmese wives, without any restrictions on the part of the authorities; in the course of time a new population-grouping came to be: Burmese Muslims<sup>2</sup>. Nevertheless, all this did not serve to create a movement of conversion to Islam. Muslims were not disturbed in the pursuit of their religion; nor did their religion tempt the population. As a matter of fact we have no evidence of any Muslim missionary attempts being made in Burma<sup>3</sup>. If they had been made, they surely would have encountered powerful religious resistance.

This was the situation through the centuries up to the advent of the British in the second half of the nineteenth century.

The British conquest of Burma brought with it revolutionary change in the life of the Muslim community because of the extensive flow of immigration from India. Until the arrival of the Indian Muslims, the Muslims in Burma were a small minority, tolerated, loyal to the kings, inactive as a community, and practically unnoticed. The immigrants' coming created a large, new, and more advanced minority of foreigners which made itself hated by the local populace, which was also true of other minority groups from India. The British conquest gave impetus to the urge to consolidate community life and to develop religious and community activity, because of the large immigration from India which it had brought about.

These immigrants developed a whole series of religious activities; they established mosques, religious schools and other institutions, even newspapers<sup>4</sup>, which the Burmese Muslims before them had not done at all. There were a number of reasons for this development: even at the beginning of the nineteenth century the Muslim immigrants from India were already double the number of local Muslims. Their organizations had larger funds for community work and, what was of even greater import, more initiative and will to act to protect their separate religious and cultural identity in the midst of their Buddhist environment. The Indian Muslims established

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<sup>1</sup> This phenomenon also explains the insignificant success of the Christian missionaries in Burma several hundred years later, despite the fact that the authorities never interfered in their activities. In this connection it is worth reading J. S. Furnivall, *Christianity and Buddhism in Burma: An Address to the Rangoon Diocesan Council* (Rangoon: Peoples' Literature Committee and House, 1929).

<sup>2</sup> Hall, *op. cit.*, p. 130; Desai, *A Pageant of Burmese History*, pp. 232–234; 237–238; Maung Ko Gaffari, "First Muslims in Burma", pp. 23–25.

<sup>3</sup> According to M. K. Rahman ("Burma Muslims", pp. 1–3), the first Muslims came to Burma as merchants, conquerors, *missionaries* and refugees, but this is unreliable. Much of the article is merely part of the general propaganda effort that the Muslims of Burma have been conducting since the thirties, in the attempt to substantiate their claim to ancient origins in Burma, within the framework of their struggle to attain the special status and privilege of a recognized minority.

<sup>4</sup> See Appendix D.

Muslim schools, saw to the development of the community's religious life, saw to the training of religious personnel in India, and set up entire network of welfare organizations. In their customs, even in their habits of dress or in their method of performing religious good deeds, they influenced the Burmese Muslims, and especially the Zerbadees – the offspring of the many mixed marriages that followed the immigration despite the fact that these latter tended to consider themselves Burmese rather than Indian Muslims<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> See p. 33, n. 3.

## Chapter II

### MUSLIMS IN BURMA DURING BRITISH RULE

#### *Immigration from India*

The British conquest of Burma caused far-reaching changes in the social and economic structure of the country. Not least among these was the revolutionary change wrought in the composition of the Muslim population, so greatly increased by emigration from India. The history of Indian immigration to Burma reads like the history of the two nations. Indian immigrants had been coming to Burma throughout the ages but up until the British conquest they were relatively few and most of them quickly assimilated with the local population. The Hindus assimilated completely in the Buddhist society; the Muslims retained their religion but became Burmese in all other respects<sup>1</sup>.

Through British initiative immediately after the first Anglo-Burmese war (1824 to 1826), a large Indian immigration reached Arakan and Tenasserim which had just been annexed to India. The second Anglo-Burmese war (1852), with the conquest of Pegu, and the third war (1885) which culminated in the total conquest of Burma, gave tremendous impetus to immigration and caused a social-economic problem that still persists to this day. After Burma became a province within the Indian empire, Indians could enter not as immigrants but as residents moving from one district to another within the land. Burma's need for these immigrants arose from the basic changes in her economic structure which the British had begun to develop. Foreign markets were opened to Burmese rice and as a result, large areas were put under rice cultivation. (In 1930 there were 12370000 acres of land under rice cultivation in Burma as against 354000 in 1845).

The opening of the Suez Canal and the introduction of the steamship in the mid-nineteenth century strengthened contacts between Burma and Europe. These changes required ever more cheap coolie labor, especially during the season of January to May. Burma had always been sparsely populated and India was the nearest, easiest, and cheapest source for the manpower needed.

In the wake of Burma's transformation from an autarchic economy to an exporting country, whole series of previously unknown services between farmer and consumer were organized. Farming the land was usually done by the Burmese themselves, although many Indian workers entered even that field. But the new services were

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<sup>1</sup> Approximately half the emigrants to Burma from India were Muslims. In an analysis of the economic results of this immigration, no differences are discerned between the Hindus and the Muslims, although examples and figures are cited – insofar as possible – for the Muslims alone. With reference to all the other effects – social, religious and political, – the study confines itself to the discussion of the Muslim immigrants only.



necessarily taken over by the immigrants, not only because of lack of manpower but also because the British preferred the Indians who were loyal and quick to acclimate.

The first immigrants came as government clerks, accessories to the army, and private businessmen; but from the very first years of their rule, the British required manpower in all fields: unskilled and skilled laborers, clerks, teachers, engineers, and the like. Workers for the railroads, river shipping, post offices, rice mills, mines, oil fields, banks, and for the shops were especially needed. No new public, army, police, or civilian administrative office was established in Burma without Indians. Following them came others whose services were required by both Europeans and Indians. These were servants, launderers (a special caste in India: dhobis), shoemakers, watchmen (also a special caste), money-changers, restaurant owners, hoteliers, men of every profession hitherto completely unknown in Burma<sup>1</sup>.

After having been accepted to their posts, the Indians made sure that other Indians joined them in their units and blocked the way to Burmese. And, when the government wished to recruit Burmese into its service, it found that the Indians with their talents and intellectual capabilities, were more successful in the examinations. The Indians were a majority in many of the Burmese public services, far out of proportion to their percentage in the population. Some governmental departments, such as the treasury and the railroads, were completely "Indian". In all departments there were always specific posts – messengers, watchmen and other services – that were filled only by Indians<sup>2</sup>.

Most of the Indians took to urban professions; the immigrants thus concentrated largely in the cities, although considerable numbers also settled in the villages<sup>3</sup>. In Rangoon and in most of Burma's towns and villages the traders and shopkeepers were almost always Indians, mainly Muslims (although Chinese immigrants also played an important role in that sphere)<sup>4</sup>. It was generally possible to identify the community of the Indian immigrant by his profession. Thus, for example, Muslims from the Malayalam area were restaurant-keepers and distillers; Gujarat immigrants traded in textiles, household appliances, rice and diamonds; the Chulia, from Madras, were metal-tools merchants; and the Muslims from Chittagong took over river shipping<sup>5</sup>. Thanks to Indian immigration, Rangoon and other towns too, developed

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<sup>1</sup> Burma, *Report on Indian Immigration*, by James Baxter (Rangoon: Superintendent, Government Printing and Stationery, Burma, 1941), p. 1; F. S. V. Donnison, *Public Administration in Burma* (London: Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1953), p. 37; D. G. E. Hall, *A History of South-East Asia* (London: Macmillan, 1958), p. 650.

<sup>2</sup> Donnison, *op. cit.*, pp. 66–67.

<sup>3</sup> A. J. Page, *Pegu District Gazetteer*, Vol. A (Rangoon, 1917), p. 50.

<sup>4</sup> V. C. Scott O'Connor, *The Silken East* (London: Hutchinson, 1904), I, 280, 673; J. S. Furnivall and W. S. Morrison, *Syriam District Gazetteer*, Vol. A (Rangoon, 1914), p. 46.

<sup>5</sup> John Leroy Christian, *Modern Burma* (New York: Institute of Public Relations, 1942), p. 274; Hugh Tinker, *The Union of Burma* (2d ed.; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1959), p. 253; Scott O'Connor, *op. cit.*, p. 658; V. C. Scott O'Connor, *Mandalay and Other Cities of the Past in Burma* (London: Hutchinson, 1907), p. 317; W. C. B. Purser and A. M. Knight, *Christian Missions in Burma* (Westminster: Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, 1911), pp. 209–210. The authors emphasize in particular the devoutness in

rapidly. From 1891 onward most of Rangoon's new inhabitants were Indians, half or even more of them, Muslims. In 1869 there were only 4425 Muslims in Rangoon; in 1874 there were already 11671. And in 1931 a fifth of the total Indian population of Burma was concentrated in Rangoon and constituted 63 percent of its inhabitants. The city's outskirts, as well as other parts of the country also enjoyed a considerable increase in the number of Muslims. In the years from 1891 to 1901, the population of Lower Burma was swelled by 130000 immigrants, and Upper Burma by 22000, mostly from Madras and Bengal<sup>1</sup>. By the beginning of the twentieth century, Indian immigrants were arriving at the rate of 250000 per year, but not all of them stayed. Their numbers increased annually, reaching a peak of 480000 in 1927. In Burma in 1921 there were 1 million Indians – half of them Muslims – as against a little more than 11 million Burmese. Since the British conquest, many more than a million Indians immigrated, but large numbers of them were seasonal workers who remained only a few years and then returned to India with their savings<sup>2</sup>.

Tension between the Burmese and the Indians, rooted in economic reasons, became apparent only after World War I. Until then the Burmese showed their contempt for the Indians because of their religion, their being foreigners, the low standard of living of many of them, and their readiness to do any menial or difficult

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Islam of the Chittagong river sailors. See also Usha Mahajani, *The Role of Indian Minorities in Burma and Malaya* (Bombay: Vora, 1960), pp. 8–16; Page, *op. cit.*, p. 85; R. S. Wilkie, *Yamethin District Gazetteer*, Vol. A (Rangoon, 1934), p. 48; A. Williamson, *Shwebo District Gazetteer*, Vol. A (Rangoon, 1929), p. 65; H. P. Hewett and J. Clague, *Bassein District Gazetteer*, Vol. A (Rangoon, 1916), p. 31.

<sup>1</sup> Scott O'Connor, *The Silken East*, pp. 69, 71–72; Furnivall and Morrison, *Syriam District Gazetteer*, pp. 38, 40–41. All the District Gazetteers cite figures on the rapid growth of the Muslim (and the Hindu) population since the British conquest, especially in the areas of the Delta, Arakan, and the length of the Irrawaddy; the numbers of Indians in the rest of the regions of Burma also increased in this period. "Several natives of India live in Namkham, some of them having married Shan wives ... trading between Mong-Mao and Yun-nan, and Bhamo, making Namkham their headquarters. They had built a tiny mosque for themselves, and their call to prayer might be heard whenever they were in the place" (Leslie Milne and Wilbur Willis Cochrane, *Shans at Home* [London: John Murray, 1910], p. xvii; see also Max Ferrars and Bertha Ferrars, *Burma* [London: Sampson Low, Marston, 1900], p. 159).

<sup>2</sup> Sir J. George Scott, *Burma: A Handbook of Practical Information* (London: Alexander Moring, 1911), pp. 86–87; Hall, *History of South-East Asia*, p. 651. For more impressive figures see Burma, *Census of India, 1931*, Vol. XI, *Burma*, Part I, *Report*, compiled by J. J. Bennison (Rangoon: Superintendent, Government Printing and Stationery, Burma, 1933), p. 18 (hereafter cited as Bennison, *Census 1931*).

Immigrants and Emigrants for Burma

Year of Census	Immigrants	Emigrants
1931	775963	24397
1921	706749	19086
1911	590965	13353

work<sup>1</sup>. As time went on, however, the Burmese were being gradually dispossessed of their land by Indians<sup>2</sup> who were prepared to pay higher rentals. It also became obvious that the Burmese were being pushed aside and were not being accepted into government service. The conspicuous concentrations of Indians in Rangoon and in other urban areas also helped confirm the Burmese impression that the immigrants were dispossessing them of their country.

Burmese contempt for the Indians and the competition between them in certain professions during the thirties engendered hate. Hatred of the Indians was aggravated by the universal depression of the 1930's which affected Burma as well. The cost of living rose. More and more Burmese flocked to Rangoon and to other cities in search of a livelihood, and there met up with the strong competition of the experienced and cheap labor of the Indians. To all this must be added the national awakening of Burma which had started back in the twenties<sup>3</sup>.

These and other causes led to serious anti-Indian outbreaks in 1930 and 1938. The 1930 riots were directed against Indian immigrants in general and were sparked by a coolie strike in Rangoon port<sup>4</sup>. The riots of 1938 were aimed at the Muslims and were caused – apart from the economic tensions already described, by several other reasons specific to the Muslim community alone.

The Muslim immigration from India also had serious social results because of the widespread custom of mixed marriages. This was a cause for anxiety to many Burmese and was also exploited for anti-Muslim propaganda by the nationalist movement. The charges were mainly legal-religious: According to Burmese custom, marriage is a private contract, without religious sanction, between the two parties who decide to live together. There is no ceremony or formality to mark a marriage between

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<sup>1</sup> Scott O'Connor, *Mandalay and Other Cities*, p. 320.

<sup>2</sup> Christian, *Modern Burma*, p. 274; "... economic influences lie at the root of the ... rioting (i. e., 1938). Those causes still remain. And, so long as they remain, they are, we think, a potential and constant – if not an increasing – menace to the peace and orderly progress of the country and to the security, welfare and happiness of its people ... we do not mean that the riots were in any way agrarian in character (i. e., ownership of considerable land by the foreigner). They were not. But the materials upon which the immediate and the more direct causes worked were, we think, provided in part by a general and deep-seated disturbance of mind for which dissatisfaction at the present position of land holding and land tenure in the country is in part responsible ... The riots and the political propaganda which preceded them were even more 'anti-foreigner' and to a large extent at least, 'anti-foreigner' meant 'anti-Indian landowner, land worker and land financier.'" (Burma, *Interim Report of the Riot Inquiry Committee* [Rangoon: Superintendent, Government Printing and Stationery, Burma, 1939], pp. 11–12 [hereafter cited as *Interim Report*]. See also: below, pp. 35–39).

<sup>3</sup> W. S. Desai, *India and Burma* (Calcutta: Orient Longmans, 1954), p. 38; Virginia Thompson and Richard Adloff, *Minority Problems in South East Asia* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1955), p. 70; Great Britain, *Report of Indian Statutory Commission* (hereafter cited as *Simon Report*), Vol. I, *Survey* (London: H. M. Stationery Office, 1930), p. 78.

<sup>4</sup> Desai, *India and Burma*, pp. 24–25, 27–28, 30–32; J. S. Furnivall, *Colonial Policy and Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1957), pp. 88–90, 116–121, 165, 199; Donnison, *op. cit.*, pp. 68–69; G. E. Harvey, *British Rule in Burma: 1824–1942* (London: Faber and Faber, 1946), pp. 69–73; Hall, *History of South-East Asia*, p. 652.

Burmese Buddhists. Nor is there a regulation stipulating that the parties must be Buddhists. According to Muslim law (the Hindu aspect is not discussed here), marriage is a contract signed in the presence of witnesses. The woman must be *kitābi*. Buddhist women who marry Muslims must first convert to Islam. Such a woman, after the death of her husband, receives a part of the property according to the family status and the number of heirs. This was always less than the inheritance of a widow of a Burmese Buddhist since, according to Burmese custom, the wife has equal property rights with her husband; if he dies she is the heir. These differences were an additional source of friction.

Another accusation was made against many Muslims who, coming to Burma, took Burmese women without marrying them. According to Burmese custom these were legal marriages; but according to Islamic law they did not constitute marriage at all.

This fact was discovered by many Burmese wives only when their Indian Muslim husbands left them after a few years' stay in Burma, or when their husbands died. Burmese women could thus be easily deceived. They might think that they were married whereas according to their husbands' law they were not<sup>1</sup>. Furthermore, the discovery that a woman could not be considered a Muslim's wife until she converted to her husband's faith and left Buddhism, also caused much anger. The committee of inquiry appointed to inquire into the reasons for the 1938 riots submitted to the pressures of Buddhist public opinion and recommended that a law be passed to protect Buddhist women married to foreigners<sup>2</sup>. The "Buddhist Women Special Marriage and Succession Bill, 1938" determined that a Buddhist woman may demand that her non-Buddhist husband marry her in civil marriage and that the children of such a union inherit.

A most important result of the inter-marriage between Indian Muslim men and Burmese Buddhist women was the creation of a new and rapidly increasing class of half-breeds called Zerbadees<sup>3</sup>. A Zerbadee is the son of an Indian Muslim father

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<sup>1</sup> *Interim Report*, pp. 28-32; Usha Mahajani, *op. cit.*, pp. 29-30.

<sup>2</sup> *Interim Report*, pp. 29, 33; Burma, *Final Report of the Riot Inquiry Committee* (Rangoon: Superintendent, Government Printing and Stationery, Burma, 1939), Appendix II, p. x; "Resolutions of the Mass Rally in the Shwe Dagon Pagoda Square on 26 July 1938" (hereafter cited as *Final Report*).

<sup>3</sup> The use of the term "Zerbadee" for Burmese Muslims having one Burmese parent or even both parents, appeared for the first time officially in the third population census taken in Burma on February 26, 1891, which was the first census to include the whole of Burma. The etymological explanation of this word has not yet been found, nor is it yet known why it came to be used for Burmese Muslims. According to Col. Henry Yule and A. C. Burnell, *Hobson-Jobson* (London: John Murray, 1903), p. 984, the Persian "Zir Bād" (زیر باد) means "below the wind", that is, against the wind, the reference being to the East. It is a nautical term meaning the countries east of India, apparently Malacca, Sumatra, Tenasserim, Bengal, Martaban and Pegu.

It is possible that the concept is borrowed from the Malay language. The use of the South-West monsoon for trading led old navigators to divide southern Asia into lands "to its windward". In Malay: "di-atas angin"; in Persian: "zir-bād" = Arabia, Persia, India; and "to its leeward". In Malay: "di-bawah angin". In Persian: "bala-bād" = Indonesia, Malaya, Burma (Sir Richard Winstedt, *A Practical Modern Malay-English Dictionary* [Kuala

and a Burmese Buddhist mother. They may be further classified as: (a) sons of Indian Muslim fathers and Burmese Buddhist mothers who converted to Islam; (b) sons of Indian fathers and Burmese Muslim mothers; (c) sons of Burmese Muslims (Zerbadees) and Burmese mothers who converted to Islam; (d) sons of Burmese Muslim mothers and Burmese fathers who converted to Islam (very rare); (e) sons of Burmese Muslim (Zerbadee) mothers and fathers<sup>1</sup>. Since the custom of inter-

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Lumpur, 1964], p. 12; R. J. Wilkinson, *A Malay-English Dictionary*, Part I [London, 1959], p. 33).

“The Malays of these countries are commonly called ‘orang di bawa angin’, i. e., ‘the people below the wind’ (to leeward), or else ‘Easterlings’, whilst those of the Occident, more especially the Arabs, are called ‘orang atas angin’, i. e. ‘people above the wind’ or Occidentals; this is not that there are no other tribes of that name, but that these two nations are the most renowned, the most ingenious and the most civilised of that race” (“Valentyn’s description of Malacca”, ed. D. F. A. H., *Journal of the Straits Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* [Singapore] [June, 1884], p. 52).

“The Malays ... from the island of Sumatra to the opposite shore, now the Malay Coast and more especially to its North-East point, known as ‘Oedjong Tanah’, that is, ‘the extremity of the country’, and known among geographers as ‘Zir bād’ which means in Persian ‘below wind’ (to leeward), hence receiving a long time afterwards also the new name of ‘the people below wind’ (to leeward), or else ‘Easterlings’ (above all the other nations in the East), from the so-called promontory where they had settled again, the same name having been given afterwards also to some of their neighbours or other Easterlings” (*ibid.*, p. 64).

On page 914 of Yule and Burnell’s *Hobson-Jobson* (under “Tenasserim”) “Zerbad” appears as the name of a place, together with other place names like China, Java, Bengal, Tenasserim, Socotra, the Maldiv Islands, etc. According to F. Steingass, *A Comprehensive Persian-English Dictionary*, too, زب باد is the name of a country. The term, “Zerbadiyah” is used for a particular type of ship by al-Maqdisī of the tenth century. According to Meer Sulaiman (“The word ‘Zerbadee’,” *The Cry*, II [Jan., 1935]). “Zeerbad” referred to the sailors plying the waters north of the strip that lies “below the wind”, which is Pegu, Martaban, and Tenasserim. But he does not know how to explain the relationship between this context and the Burmese Muslims, sons of mixed marriages; nor when the term began to be applied to them. Nor is the significance of the name clear to him. Though there can be no doubt that the term conotes a clear relationship between the foreign traders and the new community that developed in Burma.

In its wider sense, the term, “Zerbadee”, in its accepted usage during British rule, referred not only to the progeny of mixed marriages between Muslim Indians and Burmese since the period of British conquest, but also to the descendants of Burmese Muslims from the days of the Burmese Kings. See, for example, H. F. Searle, *Mandalay District Gazetteer*, Vol. A (Rangoon, 1928), pp. 76–78. Descriptions of Zerbadees in the districts of Kyaukse and Yamethin also appear (Wilkie, *Yamethin District Gazetteer*, p. 44; J. A. Stewart, *Kyaukse District Gazetteer*, Vol. A [Rangoon, 1925], p. 33).

The British were not fond of the Zerbadees and tended to attribute to them negative character traits. See, for example, Hewett and Clague, *Bassein District Gazetteer*, p. 31; Ferrars and Ferrars, *op. cit.*, p. 161; Scott, *op. cit.*, p. 88.,

<sup>1</sup> Khin Khin Su, “The Acculturation of the Burmese Muslims”, Unpublished Master’s thesis, Rangoon University, 1960, pp. 10–11.

marriage was widespread, the Zerbadee community increased greatly<sup>1</sup>. It was further augmented by the descendants of mixed Burmese Muslim marriages who almost without exception remained Muslims and lived a separate community life; on the other hand, the descendants of the Burmese Hindu marriages tended to assimilate with the Burmese Buddhists. Only a very few of the descendants of Burmese Hindu marriages considered themselves Hindus<sup>2</sup>. Within the ten years from 1921 to 1931, the Zerbadees increased from 94316 to 122705, that is, an increase of 30 percent or 28389 out of a total of 584839 Muslims in Burma in that period. The number of Zerbadees in previous census-takings cannot be relied upon since there was no exact definition of the term and the count was incomplete<sup>3</sup>. These figures indicate the scope of the new class. The Zerbadees were thrown in uncomfortable social paradox. On the one hand they considered themselves Burmese, spoke and dressed as Burmese<sup>4</sup> but, on the other hand, because they kept to Islam they were also subject to the influence of the Indian Muslims<sup>5</sup>. The Burmese saw that the conversion of their women to Islam created a new class with a different religion and culture in their midst. Since the rise of Burmese nationalism was also accompanied by a certain religious and cultural revival, the Burmese could not accept the Zerbadees as part of themselves. They were convinced that the national feelings of that semiforeign community were identical with those of the Indian immigrants. These reactions, too, contributed to heighten the inter-community tensions<sup>6</sup>.

The conclusions of the Inquiry Committee of the 1938 Anti-Muslim Riots were "that there does exist among the Burmese in general a consciousness that the Zerbadees and other Indian communities are of a different race and a different religion from their own and a resentment of those facts"<sup>7</sup>. These factors constituted the background for the riots.

Violent anti-Muslim riots broke out on July 26, 1938. Their immediate cause was the renewed publication of a book, insulting to Buddhist feelings, written by a Muslim called Maung Shwe Hpi. The book was first written in 1931 following a religious argument between a Muslim moulvi by the name of Hasan Shāh and a Buddhist called Maung Pan Nyo. In order to defend Buddhism against Hasan Shāh's attacks, the Buddhist published a pamphlet that included charges against Islam. In retaliation a Zerbadee named Abdulla Maung Sin wrote an answer in which he claimed that Maung Pan Nyo's book offended Islam and the Prophet Muhammad. In the same year Maung Shwe Hpi published his book which contained three parts:

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<sup>1</sup> W. S. Morrison, *Henzada District Gazetteer*, Vol. A (Rangoon, 1915), p. 53; Scott, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

<sup>2</sup> Burma, *Census of India, 1911*, Vol. IX, *Burma*, Part I, *Report*, compiled by C. Morgan Webb (Rangoon, 1912), p. 99; Bennison, *Census 1931*, p. 211.

<sup>3</sup> Bennison, *op. cit.*, pp. 211, 231. In the year 1911 the Zerbadees numbered 59729 souls (*Interim Report*, p. 28).

<sup>4</sup> "The children of such mixed marriages [i. e., Zerbadees] tended to be more Burmese than the pure Burmese and grew increasingly reluctant to acknowledge their partial Indian heritage. Under a silent pressure of Buddhist nationalism even a few Zerbadees got converted to Buddhism and became ardent Buddhists" (Usha Mahajani, *op. cit.*, p. 30).

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 23.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 29; *Interim Report*, p. 29.

<sup>7</sup> *Interim Report*, pp. 29-30.

Maung Pan Nyo's pamphlet, Abdulla Maung Sin's pamphlet, and his own writing. One thousand copies were circulated amongst the Muslims, and forgotten. In 1936 Hasan Shāh prompted a Muslim in Rangoon to publish a new edition and 2500 copies were printed. This edition also failed to cause any outcries until June, 1938, when a Buddhist journalist started publishing its most offending sections. On July 19, *The Sun*, an opposition newspaper, demanded action against Maung Shwe Hpi's book. Other newspapers and organizations of Buddhist monks (pongyi) also began taking an interest in the book. Since 1935 Burmese newspapers had been inciting against the Muslims "who have taken possession of the wealth of the Burmese people and also their daughters and sisters"<sup>1</sup> and against the Zerbadee culture. They also called for expulsion of Indians and their discharge from the civil service. Articles appeared demanding the prohibition of inter-marriage so as to limit the spread of Islam. Thus, the anti-Muslim attacks inspired by the book fell on fertile soil. Another important paper, *New Light of Burma*, incited its readers to boycott Muslim shops. Articles goading the public to act against the Muslims, the attacks on Muslims because of the book, and efforts to rouse public hysteria continued until July 26.

Clear signs of preparation for rioting were already noticeable a few days earlier. Muslim news papers and various Muslims organizations immediately dissociated themselves from the book and tried to pacify the Buddhists so as to prevent rioting. Concern over the publication of the book was expressed at two meetings of Muslim organizations held on July 24 and 25. It was made clear that the Muslim community had had nothing to do with its publication, but these efforts proved useless<sup>2</sup>.

On July 26 a huge mass rally was held at the Shwe Dagon pagoda. All the speakers at the meeting violently attacked the Muslims and marriages of Muslims and Burmese. Among the decisions made was the demand that the government pass the "Buddhist Women Special Marriage and Succession Bill."<sup>3</sup> Punishment for all those connected with Maung Shwe Hpi's book was also demanded. The government was warned that if it did not take the required action "steps will be taken to treat the Muslims as enemy No. 1 who insult the Buddhist community and their religion and to bring about the extermination of the Muslims and the extinction of their religion and language"<sup>4</sup>. At the end of the meeting it was decided to march toward the Muslim market-place (Surti Bazaar), shouting "Burma for the Burmese", and other anti-Muslim slogans. Muslims and Indians who happened to be caught in the path of the demonstrators were hurt<sup>5</sup> and, while the police was dispersing the crowds two or three pongyis were also hurt.

The following morning the Burmese newspapers used this fact to accuse the police of savage behaviour, especially against the Pongyis. Buddhist public opinion in Rangoon and district was inflamed particularly by the articles and picture published after the demonstration. It was primarily in the districts that the exaggerated descriptions of the events in Rangoon had their effect; riots broke out there immediat-

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<sup>1</sup> *Final Report*, p. 8; *Interim Report*, pp. 18, 35-36.

<sup>2</sup> *Final Report*, p. 12.

<sup>3</sup> See above, p. 33.

<sup>4</sup> *Final Report*, Appendix II, p. x; see also *ibid.*, Appendix I, p. ix, "Meeting Agenda"; see also, *ibid.*, p. 13.

<sup>5</sup> *Final Report*, pp. 13-15; *Interim Report*, p. 7.

ely after the Rangoon newspapers arrived<sup>1</sup>. The sight of Indian policemen attacking yellow-robed pongyis was cause for even greater fury. Rioting continued until July 28. On that day several Muslims retaliated by wounding two pongyis who were begging for food at the doors. Attacks on Indians and Muslims were immediately renewed throughout Rangoon. Shops were plundered, mosques attacked and some even burned, and people were killed. In most cases armed Pongyis were to be found in the rioting mob. They also participated actively in the attacks, the plunder and the killings. Buddhist monasteries served as headquarters for the assaulting units or as shelters for them and their plunder<sup>2</sup>. The riots ended in Rangoon on August 1 but were renewed on September 2. In this second wave the attacks and killings continued for a few days and then calmed down<sup>3</sup>.

On July 28, 29, and 30 the riots immediately spread to the districts. Almost without exception, the Muslims tried everywhere to appease the Buddhists in order to save themselves from the coming outbreak<sup>4</sup>, but Muslims, especially the shopowners among them, and Hindus were attacked everywhere<sup>5</sup>. The degree of violence of the anti-Muslim outbreaks varied from place to place nor was it everywhere in direct relation to the size of the local Muslim community. In many places the riots were used as an excuse to "settle accounts" with certain Muslims, generally shopkeepers and merchants. The most serious rioting took place in the oilfield district of Yenangyaung – which had a small Muslim population – and in the districts of Mandalay, Sagaing and Shwebo – which had considerable numbers of Muslim residents. Hundreds were wounded<sup>6</sup> and killed, millions of rupees' worth of property was damaged<sup>7</sup> and 113 mosques were set afire<sup>8</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> *Final Report*, pp. 24–25, 27.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 35–39, 276–279.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 41.

<sup>4</sup> "The Muslims of Burma everywhere did everything in their power to dissociate themselves from Maung Shwe Hpi's book" (*Final Report*, p. 307). The Committee was favorably impressed by the readiness of the Muslim community's notables everywhere to apologize to the Buddhist community for the book of Maung Shwe Hpi. "It has to be remembered that no Indian Muslim or Zerbadi in the country, outside the handful of them to whom it has been traced, had the remotest connection with, or responsibility for, the book of Maung Shwe Hpi. While we have nothing but praise for their humility and sense of conciliation in tendering the apologies they offered, we think it fair to make it clear that throughout the country they did all in this respect that was possible to avert the disaster which threatened them and in many cases more than could in fairness have been asked of them. In some cases this was effective to promote peace and in more than one place the *pongyis* of goodwill were not slow in accepting it. But in many places, we regret to say, it had no effect at all to ward off the danger in which they stood from causes in which the book of Maung Shwe Hpi played no or little part" (*ibid.*, pp. 265–266).

<sup>5</sup> *Interim Report*, p. 9; the *Final Report* gives details of the events in each and every district separately: Myaungmya, pp. 45–69; Maubin, Henzada, and Prome, pp. 70–97; Magwe, pp. 98–140; Sagaing and Shwebo, pp. 141–162; Mandalay, pp. 163–187; Tharrawaddy, pp. 188–207; Taungoo, Pegu, and others, pp. 208–222.

<sup>6</sup> Casualties:

	Muslims	Hindus	Burmans	Others
Killed	142	25	73	–
Wounded	520	200	244	23

It would seem, from the official figures submitted to the Committee, that the totals perhaps do not include all the casualties sustained (*ibid.*, p. 261). <sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 284. <sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 286.



On September 22, the Governor convened a Committee of Inquiry. The chairman was a British judge, the secretary a British lawyer, and its members were two Buddhist Burmese and two Muslim leaders. The committee's term of reference were to examine the reasons for the riots, to report on the operations of the police and the civil authorities, and to recommend steps that would prevent similar community and religious disturbances in the future<sup>1</sup>. The Committee discovered in the course of its work that the situation was still so explosive that it stopped gathering evidence and quickly prepared an intermediary report recommending that the government take urgent and resolute preventive measures. The full report was completed later on.

The Committee concluded that the publication of Maung Shwe Hpi's book which is a "shocking and stupid piece of intolerance and bad taste"<sup>2</sup> was not the real reason for the riots. Parts of the book were insulting and supplied the excuse, but they alone were not enough to evoke such violence without the already existing powerful tensions – economic, political and social<sup>3</sup>. Nevertheless, the book was the immediate cause in that it aroused undesirable attention and irresponsible publicity in Burmese newspapers, aimed at embarrassing the government, inciting the population against Indians and other foreigners in Burma, and provoking the riots. The book was exploited for violent anti-Muslim propaganda by giving it an undeserved importance<sup>4</sup>. The meeting at the Shwe Dagon Pagoda on July 26 which marked the beginning of the riots had taken place because of the book<sup>5</sup>. "We sum it up by saying that, in our view, it (the Burmese press) has been one of the chief agents, if not the chief agent, in creating that unrest which led to the riots into which we have inquired, in making use of the resentment which Maung Shwe Hpi's book raised for political purposes and in fostering for political ends the confusion the riots have left behind them"<sup>6</sup>.

Although the book did have a negative influence on some persons, and some newspapers did blow the matter up out of all proportion, there were deeper and more serious factors at work in Burma which had no connection whatsoever with the publication of parts of the book nor with the Pagoda meeting of July 28, 1938. This fact did not reduce the book's offense to orthodox Buddhists who for the most part had not known about the book until the middle of July 1938<sup>7</sup>. In the opinion of the Committee, the riots were not religious riots. They did have religious anti-Muslim undertones, the pongyis did participate conspicuously, and Muslims, Indians and Zerbadees were special targets for attack; but the real causes were political, economic, and social and not religious<sup>8</sup>.

The Committee learned that the Burmese, especially in Lower Burma, were seriously concerned about the Indians and feared that a continuing immigration would affect the social and economic life of Burma. This was considered to be a pressing

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<sup>1</sup> *Interim Report*, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10; *Final Report*, p. 287.

<sup>4</sup> *Interim Report*, pp. 37–38; *Final Report*, pp. 288, 292.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 287

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 309.

<sup>7</sup> *Interim Report*, p. 9.

<sup>8</sup> *Final Report*, p. 287; contrary to the opinion of Usha Mahajani, *op. cit.*, p. 79, who reveals frankly anti-Muslim views – possibly owing to the fact that she is herself a Hindu!

problem. The Committee therefore proposed a thorough examination into the social and economic position of the Indian minority in Burma in order to ascertain whether Burmese and Indian interests clashed. As an intermediary step, the Committee proposed that Indian immigration to Burma be limited and that land reform be introduced. It also suggested "serious attention of the Government of Burma to the 'Marriage Question' which we have put forward as a Burman-Indian source of friction in the country"<sup>1</sup>. As a result of the recommendations included in the Committee's report, an additional Committee of Inquiry, headed by an economic expert, James Baxter, was appointed. This Committee was asked to examine the problem of Indian immigration: to inquire into the number of immigrants, to determine to what extent the immigration was seasonal, temporary or permanent and to determine the professions in which the Indians had displaced the Burmese<sup>2</sup>. Following up the findings of the Baxter Committee, the Governments of Burma and India initiated talks on limiting Indian immigration to Burma. In 1941 the two governments signed the Indo-Burma Immigration Agreement. It stipulated a number of limitations on Indian immigration to Burma and aroused violent protests both in India and among the Indian minority in Burma. Shortly before the law came into force, Burma was conquered by the Japanese<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> *Final Report*, pp. 295-296; *Interim Report*, pp. 14, 19, 22. For the whole story of the riots, see also: John F. Cady, *A History of Modern Burma* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1958), pp. 393-396; Burma, *Burma Handbook* (Simla: Government of India Press, 1944), pp. 107-108; Harvey, *British Rule in Burma*, p. 92; Desai, *India and Burma*, pp. 39-42, 68.

<sup>2</sup> Thompson and Adloff, *Minority Problems in South East Asia*, p. 73.

<sup>3</sup> Cady, pp. 396, 398; Desai, *India and Burma*, p. 69.

## *Organizations of Muslim Immigrants from India*<sup>1</sup>

The Muslim immigrants came from all parts of India. Settling in Burma, they maintained their ties with the districts from which they hailed, and their organizations were according to *Landsmannschaften*, or the sects to which they belonged (that is Shi'a, Ismā'ili, Ahmadi). The educational requirements were such that each community engaged moulvis (priests) and religious men from their own home districts in India so as to ensure the maintenance of contacts and the flavour of home. Each community built its own mosque, madrasa (religious school) and guest house, maintained its own muezzin to call the faithful to prayer, moulvi to conduct the prayers and to teach the Koran. In this manner the immigrants managed for a long time to retain their strong ties with their places of origin in India – not only in the matter of family and the bringing over of special people to perform special tasks required by the respective sects, but also in the matter of language, dress and customs.

Early in the twentieth century, associations of Indians began to be formed, first in Rangoon; but other towns in Burma soon followed suit. The structure, purpose, and activities of the various societies were very similar. The first to set up such an association were the Soortis, from the city of Rander in the Bombay District. Formed in 1908, it was called The Rander Sunni Bohras Soorti Mohamedan Association. Although their number was small (today the Association has a membership of about 1000), most of them were wealthy merchants. Somewhat later, associations of Soortis were established in Moulmein, Maymyo, and Mandalay as well. Each one is an independent group, unrelated to the Rangoon Association.

At about the same time (in 1908) the Meimans, from the district of Saurashtra in India, established the Rangoon Meiman Jamaat. They, too, are a small community, today estimated at 3000–4000 scattered throughout Burma. They are mostly merchants, and their language is Gujerati<sup>2</sup>.

The Shi'as organized in 1909. Several years earlier they had set up a sports' club which they called the Islamic Fraternal Society, but their only activity was billiards. In 1909 a group of young Shi'as established the Young Men's Persian Association. Their purpose was to concern themselves with the social and religious affairs of the Shi'a community in Rangoon. Within two years the majority of the important Shi'as had joined up, and its name was changed to the Persian Association. There was a split in the association in 1914; the splinter group set up the Burma Ithnā' Ashari Society, but after two or three years returned to the parent organization. In 1930 there was a second split which likewise did not last long; its short-lived name was

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<sup>1</sup> Because of the dearth of written sources, this section is based, in the main, upon conversations with community leaders and heads of organizations in Burma – except where otherwise indicated (see Introduction). The reason for the use of the Present Tense in this section and those which follows, is also explained in the Introduction.

<sup>2</sup> The exact date of the establishment of their society in Rangoon is today no longer remembered.

the Iran Youth League. In 1935 when Persia changed her name to Iran, it was decided also to change the name of the Persian Association to the Iran Club. Most of the Shi'as in Burma, today numbering 500 in Rangoon and about 2000 in the rest of Burma, are engaged in commerce. They are known in Burma also by the name "Moguls". The majority are of Indian origin and came as part of the waves of Muslim immigration from India to Burma, but their prime attachment is to Iran. In the years prior to World War I they maintained regular contact with the Persian Consul-General in Rangoon. The association's constitution stipulates that life membership shall be awarded to those who excel in any activity, or whose service to Islam or to some Muslim state – particularly to Iran – or to Iranian literature is outstanding. They presented lectures on events in Iran, classes in Persian, and made regular contributions to the Red Lion and Sun, Iran's equivalent of the Red Cross. The name of the Shāh of Persia was always remembered at all their social events. The Iran Club is one of the oldest social organizations functioning in Burma<sup>1</sup>. Incidentally, the Shi'as, like the Muslims, also married Burmese women and they, too, have their own brand of "Zerbadees".

Most of the Dawoodi Bhoras, today some 300 all told, live in Rangoon and are also engaged in commerce. They came to Burma at the beginning of the century from the District of Gujerat; their language is Gujerati. Because of their small number they do not have an association, but they cluster around their mosque, which was built in 1902. The Isma'ilis also conduct a closed community life, led by their community council<sup>2</sup>.

The Cholia Muslim Association was established on October 20, 1912, by Muslims from Malabar<sup>3</sup>. The Cholias speak Tamil. They are scattered throughout Burma, in villages and in towns, and most of them are shopkeepers and small merchants. In 1946 a group of young people who objected to the use of the term "Cholia" broke away and formed a separate organization. The All-Burma Tamil Muslim Association today boasts only 1500 members.

The Malabar Muslim Association was established in 1918. Although their number in Burma today is estimated at 10000, the Association's membership rolls list only 400.

Until the outbreak of World War II the Muslims from East Bengal had many organizations, according to their places of origin, such as: the Dacca Club, the Chittagong Association, the Bengal Association. After the establishment of Pakistan in 1947, all these societies merged to form the All-Burma Pakistan Association<sup>4</sup>.

The Qādiyānī Aḥmadīs also established their own organization at the beginning of the century, although the exact year is unknown. The first of the Aḥmadīs were Punjabi soldiers and policemen serving with the British forces. Their numbers have

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<sup>1</sup> Iran Club, *Golden Jubilee Magazine, 1909–1959* (Rangoon, n. d.), pp. 3–9, 25–26, 31, 33, 44, 46. This Jubilee issue also contains an article briefly reviewing the history of Iran.

<sup>2</sup> It was extremely difficult to obtain any information about this community.

<sup>3</sup> Cholia Muslim Association, *Constitution and Rules of the Cholia Muslim Association* (Rangoon, 1957), p. 4. There is no certainty with reference to the meaning of the name (Yule and Burnell, *Hobson-Jobson*, p. 207). In the judgment handed down by the Supreme Court of Rangoon in the matter of the conduct of the community's mosque, in the year 1936, the following definition was accepted: "Cholia Muslim" means every Muslim whose mother-tongue is Tamil. This judgment was confirmed by the Supreme Court of Rangoon in the year 1953 (Chulia Mosque, *Amended Scheme for the Management of the Trust of the Chulia Mosque* [Rangoon, 1954], p. 7).

<sup>4</sup> See below, pp. 44, 86–87.

dwindled to some 150 today. Most of them live in Rangoon with but a smattering in the provincial towns. Unlike the other associations, the Ahmadis do not organize social activities at all; they devote themselves exclusively to missionary work, distributing printed material in Tamil, Urdu, Burmese, and English. World War II having isolated them, many Ahmadis in the provinces went over to the ranks of the ordinary Islam.

Several of the Muslim associations were registered by the government and recognized as literary, scientific, or charitable organizations. Their activities were very similar. They were all scrupulously careful to avoid becoming involved in political affairs<sup>1</sup> (although some individuals did do so, it was not as members of an association that they acted but on their private capacity), and they concentrated instead on cultural, religious, educational, and welfare affairs for the benefit of their kinsmen. Upon occasion they also cooperated in general welfare projects for non-Muslims in Burma.

Some of these associations formulated rules and regulations containing their aims, purposes, and methods of activity<sup>2</sup>. Most of the constitutions of the associations are similar, describing their goals as the encouragement of literary, scientific, cultural, religious, charitable, and educational activities among the members of their respective communities specifically and among the Muslims of Burma in general; to devote themselves to the religious, social, cultural, and moral development by means of the distribution of publications, the organization of lectures, the establishment and support of school and other educational institutions; the granting of scholarships, loans and other forms of financial aid to needy students; the building of housing, hotels, hospitals, and similar public institutions for their membership; the fostering of the spirit of unity and brotherhood within the community, and of cooperation with other communities. Some of the constitutions also imposed upon the associations the responsibility of coping with the difficulties obstructing the commercial pursuits of their members, and of taking the necessary steps to improve their economic status. Their institutions were also to act as arbiter in disputes among members. Each association was empowered to represent its members in dealings with government and public institutions.

The actual achievements of most of the associations are much more modest than their declared aims. The Soortis, for example – a sect known for its generosity and charitable works – year after year busy themselves with the distribution of text-

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<sup>1</sup> “Our Association has, from its very inception, been a purely social organisation working for the attainment of our religious goal and making its members honest and law abiding citizens. It has never taken part in politics” (Iran Club, *op. cit.*, p. 9; see also: *Ibid.*, p. 25). In many separate conversations I had with the respective leaders of the Soorti, Meiman, and Tamil communities, they each emphasized the great care they took to avoid becoming involved in the political affairs which exercise Burmese public opinion.

<sup>2</sup> John Leroy Christian, *Modern Burma* (New York: Institute of Pacific Relations, 1942), pp. 221–222; Surtee Sunny Vohra Trust Society, *Memorandum and Articles of Association* (Rangoon, n. d.), para. 3; Cholia Muslim Association, *op. cit.* The Constitution of the Cholia Muslim Association had already been adopted on September 28, 1929 (see para. 3). The Meimans also have a similar constitution, but it is recorded only in the Gujarati language. See also Iran Club, *op. cit.*, pp. 4, 9, 26.

books to needy schoolchildren and the care of the sick. The Soorti clubhouse has a library, reading room, and gymnasium for youth and adults. The sect conducts a special foundation, ever since 1926, the funds of which go to the orphans and the poor, pay for scholarships, for school fees, and for burial costs. The Soorti society in Rangoon also contributes to the upkeep of the Muslim hospital and cemeteries<sup>1</sup>. The Randeria High School is a special project of the Soorti-Rander community; even today all the members of its board of governors are Randeris, but the school is open to all pupils, of all sects, non-Muslims as well. In the days of British rule the school was government-supported, but since 1948 it is financed by pupils' fees and the income from the community's property which is earmarked for this purpose. Its program of studies is the same as in most Muslim schools in Burma and, in addition to the required subjects, includes Muslim subjects, obligatory only for the Muslim pupils: Koran, prayers, and Urdu. At present the school has an enrollment of 600 and a staff of 30 teachers; of these, sixty pupils and ten teachers are non-Muslim.

The large Soorti Mosque of Rangoon was also built by the Randeris. Its directorate is composed of Soortis only, but its Advisory Council membership includes Muslims of other communities as well.

The Meimans, too, established a club which serves as a social center for its members. They, too, take care of their needy, give scholarships, interest-free loans to small businessmen, and handle the burial procedures for their kin. The parent body organized the Young Men's Meiman Association which runs a library, a reading-room and social games. The adults' organization similarly conducts a Muslim school open to pupils from outside the Meiman community.

The elementary school of the Chulia Association, begun in 1926, developed with the years and in 1961 became a secondary school. Its curriculum is on a par with the government program of studies of Burma and of India. There are separate classes for the children of Burmese citizens conducted in accordance with Burmese governmental requirements, and other classes for the children of Chulias who have retained their Indian citizenship. The matriculation examinations of the latter are under the supervision of the University of Calcutta. The language of instruction in the Burmese classes is Burmese; in the "Indian" classes it is English. The religious education offered by moulvis includes the study of the Koran, prayers, and the tenets of Islam. The Hindustani language is taught, but Urdu, Arabic, and Persian are not. Among the school's fifteen teachers, only three are Chulia; six are Hindus and two are Christians. The Chulia Association has a library of its own and since 1951 a students' club which maintains a separate library. Membership in this students' organization is open only to Chulias. They organize sports activities, have a debating society, and undertake various kinds of humanitarian services and projects for the needy. The Chulia Association in 1959 set up the Chulia Muslim Educational Trust to handle the awarding of scholarship to needy pupils and students of their community. The Chulia society has branches in the cities of Mandalay, Pegu, Henzada and Prome, with a school, a library, and a mosque in each.

The large Chulia Mosque of Rangoon is an institution conducted by a board of directors separate and distinct from the Association. The maintenance of the mosque

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<sup>1</sup> Burma Muslim Soortee Vohra Association, *Annual Report for the Year Ending July 31, 1960* (Moulmein, 1960); Rander Sunni Bohras Soorti Mohamedan Association, *Fifty-Sixth Annual Report, 1961* (Rangoon, n. d.).

is financed by the income from property belonging to it and from public contributions. The officially recognized statutes of the mosque, in English and in Tamil, were determined by the High Court of Rangoon as a result of disputes in management that were uncovered in 1936, and again in 1953. The statutes lay down the procedures to be followed in the election and terms of reference of the board of directors and in the monetary management, the engagement of the imam, muezzin, clerk, messenger, porter, and all other employees. The Court appointed a supervisory committee of eleven to be members for life; when a seat on the committee became vacant, the new member was voted in by the other members. The Court reserved to itself the right, in the event of an emergency, to void the statutes or portions thereof, and on the recommendation of the supervisory committee, to appoint an administrator to manage the mosque<sup>1</sup>.

The All-Burma Tamil Muslim Association maintains a school in a village not far from Rangoon which is populated by a majority of Tamils; it also assists members of the Tamil community in obtaining citizenship papers and in their other applications to government.

The Malabar Muslim Association also has a mosque in Rangoon. It has mosques in the districts, too, but no branches; nevertheless it does maintain contact with members of the community outside Rangoon, especially in matters relating to religion, welfare, and care of the poor. The Malabar Association ceased to function in 1960 owing to quarrels among the community's leadership. Not a single one of the activities decided upon as far back as the year of its inception, 1918, has been carried out, such as the building of a school and additional mosques; not even an annual report has ever been prepared, as in the other associations. In Rangoon the Malabar Muslims jointly with the Malabar Hindus, conduct a social club, the Malabar Club, which came into existence in 1913, several years before the Muslim Malabar Association came into being.

One of the largest mosques in Rangoon is the Bengali-Sunni Mohamedan Mosque of the East Bengalis; it, too, is governed by statutes established by the courts, providing exact procedures to be followed in relation to the composition, election, length of service of the board of governors, their duties, the administration of the mosque, the employed staff, the annual general meeting, etc. There is a madrasa annexed to the mosque and supported by it; its four-year course includes the study of the Koran, Arabic, Burmese, Urdu, and a little history, arithmetic, and English. During the month of Ramadan, the mosque conducts a special collection of funds; the moneys thus acquired are allocated to the staff, the cost of repairs, and other good deeds<sup>2</sup>.

The All-Burma Pakistan Association came into being only after World War II, but serves as an umbrella organization of the various societies of the Bengalis. It does not differ in any way from the other associations of Indian Muslims.

The Shi'as are particularly active in communal work. In the Iran Club regular sports competitions take place, plays are mounted (*Romeo and Juliet*, and *The Merchant*

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<sup>1</sup> Chulia Mosque, *op. cit.*, pp. 7-20.

<sup>2</sup> Bengalee Sunni Mohamedan Mosque, *Amended Scheme for the Management of the Trust of the Bengalee Sunni Mohamedan Mosque at Sule Pagoda Road in Rangoon: As Amended by the High Court of Judicature at Rangoon in Civil Case No. 117 of 1939* (Rangoon: Royal Stationery Supply House, 1940).

of Venice!), contributions are collected for the burial of the destitute, and even funeral arrangements have been made by them for members of the community. In 1912 they established a school for the children of the community. In 1919 they opened a youth department with a library, sports and games, attendance at adults' discussions, lectures on religious matters, discussion groups in Persian and in English, distribution of annual prizes to outstanding members, and a bulletin in English and in Persian. In the course of time non-Shi'a members were also admitted to the club<sup>1</sup>.

There are three Shi'a mosques in Rangoon; the largest of the three is the Mogul Mosque, built in 1914; it is the center of the community's most important celebrations, those of Muḥarram. On the day of 'Ashūrā', at the end of the prayers and "lessons" about the Massacre of Kerbela processions of *Imāmbarehs* from the other two mosques converge in front of the Mogul Mosque. Each family or community group, according to places of origin in India or in Burma – the Shi'a Zerbadees – generally bear their separate *Imāmbareh* decorated in accordance with the respective local custom: garlands of Indian flowers, or colored paper festoons in the style of Burma. The Shi'a youths, dressed in Scout uniforms, encircle the street. Songs in Urdu and in Persian are heard in addition to the cries of "Ya-Allah, Ya-'Allī, Ya-Ḥasan, Ya-Ḥusayn".

A black horse and a white horse covered with blood-stained cloths; black-garbed boys and girls are also present, as usual in these processions. Unlike the prohibition in other countries, the Shi'as in Burma are permitted to flagellate themselves using iron chains and razor blades – which is done with excessive enthusiasm, even to the spilling of blood. The police prepares ambulances, for if the holiday falls during the hot season, there are always people hurt. The Dawoodi-Bhora also take part in the parade. Foreigners are allowed to watch the procession and to take photographs without interference. When the men emerge from the mosque the women, black-robed, enter, and from that vantage point watch the proceedings. Such processions take place in Mandalay, Prome, Taunggyi and Akyab. The day before the procession, a ceremony takes place involving walking over hot coals, apparently under the influence of a similar Hindu custom. In the days of British rule, clashes sometimes occurred with the Sunnis during the procession, but never with the Buddhists<sup>2</sup>. In the wake of these clashes, attempts have been made to invest the Muḥarram celebrations with a more general and dignified Muslim content. On the anniversary of the Imām Ḥusayn, public lectures are held on the Day of Kerbela for Muslims, not necessarily Shi'as, and with the participation of Sunni personalities. The newspapers carry notices of invitation to all Muslims in Rangoon to participate in these rallies<sup>3</sup>.

The Dawoodi-Bhora community is under the leadership of a single man, imam, whose sole occupation this is. He comes from India, and is replaced every three years, because the Burmese permit is valid for only that period. They have no school nor madrasa of their own. Their children attend other schools, government and Muslim schools, but the imam gives lessons in religion three times a week, to adults as well. The imam's salary and the other financial needs of the community are covered

<sup>1</sup> Iran Club, *op. cit.*, pp. 3–6, 9, 44–46.

<sup>2</sup> On June 13, 1962, I visited the Shi'a mosque and witnessed the Muḥarram procession. See also Khin Khin Su, *op. cit.*, pp. 12, 14–15.

<sup>3</sup> *Guardian* (Rangoon), July 28, 1961; *Nation* (Rangoon), June 13, 1962.



with the help of donations. The community maintains close ties with the center in Bombay whence it receives religious counsel.

The Ismā'īlī community, which runs branches in Mandalay and other places in Burma, has been supporting a small secondary school in Rangoon for many years. In 1961 construction was begun on a new building for the school, where pupils of other communities and religions also study<sup>1</sup>. Following the instructions of the Aga Khān, the Ismā'īlīs began to take Burmese names and to adopt the Burmese national dress.

The Chinese Muslim community is a somewhat unusual group. Its members, also known by the name "Panthay"<sup>2</sup>, are Chinese Muslims who come from the district of Yunan in western China bordering on Burma. The majority of them reached Burma as traders, muleteers, and especially as refugees after the collapse of the Panthay revolt (1856–1873) against the Chinese emperors, which established an independent sultanate. The Panthay settled in various places throughout the Shan area. Most of them were mule drivers in caravans between Burma and China, or traders along the Salween River. The Panthay mule caravans continued to operate until World War II. Some Panthays also settled in the vicinity of the mines of semi-precious stones near the city of Mogok. The Panthay immigration to Burma continued until Yunan was taken by the Chinese Communists, and apparently stopped altogether only in 1950 when the frontier was completely sealed off by the Chinese.

Small groups of Panthays are today scattered throughout most of the larger towns of Burma; many of them are to be found along the Salween River. The largest concentration is in Tanyan near the town of Lashio. Other Panthay centers are in Kengtung, Mandalay, Rangoon, Taunggyi, Mogok, Bhamo. An occasional family can also be found in various other localities.

There is no certainty about the number of Panthays in Burma. The community leaders estimate their people at some ten to fifteen thousand. This seems reasonably acceptable, in view of the estimated numbers living in the major urban areas.

Wherever the Panthays live they set up a mosque and a madrasa with it. They do not have a central community organization as all the Muslim immigrants from India have; but they do have a special Chinese Muslim Community in each place where a group of them settles, which is the organization that looks after the religious,

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<sup>1</sup> *Nation*, Jan. 16, 1961.

<sup>2</sup> There is no certainty as to the origin or significance of the term, "Panthay". There are those who believe it to be a deformation of the word "Parsi" or "Farsi" (John Anderson, *Mandalay to Momien* [London: Macmillan, 1876], pp. 224–225). Others claim that the word is of Burmese origin and is no more than a distortion of the word "Pathi" or "Puthee" (Yule and Burnell, *Hobson-Jobson*, p. 669); in the same place is also expressed the contrary opinion that there is no relation between "Pathi" and "Panthay".

Among themselves, and also by the Chinese, the Panthays are known as "Hui-Hui" or "Hui-Tzu", which, in Chinese, means Muslims. The second term has a derogatory implication and is in more common use among the Chinese (Capt. William Gill, *The River of Golden Sand*, condensed by Edward Colborne Baber [London: John Murray, 1883], p. 251; J. George Scott and J. P. Hardiman, *Gazetteer of Upper Burma and the Shan States* [Rangoon, 1960], I, 607).

Members of the Panthay community in Burma today do not use this term at all, but call themselves Chinese Muslims.

charitable, welfare, educational, marriage, burial, and other affairs of the community members. They do not always have a spiritual leader of their own; where there is no Panthay moulvi to direct the mosque, they hire one of other origins, usually an Indian Muslim. In their madrasas Chinese is not taught; they study only a little Arabic, prayers, and the Koran. Chinese was quickly forgotten, especially by those already born in Burma, and the Burmese language has replaced it. Chinese is still spoken among the Panthays only by the older generation.

The numerous mixed marriages are an important phenomenon in the life of the community, particularly in areas of sparse concentration. The Panthay youths tend to take native wives: Burmese or even Burmese-Buddhist. The ties of kinship with the Panthay community on the part of those children whose mothers are not Chinese Muslims have weakened considerably. A second factor affecting this community, as well as the other Muslim communities in Burma, is the younger generation's drift away from the religion and traditions of their parents born out of the desire to imitate the Burmese Buddhist majority in whose midst they live, and their wish to remove all signs of difference. The community elders, fully aware of the situation, assume that the Panthays in Burma will in a generation or two assimilate completely and cease to exist as a separate entity<sup>1</sup>.

Except for these community organizations, each of which persisted in its ties with the home district in India and dealt with its specialized affairs, the bonds of the general Muslim population in Burma with the Muslims of India were greatly relaxed; this is true despite the fact that their way of life and the character of the community activities were clear witness to the strong links and sentimental attachments to the Muslim way of life in India. The immigrants were busy enough coping with the problems of existence and livelihood in their new country, and anxious to avoid any excessive display of contacts with India, lest this evoke Burmese hatred toward themselves. The Muslim-Hindu rifts which divided India had their counterpart among the Indians in Burma, but not so much because of the events in India as because of the religious quarrels in Burma itself, and even that, on a rather insignificant scale.

A branch of the All-India Muslim League was formed in 1909 in Burma, then still a province of India, and continued to exist with a minimum of activity until August 4, 1914. This branch was established to counterbalance the Burmese branch of the Congress Party – the Burma Provincial Congress Committee. With Turkey's entry into the war against England, several outstanding Muslims in Burma, who indicated their support of the Central Powers, were arrested; they were set free only at the end of the war. With the Armistice in 1918 the Muslim League resumed activity for a short spell, but with the formation that same year of the Khilāfat Movement, which called attention to it, it discontinued its activities<sup>2</sup>. It tried to renew its organization under the name of the All-Burma Muslim League; it existed, without doing a thing, until World War II. It did, however, maintain contact with the Muslim League in India.

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<sup>1</sup> For details on the history of this community in Yunnan and in Burma, bibliography and comments, see Moshe Yegar, "The 'Panthay' of Burma and Yunnan," *Journal of Southeast Asian History*, VII (March, 1966), 73–85.

<sup>2</sup> That which appears in Usha Mahajani, *op. cit.*, pp. 23–24, was confirmed to me by various persons, orally.

The Khilāfat Movement in Burma was also merely a branch of the main movement that arose in India. The Burmese branch devoted itself to the collection of contributions which were transmitted to India, and to the organization of meetings at which the problems of the Caliphate were discussed. Several Buddhists were also active in the Movement, especially those who were connected with the Congress Party in India and with Gandhi who supported the Khilāfat Movement. This Movement, for a time, served as a rallying point for Indian Muslim activity in Burma while, except for a few, the Burmese Muslims showed no interest in it at all. With the cessation of the Ottoman Caliphate and the Khilāfat Movement in India in 1924, the organization's program nationally ceased to be. Neither the Muslim League nor the Khilāfat Movement succeeded in arousing any particular interest in Burma, as they had among the Muslims in India; this was due to the absence of outstanding leadership. Many of the Indian community leaders (Muslims and Hindus alike) in the course of time lost interest in India and in what was happening there.

Relations between Hindus and Muslims in Burma were for the most part good. On specific occasions they even cooperated in the struggle for the attainment of rights. In the riots of 1938, however, and again in 1939 and 1940, some serious clashes occurred between them. During the anti-Muslim riots there were Hindus who cooperated with the Burmese against the Muslims. Processions organized by the Congress Party were considered by the Muslims to be anti-Muslim demonstrations; celebrations of the Prophet's birthday, or holidays arranged by the All-India Muslim League were thought by the Hindus to be directed against themselves. Clashes also took place in connection with the slaughter of cattle for Muslim holidays<sup>1</sup>.

The Indian Muslims excelled not only in the organization of their communal life according to places of origin, but also in the establishment of a series of general Muslim organizations and institutions some of which included Burmese Muslims. Particular emphasis was placed on the education of the youth, so as to ensure the Muslim unity of the community, including the offspring, the Zerbadees, whom they wished to rear in their own traditions in the midst of the Buddhist majority surrounding them. But it was just that problem of education which caused the awakening of the Burmese Muslim consciousness of self and led to the setting up of their own organizations; these organizations did at times embrace Indian Muslims, but more often did not, and even worked against them in their desire for prominence within the Burmese Buddhist public, as against the "foreign Indian" immigrants.

The organizational aspect of the various community activities of the Muslims in Burma should not be exaggerated. To a large extent most of the institutions were created by the personal initiative of certain outstanding individuals, some of them wealthy, who alone financed them, as discussed below.

As noted, the Muslims built a mosque and a madrasa wherever they settled down. In the majority of instances the school was part of the mosque, and most of the teachers were Indian Muslims who taught the Koran and some Arabic and Urdu. Most of the children attended these schools for two or three years and upon leaving,

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<sup>1</sup> Thompson and Adloff, *op. cit.*, pp. 70-71, 75; Scott O'Connor, *The Silken East*, I, 70; P. D. Patel, *My Fifty Years in Burma* (Rangoon: Rangoon Gazette, n. d.), p. 6; Usha Mahajani (*op. cit.*, p. 27) maintains that the outbursts were unusual, an opinion that cannot be accepted; see also *ibid.*, pp. 79-80.

could recite parts of the Koran by rote, but without understanding the meaning. Many of their teachers did not know much more themselves<sup>1</sup>.

Upon completion of these few years of study most of the Muslim children transferred to government or private schools. This is still the custom. There are, of course, many Muslim children who do not receive even this smattering of Muslim instruction, attending only government or private schools. This phenomenon is particularly in evidence in the larger cities – Rangoon and Mandalay – and especially among the children of upper middle-class families, despite the fact that it is in these cities that the Muslim schools are most numerous. The Indian Muslims are stricter than the Burmese Muslims about providing traditional Muslim instruction for their children<sup>2</sup>. In the very first years following the British conquest the Muslims began to put up their own schools which offered the approved governmental curriculum, with the addition of some hours for religious instruction. Every province had its government-appointed Muslim assistant supervisor assigned to these schools. In those areas where the Indian Muslims were in the majority, the language of instruction was Urdu, Tamil or Telugu, depending upon the place of origin in India. In the Zerbadee settlement areas the language of instruction was Burmese, and sometimes educational institutions were under the supervision of Burmese officials. There were Zerbadees who preferred to send their children to general Burmese schools where the language of instruction was Burmese, rather than to the Muslim schools where Urdu was the language of instruction. The number of Muslim schools in Burma grew steadily, as did the number of attending boys and girls<sup>3</sup>. In the reports of the British District Officers mention was made of the keen interest the Muslims displayed in the education of their children. In many Muslim-populated villages, the leaders and elders made special efforts in order to build a school.

The result of all this was that among the various religious groups in Burma, the Muslims were second only to the Buddhists in literacy. The Buddhists surpassed the Muslims because of the general education given in the Buddhist monasteries<sup>4</sup>. The percentage of literacy differed from group to group within the Muslim com-

<sup>1</sup> Khin Khin Su, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 25–26, 52–53.

<sup>3</sup> In 1931 there were 32269 Muslim pupils in the elementary, secondary, and high schools in Burma (A. Hamid, *The Burma Muslim Educational Conference: Tenth Annual Session, 1931* [Rangoon: British Burma Press, 1931], p. 39) – as opposed to 27105 (7051 girls among them) in the year 1946–47 (Union of Burma, *Report on the Public Instruction in Burma for the Year 1946–47*, by Maung Kaung [Superintendent, Government Printing and Stationery, Burma, Rangoon, 1954], pp. 21, 47, 49). In the year 1959, the number of Muslim children in state schools had already reached 63608 (it is not clear whether this figure includes Muslim schools as well). See Union of Burma, Directorate of Education, *Schools in Burma*, by John U. Michaelis (Rangoon, 1959), p. 60.

<sup>4</sup> *Comparative Table of Literacy in Burma, Over 20 Years Old Per 1000*

		1911	1921
MALES	Buddhists	619	708
	Muslims	299	357
FEMALES	Buddhists	74	120
	Muslims	112	100

(Burma, *Census of India, 1921*, Vol. X, *Burma*, Part I, *Report*, compiled by S. G. Grantham [Rangoon, 1923], p. 175). In the Taungoo District, for example, on the eve of World War I,

munity. The Zerbadees, for example, ranked higher in literacy than the Arakan Muslims, among whom the illiteracy percentage was especially high in the Muslim agricultural areas<sup>1</sup>. The educational level among the Zerbadee women, too, was relatively high, for Burmese Muslim girls were also sent to school in accordance with Burmese custom<sup>2</sup>.

Many schools were built by Muslims, especially in Rangoon. The first secondary school, Madrasa Mohammedia Randeria High School, was opened as early as 1867 and is one of the oldest schools in Burma. Until 1899 it was devoted exclusively to religious studies, and only Islam and Urdu were taught. In 1900 the study of English was introduced, and the school began to follow the government curriculum, plus the additional Muslim instruction. In 1909 it became a secondary school in its entirety. With but one exception all the school's principals until 1927 were British – "whose white skin alone commanded respect"<sup>3</sup>. Hindu, Buddhist, and Christian children also attended the school. Teachers of these religious persuasions were employed, as well as Muslims. Only in 1948 did Burmese replace English as the language of instruction. The high school, still in existence, with a present enrolment of 500, greatly encourages sports and scouting activities<sup>4</sup>.

Another important Muslim secondary school, established in 1886, was the Islamia School. Its aim was to integrate parochial education with general studies. It was the first school in Burma using Urdu, to be officially recognized by the governmental Department of Education. The Burmese and Gujerati languages were also taught; later on, Arabic, Persian, and English were added. On May 1, 1935, it became a full-fledged secondary school with English as the major language of instruction. The school had its own mosque, sports facilities, dormitories, printing shop, and a great number of other properties. Like the other schools, this one, too, published a monthly journal in Urdu and an annual in English. Contrary to the Randeria School founded and administered by the Soortis of Rander, this school's board of directors included representatives of all the Muslim sects<sup>5</sup>.

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24.63 percent of the Buddhists knew how to read and write, and 24.37 percent of the Muslims, as against 17.39 percent of the Christians, 10.63 percent of the Hindus, and 5 percent of the Animists (S. A. Smyth, *Toungoo District Gazetteer*, Vol. A [Rangoon, 1914], p. 75).

<sup>1</sup> Burma, *Census of India, 1921*, p. 176.

<sup>2</sup> Details from the respective districts of Burma are to be found in the following sources: Scott, *Burma: A Handbook of Practical Information*, p. 165; Burma, *Burma Handbook*, p. 12; Furnivall, *Colonial Policy and Practice*, p. 13; B. C. Binns, *Amherst District Gazetteer*, Vol. A (Rangoon, 1935), p. 95; J. S. Furnivall and W. S. Morrison, *Insein District Gazetteer*, Vol. A (Rangoon, 1914), pp. 163–164; Hewett and Clague, *Bassein District Gazetteer*, p. 116; Searle, *Mandalay District Gazetteer*, p. 220; R. B. Smart, *Akyab District Gazetteer*, Vol. A (Rangoon, 1917), pp. 207, 209; Stewart, *Kyaukse District Gazetteer*, p. 148; U Tin Gyi, *Maubin District Gazetteer*, Vol. A (Rangoon, 1931), p. 98; Wilkie, *Yamethin District Gazetteer*, p. 156; Williamson, *Shwebo District Gazetteer*, p. 203.

<sup>3</sup> Madrasa Mohammedia Randeria High School, *Golden Jubilee Souvenir: 1906–1956* (Rangoon, n. d.), p. 10.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*; Madrasa Mohammedia Randeria High School, *Annual Magazine, 1957–1958* (Rangoon, n. d.).

<sup>5</sup> Islamia School, *Annual*, Vol. I, no. 1 (Rangoon: Rangoon Daily News Press, 1935), pp. 67–70.

The Muslim of Burma did much for the care of orphans, including the establishment of orphanages in various places throughout the country. Most of them were "private" and were conducted by the moulvis of the relative mosques. In Rangoon alone five such orphanages were inaugurated during the British period. One of these, built in 1922, was attached to the Madrasa Islamia<sup>1</sup>, and annexed to the Muslim secondary school that replaced the Madrasa Islamia after World War II.

A Muslim school for girls was established in Rangoon in 1925, the only one of its kind in Burma. The study of the Burmese replaced Urdu as the major language of instruction. It became a secondary school in 1956. The school also runs an orphanage. Of the 450 girls enrolled at present, 80 percent are Muslims. Most of the remaining 20 percent are Christians. The majority of the teachers, male and female, are Muslim, but there are also some Buddhists and Christians among them.

Just prior to the outbreak of World War II, Rangoon boasted a total of 41 Muslim schools, in 5 of which English was the language of instructions. Only 5 of the 29 Indian Muslim schools taught Burmese as a separate subject. The salaries of the teachers of Burmese in these schools were paid by the Education Department of the Rangoon municipality. Of the total of 41 schools, 11 were "private", that is, madrasas conducted by moulvis. In all these Muslim schools Islamic studies were compulsory. The educational supervisory network of the Rangoon municipality included a special assistant supervisor assigned to the Muslim schools<sup>2</sup>.

The keen interest of Burma's Muslim community in the education of its children led to the calling of annual conferences, from 1905 onward, devoted to their specific educational problems (All-Burma Muslim Educational Conference). In the beginning these conferences were looked upon as adjuncts of the All-India Educational Conference, a similar Muslim institution taking place each year, whose center was in Aligarh, India. Indian Muslims and Burmese Muslims alike attended these conferences, representing the various Muslim communities scattered throughout Burma. The Indian Muslims constituted the more influential element, because of both their wealth and their activity. They aspired to having Urdu declared the compulsory language of instruction in all the Muslim schools. As early as 1915 it was this point that began to lead to differences of opinion between the Indian Muslims and the Burmese Muslims; it was in that year that the latter first demanded the introduction of the Burmese language in the schools. Their demands were renewed year after year. For fourteen years the Zerbadees took no effective action toward achieving their purpose; at the 1929 Educational Conference at Pegu, however, they insisted that the Indian Muslim teachers acquire a satisfactory knowledge of Burmese within the next three years as a condition for their advancement. Efforts were made to find a compromise in the matter of the use of Urdu or Burmese as the language of instruction in order to prevent further splits among the Muslims who were already separated on so many other issues<sup>3</sup>. These efforts failed, and in 1931 the Zerbadees broke away and set up their own annual All-Burma *Burmese* Muslim Educational Conference. Their purpose was to emphasize their identity with the Burmese people while retaining their own religion. The Indian Muslims were unable to continue the separate existence of their conferences, a fact that made all the more conspicuous

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<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 3-8.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> Hamid, *op. cit.*, pp. 84-85.

their *Indian* attitudes, at odds with the *Burmese* national movement already active at that time. Their conference was disbanded a year later. Many Indian Muslims continued to take part in the educational conferences organized by the Burmese Muslims, even growing accustomed to the new trend and accepting it. The Indian Muslim, U Raschid, who took Burmese citizenship and became one of the foremost leaders of the community, declared in 1935 that the Muslims in Burma did not know any other country and that is why they should recognize the importance of the language. This does not mean that by identifying with the aspirations of the Burmese people, in language as in other fields, the Muslims must renounce their own special traits, their religion, their culture, their institutions, or even their Muslim names. On the contrary, they must oppose any factor likely to shatter their religious unity, and one of the conditions for this is the meaning of the rift existing between the Indian Muslims and the Burmese Muslims. Both sides have to make efforts to mutually understand each other. The Muslims can ill afford rifts and splits in their ranks<sup>1</sup>.

The conferences were finally discontinued in 1938. These conferences and their debates were matters of internal Muslim concern; the British authorities ignored them completely. Although the conferences did not complain against the government's Department of Education, and although they agreed that it acted fairly toward all the communities, they did nevertheless petition for increase in the educational budget<sup>2</sup>. The schools continued to teach in the language – Urdu or Burmese – that suited the population. Generally speaking, the Muslim schools in Lower Burma employed Urdu, and in Upper Burma, Burmese was more in use; however, there were many exceptions to this generalization<sup>3</sup>. The Educational Conference was the first Muslim organization in Burma which, until the split, embraced the entire Muslim minority with all its variety of divisions. In addition to the language problem – which was the cause of the first quarrel between the Burmese Muslims and the Muslim immigrants from India, and which led to the crystalization of hatred between the two groups – the conferences also took up other educational problems of a general nature.

One of the subjects that engaged the Muslims at their educational conferences was the relationship between religious education and general, modern education. The learned among them were critical of the educational system obtaining in the Muslim institutions. They claimed that the Muslims must adapt themselves to the deep economic and social changes of the day, and provide their youngsters with the educational system that would make it possible for every one to develop his abilities and talents to the full<sup>4</sup>. There is no kindergarten, and the infants are hurled directly into the classroom where they immediately start on the study of the Koran, which is so difficult to understand. All this, instead of teaching them in stages, beginning with a bit of the history of religion, tradition, and the fundamentals of Islam, in lessons made easy and adapted to the age group. Educational aids, and

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<sup>1</sup> M. A. Raschid, "The Muslim Youth in Burma", *Islamia School Annual*, I (March, 1935) 21–22, 24.

<sup>2</sup> Hamid, *op. cit.*, pp. 8, 78–79.

<sup>3</sup> Usha Mahajani, *op. cit.*, p. 23; U Mya, [*The Brief History of the Burmese Muslims*] (Rangoon, n. d.), p. 84 (Burmese). These facts have been confirmed orally by many sources.

<sup>4</sup> Hamid, *op. cit.*, p. 83.

modern teaching methods should be introduced, following the accepted procedures in western countries. A solution must also be found for the problem of the lack of textbooks. Muslim youth must be educated to ideas, must be given the kind of education which will result in the formation and development of personality, rather than being taught to repeat by rote texts they do not begin to understand.

There was also a demand that the Muslim youth be provided with vocational training so as to earn a livelihood. Upon graduation students are faced with unemployment. They do not want to engage in physical labor; since they have acquired education, this is beneath their dignity. Separate educational programs should be drawn up for rural youth and urban, in accordance with the different fields and trades in which they can reasonably expect to find employment. This is imperative in order to prevent the creation of an educated but useless class that will be a burden and responsibility of society and government<sup>1</sup>. With reference to the education of girls, the spokesmen of this reform trend demanded the correction of the existing ratio between boys and girls in the Muslim schools which, in 1931 had mounted to 8 to 1. They demanded that the educational possibilities for girls be widened and their program of studies adapted, apart from that of the boys, to be in keeping with their temperament and their physical build. It was emphasized that they should be encouraged to take part in sports activity<sup>2</sup>.

The scholars and university graduates among the Muslims were urged to devote themselves to teaching so as to raise the level of Muslim education and remove it from the province of teachers unsuited to the calling. It was suggested that they be drawn to the teaching profession and encouraged to engage in it by means of appropriate salaries<sup>3</sup>. A demand was also made for an authorized translation of the Koran into Burmese because lack of knowledge of Arabic makes it impossible to understand the book<sup>4</sup>. No effort was made to realize the demands for educational reform in the madrasas, toward which the criticism was leveled, despite the fact that the network of Muslim schools was enlarged, as described above<sup>5</sup>.

In addition to the concern for its schools, the Muslim community in Burma also devoted itself to providing afterschool activities for the youth. Mention has already been made of the Students' Association, reading rooms, and clubs established by some of the communities. In 1921 the Muslim students of the University of Rangoon formed the Rangoon University Muslim Students' Association as an all-embracing Muslim project. Its purpose was to strengthen the ties among the Muslim students

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<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 40-51, 55, 81, 83.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 55-57.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 54.

<sup>4</sup> Raschid, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

<sup>5</sup> The concern for education, and especially for religious education within the Muslim community was undiminished in later periods as well. In May, 1946, the Moulvi Hashim of the Arab College in Yindaw appointed a committee to select the material to be used in religious studies which would also be in accordance with the demands of the times. He admitted that the Burmese Muslims were reading the Koran without understanding much of its lofty ideas, a situation that required urgent correction (Thompson and Adloff, *op. cit.*, p. 89, quoting the *Burman* [Rangoon], May 20, 1946).

I was unable to discover whether this committee did indeed meet to consider the problem, or what its conclusions were, if any.



within the University and to work on their behalf<sup>1</sup>. They built up a library with the assistance of contributions by Muslim donors; they published an annual, half in English and half in Burmese, which included articles on matters of religion, politics, literature, and history. From time to time they organized lectures for their members as well as weekly lessons in religion. Once a year they held a Grand Tea. After the war the Association split into two: one for the University students, and the second a separate organization of Muslim students in the Faculty of Medicine; both groups continued separately to function along the same lines as the former single organization<sup>2</sup>.

An additional body came into being in Rangoon in 1923, the Muslim Students' Society, which included Muslim school children and Rangoon University students in its membership. According to its constitution – and practically every Muslim organization in Burma considered itself obliged to formulate and publish such a document – the Society's aims were stated to be to encourage the Muslims in the various educational institutions in Rangoon to draw together and in general to interest the Muslim intelligentsia; to improve the standard of its members – social, moral, religious, educational, and physical; to defend and protect the interests and rights of the Muslim students (and pupils); to improve and defend the status of the Muslims in Burma in general, and to champion the spirit of compromise, co-operation, and goodwill among the members of the various communities and religions<sup>3</sup>. The Society organized lectures, debating circles, sports activities – this was the fashion among most of the Muslim organizations, especially in Rangoon, for adults and for the youth alike<sup>4</sup> – a reading room, a library and a students' club, and all manner of social activities for its members. In 1933 the Society started to publish an annual called *The Cry*, distributed for the most part free of charge to the educational institutions, the libraries, and the reading rooms. Like similar publications of the Muslim schools and organizations, *The Cry*, contained articles on religious and general subjects<sup>5</sup>. After the war the activity of the Muslim Students' Society in Rangoon lessened considerably, although even before the war there was a wide gap between its declared aims and its achievements; but one interesting annual function was added to its program in Rangoon and in Mandalay, beginning with the year 1955, within the framework of the general celebrations of the Prophet's Birthday. Lectures in English, Burmese, and Urdu were organized; religious examinations on Islam were conducted and prizes distributed to the children<sup>6</sup>. This was

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<sup>1</sup> Rangoon University Muslim Students' Organization, "Constitution", *Annual Magazine* (Rangoon), (1953), p. 45.

<sup>2</sup> Rangoon University Muslim Students' Organization, *Times Mirror Magazine*, Vol. I, no. 5 (1957–58), Introduction.

<sup>3</sup> Muslim Students' Society, *Memorandum and Rules and Regulations* (Rangoon, April 16, 1935), pp. 1–2.

<sup>4</sup> The first Muslim cricket group was organized as early as 1912–13, and on its heels various other Muslim sports groups were organized by individuals, organizations, institutions, and schools (A. M. Ismail, "Muslim Cricket Clubs: 1907–40", *The Cry* (Rangoon), n. v. (1953–54).

<sup>5</sup> *The Cry* (official organ of the Muslim Students' Society, Rangoon), n. v. (1953–54), and n. v. (1946), 21.

<sup>6</sup> *The Cry*, n. v. (1946), pp. 89–93; Khin Khin Su, *op. cit.*, pp. 53–54; Syed M. A. Majeed, "The Muslim Students' Society Report, 1953–54", *The Cry*, n. v. (1953–54).

probably done in imitation of the annual Buddhist examinations in Rangoon and elsewhere.

In 1950 a Muslim Students' Society came into being in the town of Maymyo, with a similar constitution and similar activities in the fields of literature, sport, study groups, library, reading room, etc. It became a branch of the Rangoon Society in 1954. The rolls of the Maymyo Society contain 150 listed members; more than a third of them are not Muslims<sup>1</sup>.

To help in the rehabilitation work conducted after the war, meeting was called, at the initiative of the Muslim Students' Society, of representatives of all the Muslim organizations in Rangoon, at which the Muslim Welfare and Rehabilitation Organization was founded. The Organization extended aid to widows and orphans and assisted them in obtaining support from government institutions. It also helped people in the rebuilding of their homes which had been destroyed in the war<sup>2</sup>.

The most important project initiated by the Muslim Students' Society, was, without a doubt, the Muslim Free Hospital and Medical Relief Society, which opened in Rangoon on January 5, 1937. The members of the Society did do social work, it is true, from its very first day, in 1923, but now they felt that the Muslim community which constituted a very important sector in the population of Rangoon had to establish something outstanding as a token of their gratitude for the rights and opportunities which they enjoy in full equality with the others<sup>3</sup>. The hospital started out as a free clinic but gradually grew and extended its operations until today it is a large hospital with eleven departments and a School for Nursing. It is meant for the poor of all communities and religions. From its beginning and until the end of 1961 some four million patients received treatment. Slightly less than half this number were non-Muslims<sup>4</sup>. The building of the hospital and its extension were made possible primarily by Muslim donations. Its operating budget is covered by the monthly membership dues of Muslims who are members of the Hospital Society, various contributions collected especially during the month of Ramadan, as well as the allocations from the Burmese Government, the Rangoon Municipality and various clubs in the city. For several years, the Y. W. C. A. was also a regular donor<sup>5</sup>. A significant source of finance is the *Zakāt* contributions made by Muslims for the specific care of Muslim patients only, which gave rise to a situation where on the whole there was no lack of funds for the care of Muslim patients but there was for the non-Muslim patients. The hospital was able to overcome this difficulty by levying a fee, though a symbolic sum, upon the Muslim patients for the treatment they receive, to form a *Lillāh* ("to God") Fund earmarked for the treatment of non-Muslim patients. The hospital does not serve food to its patients. Food is

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<sup>1</sup> Mohamed Shareef, "Annual Report of the Muslim Students' Society, Maymyo, for 1952-53", *The Cry*, n. v. (1953-54); Muslim Students' Society, *Eleventh Annual Report*, Jan. 1 to Dec. 31, 1960 (Maymyo. n. d.).

<sup>2</sup> *The Cry*, n. v. (1946), 92.

<sup>3</sup> Muslim Free Dispensary and Medical Relief Society, *Annual Report, 1961* (Rangoon, n. d.), p. 4.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 26. Of the total of 3721418 patients, 1968579 were Muslims and 1732839 were non-Muslims.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7; see also *idem.*, *Annual Reports* for the years 1953-1954, 1955-1957, 1958, and 1959 (Rangoon).

brought from outside by relatives or friends or charity workers. Even pork is permitted on the premises. Most of the doctors, some of them non-Muslims, work as volunteers. Salaries are paid to the nurses and to the administrative and service staffs. All the nurses are non-Muslims<sup>1</sup>! The members of the Hospital's Board of Directors are usually chosen from among the Muslim leaders of Rangoon, merchants and public figures. Five *ex officio* members also serve on the Board as representatives of the Muslim Students' Society. The hospital, besides caring for its patients, also supervises the health of the Muslim old people's home, Aziziyah, in Rangoon and that of the children in the Muslim secondary school, providing them with free medical care<sup>2</sup>.

Together with all other hospitals in Burma, the Muslim Free Hospital, too, was nationalised by the military regime of General Ne Win.

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<sup>1</sup> Muslim girls in Burma were not at all attracted to the profession. In all the health institutions in Burma the majority of the nurses are Christians, usually from the various minorities – Karens and Kachins – although some are from other ethnic groups, including Burmese. It is possible that this situation stems from the influence of the Christian missionaries so active in the field of medical care. Another probable reason is the fact that among Burmese at large nurses enjoy a low social status because they have to deal with naked men and with the dead.

<sup>2</sup> Muslim Free Dispensary and Medical Relief Society, *Annual Report*, 1961 (Rangoon, n. d.), p. 9, and the *Annual Reports* for 1953–54, 1955–57, 1958, and 1959.

## *Organizations of Burmese Muslims*

### The Burma Moslem Society

In the wake of the community organizations of Indians in Burma, and in large measure influenced by their example, a group of Burmese Muslims in Rangoon were moved to establish a similar social organization, complete with lectures, library, sports, children's activities, support of a Muslim school, social gatherings, and the rest of the gamut of activities that characterized the various Indian Muslim organizations. In the Burma Moslem Society (BMS), formed on December 12, 1909, many Indian Muslims were enrolled, although it was described as a society "of people known in Burma as Burman-Muslims, or, in other words, the Zerbadees or Indian Burmans"<sup>1</sup>. The Society intended to open branches in the other important towns of Burma, but up until the 30's nothing came of these intentions<sup>2</sup>. The Society would not have existed for long had not good fortune blown its way in the form of U Bah Oh, an exceedingly wealthy man and generous donor who undertook to finance the organization. The better to tie the man to the Society, the members voted U Bah Oh president for life<sup>3</sup>.

The Burma Moslem Society was for many years the only organization of Burmese Muslims; it therefore considered itself the representative of Muslims in Burma in general, and the authorized body to act in establishing and defending the rights and interests of that community<sup>4</sup>. The Society submitted petitions in the name of the Muslims of Burma, containing the claims of the community, to the various British Inquiry Committee, to the British Governor and to many persons who visited Burma. The leaders of the Society solicited the aid of Lord Chelmsford when he came to Burma in 1916; and later, at the end of 1917, at the time of E. S. Montague's visit to India in connection with the constitutional reforms then under consideration by the British Government, they sent him a memorandum, too, through the good offices of the Burmese Government<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Burma Moslem Society, *Silver Jubilee Number, 1904-1934* (Rangoon: Rangoon Daily News Press, 1935), p. 17.      <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 19; see also n. 4, below.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 26 (Honour Certificate issued to U Bah Oh, dated February 17, 1935).

<sup>4</sup> Burma Moslem Society, *Annual Reports for the Years 1927-1928-1929* (Rangoon: New Light of Burma Press, n. d.), p. 17.

In the 20's there was an organization in Mandalay called Young Moslems' Union which cooperated with the Society in some of its political activities (*ibid.*, p. 16). I was unable to uncover any further details about this Union, or on the other small local associations that existed in Burma in those years but which had no importance beyond their respective localities. In the years 1937 to 1939, twelve such associations – all from Upper Burma – joined the Society. A listing of them appears in Burma Moslem Society, *Twenty-Ninth and Thirtieth Annual Reports for 1937-38-39* (Rangoon, n. d.), p. 14.

<sup>5</sup> Following these visits of Chelmsford and Montague, a new constitution for India was published in 1919, which did not include Burma. Not until January, 1923, was this constitution applied to Burma, too.

The Burma Moslem Society demanded the protection of the interests of Burma's Muslims, and particularly, separate representation on the Legislative Council. The Burmese Government sent their reply to the Society's demands saying that members of the Zerbadee community are eligible to be elected to the Legislative Council as representatives of the areas in which they domicile. In case the Muslim community did not achieve ample representation in the Legislative Council by elected members, the demand to add – by nomination – additional representatives would be discussed together with similar requests of other minorities<sup>1</sup>.

The Society made thorough preparations for the Royal Statutory Commission, referred to as the Simon Commission, after Sir John Simon, its chairman. This Commission was appointed under the terms of The Law of the Government of India, 1919 (the Montague-Chelmsford Law), which came into effect in 1920, and which determined that ten years hence a commission would be appointed to inquire into the dyarchy system in operation and to recommend the best method of introducing independent rule in India. Burma at that time was a province of India and was therefore included within the terms of reference of the Commission. A provincial committee was appointed in each of India's provinces, from among the members of the province's Legislative Council, which worked in coordination with and under the direction of the Simon Commission; these subsidiary committees, however, did not take part in the drafting of the final report of the Simon Commission.

In Burma, too, such a committee was appointed, two of its members being Muslims<sup>2</sup>. The major political parties in Burma, like the Congress Party in India, boycotted the Simon Commission. The Commission, visiting Burma in 1929–30, came in contact with the Government of Burma which submitted a Memorandum; with several chambers of commerce, public figures, representatives of minorities, including those of the Burma Moslem Society, and with Indian Muslim personalities who appeared separately and as private individuals before the Simon Commission.

The Society submitted its Memorandum on January 26, 1929. In it, Burmese Muslims were defined as: (1) pure Burmese; or (2) offspring of mixed marriages; or (3) native Burmese both of whose parents were Indian Muslims; or (4) Indian Muslims who had settled in Burma permanently<sup>3</sup>. That is to say, the only category omitted was that of temporary laborers who would come for a work season or more and then return to India. The Memorandum began with a historical introduction outlining the Muslim community's ties with Burma since the days of the Kings, bearing to which was the fact that the Muslim population was scattered throughout the towns and villages of the country. The Memorandum stated that these Muslims were the descendants of immigrant merchants, soldiers, and others who had settled in Burma hundreds of years ago, and, therefore, they had the same rights as descen-

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<sup>1</sup> BMS, *Silver Jubilee*, p. 23; see also p. 22. In the joint report of 1919, Montague and Chelmsford declared that Burma was not India and was therefore omitted from their survey (Usha Mahajani, *op. cit.*, p. 49).

<sup>2</sup> *Simon Report*, Vol. III, *Report of the Burma (Provincial) Committee*, p. 510. The two were both outstanding Muslim personalities, Yusuf and Mirza M. Raffi. See also Usha Mahajani, *op. cit.*, pp. 54, 56; Cady, *History of Modern Burma*, pp. 294–295.

<sup>3</sup> The complete text of the Memorandum of the Burma Moslem Community submitted to the Royal Statutory Commission (Simon Commission), is to be found in BMS, *Annual Report for the Years 1927–28–29*, pp. 19–26.

dants of any other racial group, to be considered as true Burmese. They differ only by their religion<sup>1</sup>.

The Burmese nationalist movement raised the cry: "Burma for the Burmese". This is a legitimate demand, but the government interpreted it to mean "Burma for the *Buddhist* Burmans", while the Burmese Muslims were labeled *kalas* or "foreign immigrants". This policy of the (British) Government endangered the security of the community, a situation that had not existed before (that is, during the reign of the kings of Burma). For this reason the Muslim community demanded special protection, similar to that granted to the other minorities in Burma. Any future legal formulation must grant the Muslims recognition as Burmese citizens in all respects, and must protect their rights. The Muslim religion of the members of the community must not be allowed to lead to their being considered non-Burmese<sup>2</sup>. The demand was: ample representation in all the District institutions, Municipalities, Educational boards and other public bodies up to 10 percent in each place<sup>3</sup>. At the same time the Society admitted that it is more beneficial to the welfare of the nation not to adopt a *representation* system based on communal lines, but they felt that they had to insist on their demand because the attitude of the Buddhist majority did not inspire in them a feeling of security. With the increasing political hostility of the Buddhist majority it was unlikely that a Burmese Muslim candidate would have any chance of being elected<sup>4</sup>.

The Muslim demand for a fair share in all the public nominations was also included in the Memorandum. The Muslims had the feeling that in recent years members of their community were discriminated against and treated as foreigners especially in matters of nominations<sup>5</sup>.

In the field of education, the authors of the Memorandum demanded that the Government evince a favorable approach toward the educational advancement of the Muslims of Burma. They demanded that the community receive financial allocations sufficient to provide secondary education, literary and technical, for the community's children. They also insisted upon obtaining adequate community representation on educational boards and on the University Council<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20.                   <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 19-21.

<sup>3</sup> The Muslims in Burma at that time did not exceed 4 percent of the total population (see below, Appendix A).

<sup>4</sup> BMS, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 23. The authors of the Memorandum here quoted figures from the 1921 Census on the numbers of Muslims in the services so as to prove their point of inequality.

A similar complaint was included in the application of U Ba Oh of March 22, 1929, to the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court with reference to the appointment of judges. He repeated the Muslims' conviction that the government prefers Buddhists, and that Muslims of equal qualifications have no chance of being accepted to government service. To this the registrar of the Supreme Court replied on March 26, 1929, that there is no preference for Buddhists in appointment of judges and that the only requirements are a good knowledge of Burmese, domicile in Burma, and the necessary academic qualifications (*ibid.*, p. 18).

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 23. As early as November, 1911, the Society submitted a petition to the Government of Burma in which the request was made for the establishment of a club for Muslim students in Rangoon. U Ba Oh contributed 20000 rupees of his own for this purpose (BMS, *Silver Jubilee*, pp. 19-20).

The major concern of public opinion in Burma during the 1920's and the 1930's, and around which the Burmese nationalist movement rallied, was the question of the separation of Burma from India. The authors of the Memorandum expressed their view against the separation of Burma from India. On the other hand they recommended that economic and monetary reforms be initiated in Burma, but hastened to add that if the majority of the Burmese Buddhist community insisted on separation they would not stand in the way<sup>1</sup>. It is interesting to note that the Burmese nationalists also opposed the separation of Burma from India at that time, not because they did not aspire to independence but because they were suspicious of British intentions. The Muslim's attitude was the result, of course, of their fear lest the Burmese Buddhist majority, through separation from India, attain a position of power over them. This conviction, as well as their lack of a general feeling of security and the awareness of their being a minority unacceptable to the majority and needing government guarantees, found expression in the Memorandum's summary which reiterated again that Burma was the only homeland for the Muslims, that in their patriotic sentiments and services to the country they were not inferior to the Buddhist majority, and that they themselves excelled especially in all kinds of social welfare activities, much more than their means could afford. They had no intention of interfering with the political aspirations of their Buddhist brethren who wished to establish a Home Rule, but by insisting on special guarantees they were motivated by their desire to preserve their status against the open political hostility of the majority<sup>2</sup>.

The Burmese, of course, objected to the Muslim demands for separate community representation and for other rights, arguing that "In Burma, neither the Muslims, nor the Brahmans, nor the Christians are known to have been debarred on account of their religious beliefs from occupying high offices in the service of Governments, both under the Burmese Kings and the British Crown. The Burmese society has all along been so democratic as to allow of equal chances for all ... Although the British Government in Burma does not endow any institution for purely religious purposes, all the educational and medical institutions, whether Muslim, Hindu, Christian, or Buddhist, receive Government grants uniformly. This British policy has taken root in the suitable soil of Burmese-Buddhist tolerance. Thus there is no reason whatsoever to entertain any anxiety on the part of the religious denominations who form the minorities in Burma"<sup>3</sup>. The Burmese opposed separate community representation, claiming that this would only bring unnecessary rifts and divisions to Burma<sup>4</sup>.

As stated, the Indian Muslims in Burma opposed the separation of Burma from India. Mirza M. Rafi, member of the Provincial Committee for Burma of the Simon Commission, submitted a memorandum of his own in this matter, in which he explained his objections to the demand for separation. He expressed his agreement to the establishment of home rule in Burma but suggested that if the British Parlia-

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<sup>1</sup> BMS, *Annual Report for the Years 1927-28-29*, p. 22.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 26.

<sup>3</sup> "Note of Dissent" prepared by U Ba U, the Burmese member of the District Auxiliary Committee of the Simon Commission. It was published as an Appendix to the General Report (*Simon Report*, III, 518).

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

ment should refuse to approve it, they should be satisfied with the granting of provincial autonomy for Burma in several fields but within the framework of British India and without separating from it<sup>1</sup>. Rafi also objected to the limitation of Indian immigration and pointed out their share in the development of Burma and the vast benefits they brought. He argued that there actually was no competition between the Indian and Burmese laborers because the Indians undertook all manner of difficult work that the Burmese would not think of doing. From the aspect of absolute numbers, the Indians do not constitute a danger to the "Burmanization" of the country. Furthermore, they tend to assimilate<sup>2</sup>. This memorandum also represented the opinion of the Hindu community of Burma.

The Simon Commission in its conclusions accepted part of the demands of the Burma Moslem Society, and recommended that special places be assigned to the Muslims of Burma in the Legislative Council (a recommendation that was not accepted by the British Government). In addition, the Simon Report stated that full rights of citizenship are guaranteed to the minorities in the constitution itself. These rights include the right of free worship, the right to follow their own customs and to educate their children in their own languages and religion, the right to promote their own languages and religion, the right to promote their own culture, and above all the right to own property and to receive a share of the public revenues for the maintenance of their own educational and charitable institutions<sup>3</sup>.

The demands of the Indian Muslim minority and of the Hindu minority, as outlined by Mirza M. Rafi, were refused. The Report even stated specifically that the loyalty to Burma of the claimants is in question. The major conclusion of the Simon Commission was that Burma should be separated from India as soon as possible: "There is ... one province, to-day an integral part of British India, which should, we think, be definitely excluded from the new polity, and that is Burma ... Burma is not India. Its inclusion in India is an historical accident<sup>4</sup> ... her (Burma's) political union with India is based neither upon geographical connection nor racial affinity ... there remain two main grounds for our belief in the necessity of Burma's separation from India. One is the strength which Burman sentiment in its favour has now attained - to the overshadowing of every other Burman demand - and the other is the constitutional difficulty of giving to Burma a satisfactory place in any centralised system designed to advance the realisation of responsible government in British India<sup>5</sup>. ... it is only the elements which derive their political inspiration from corresponding Indian sources that would postpone separation from a belief that Burma's political progress may be hastened by a further period of association with India<sup>6</sup>". Among the reasons making the separation imperative the Simon Commission underlined the anticipated danger to Burma resulting from Indian immigration, because the wealthy Indians acquired considerable portions of the country's lands and "the uninterrupted flow of Indian labour, however advantageous it may be

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<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 515-516.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 517. The claim that the Indian immigrants tended to assimilate is more applicable to the Hindus than to the Muslims.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 514.

<sup>4</sup> *Simon Report*, Vol. II, *Recommendations*, p. 16.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 181.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 184.



to the foreign capitalists carrying on business in Burma, tends to oust indigenous labour from the field<sup>1</sup>". A second recommendation of the Simon Inquiry Commission was that Burma be granted independent government or home rule or the status of a dominion, in any case directly subject to the India Office (Secretary of State for India) in London. It was suggested that the number of representatives of the various minorities within the Legislative Council be increased and "communal representation be given to the Burma Muslims<sup>2</sup>".

A Round Table committee on India was convened in London in October, 1930, to discuss the matter of the separation of Burma from India. Anti-Indian feeling in Burma ran high. The Indians, more than any other community, felt the need to fight for their rights. They demanded a separate Indian delegation to represent the Indians in Burma before the committee. The Burmese objected. The Burma Moslem Society demanded that a seat be given to the Muslims at the Round Table discussion in addition to and separate from the Indian delegation. After negotiations with the Governor, it was decided that U Aung Thin, a Burmese Muslim lawyer, representing the Burma National Party at the conference, would also represent the Muslims of Burma. Despite this agreement, the Society published a statement expressing sorrow that the community had not succeeded in having its claim met – the appointment of a separate and special representative of its own to the Round Table Conference<sup>3</sup>.

The subcommittee for Burma appointed by the Round Table Conference met in sessions from November 12, 1930, to January 19, 1931. The subcommittee recommended the separation of Burma from India. The Indian representatives dissented. The representatives of the minorities – Indians, Europeans and Muslims – demanded the insertion of special guarantees in the law for the legal protection of minorities. Except for the general agreement in principle among the participants at the conference on the desirability of separation, there was complete stalemate on all the positive subjects on the agenda, such as, immigration, representation of minorities on the Legislative Council, voting rights, and the system of elections to the upper house; the conference thus ended in failure<sup>4</sup>.

Certain Indian Muslim personalities<sup>5</sup> who continued their agitation against the separation of Burma from India even beyond the sessions of the conference, created added tension between them and the Burmese nationalists. They were publicly accused of undermining motives and quarrelsomeness – together with the Indian organizations, – and of harboring aspirations to rule over the Burmese.

In 1934 a Joint Select Committee of the British Parliament was formed for the purpose of preparing a constitution for Burma on the basis of the recommendations of the Simon Commission and of the Round Table Conference. This Committee also found that "Burma is only by accident a part of the responsibility of the Governor

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<sup>1</sup> *Simon Report*, III, 151. At the same time the Commission agreed with the argument of the Muslim and Hindu Indians that the immigrants were filling a role in the economic life of Burma which the Burmese themselves were not prepared to undertake because the Burmese is not ready to work hard for a low salary (*Simon Report*, I, 78).

<sup>2</sup> *Simon Report*, III, 512.

<sup>3</sup> BMS, *Silver Jubilee*, pp. 24–25; Usha Mahajani, *op. cit.*, pp. 57–58.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 58–59, 61.

<sup>5</sup> M. M. Rafi, S. A. S. Tayabji, S. N. Haji, and others; see Usha Mahajani, *op. cit.*, p. 63.

General of India. The Burmese are as distinct from Indians in race and language as they are from the British<sup>1</sup>". The Joint Select Committee drew up the Constitution of Burma of 1935; Burma was separated from India in 1937.

No mention was made in the Committee's Report of the status to be given Burmese Muslims in the future constitution of Burma. The Burma Moslem Society organized a protest campaign against this omission. Articles and letters to the editor were printed in the daily press. The writers repeated the demand for separate community representation as had already been outlined and explained in the several memoranda submitted to the Simon Commission and to the Round Table Conference. They felt themselves discriminated against, especially in view of the separate representation that had been granted the Karen minority and the Anglo-Burmese. The Burmese Muslims resented the fact that the government considered them a part of the Indian community and lumped them together in one category in census and other statistical reports. (The Indians were granted separate community representation.) They argued that they were natives of Burma and did not want to be looked upon as foreigners<sup>2</sup>.

On December 13, 1934, the Society decided to send to the Indian Government their protest against the Joint Select Committee for completely ignoring the Muslims while not ignoring the Anglo-Burmese community which was so much smaller than their own. The protest reiterated all the claims that had been made from time to time to the government and to the various inquiry commissions: their demands to be granted community representation on the Legislative Assembly and in the other public institutions; appointments of Muslims to government services; government support for the educational institutions of the community; protection of the religious customs and culture of the Muslims; and, most important of all, the incorporation of all these demands in the constitution eventually to be adopted. The Society called upon all the Muslims throughout Burma to support these claims. Many wrote to the newspapers; protest meetings were organized in several parts of Burma; cables were dispatched to the India Office<sup>3</sup>.

On December 27, 1934, the Society sent an additional memorandum to Sir Samuel Hoare, Secretary of State for India, again recapitulating the historical rights of the Burmese Muslims, their loyalty to the British Crown<sup>4</sup>, the difference between themselves and the immigrants from India, the hatred harboured against themselves by the Burmese Buddhists. Their memorandum also repeated the well-known demands already described above. Copies of it were sent, too, to Members of Parliament, to Ministers, and to various other persons<sup>5</sup>. The Government simply acknowledged

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<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 49.

<sup>2</sup> Article in the *Rangoon Daily News*, Dec. 1, 1934 (a newspaper owned by a Muslim); Letter to the Editor in the *Rangoon Gazette*, Nov. 30, 1934, reprinted in BMS, *Silver Jubilee*, p. 31-33.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 34-35.

<sup>4</sup> An important ceremony at all the meetings of the Society, including its secular and religious gatherings, was the pledge of loyalty to the British Crown, particularly on special occasions such as coronations, and the celebration of the armistice marking the end of World War I. Such a ceremony once took place with the participation of the Indian Catholic Association (BMS, *Silver Jubilee*, pp. 20-21, 26).

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 36-41.

receipt of the memorandum without reacting to its contents<sup>1</sup>. On February 15, 1935, U Ba Oh, President of the Burma Moslem Society, was received by the Governor of Burma in yet another attempt to correct the omission of any reference to Muslims in the Report of the Joint Select Committee. This meeting likewise produced no results<sup>2</sup>.

The agitation subsided in 1935 when the British Parliament passed the Government of Burma Act, which separated Burma from India without, however, granting Dominion status to Burma. The Muslims were not granted separate representation. The Act itself became effective only on April 1, 1937<sup>3</sup>.

Another activity of the Society, one that did not fail, was its struggle against the usage of the terms "Zerbadees" and "Mohammedans" in official documents. Even before the 1931 Census the Burma Moslem Society requested the Government of Burma to substitute "Burma-Muslim" for the odious "Zerbadee".

The opposition of the Muslims to the term "Zerbadee" must be understood in view of the conflict created between their will to preserve their separateness on the one hand as Muslims and their tendency to assimilate in the Burmese society on the other hand. The title "Burmese-Muslim" could satisfy their demand and their feeling of identity with the Burmese society while "Zerbadee" emphasized their strangeness. The request was turned down on the grounds that the category had been determined by the Indian Government. The Society then published a call to all Muslims residing permanently in Burma to register themselves in the Census as "Burma Muslims". The government did not accept this category and the Burmese Muslims were once again listed as "Zerbadees". "Arakan Muslims", "Kamans", and "Myedu" were listed all together under the category "Burman-Indian Races"<sup>4</sup>. Before the 1941 Census the Society renewed its activities in this matter and again applied to the government, on February 21, 1939, demanding that members of the Muslim community be registered as "Burman Muslims" and that this category include native-born Burmese Muslims, Zerbadees, Arakan Muslims, Kamans, Myedus as well as Muslims born or permanently resident in Burma (that is to say, those of Indian origin as well). The Society based its claim on the argument that in the meantime Burma had been separated from India and the previous excuse for rejecting their demand no longer was valid. In addition, the Society even earlier – on February 17, 1938 – had demanded that the use of the term "Mohammadan" be discontinued in government publications and the term "Muslim" used in its stead. Correspondence on this subject was conducted with the Government Secretary, without result, until May, 1939. In that month the Society wrote to all the Muslim organizations and leading personalities, suggesting the convening of an all-Muslim conference to deliberate on the question of the acceptable term to be adopted and the separate registration of the members of the Muslim community. Although the conference did not take place, many replies were received supporting the suggested change in terminology and the separate registering of Muslims in the census to be held in 1941. In June of 1941 the government announced its decision to grant the

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<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 38.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 42–44.

<sup>3</sup> Usha Mahajani, *op. cit.*, pp. 63, 65.

<sup>4</sup> BMS, *Silver Jubilee*, pp. 23, 55–56; BMS, *Twenty-Ninth and Thirtieth Annual Reports for 1937–38–39*, pp. 7, 15.

Muslim request and replace the term “Zerbadee”. On August 18, 1941, U Ba Oh inserted an announcement in the press which contained the Government’s notification and summarized the ten-year struggle that had preceded it<sup>1</sup>. This was the last activity of the Burma Moslem Society, for it was shortly thereafter that the Japanese invaded the country<sup>2</sup>.

### The General Council of Burma Moslem Associations

In 1936 a second Burmese Muslim organization came into being, named General Council of Burma Moslem Associations (GCBMA) (in imitation of the General Council of Burmese Associations (GCBA), founded in 1920). This new organization was founded in the city of Pyinmana, during the time of the annual meeting of the Muslim Education Conference, by a number of delegates to the conference. Some of the same people who were active in the Burma Moslem Society were active here, too, including Indian Muslims. The General Council did not develop its own program but supported rather the activities of the Burma Moslem Society. All the same they emphasized their being Burmese and objected to the activity of the Muslim Congress branch, although they refrained from cooperating with the Burmese nationalist movement, merely displaying passive sympathy with it. After the war the General Council was reorganized and for several years was very active (see below, p. 72).

### The Renaissance Movement

Only in the latter half of the 1930’s did an organization comprised exclusively of Burmese Muslims come into being. The Burma Moslem Society and the General Council of Burma Moslem Associations were both organizations that included Indian Muslims in their memberships. They even aspired to represent all the Muslims in Burma including, too, the immigrants from India who became permanent settlers. The events of the 1920’s and 1930’s, as well as the stand of the Indian Muslims and the two above organizations in the matter of the separation of Burma from India all contributed toward heightening the Burmese Buddhists’ hatred of the Muslims. It was this that caused the Burmese Muslims, the Zerbadees – especially in Mandalay and in Upper Burma where they lived in large concentrations – to feel the need for a special and separate organization that would differentiate them from the Indian Muslims and would the more effectively emphasize their being part and parcel of the Burmese people in all respects, with the single exception of religion.

There was not one Indian Muslim member in the Renaissance Movement (called No-Kyar-Ye, pronounced no-cha-yey). The movement began in 1937 and held

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<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 16, 21–22; “Burman Muslims: Their Status in Burma”, Government of Burma’s press communique, published by the Burma Moslem Society, Rangoon, Aug. 9, 1941.

<sup>2</sup> U Ba Oh died in the year 1944 at the age of 72. On March 1, 1954, the veterans of the Burma Moslem Society met together in Rangoon and tried to renew the activities of their organization, but without success (*New Times of Burma* [Rangoon], March 12, 1954).

three annual congresses: the first, in 1938 at Pyinmana; the second, in 1939 at Mandalay; and the third, in 1940 at Yindaw. With the Japanese conquest, the organization collapsed but after the war several of its former leaders occupied important positions in the life of the Burmese Muslim community. The ideology of the Renaissance Movement, obvious from its very name, was elucidated in detail in a pamphlet published in Burmese, apparently in 1939 (the pamphlet bears no date)<sup>1</sup>. Their primary claim was that they were, first and foremost, Burmese. Only because their indigenous lethargy and natural indifference did they fail to be noticed and recognized. Actually there was no need for them to have tried to do anything special since they enjoyed an attitude of full equality as Burmese in the reign of the Kings who were so loyally served by so many Muslims. Since the very advent of the Indian Muslims they took the lead in running everything – all educational matters, the opening of new schools, the establishment of organizations, the advancement of Islam and religious affairs. This it was that was responsible for the erroneous identification of the Burmese Muslims – in the eyes of their Buddhist brethren – as half Indian. The members of the Renaissance Movement, in their use of the term “Burman Muslim”, referred only to the offspring of mixed marriages or to Buddhists who converted to Islam. The wealthy Indian Muslims opened schools and the children of Burmese Muslims attended them. There they were obliged to learn Urdu and Arabic instead of Burmese and English. The study of Arabic could, possibly, be justified as being dictated by the needs of religion; Urdu, however, was a completely foreign language that had no place in Burma and its study by Burman Muslims was a sheer waste of time. The No-Kyar-Ye Movement reluctantly conceded the credit due to the members of the Burma Moslem Society and the General Council of Burma Moslem Associations as well as to some individuals who worked in the annual educational conferences against the study and use of Urdu in Muslim schools; but, they contended, this activity was not pursued with sufficient vigor, hence the stated aims were not achieved. The London Conference and the riots of 1938 (during which the Burmese Muslims were also hurt despite the fact that the riots sprang from hatred of the Indians) proved that the harmony existing between the Buddhists and the Burmese Muslims was shattered because the Indian Muslims succeeded in completely blurring – in the eyes of the Burmese public – the difference between the Burmese-born Muslim and the recent immigrant. The Burmese Muslims were in need of new leadership in order to correct their status with their Buddhist brethren. They were native Burmese, citizens of the land, cousins of the Buddhists. Their literature was the same, their language was the same, their culture was the same. The difference of religion need not constitute an obstacle between them nor should it lead to their being identified with the foreign immigrants from India. The pamphlet repeated this last point several times, adding that the organization’s aims were: to imbue the youth of their community with the spirit of Burmese nationalism; to work towards the recognition of the Burmese Muslims by government and nation; to improve the ties of friendship with the Buddhist communities of the country and cooperate with them; to attain separate registration of Burmese Muslims in the 1941 Census (separate, that is, from the Indian immigrants); to work toward the advancement

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<sup>1</sup> Shwe Myaing Aung, [*Burmese Muslim Cause*] (Rangoon: No-Kyar-Ye, n. d.) (Burmese). The pamphlet was translated for me into English. Other witness reports, not included in the pamphlet, were collected orally.

of the Muslims living in rural districts; and at the same time to strive toward the strengthening of their religion, and to achieve government recognition of the Prophet's Birthday as an official public holiday<sup>1</sup>.

This cleavage between the Burmese Muslims and the immigrant Muslims from India had no time to develop any further because of the Japanese conquest of Burma; after World War II, however, the quarrel was renewed and found expression in a long list of organizations that were founded and caused increasing dissension between them.

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<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*

## *The Japanese Occupation*

With the withdrawal of the British from Burma and the entry of the Japanese, organized community life came practically to a stand-still among all the peoples of the land (except for religious activities), not only among the Muslims. This was due no less to the fact that most of the leaders left for India, as to the uncertainty of what life under Japanese rule would be like, an uncertainty that affected the populations profoundly. It quickly became evident that the Japanese had no specific policy toward the Muslims; they showed signs of friendliness toward all Indians, Muslims and Hindus alike<sup>1</sup>. The Japanese restored order and discipline and halted the offenses against the Indians which had been inflicted by the Burmese in various districts during the interim period between the dissolution of British rule and the set-up of Japanese rule. The Japanese were anxious to win over the Indian minorities living in the countries of southeast Asia as a desirable aid in the execution of their own plans for the conquest of India. The sympathy of the Indians in Burma was also necessary to them for purposes of labour and commerce<sup>2</sup>.

Long before the outbreak of World War II, there were nationalist Indians and exiles in various places throughout East and southeast Asia who were actively engaged in anti-British propaganda aimed at achieving Indian independence. With the rise of Japan and her great conquests, these Indian nationalists hung their hopes upon Japan. A plan was conceived whereby an Indian army would be organized from among the millions of Indians scattered throughout the countries of southeast Asia, to fight side by side with the Japanese to free India from the British yoke. The Indian Independence League (IIL), known also as the Azad Hind League, was founded on December 9, 1941, in Bangkok, under the leadership of Subhas Chandra Bose. In addition to its primary objective of attaining Indian independence, the League also conducted lobbying with the Japanese authorities, and concerned itself with the day-to-day problems of the Indians living in the conquered areas: protection of their life, dignity, and property. A branch of the League was also established in Burma<sup>3</sup>, where, as in other places, both Hindus and Muslims joined the movement.

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<sup>1</sup> Many of the Shi'a community, the Moguls, left Rangoon and went to the town of Kalaw. There they were careful to call themselves by the name "Iranians" rather than Shi'as. They enjoyed a benevolent attitude on the part of the Japanese who looked upon them as allies because of the stand Iran had taken. In 1944 the Japanese attitude toward them changed for the worse, and some of them were even arrested (Iran Club, *Golden Jubilee*, pp. 32-34; Patel, *op. cit.*, p. 14). <sup>2</sup> Thompson and Adloff, *op. cit.*, p. 78.

<sup>3</sup> According to a British Intelligence report during the war, the Indian Independence League performed political and administrative functions. Many Indians in Burma considered the Burmese branch of the above mentioned League more as an instrument to safeguard their well being than as an active anti-British body (Burma, *Burma during the Japanese Occupation*. Intelligence Bureau, Book I [Simla 1943], p. 24; see also *ibid.*, p. 23; Desai, *India and Burma*, pp. 75-78).

The Chairman of the Burmese branch of the Indian Independence League was a Muslim and the great majority of the Muslims active in this movement were Indian Muslims; Burmese Muslims evinced practically no interest in it<sup>1</sup>. There were also some Indian Muslims who remained aloof from the League, especially from the Meiman and Ismā'ili' communities<sup>2</sup>. Religious differences did not divide Hindus and Muslims in those days. The situation changed only after the war, when their overall patriotic sentiments for India clashed with their religious identity.

The League organized units of the Indian National Army (INA). Several members of these units were sent into India as agents in the service of the Japanese. The units of the Indian National Army included many Muslims, among them officers as high in rank as colonels and even one general. The military strength of these units was rather insignificant; however, they did fight in the battles of January, 1945, against the British forces that conquered Burma anew<sup>3</sup>.

As an outgrowth of the activities of the Indian Independence League and of the Indian National Army during the years 1942 to 1945, the relations between the Hindus and the Muslims in Burma improved tremendously, leading to full cooperation and unity between the two groups. With the return of the British, this idyllic situation became reversed and each of the communities separated and went its own way. This happened, first of all, because few were interested in having their ties with the Japanese during the war remembered; and second, because after the war the question of Pakistan became more urgent. The Muslims of Burma, including the Indians among them, were not interested in the political quarrels of India, and there was neither alertness to nor political organization around this issue; nevertheless, they did entertain feelings of religious solidarity with the Muslim League and toward the idea of Pakistan. For this reason there quickly came a disassociation from the Indian Independence movement which, after the war, was looked upon as being anti-Muslim. There were even a few isolated cases where Muslim officers, who had fought in the Indian National Army and were brought to trial after the war, refused to be defended in the courts by representatives of the Indian Congress, demanding that they be defended only by Muslim representatives<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> D. M. A. Karim Gani, editor of newspapers in the Tamil and Burmese languages. In his youth he had been the Secretary of the Youth League of the Chulia Association. In 1932 he was elected to the Legislative Assembly of Burma, and in 1936, to the House of Representatives. His name was included in the list of persons "to be arrested immediately" in the British Intelligence report (Burma, *Burma during the Japanese Occupation*, Intelligence Bureau, Book I [Simla, Oct. 1, 1943]). Today he lives in Karachi.

Another Muslim who did much for the League was the millionaire, A. Habib, who contributed ten million rupees to its coffers (Desai, *op. cit.*, p. 83).

U Khin Maung Lat, who became prominent after the war as an important Burmese Muslim leader, was appointed District Organizer of the League.

<sup>2</sup> U Khin, *U Hla Pe's Narrative of the Japanese Occupation of Burma*. Data Paper no. 41, Southeast Asia Program, Department of Far Eastern Studies (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1961), p. 40.

<sup>3</sup> Intelligence Report, Simla, p. 25; Desai, *op. cit.*, pp. 84-85.

<sup>4</sup> Usha Mahajani, *op. cit.*, p. 169. Abdul Razak, the foremost leader of the Burmese Muslims in the period immediately after World War II, was definitely in support of the Indian Congress and against the Muslim League. He even orated publicly against the concept of Pakistan and against partition along community or religious lines. This was, indeed, in keeping with his conviction concerning the place of the Muslims in Burma. See also pp. 75-76.



## Chapter III

### MUSLIMS IN BURMA SINCE INDEPENDENCE

#### *Structural Changes in the Muslim Community*

After World War II several Muslim organizations renewed their activities. The leaders of the Burmese national movement, Anti-Fascist Peoples' Freedom League (AFPFL) were already deep in negotiations with the British concerning Burma's independence; and the Muslims were occupied with the delineation of their position and with the struggle for their rights in the Burma that was about to be granted independence. The Indian Muslims desisted from any separate activity and even tried to cover up any signs of their past political ties with India. Many of the Indian Muslims, especially those of their leaders who had fled to India before the Japanese conquest, did not return after the war; others who did return quickly understood that conditions in Burma had changed to such an extent that they had no room there to continue their former political activity, and left Burma forever to return to India<sup>1</sup>.

As a result of these changes, a wide range of new organizations emerged among the Muslims in Burma: First, the political organizations in which were active both Burmese Muslims as well as Indian Muslims. Some of these organizations developed also educational, social, religious, economic and financial activities. Second, the various *Landsmannschaften* of Indian Muslims and Chinese Muslims. Third, the religious groups, the purpose of which was to insure the religious interests of the Muslims which quite often clashed with the views of the Buddhist majority and Burmese Government. All these are described in detail.

There were two different attitudes among the Muslims toward the questions dealing with the status of the community in independent Burma. One was represented by the General Council of Burman Muslim Associations, and the second by the Burma Muslim Congress.

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<sup>1</sup> An outstanding case in point is that of S. A. S. Tayabji, an Indian Muslim who had been very active in the 1930's in Muslim community affairs in Burma, especially in the sphere of education. It was he who founded the Zinat al-Islam Girl's High School. At the outbreak of the war he fled to India; immediately after the war, upon his return, he was appointed Advisor on Indian Affairs by Sir Reginald Dorman-Smith, the Governor of Burma. A serious quarrel broke out between Tayabji and a group of Burmese Muslims led by U Khin Maung Lat, revolving about the question of participation in the Board of Governors of the Zinat al-Islam Girls' High School. Tayabji and other Indian Muslims were accused of not permitting the Burmese Muslims to take their proper share in the administration. The result of this dispute was that Tayabji returned to India (Usha Mahajani, *The Role of Indian Minorities in Burma and Malaya* [Bombay: Vora, 1960], p. 186).

## The General Council of Burma Moslem Associations (GCBMA)

Several of the veteran leaders of the old General Council met in Rangoon on July 23, 1945, and signed "The Document", symbolizing the renewal of activity by their organization which had been completely dormant throughout the period of Japanese rule. "The Document" emphasized that the Association was for "members of the Burman Muslim community". Realizing the need to curry favor with the British authorities who had returned to Burma, the authors of "The Document" explained their inactivity during the period of Japanese conquest as resulting from the desire of the Muslim community to prove their unstinted loyalty to the British Crown<sup>1</sup>. During the general conference called by the General Council on September 23, 1945, the organization's "draft constitution" was adopted. The "draft" decreed that the official language of the organization was Burmese; its aims were to defend the political, social, educational, and economic interests of the Muslims of Burma, and its intention was to employ all constitutional (l) means in its struggle to achieve its aims. A special point was made to the effect that the Council would champion the community's religion and culture and the Muslim law of the individual. The definition of the category "Burman Muslim" (i.e., Burmese Muslims) was broad here too, similar to that of the Burma Moslem Society, and included, in addition to indigenous Burmese Muslims and descendants of mixed marriages, also those who settled in Burma (i.e., Indians) and their descendants. The Council specifically decreed that its President must be a Burmese, at least one parent of whom was an indigenous Burmese. The same condition was imposed concerning the eligibility of its Vice President and all the members of its Executive Committee. As to the general membership of the Council, it was stipulated that "no more than one fourth of the Council's members were to be domiciled Burman Muslims", which was the draft's euphemism for Indian Muslims who became permanent settlers in Burma<sup>2</sup>.

As early as January 14, 1946, the General Council approached the British Governor to ensure the community's status in the arrangements being made in preparation for the negotiations on independence. The Council demanded that its representatives participate as members of the executive council and the legislative council operating under the authority of the Governor. The Governor refused to meet these demands and even refused to receive the Council's representatives<sup>3</sup>. Following these refusals,

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<sup>1</sup> General Council of Burman Moslem Associations, "The Document" (Rangoon, July 22, 1947). On August 6, 1945, the General Council sent a congratulatory cable to Clement Attlee on having been elected Prime Minister of Great Britain. The cable stated that the Muslims of Burma were loyal to the British Crown, that they fought with the Allied forces and that, during the Japanese occupation, they avoided all activities that might harm the British cause (General Council of Burman Moslem Associations, *Report of the Secretary General for 1945* [Rangoon, n. d., mimeo]).

<sup>2</sup> General Council of Burman Moslem Associations, *Draft Constitution* (Rangoon, Sept. 23, 1945); "G.C.B.M.A. Conference, U Maung Maung's Presidential Speech", *The Businessman* (Rangoon), Sept. 26, 1945.

<sup>3</sup> Letter from the Secretary to the Governor of Burma, to the Secretary General of GCBMA, Rangoon, Jan. 15, 1946.

and in view of the progress being made in the drafting of the constitution for independent Burma, the Council began to demand the incorporation in the constitution of special guarantees for the Muslim community. They demanded separate community representation in the Constituent Assembly. They based their demands on the community's ancient ties with the Kings of Burma, on their participation in the struggle for independence, and on their claim to being Burmese. Their lines of argumentation very closely resembled those of the Burma Moslem Society in the period between the two world wars<sup>1</sup>.

On August 4, 1947, the General Council wrote an official letter to Thakin Nu (later: U Nu), the then Prime Minister of Burma, thanking him for the AFPFL's decision to grant to the "national minorities ... group(s) of citizens who differ from the majority in race, language, culture and historical traditions" fitting representation in the lawmaking institution, freedom to organize, and cultural autonomy. The Council noted with disappointment, and with a hint of suspicion, that Muslims were not mentioned among all the national minorities of Burma listed in the draft constitution, nor were they given any guarantees. The Muslims of Burma hoped that they, too, would be given community representation and legal guarantees for their rights and their special interests. They were particularly anxious to have assurances – by specific incorporation in the constitution – that the legislative council would not pass laws that would be contrary to the laws of the individual of the minorities<sup>2</sup>. On September 17, 1947, a copy of this letter was sent to many Muslim personalities and to representatives of the various other communities, as well as to Ministers and to the leaders of the AFPFL. It was sent under cover of a memorandum in which the Council's President emphasized the point that the Muslims constituted an important minority in Burma which must attain a status of equality with all other minorities recognized by the constitution<sup>3</sup>.

The AFPFL leadership refused to recognize the Muslims as a national minority; on October 2, 1947, U Chan Htoon, Adviser on constitutional affairs to the Constituent Assembly, and later Chief Justice until arrested by General Ne Win's military Government, replied to the letter from the General Council's President saying that Muslims born in Burma, raised and educated in Burma, whose parents, or at least one of them, were Burmese, automatically had Burmese citizenship, according to paragraphs ≠ 11 (ii) and ≠ 11 (iii) of the constitution<sup>4</sup>. As citizens, they would enjoy the same status, rights and privileges as all other citizens of Burma. Paragraph 13 of the Constitution guaranteed that all the citizens of Burma, without regard to

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<sup>1</sup> Proclamation of GCBMA, apparently in March, 1947; letter of GCBMA Secretary General to the editor of *Voice of Burma* (Rangoon), May 1, 1947.

<sup>2</sup> Letter signed by A. E. Madari, President of GCBMA, addressed to the Prime Minister of Burma, Thakin Nu, dated Aug. 4, 1947.

<sup>3</sup> Circular letter signed by Madari dated Sept. 17, 1947.

<sup>4</sup> Art. 11 (i) Every person, both of whose parents belong or belonged to any of the indigenous races of Burma; (ii) every person born in any of the territories included within the Union, at least one of whose grand-parents belong or belonged to any of the indigenous races of Burma; (iii) every person born in any of the territories included within the Union, of parents both of whom are, or if they had been alive at the commencements of this Constitution would have been, citizens of the Union (Union of Burma, Parliament, *The Constitution of the Union of Burma, 1947* [Rangoon: Government Printing and Stationery, Burma, 1959]).

origin, religion, race, or sex, shall be equal before the law. Paragraph 14 guaranteed equal opportunity to all citizens in matters of public service, and in employment in any post, profession or business whatsoever. They also were entitled to all the other privileges of the citizen mentioned in the constitution, even the right to candidacy for the election to the post of President of the State and to membership in the two Houses of Parliament<sup>1</sup>.

This reply did not satisfy the General Council of Burman Moslem Associations, and on October 4, 1947, another letter was dispatched to U Chan Htoon stating that the guarantees he had listed were not satisfactory. To all intents and purposes, the real situation was that Muslims, by virtue of their being a minority, had not the remotest chance of being elected to the legislative institution. Once again they renewed their request that, of the seats reserved by the Constitution (according to paragraph 87 m(f) for representatives of the minorities, a number should be allocated to Muslims<sup>2</sup>. And again the efforts of the General Council were fruitless.

On November 19, 1948, in a memorandum submitted to the members of the High Court, the Council made a last attempt to get constitutional recognition and special guarantees for the Muslim community similar to those granted the members of other minorities. As in all previous documents of the Council, this memorandum, too, opened with a brief historical survey in order to prove that the Burmese Muslims were an indigenous race and sons of the soil, that numerically speaking they are the second largest minority after the Karens, and that they occupy important positions within Burma in various fields. The authors of the memorandum complained that despite their appeals to the Prime Minister they were not afforded the attention they deserved nor were their representatives allowed to participate in or cooperate with the preparatory committee which drafted the constitution<sup>3</sup>. They repeated their demands for representation in the government, in the legislative council and in the public services, in proportion to their numbers and the needs of the community; for the equality of their basic rights with the other minorities; and for the assurances of freedom of religion, customs, institutions and the Muslim laws of the individual<sup>4</sup>.

In early November, 1948, the President of the General Council distributed a memorandum to the Muslims of Burma containing refutations to the doubts which had been raised concerning the status of Burmese Muslims as citizens, the contents of this memorandum were also quoted in several newspapers. To those who had previously been categorized as Zerbadees, Pathis, Kamans, Myedus, and Arakanese Muslims, it was explained that they did not have to apply for citizenship since, according to paragraph 11 (ii) of the Constitution they automatically received Burmese citizenship. Muslims were not entitled to claim Burmese citizenship on the basis

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<sup>1</sup> U Chan Htoon's letter to Madari of Oct. 2, 1947.

<sup>2</sup> Madari's letter to U Chan Htoon of Oct. 4, 1947.

<sup>3</sup> This argument was not quite correct. U Khin Maung Lat, an important Muslim leader and one of the founders of the Burma Muslim Congress (see below, p. 76, n. 2), was a member of the legislative council, but not all the Muslims accepted him as their representative (*Guardian Monthly* [Rangoon], IX [March, 1962]). Their claim to being the second largest minority is also not correct (see below, Appendix A).

<sup>4</sup> Memorandum from Madari, GCBMA President, to the members of the High Court, Nov. 19, 1948 (not published).

of paragraph 11(i) of the constitution<sup>1</sup>. The General Council announced that it was taking upon itself the task of offering assistance to all those who required help in matters pertaining to citizenship<sup>2</sup>.

### The Burma Muslim Congress<sup>3</sup> (BMC)

The Congress differed radically in type and aims. It was a Muslim organization founded at the time of the establishment of the AFPFL, by Burmese Muslim personalities who had been active in the Burmese national movement in the underground period of World War II and thereafter. They wanted to harness the Muslim community to the service of the national movement in Burma, so as to prove that they were an indivisible part of the Burmese people without any attachments to any other influence.

In Pinyinana on December 24–26, 1945 the All-Burma Burman Muslim Conference took place where it was resolved to unite all the existing Burmese Muslim organizations into one single body to be called the Burma Muslim Congress<sup>4</sup>. This Congress decided to join the AFPFL. Saya Abdul Razak, an active member in the Burmese national movement and in the AFPFL, was elected President of the Congress<sup>5</sup>. The Congress grew rapidly and established twenty-two branches throughout the country. It joined the AFPFL, together with many other organizations, such as: the Socialist Party, the Communist Party, the Karen Associations League, Chambers of Commerce, youth organizations, women's organizations, and the like. One of the very first activities of the Congress was to explain to all the Muslims, and especially to the Indian Muslims, the inescapable fact that only one possibility existed for them and that was to demonstrate their unreserved loyalty to Burma alone. This campaign was in response to the disquiet that had spread among the Muslims of Indian origins, to whom the law did not grant Burmese citizenship because of their Indian origins, or to those who harboured sympathy toward the Pakistan

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<sup>1</sup> See p. 73, n. 4, above.

<sup>2</sup> GCBMA, Letter of General Information to Muslims, Nov. 2, 1948 (not published); Letters to the Editor, *Monitor* (Rangoon) and *New Times of Burma* (Rangoon), Nov. 4, 1948. (These Letters to the Editor were also published in *Paigam* (Rangoon) in Urdu on Nov. 5, 1948).

<sup>3</sup> Burma Muslim Congress, also known as BMC and Ba-Ma-Ka.

<sup>4</sup> BMC likewise suggested to GCBMA to join the AFPFL, but GCBMA declined (GCBMA *Report of the Secretary General for 1945*).

<sup>5</sup> A. Razak, "The Burman Muslim Organization", *The Cry*, n. v. (1946). Razak was also known as Sayagyi (the great teacher) Razak, and also by the Burmese form of U Razak. He was a teacher and principal of a school in Mandalay, and insisted on the injection of the national spirit among his pupils. Military education was also included in his school's curriculum. He was a leader of the resistance movement in North Burma and was elected AFPFL President in the Mandalay District in 1946. He was the only Burmese Muslim whose name was presented to the Governor of Burma as a member of the constitutional council. Razak developed excellent contacts with various Buddhist circles, and even knew Pali perfectly. He was the Minister for Education and Planning in the Cabinet of General Aung San, Burma's national hero, and was assassinated together with him on July 19, 1947 (*Nation* [Rangoon], July 20, 1962; Razak, *op. cit.*; see also p. 69, n. 4).

movement. As early as May 20, 1946, U Razak published a warning in the press calling upon the Muslims not to show any sympathy to Pakistan. U Razak wanted them to be a strong and respected community in Burma, but without hampering the national development of the country<sup>1</sup>. After the assassination of U Razak in December, 1947, U Khin Maung Lat was elected to succeed him as President of the Congress; he retained the post until September, 1956<sup>2</sup>.

In April of 1948 U Nu requested the Congress to resign its membership in the AFPFL because, being a religious organization, the content of its activities did not dovetail with the political aims of the AFPFL. In response to this request, U Khin Maung Lat decided to discontinue the religious activities of the Congress, transferring these activities to other Muslim organizations whose sole purpose it was to conduct the religious affairs of the community, so as to enable the Congress to join the AFPFL anew. This decision to rejoin the AFPFL caused a split in the Congress. The objectors formed the Burma Muslim League. The Congress was readmitted to the ranks of the AFPFL<sup>3</sup>. The League and the General Council were the two major Muslim bodies that objected to the Congress from the day of its formation, and particularly since 1948. They argued that the Congress was not a body representative of the interests of the Muslim community which must strive toward the attainment of a separate community status, a thing to which the AFPFL would never agree<sup>4</sup>. The declaration of the League stated that if the Congress does not recognize the need to represent the Muslim community with its particular requirements, then its members need not form a Burma *Muslim* Congress, but should rather join, as individuals, the existing Burmese parties. The Burmese Muslims suffered open discrimination in being deprived of their due rights: the Buddhist pilgrims to Ceylon did not have to face the same difficulties as did the Muslim pilgrims to Mecca; in all the government offices members of the various other minority races were to be found, but the Burmese Muslims were not to be found in comparable numbers. Discrimination was practised against those with Muslim names<sup>5</sup>. The

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<sup>1</sup> *Burman* (Rangoon), May 20, 1946.

<sup>2</sup> U Khin Maung Lat (Abd al-Latif), too, was one of the AFPFL leaders. He had been active in the Students' Organizations of the Rangoon University and took part in the famous students' strike of 1936. During the war he was active in the League for Indian Independence, but after the war he organized the AFPFL branch in Myaungmya. He was asked, together with U Razak, to organize the Muslims throughout Burma under the AFPFL flag, in preparation for the approaching struggle for independence. U Khin Maung Lat was the Secretary General of the Burma Muslim Congress from the day of its founding, and one of its representatives on the Supreme Council of the AFPFL. He was also Parliamentary Secretary to U Razak, Minister of Education. From March, 1950, to June, 1958, he served as Minister of Justice. In 1958 when the AFPFL split, he joined the "Stable" AFPFL, competitor to Prime Minister U Nu (*Guardian Monthly* [Rangoon] IX [March, 1962]; Hugh Tinker, *The Union of Burma* [2d ed.; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1959], p. 85).

<sup>3</sup> Virginia Thompson and Richard Adloff. *Minority Problems in South East Asia* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1955); Tinker *op. cit.*, p. 66; John F. Cady, *A History of Modern Burma* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1958), p. 615.

<sup>4</sup> Thompson and Adloff, *op. cit.*, p. 82.

<sup>5</sup> In his speech before the Burma Muslim Congress convening in June, 1954, on the

Muslims were not held to be a recognized minority at all<sup>1</sup>. The Congress not only did not represent all these aspirations, but even opposed them, and thereby caused harm to the Muslim community. It was nothing but a tool in the service of the AFPFL and an organization of those who were ambitious for personal position and honour and material profit. A Muslim was, it is true, appointed minister (U Khin Maung Lat himself), but he could not be considered representative of the Muslim community because he served by the grace of U Nu and the AFPFL. He himself did much against the interests of the Muslim community. He was even labeled traitor in the public statements of the League<sup>2</sup>. The League demanded a special government department for Muslim affairs which would be able to determine their future, as had been done for other minorities (which had Ministries in Rangoon and governments in their states), and their religious security. The League declared its loyalty to the country, the people, the government. Removing the Congress from the ranks of the AFPFL was the opportunity to convene a general conference of Muslims to consider the matter of the community's status and the attainment of its rights<sup>3</sup>.

The rift among the Burmese Muslims grew more serious in the year 1952 when an argument arose that shook all the Muslims of the land. The Muslim Minister of Justice, U Khin Maung Lat, proposed the Burma Muslim Dissolution of Marriages Act, as a solution to the problem of the many deserted Muslim women left behind in Burma when their husbands returned to India. The only way open to them to be rid of their marriage was to convert to Buddhism; most of them had no idea how to handle their problem. Daw (Mrs.) Soe Shwe was the moving spirit behind this legal initiative. The Act was copied from a similar Indian law<sup>4</sup>, and granted Muslim women equality of rights with Buddhist women. Its pertinent paragraphs

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subject of the Union of Burma, U Khin Maung Lat denounced those Muslims who cling to their Indian mode of dress and who refuse to adopt Burmese names (*ibid.*, pp. 82-83). Compare with U Raschid who criticized the Muslims who did take Burmese names ("The Muslim Youth in Burma", *Islamia School Annual*, Vol. I, no. 1 [Rangoon: Rangoon Daily News Press, March, 1935]).

<sup>1</sup> Each minority State of Burma is represented on the national flag of Burma by a separate star. These are: Burmans, Karens, Shans, Kachins, Chins, and Kayahs. The Muslims have no "State" of their own nor do they have the status of a recognized minority. There are some other minorities who struggled for "Statehood" and an additional star in the national flag, like the Mons. However, the Mons are almost nonexistent.

<sup>2</sup> "Manifesto" of the Burma Muslim League, undated but apparently of 1948 or 1949, lists a whole series of offenses against the Muslims by the BMC of U Khin Maung Lat. Among them is a story according to which the Burmese Muslims were invited to participate in the building of a Bait al-Māl (treasury) in Mecca, but Daw Soe Shwe, one of the women leaders of BMC, objected to the waste of Burmese monies abroad. This was found to be offensive to the religious sensitivities of many Muslims.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*; poster against the Burma Muslim Congress signed Toungoo Aung, apparently Madari, President of GCBMA, March 1, 1948; a pamphlet by Madari (in Burmese, and undated), against BMC published by GCBMA.

<sup>4</sup> The Dissolution of Muslim Marriages Act, VIII of 1939 (Kashi Prasad Saksena, *Muslim Law as Administered in India and Pakistan* [3d ed.; Lucknow: Eastern Book Co., 1954], pp. 275-287).

granted the Muslim woman the right to divorce her husband if his whereabouts were unknown, if he had failed to support her without due cause for a period of half a year, if he lacked virility from the day of their marriage, if he was mentally unbalanced for at least a year, or had contracted leprosy or any venereal disease, or if he was guilty of cruelty to his wife, mental or physical. In the case of girls below the age of 15, the marriage was to be annulled if there was no pregnancy and if the agreement of her father or grandfather had not been given to the marriage<sup>1</sup>.

The majority of the Muslims of Burma, and especially the ulama and the competing organizations within the Congress, objected most bitterly to the law. Their argument was that it constituted a serious blow to the Shari'a that permits only the husband to divorce his wife, and undesirable interference in the internal affairs of the community. They did not wish to have government legislation over Muslim concerns. The community itself should solve such problems, unaided by outside factors, only with the help of qadis and elders of the community without recourse to courts (just as it had been doing heretofore). As a compromise the ulama suggested that the husband's right to divorce be transferred to a Muslim judge, whose word would be law. This suggestion was rejected, and it was decided that any judge, including a Buddhist judge, had the power to pass judgment in a Muslim divorce case, in accordance with the law of 1953<sup>2</sup>. The General Council of Burmese Muslim As-

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<sup>1</sup> The Muslim Divorce Act 1953 (*The Burma Code*, Vol. XI, Act XIV of 1953 [see Appendix B, 4, translated from the Burmese]).

<sup>2</sup> In accordance with the tradition of British rule, the government refrained from interfering in the local customs and mores of the various communities and religious groups, especially in matters of personal status. The Burma Laws Act, 1898, paragraph 13(1)(b) stipulated that in matters of inheritance, marriage, religion, etc., Muslim judges would judge only in accordance with Islamic law (see also Sir J. George Scott, *Burma: A Handbook of Practical Information* [London: Alexander Moring, 1911], p. 161).

The principle was determined in several judgments passed. One ruled that in a Zerbadee inheritance case Islamic law should govern rather than Buddhist law (*Ahmed and Another v. Ma Pwa*, 1895, in *Upper Burma Rulings, 1892-1896*, Vol. II, *Civil* [Rangoon: Superintendent, Government Printing and Stationery, Burma, 1960], pp. 529-535).

Another judgment applied the same principle in matters of divorce and of the custody of an adopted girl (*Ma Pwa v. Ma Hla Win*, 1894, in *ibid.*, pp. 536-539). With regard to Shi'as, it was determined that they would be judged in accordance with Shi'a-Muslim law, as decided in the custody judgment (*Ma Thi and Syed Jawad v. Aga Mahomed Jawad*, in *ibid.*, pp. 540-545).

There were other laws in Burma that were specifically for Muslims only. The Kazis (qadi) law of India automatically applied to Burma as well, but in actual fact was never put into practice. In theory, however, it is still valid in Burma today. It provides that, in any place where it seems to the President (formerly the Governor) that a respectable number of Muslims in that specific region wish to have a Kazi (qadi) appointed, he may if he deems it desirable, and after consultation with the local Muslim leadership, appoint one or more persons as qadis of that place. The President may also remove such qadis from their posts. The qadis are empowered to appoint and to dismiss Nā'ibs (deputies) (*The Kazis Act*, in *The Burma Code*, Vol. XI, c, *Muhammadian*, India Act XII, 1880 [July 9, 1880]; see Appendix B, below).

Qadis have never been appointed in Burma under this law, apparently owing to the fact



sociations organized many public protest meetings in Rangoon, published articles in the press, and solicited the government to prevent interference in religious laws and existing customs<sup>1</sup>. Such protest meetings were also held in the other cities of Burma where Muslim communities existed. There were cases, too, where even branches of the Congress protested against the suggested legislation of their own organization's leadership<sup>2</sup>. The law was passed in spite of the objection of most of the Muslim community; but it was this that was responsible for the decline of U Khin Maung Lat's influence within the Muslim community, as became evident a few years later. Their failure in the struggle to prevent the divorce act from becoming law can be said, too, to mark the end of the activities of the General Council of Burman Muslim Associations, even though its leaders attempted from time to time in later years to issue statements of opinion in various matters such as Palestine, Algeria, Mauritania, and the like<sup>3</sup>.

For the second time U Nu removed the Congress from the ranks of the AFPFL on September 30, 1956. U Nu did this out of a desire to strengthen the unity in Burma in general and in his organization in particular, and in an attempt to counteract and overcome the strong tendencies to splitting and regionalism that had been spreading among the many ethnic, religious, and language groupings in Burma.

Because Muslims had the reputation of a community of outstanding political orientation that was constantly making claims on religious grounds, the Congress was requested to leave the AFPFL. At first, in 1954, the Congress was asked to dissolve its organization by 1955 because of its community character. The Congress refused to do so, and in November the AFPFL temporarily retracted. On December 29, 1955, the Congress reiterated its decision not to dissolve; on the very next day,

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that the appropriate candidates were not available. Muslim cases were usually judged by non-Muslim judges.

Two further laws still valid in Burma were those designed to deal with questions of the *waqf*. The first is the Mussulman Wakf Validating Act, *The Burma Code*, Vol. XI, India Act VI, 1913 (March 7, 1913). This provides that any Muslim may set up a *waqf*, following the Islamic precepts of good deeds, for the purpose of maintaining his family, his children, and his grandchildren. If he is a Hanafi-Muslim, then the *waqf* can also be used to support himself during his lifetime, or to repay his debts from his property earnings.

The second *waqf* law is the Mussulman Wakf Act, *The Burma Code*, Vol. IX, India Act XLII, 1923 (Aug. 1, 1924). Its purpose is to enable interested parties, with the court's permission, to check the accounts of any *waqf*. According to the law he who establishes a *waqf* or the court will nominate a *mutawalli* (supervisor) in order to administer the *waqf*'s property. Each *mutawalli* has to submit a report to the district court which contains a description of *waqf* property, the annual income, the annual expenditures involved in maintaining the property, charitable needs, and so on. The *waqf* must be administered in accordance with authoritative accounting systems. This law does not apply to a private *waqf* that an individual dedicates to himself, to his family, or to his descendants.

<sup>1</sup> Information bulletins of GCBMA dated December 6 and 27, 1952; memoranda to the House of Representatives of the Union of Burma by GCBMA with reference to the proposed marriage law put forward by BMC on September 22, 1952.

<sup>2</sup> The religious committee of BMC in the Akyab district protested against the law. Information Bulletin of the GCBMA, dated December 27, 1952.

<sup>3</sup> See Appendix C.

however, the organization reversed itself, submitting to the pressure exerted by Prime Minister U Nu, and undertook to dissolve itself by October, 1956. On the last day of September, 1956, the Congress announced its dissolution<sup>1</sup>.

Two years prior to this, U Khin Maung Lat himself founded another organization for purely religious purpose called the Islamic Religious Affairs Council; he was its president, and it continued with its political activities within the framework of the AFPFL. Those who did not accept the dissolution of the Congress, however, reorganized after the Congress was ousted from the AFPFL, retaining its name and veering leftward in its aims. U Than Myint was elected President of the reorganized Congress, the same U Than Myint who had been elected President of the original Congress after the death of U Razak, and had been removed from that post because of the objections of the AFPFL, whereupon U Khin Maung Lat was elected in his stead.

In 1958 the new Congress joined forces with a pro-communist body, the National United Front (NUF), but in August, 1960, broke away from the NUF and changed its own name to the Pathi Congress. U Than Myint died in January, 1962<sup>2</sup>. The leaders of the Pathi organization were arrested several times for their communist tendencies and their outspoken support of the rebellions of the minorities in Burma which they described as a "struggle for the freedom of minority races", which "is the right thing to do"<sup>3</sup>. The Pathi renewed the old demand that the Muslim community be granted the status of a recognized national minority, similar to the Kachins, the Chins, the Karens, and others, and that it should be referred to by the term "Pathi" – a claim no longer demanded by the other Muslim organizations since the end of the debate on the divorce act. These others were opposed to the Pathi Congress as well as to the use of the term, "Pathi", for fear that it would create the impression that the Burmese Muslim is not an integral part of the Burmese majority of the state but rather a foreign body<sup>4</sup>. The Pathi leaders made their views and opinions known through the distribution of a whole series of pamphlets that contained many quotations of Stalin's on the definition of the concept of "people"<sup>5</sup> which described in a style new to the Burmese Muslim, and in the accepted terminology of communist literature, the historical sequences of the community's struggle for recognition as a national minority and the attainment of its rights<sup>6</sup>. In these terms they explained that they had chosen the term "Pathi" on purpose because the description, "Burman Muslim" was not sufficiently all-inclusive, since there were in Burma also such groups as Arakan Muslims, Kachin Muslims, Mon Muslims, etc. "Pathi" means all non-Indian Muslims against whose influence this organization

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<sup>1</sup> *Nation* (Rangoon), Dec. 29, 1955; Dec. 31, 1955; Sept. 21, 1956.

<sup>2</sup> Conversation with U Tin Ngwe on June 7, 1962; *Nation*, Nov. 2, 1956; Aug. 8, 1960; Sept. 12, 1960; *Guardian* (Rangoon), Feb. 1, 1961; *New Times of Burma* (Rangoon), July 26, 1960; Cady, *op. cit.*, p. 637.

<sup>3</sup> *Vanguard* (Rangoon), Jan. 8, 1962.

<sup>4</sup> *Nation*, March 6, 1961; Jan. 9, 1962.

<sup>5</sup> [*All Burma Pathi National Congress*], a pamphlet in Burmese; personal communication from U Ko Ko Lay, Secretary-General of the Pathi Congress, dated August 2, 1962.

<sup>6</sup> All-Burma Muslim Congress. *Chairman Haji Aung Khin Speech, Jan. 10, 1962: Fifth Anniversary Celebration*. New Ba-Ma-Ka, Mandalay District (Mandalay, Oct. 1, 1962), pamphlets in Burmese.

too was fighting<sup>1</sup>. The Pathi Congress also took a stand on various matters outside the framework of Muslim affairs such as its objection to the decreeing of Buddhism as the state religion of Burma, the bringing to an end of the rebellions that spread through Burma by means of negotiations (as opposed to the government policy that demanded unconditional surrender by the rebels), and the denouncement of the United States, France, and Belgium for their intervention in Asia and Africa<sup>2</sup>. The organization still continues but leads a poor isolated existence completely cut off from the life of the Muslim community. In actual fact, it consists of no more than a handful of activists.

The Islamic Religious Affairs Council that U Khin Maung Lat had founded back in 1954 attempted to renew and cement the unity of all the Muslim splinters within the country, but to no avail. The attitude of the Muslim Council was that the demand still cherished by several other Muslim groups, to be awarded the status of a recognized Muslim minority, was unacceptable as being contrary to the national unity of Burma. Religious problems arising in the community which must be dealt with by the government could be solved through negotiation. The community must avoid political activity, must support the government, must foster the nationalist spirit among its members, and must concentrate on projects and activities of education, social, and religious activities and projects<sup>3</sup>. Despite these efforts, the differences of opinion increased and deepened, and on May 22, 1960, Vice President U Raschid<sup>4</sup>, one of the Muslim leaders active since World War II, and especially in the 1950's, resigned and set up a new organization.

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<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>2</sup> *Guardian*, Jan. 4, 1961.

<sup>3</sup> *Guardian*, May 7, 1962.

<sup>4</sup> U Raschid was born in India in 1912 to Indian parents who had previously lived in Burma. His grandfather had settled in Burma in 1885. U Raschid was brought to Burma at the age of three, and became a citizen. He was active in the Thakin movement – the Burmese national movement – from its very beginning. He was active in the early thirties, together with Aung San, U Kyaw Nyein, U Ba Swe, U Nu, and others, in the Rangoon University Students' Organizations; in 1931 he was Secretary-General of the Students' Association; he was the first President of the All-Burma Students' Union, although in this area of his public activities he encountered difficulties by virtue of his being Muslim and Indian. In all the years he spent at the University he suffered humiliations for being a *kala*. Intrigues were set up against him, but he always succeeded in proving his adherence and loyalty to U Nu, and earned the acceptance by the major leaders. At the time of World War II his family fled to India, but upon its conclusion he was asked by Aung San to return. U Nu included him in his Cabinet. In 1952 he was named Minister for Housing and Labour; in 1954, Minister for Trade Development; in 1956, Minister of Mines; in 1960, Minister of Commerce and Industry, until March 1962 when he was arrested by the Revolutionary Government of General Ne Win.

In 1958, before the AFPFL split, he was also Vice President of the Trade Union Council of Burma (TUCB).

He was retained in his position thanks almost entirely to the determined and continued support of U Nu and his obstinate position that it was necessary to withstand the pressures from those in the most influential circles who objected to the appointment of U Raschid because of his Indian origins. U Nu urged him to change his name to U Yanshin – which

## The Burma Muslim Organization (BMO)<sup>1</sup>

The founders of this new organization justified it by the claim that it came to fill the need for a new religious, social, and educational body for Muslims which could handle those aspects neglected by all the other Muslim groups. They further claimed that the split between U Raschid and U Khin Maung Lat was an entirely personal quarrel. The latter had no supporters among the Muslims and he was not drawn to devoting his energies to Muslim affairs beyond that degree that would be of value to him in his own political aspirations; hence, the rift could not be considered a rift within the Muslim community. As proof of this the leadership pointed to the rapid growth of the organization which, in a matter of a few months, they claimed, had hundreds of branches and tens of thousands of members.

These boasts were not quite exact. There can be no doubt that the antagonism between these two personalities was attributable largely to the general political situation in Burma. Each of these two Muslim leaders was on opposite sides in the AFPFL split that took place in early 1958. In the general elections of April, 1960, they were rival candidates in the same Rangoon electorate and U Khin Maung Lat was defeated by U Raschid. The accumulated bitterness between them made it impossible for them both to work within the same organization. The attempts by both camps to ignore this pertinent factor undoubtedly sprang only from their mutual desire to demonstrate that Muslim community affairs are unaffected by outside influences.

The Organization held its first general conference in Rangoon in December, 1960. Six hundred delegates represented 294 branches. U Raschid explained the purposes of the Organization which aspired to operate in the fields of religion, education and social affairs within the Muslim community, unaffiliated with any political group or party whatsoever. The Organization was to be financed by its members alone, although government assistance, if forthcoming, would be welcome. First priority would be given by the Organization to religious education: schools, students, education for women and the training of ulama. There would also be

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means "immune to evil" – but Raschid, a loyal Muslim, objected, agreeing only to preface his name with "U".

On this subject of the change of name, and on other subjects concerning the life of the Muslim community, there were differences of opinion between U Raschid and U Khin Maung Lat who advocated rapid assimilation (Maung Maung, "M. A. Raschid", *Guardian Monthly*, III [Dec., 1956], 27-34; Tinker, *op. cit.*, pp. 6, 65, 82, 396).

U Raschid was often the target of public complaints by various Buddhist factors who wanted to know why Burma needed an Indian (and Muslim) in her Cabinet. Incidentally, U Raschid's brother, the late Dr. M. A. Rauf, was an ambassador in the Indian foreign service, and even represented his country in Burma in the early fifties. U Nu on one occasion made a public statement in which he declared that he would not permit his Indian origins to prevent U Raschid from giving his services to his adopted country (Ferdinand Kuhn, "Commentary", in *Nationalism and Progress in Free Asia*, ed. Philip W. Thayer [Baltimore, Johns Hopkins Press, 1956], p. 247).

<sup>1</sup> *New Times of Burma*, March 27, 1960; *Nation*, Feb. 5, 1962; *Guardian*, Feb. 5, 1962.

launched an information campaign among non-Muslims, with a view to lessening the misunderstandings. (He did not speak of Muslim missionary work in Burma; U Raschid was reputed to be opposed to this.) Concerning the proposed legislation to make Buddhism the state religion, which U Nu had promised as a plank in his 1960 election campaign, U Raschid announced that the Organization was opposed to this; (the Organization sponsored protest rallies against the proposed law). On the same occasion U Raschid put forward a new idea, suggesting the convening of a congress of Muslim representatives from all of southeast Asia to exchange information on their common religious, educational, and social affairs<sup>1</sup>.

The Organization's leaders prepared a draft constitution in Burmese according to which the Organization would work toward the advancement of the Muslims of Burma, including all their various groupings, toward the abolition of discrimination and political or other differences which obtained in the land to the detriment of the Muslims, and toward felicitous relations of brotherhood with members of the other minorities and religions<sup>2</sup>. The Organization's leaders and other active members—especially U Raschid—in recent years developed extensive public activity within the community, in the framework of the Burma Muslim Organization as well as outside the formal structure; these activities included the establishment of a well run finance institution, support for schools, orphanages, mosques, and aid to needy students.

In 1952, members of the BMO established the Muslim Central Trust Fund. Its purpose was to centralize and coordinate all the monetary sources, property, and contributions of the Muslims, and to distribute the funds in accordance with a priority list to be drawn up by the Fund's Board of Directors. The underlying purpose was, of course, to be able to derive the most efficient benefit from these monies. Both U Raschid and U Khin Maung Lat participated in the establishment of this Trust Fund, along with many other Muslim notables. It did not take long before U Khin Maung Lat became the opposition in the activities of the Fund, and U Raschid was elected president and chairman of its Board of Directors. The most active members of the Fund were the Indian Muslims, active also in the Organization, although today they are Burmese citizens. It was the establishment of the Organization that supplied the upsurge of activity of the Trust Fund.

The Board of Directors of the Trust Fund functions in three committees: scholarships, Muslim advanced studies, and mosques and madrasas. The Fund also maintains branches in Mandalay, Moulmein, and Maungdaw. Each year it distributes some one hundred scholarships of varying sums, and loans to Muslim students in general education. Scholarship candidates are obliged to sit for examinations in the elements of Islam<sup>3</sup>. Several scholarships are awarded to those pursuing advanced studies in Islamic subjects at Dār al-'Ulūm in Deoband and at Mazāhir al-'Ulūm in Saharanpur, India. In cooperation with al-Azhar and the U. A. R. Moslem Congress, the Trust Fund for the past few years has been supporting two students who went to Al-

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<sup>1</sup> *Nation*, Dec. 24, 1960; *Guardian*, Sept. 29, 1960.

<sup>2</sup> Burman Muslim Organisation, [*The Constitution of the Union of Burma Burman Muslim Organisation: Second Draft*] (Rangoon, n. d.), in Burmese. The constitution lists in detail the various officebearers and their respective duties, as well as the manner in which the organisation and its branches would function.

<sup>3</sup> Notice in the *Guardian*, May 15, 1962.

Azhar to study. The Trust Fund also contributes to the maintenance of the Arab College in Kanbalu, founded as far back as 1937 in the heart of the region populated by Burmese Muslims. The College turns out authorized moulvis and, in addition, also teaches Burmese, English, and mathematics. To date it has graduated 50 moulvis. The College principal claims that the level of his institution is on a par with that of the school in Deoband<sup>1</sup>!

Financial assistance is also allocated for the repair of the mosques and as contributions to Muslim institutions in various localities in Burma, subject to investigation of requests submitted. Books have been presented to Muslim libraries, prizes distributed to *hāfiẓ*'s students of the Koran, as well as contributions to Muslim orphanages, old age homes, madrasas, and schools. The Fund also finances the translation into Burmese of the Koran, which is done by the Qur'ān Translation Bureau of the Islamic Society<sup>2</sup>.

The Trust Fund is financed by the contributions made by Muslims. There is a set annual membership fee; in addition, various special collections are solicited and contributions of a general nature are also received, as well as those earmarked for specific purposes<sup>3</sup>.

The Muslim Central Trust Fund in 1961 set up a separate financial institution called the Muslim Foundation. Its purposes were the financing of the Fund's activities, and to render aid to mosques, Muslim educational institutions, old age homes, companies, organizations, and every other kind of Muslim venture that seemed worthwhile, even outside the framework of the Trust Fund's activities. The Foundation is financed by the conduct of business ventures, property and real estate acquisitions of all sorts, investments, loans, purchase of stocks and bonds, and the like. Only Burmese citizens are eligible to membership in this financial enterprise which is managed by the Board of Directors of the Muslim Central Trust Fund<sup>4</sup>.

The leadership of the Organization also paid special attention to education, their wish being to interrelate parochial and general studies into a single whole. They

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<sup>1</sup> Arabic College (Madrasa Jamiatul Ulama), *Sixteenth Anniversary Report, 1961*, compiled by Alhaj Maulana Bashir Ahmed (alias Saya Pone) (Shwebo, n. d.). Also, personal communication dated July 5, 1962, from Saya Pone.

<sup>2</sup> Two previous translations of the Koran into Burmese had been prepared in the thirties and financed by U Ba Oh, President of the Burma Moslem Society. On November 1, 1950, a new translation was begun, accompanied by a *tafsīr* (exegesis, commentary) by the Qur'ān Translation Bureau of the Islamic Society. Despite all the rifts and splits within the Muslim community, this institution remained the only institution where all the Muslim organizations cooperated. The president of the Qur'ān Bureau was U Raschid. The secretary and chief translator was Haji Ghazi Mohammed Hashim who in 1962 was elected President of the Islamic Council for Religious Affairs. A few volumes have already been published. The entire project will comprise thirty volumes when completed. The translation society is supported by the Muslim Central Trust Fund, but still it suffers from budgetary difficulties which delay the work (Central Muslim Trust Fund, *Ninth Annual Report* [Rangoon, 1960], and *Tenth Annual Report* [Rangoon, 1961]; conversation with Haji Ghazi Mohammed Hashim, the chief translator, on May 12, 1962; see also BMS, *Twenty-Ninth and Thirtieth Annual Reports* for 1937-38-39 [Rangoon, n. d.], p. 9).

<sup>3</sup> Central Muslim Trust Fund, *Ninth Annual Report* and *Tenth Annual Report*.

<sup>4</sup> Muslim Foundation, *Memorandum and Articles of Association* (Rangoon, 1961).

demanded that the program of studies in Muslim education in the community's schools be prepared by experienced educators, and be unified for all schools. They suggested dissolving the madrasa<sup>1</sup>. This they were unable to do because of the tremendous resistance they would have met had they but tried.

In 1960 there took place the reorganization of the Burma-Muslim Educational Society, which had been founded after World War II. U Raschid was elected president. The Educational Society undertook the direction of the Burma-Muslim High School in Rangoon, and the Zinat Islam Boys' Home, the orphanage annexed to the High School. Changes were made in the program of studies. Arabic now was being taught as a foreign language, separate from the study of the Koran. The general, non-Muslim studies were adapted to follow the official government curriculum. The school's enrolment is 345 pupils, fifty of them non-Muslims, most of them Buddhists. Among the eleven teachers, three are Christians and two Buddhists. Girls are also admitted. The Trust Fund covers the school's deficits and also maintains the Boys' Home. The boys receive free housing, food, clothing, medical care, education, books, and technical and trade training. Religious studies, Koran, and prayers are given special emphasis<sup>2</sup>. The Burma-Muslim Educational Society also directs schools in Mandalay, Moulmein, and Taunggyi.

The All-Burma Burman Muslim Women's League devoted itself to the education of girls. Daw Soe Shwe, President of the League, is the principal of the only high school for girls in Burma, in existence since 1925. Annexed to this school, too, is an orphanage for girls established in 1950. The same conference that took place in Pyinmana in 1945 where the establishment of the Burman-Muslim Congress was decided upon, and its affiliation with the AFPFL, also decided upon the establishment of the Women's League<sup>3</sup>. It came into being on February 3, 1946. In addition to running the girls' school and orphanage, the League also organizes evening classes for women and is active in the campaign to abolish the custom of purdah; there are actually very few who wear it in Burma, especially since World War II, and most of those who still do are Indian Muslims.

For a time the moulvis of Rangoon were opposed to the existence of the Women's League, but they did not succeed in interfering with its work. With the help of contributions, the League finances its own activities.

The Rangoon University Muslim Students' Association (RUMSA) renewed its activities after World War II, under the auspices of U Khin Maung Lat. Their publications emphasized that one of their major aims was to strengthen the mutual understanding between themselves and the students of the other communities. The Muslim students must not lag behind in doing their share in the development of Burma and in involving themselves in Burma's problems and aspirations. To this end the Muslim students at the University were called upon to devote themselves diligently to the study of the history of Burma, her culture and tradition<sup>4</sup>. Until

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<sup>1</sup> Moosa S. Madha, "Problems of Education of Muslims in Burma", *Times Mirror Magazine*, Rangoon University Muslim Students Association Publication, no. 5 (1957-58), 7-8.

<sup>2</sup> Program of the opening ceremony of the Burma Muslim High School, Rangoon, June 2, 1962; Zinat Islam Boys' Home and Educational Society, *Annual Report, 1955-56 and Annual Report, 1960-61* (Rangoon, n. d.).

<sup>3</sup> See above, page 75.

<sup>4</sup> Rangoon University Muslim Students' Association, *Annual Magazine, 1953* (Rangoon, n. d.), editorial.

1961 when the debate began in Burma on the introduction of Buddhism as the state religion, RUMSA was not particularly outstanding in its activity. It protested vigorously against this proposal, and also took the opportunity to demand the introduction of the teaching of Arabic in the University's curriculum. The Association condemned moulvi U San Shah (Hasan Shah), who had come out in support of the proposal, and announced that they no longer recognized his religious authority<sup>1</sup>.

In an effort to help the Muslim students at the Rangoon University and to counsel them in matters of religion and education, the University Muslim Old Students' Association was established on October 23, 1960. The organizers were Muslim educators, professors, judges, and businessmen. The Association decided not to appoint Muslim politicians as patrons, and to remain aloof from politics altogether (that is to say, from the quarrels and disputes that were raging within the Muslim community). A constitution was drafted (in the Burmese language) which determined that the alumni would organize lectures on Islam, publish various studies, translate Muslim material into Burmese, develop friendly relations among all the Muslims, and encourage mutual help, sports meets, and debating circles among the Muslims students. They were also keen to initiate meetings with the members of other religious groups<sup>2</sup>. Except for several lectures which took place from time to time, the alumni association did not do a single thing toward the realization of its aims and plans.

## The Indian Muslims after World War II

With Burma's attainment of independence the status of the Indian Muslims was changed. Now again they were unable to be open about their ties with the places of origin and were obliged to accept Burmese citizenship, or be considered foreigners, or become stateless. The various community associations of Indians continued their activities with almost no change in the fields of the social, educational and religious affairs of their people, except for those from Bengal, which had since become East Pakistan\*. All the societies of those coming from this region joined forces to form the All-Burma Pakistan Association. It is headquartered in Rangoon and today has fifty-six branches throughout Burma. It represents the largest single community of Indian Muslims in all Burma<sup>3</sup>. As opposed to the small, rich communities, such as the Soortis and the Meimans, the Pakistanis number very many indeed who are economically and culturally underprivileged. Actual illiteracy is the rule among them. Many of them never became Burmese citizens but continue to live in Burma and send support to their families in Pakistan. There are those who have settled permanently in Burma, nevertheless prefer to retain their Pakistani citizenship. Many others did not take Burmese citizenship but owing to ignorance, and not knowing the consular regulations, have lost their Pakistani citizenship. The Association set itself the task of dealing with the authorities directly, as well as through the good offices of the Pakistan Embassy in Rangoon, to ease the processes of attaining

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<sup>1</sup> *Htoon Daily* (Rangoon), Aug. 10, 1961, in Burmese. See above pp. 35.

<sup>2</sup> *Guardian*, Oct. 24, 1960; Rangoon University Muslim Old Students' Association, *Constitution* (Rangoon, n. d.).

<sup>3</sup> The Association's leaders estimate the number of Pakistanis in Burma at between 300000 and 500000. For lack of authentic statistics, this estimate cannot be confirmed.

\* Bangla Desh since the end of 1971.



citizenship in Burma for those who wish it, and to persuade the Pakistani authorities to ease the processes of getting Pakistani passports for the others<sup>1</sup>.

The All-Burma Pakistan Association is outstanding also with reference to the quality of the contacts and relations that it has with the Pakistan Government. Pakistan V.I.P.'s who have visited Burma were the guests of the Association<sup>2</sup>. On these occasions the visitors were told that the Pakistanis in Burma were loyal equally to Burma and to Pakistan, identifying themselves with the national aspirations of both countries and it was for this reason that they were so anxious for the achievement of permanent improvement in the relations between the two<sup>3</sup>. Since World War II and until this very day the Pakistanis enjoy the same attitude as that shown in Burma to the others of Indian origins. Even the mujahids' rebellion (see below pp. 95 ff.) and the mutual accusation between Pakistan and Burma that followed, had no effect at all upon the life of the Pakistanis in Burma. On the contrary, the Pakistanis enjoyed special privileges granted by the Government of Burma which permitted them to hold celebrations and to raise the Pakistan flag on the occasion of Pakistan Day that falls on March 23<sup>4</sup>. Similar privileges were enjoyed by other minority groups like the Hindus and the Chinese. General Ne Win's military coup changed that situation.

Still another organization of definite although undercover Indian Muslim character is the Muslim Chamber of Commerce. During the period of British rule there was no such organization, since trade in Burma was then free and unfettered. After the war, governmental supervision in economic matters was introduced in Burma; the Indian merchants, in control of the largest portion of the country's commerce, felt the need to organize in order to protect their interests. Other chambers of commerce, of course, also exist in Burma.

The Muslim Chamber of Commerce was established in Calcutta in 1942, by Indian Muslim refugees who had fled Burma when the Japanese came. In 1946 they returned to Rangoon and reactivated the Chamber there. The constitution of the Chamber of Commerce throws open membership to all citizens of Burma, regardless of origin; nevertheless, practically all – if not indeed all – its members are Muslim of Indian origins. The most active among them are the Soortis and

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<sup>1</sup> The Association appealed to the Pakistan Embassy to refrain from imposing difficulties and inconveniences of involved procedures upon the Pakistani citizens scattered throughout Burma who are obliged each time to make the trip to Rangoon for personal interviews with Embassy personnel.

<sup>2</sup> The Association's guests included: Zafrullah Khan, Foreign Minister of Pakistan, on September 2, 1954; H. S. Suhrawardi, Prime Minister of Pakistan, on October 16, 1956; Field Marshal Ayub Khan, President of Pakistan, on December 3, 1960; Lt.-Gen. Mohammed Azam Khan, Governor of East Pakistan, on December 5, 1960; Mohammed Ali, Prime Minister of Pakistan, visited Rangoon in early 1962.

<sup>3</sup> The sources of reference for this summary are the Memoranda that the President of the Pakistan Association submitted to Zafrullah Khan, Suhrawardi, Ayub Khan, and Mohammed Azam Khan on the occasion of their respective visits in Burma, on the dates indicated in n. 2, above; and also another Memorandum of the Association in the year 1955, which bears neither its exact date nor the addressee; also a conversation with Rauf Chowdhri, President of the Association, on May 31, 1962; see also *Nation*, March 21, 1962.

<sup>4</sup> *Nation*, March 22, 1962.

Meimans. Indian Muslims who are not citizens of Burma are also eligible to membership, but without voting rights<sup>1</sup>. The term, "Burmese citizen", as used in the constitution of the Muslim Chamber of Commerce, includes anybody who is a citizen of Burma regardless of any previous citizenship he might have had or of the national origins of his parents<sup>2</sup>. This is specifically in order to embrace Indian Muslims.

Beyond the normal agricultural and general economic aims that the Muslim Chamber of Commerce set itself, there is another special purpose to protect the economic interests of Muslims and to protest against any steps or rulings that might affect Muslims adversely<sup>3</sup>. The Chamber is on record as having been active in this field. It demanded considerations from the governments of India and Pakistan in the granting of visas and other permits and arrangements in connection with the visits of Burmese citizens – that is, Indian Muslims – to India for purposes of business and trips. Many of these travelers have strong family and business ties in India; of the Burmese Government it demanded exception for the purdah women from the required photograph for use in official government document; it also lodged complaints in cases of discrimination against Burmese citizens of Indian origin.

On the other hand the Muslim Chamber of Commerce also contributed generously to various institutions and charities non-Muslim in nature, and took active part in the economic life of the country, making practical suggestions in relation to various government development projects and programs, so as to demonstrate its integrity, loyalty and interest in all that goes on in Burma<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Burma Muslim Chamber of Commerce, *Memorandum and Articles of Association* (Rangoon, Jan. 6, 1947).

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, para. 21 (b).

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, para. 3.

<sup>4</sup> Burma Muslim Chamber of Commerce, *Annual Report of the Managing Committee* (Rangoon, 1956–57); *idem*, *Annual Report of the Managing Committee* (Rangoon, 1957–58); *idem*, *Annual Report of the Managing Committee* (Rangoon, 1959–60).

## *Religious Activities*

The first religious Muslim organization to come into being in Burma, in 1922<sup>1</sup>, was the branch of the Indian Jam‘iyyat al-‘Ulamā’ (the council of the ulama) affiliated with the Congress Party in India. Its name was: “Jam‘iyyat al-‘Ulamā’, Province of Burma”. The Soortis, from the Bombay district, established it and the organization was exclusively Indian Muslim; Burmese Muslims did not participate at all. It continued in existence up until the Japanese conquest. With the return of the British, at the end of World War II, it was reorganized under a new name: “al-Mashīkhat al-Islāmiyya” (المشيخة الإسلامية). On the eve of Burma’s independence, the organization again changed its name to “Jam‘iyyat al-‘Ulamā’ al-Islam, Burma”.

In the meantime, in 1946 U Razak founded a parallel organization in Upper Burma, called “Jam‘iyyat al-‘Ulamā’, Burma”. Its elected president was Haji Ghazi Mohamad Hashim<sup>2</sup>. In this manner, there were two functioning Jam‘iyyats in Burma, one Indian Muslim, the other, Burmese Muslim.

In 1948, following Independence, most of the “Indians” became Burmese citizens, and the two organizations united into a single body called “Jam‘iyyat al-‘Ulamā’, Burma”. Preparations for this unification had already been started by U Razak before he was assassinated.

Although it was for all intents and purposes just a religious organization, the Jam‘iyyat nevertheless fostered close ties with the political life of the Muslim community. The Jam‘iyyat supported the Burman Muslim Congress until the latter was forced to disband. Thereafter the Jam‘iyyat continued to support the Islamic Council for Religious Affairs which replaced the Congress.

In 1958 there was a split in the Jam‘iyyat, paralleling the split that occurred in the Islamic Council, which led to the formation of the Burma Muslim Organization. The split was caused by disputes on religious-national subjects. The Indian Muslims, those who had belonged to the Jam‘iyyat al-‘Ulamā’ al-Islām, Burma, objected to the participation of women in public meetings, to the wearing of Burmese dress during prayers (they insisted on the wearing of Indian dress exclusively!), to standing during the reading of a speech of the President of Burma, as was the custom, and to paying homage to the flag of Burma (they insisted the Jam‘iyyat members were obliged to pay homage only to their religious flag). On the other hand, the Burmese Muslim ulama were in favour of all these manifestations.

There were other subjects of debate that contributed to the split. First and fore-

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<sup>1</sup> The very first organization, apparently, was established in the days of the rule of King Mindon in the mid-nineteenth century. I was unable to find any details on it, or even its exact name, whether Jam‘iyyat al-‘Ulamā’ or *a‘immāt al-masājid*. There is no connection between this organization – if indeed there existed one – and any other organizations with similar names which were established during British rule after World War I. My sources are oral reports of several moulvis who themselves knew little on the subject.

<sup>2</sup> This organization was also known by the name All-Burma Burman Muslim Ulama Association. See above, page 84, n. 2.

most was the dispute erupted over the showing of the American film *The Ten Commandments*, in Rangoon. The Indian Muslims demanded that the government be solicited to ban the showing of the film which distorts the image of the "Prophet Mussa". Ghazi Mohamud Hashim argued that the picture was prepared in accordance with the "Bible of the Jews" and not according to the Koran, thus leaving no room for interference or protest by the Jam'iyyats.

Another dispute that added much bitterness in the relations between the heads of the Jam'iyyats arose at the time of the first military regime of General Ne Win in 1958. General compulsory military service was imposed at that time. Ghazi Hashim declared that the moulvis should be the first to volunteer, to serve as an example to the Muslim community in demonstrating loyalty to the government. The moulvis objected.

Ghazi Hashim resigned, and most of the Burmese Muslims left the organization with him. The Jam'iyyat continued to exist, and today it is of definite Indian Muslim nature, extremely orthodox in character. Its membership does still include Burmese Muslims – that is, Zerbadees in origin – but they are graduates of religious schools in India, of a definite bent toward Indian Muslim culture. Just prior to the general elections in Burma of April, 1960, U Raschid joined this Jam'iyyat, which became one of the supporters of the Burma Muslim Organization. In its turn, the Jam'iyyat is a recipient of financial support from the Central Muslim Trust Fund.

On the heels of the split, the Islamic Council for Religious Affairs founded a new Jam'iyyat of its own called "Mu'atamar al-'Ulamā'" (Congress of Religious Elders), under the presidency of Haji Ghazi Mohamad Hashim. This organization is, actually, the successor of the "Jam'iyyat al-'Ulamā', Burma" founded by U Razak, and is similar to it in the composition of its membership. It is supported by the Burmese Muslim ulama, whose center is in Dar al-'Ulūm in the region of Shwebo.

At the same time Hasan Shah also set up a separate organization named "Jam'iyyat al-'Ulamā' al-Haqq"<sup>1</sup>, a small group all of whose members are Burmese Muslims. It is entirely independent, unconnected in any way with any of the other existing Muslim bodies.

All these organizations busy themselves with declarations of fatwas, with the determination of the new moon each month, and with the holidays. They send lecturers to the Muslim communities throughout the country and lay down the law in religious affairs for all those who are referred to them for judgment. They have no executive power whatsoever, merely opinion. Not always is there agreement among the elders of these competing organizations, even in matters of religious law. The Jam'iyyat tends to severity, the Mu'atamar, to leniency. Beginning in 1959 the Mu'atamar organized annual religious examinations. The only single project on which there is cooperating among all these competing bodies is the Qur'ān Translation Bureau, mentioned earlier.

An entirely different religious organization is the "Jam'iyyat a'immāt'ul-masājid" founded in 1951–52. Contrary to the other religious organizations, the Jam'iyyat and the Mu'atamar which accepted also non-ulamas into their ranks, this new organization is open only to imams. It, too, publishes fatwas and puts out books

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<sup>1</sup> Also known as the All-Burma Moulvi Association. It published "regulations of the Jam'iyyat al-'Ulamā' al-Haqq" in Burmese, undated. See above, page 86.

on religious subjects. All the organizations also concern themselves with the training of moulvis and religious leaders. The Jam'iyat sends its trainees who complete their studies in religious schools in Burma to institutions of higher religious learning in India (and one such in Pakistan), thus ensuring the continuity and perpetuity of spiritual ties with India. Each year about ten such students go abroad. The Mu'atamar, which is supported by the Islamic Council, trains its people at Dār al-'Ulūm in the Shwebo region, where the course of study is eight years. The same organization, in 1961, opened another school in Rangoon under the name "Jam'iyat al-Athār". The purpose of its founders was to prepare in the course of time to train hafiz's and moulvis who would teach the Koran, hadith, the life of the Prophet, Muslim tradition, Arabic, Burmese, and English. While their own students were being trained, the Burmese Muslims could not avoid accepting graduates of the religious institutions of India and Pakistan as teachers in their communities and mosques. Even these are not enough; in many villages where there is no moulvi, the local Muslims choose one among themselves who knows how to read a bit in the Koran and how to lead the prayers, and he becomes the leader of the mosque<sup>1</sup>.

The split between the Jam'iyat al-'Ulamā' and the Mu'atamar al-'Ulamā' also brought about a split in the handling of the pilgrims to Mecca. Until 1958 these pilgrims were handled by the Haj Committee that had been set up by U Khin Maung Lat when he was the Minister of Justice. This Committee conducted its activities within the framework of the Islamic Council for Religious Affairs. After the split within the Jam'iyat al-'Ulamā', the Jam'iyat set up a Haj Section. Both offices do exactly the same thing – assist the pilgrims in obtaining passports and preparing visas, acquiring foreign currency, applying for travel papers, and all the other necessary documents and preparations. Both offices also prepare celebrations and receptions for the pilgrims returning from Mecca. Until 1962 some 400–500 pilgrims left Burma for Mecca annually. After the military revolution in March, 1962, severe restrictions were imposed on foreign currency and the number of pilgrims in that year dropped drastically to a total of only sixteen. The leaders of all the organizations applied to the government, requesting that the conditions for pilgrimage be lightened, at least for the aged who had not yet been able to perform this holy trek<sup>2</sup>.

Despite the splits and antagonisms among the various organizations of Muslims in Burma, which caused duplication in many fields of activity, there were a few projects in which they all cooperated. The first and most important of these was the Prophet's Birthday Celebrations Committee. The beginnings of this Celebrations Committee were in the 1930's, when the Seerat Committee (the Biography of the Prophet) came into being in Rangoon. The Committee organized meetings of men and women where Muslim literature was distributed and lectures on religious affairs offered in Urdu and in Burmese. This first Committee was motivated by the Seerat Committee of Lahore. Individual organizations, such as the Burma Moslem Society, also organized celebrations for the Prophet's Birthday<sup>3</sup>. In the year 1946 the Muslim

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<sup>1</sup> The Muslims maintain madrasas of various academic levels in different localities throughout Burma. See, for example, *Madrassa Talimul Qur-an, Yearly Report, 1960* (Maymyo, n. d.); Letter to me from the Director of Islamia Arabic School, Bassein, dated July 28, 1961.

<sup>2</sup> *Natton*, March 23, 1962, and March 29, 1962.

<sup>3</sup> Burma Moslem Society, *Twenty-Ninth and Thirtieth Annual Reports for 1937–38–39* (Rangoon, n. d.), p. 13. The Seerat Committee, in collaboration with BMS, also held a public rally on the occasion of the death of Kemal Ataturk (*Ibid.*, p. 25).

Students' Association initiated the reorganization of the Committee which was then named The Prophet's Birthday Celebrations Committee, with the participation of representatives of all the Muslim organizations and communities, even including the Shi'as and the Ismā'ilis.

The Committee each year begins its preparations two months before the date of the celebrations. The major events of the celebrations are: a central mass rally of Muslims in Rangoon, with large meetings in other localities as well; religious examinations for girls and boys; and essay contests on the life of the Prophet; lectures and sermons in all the mosques; competitions in the reading of Koran passages, and the ceremonial distribution of prizes. Some years processions are also organized. The question of the procession gave rise to disagreement: Who was to lead the procession? Was it to be those attired in Burmese dress, or those wearing the "traditional Muslim" garb – that is, Indians? Among the objectors to a procession altogether were to be found members of the Jam'iyat al-'Ulamā' as well as members of the Islamic Council for Religious Affairs; their argument was that since the processions irritated the Buddhists, they should not be held. And, indeed, in the years 1955 and 1956 there were no processions. In 1957, and until 1961, the processions were resumed, at the instigation of the Burmese Muslim Youth League<sup>1</sup>; however, in 1962, again, no procession took place because the Revolutionary Government did not permit it<sup>2</sup>.

The struggle to obtain government permission for the slaughter of cattle for religious purposes, especially for use during their celebrations of the Feast of Sacrifice, was yet another field providing opportunity for cooperative efforts among the various Muslim groupings. Here, too, it was the Burmese Muslim Youth League that took the initiative. Burma's Buddhist majority (as well as the Hindus with whom there had been clashes within this context during British reign) object to killing of animals and the slaughter of cattle was forbidden by law. U Nu's government each year would issue special slaughter permits for the holiday, but each year the number of heads of cattle permitted for slaughter was reduced<sup>3</sup>. The heavy opposing pressures – by the Buddhists and by the Muslims – compelled U Nu to broadcast a special statement on the subject (August 18, 1953) in which he made it clear to his radio audience that, although animal killing was emphatically contrary to his own feelings, yet, since there existed in Burma a minority group for whom the slaughter of cattle was a religious dictum, the majority could not impose

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<sup>1</sup> A Muslim Youth League sprang up immediately after World War II. In 1951 U Khin Maung Lat succeeded in persuading the movement's leaders to join the Youth Section of the Burma Muslim Congress, and thereby automatically to join the AFPFL, as well. The Youth League renewed its activities as an independent, unaffiliated body on June 6, 1955. In 1959 U Raschid was elected President. With the founding of the Burma Muslim Organization, U Raschid urged the League to join, but because of this pressure he was himself requested to resign the presidency of the Youth League. It is several years now that the League has been completely inactive – despite its thirty-four branches throughout Burma – especially owing to the absence of financial assistance and the lack of support on the part of the Muslim community leaders of all groups and organizations. For the structure of the Youth League, see: All-Burma Burman Muslim Youth League [*Constitution of Ba-Ma-La*] (Rangoon, n. d.), in Burmese.

<sup>2</sup> For the history of these processions, see: *The Cry* (1946), p. 92.

<sup>3</sup> Tinker, *op. cit.*, pp. 169–170.

its will upon it. As proof, he cited the example of India, where cattle-slaughter is also forbidden; nevertheless, India issues permits lifting the ban for the holiday. U Nu made a special plea addressed to the Sayadaws (the heads of Buddhist monasteries) to prevent tensions, rioting and the spilling of blood over this issue. For his part, he promised that the government would issue the permits and the police would see to it that the permits issued would not be misused (for example, the slaughter of four or five heads of cattle on the basis of one permit!)<sup>1</sup>.

The Muslims objected to this arrangement, and in 1959 set up the Kurbanî Committee, which demanded the abolition of permit-giving and the granting of unlimited slaughter; the basis for their demands was related to the constitutional assurance of religious freedom. The Committee, whose center was in Mandalay, was joined by important personages and representatives of all the Muslim organizations except the Burma Muslim Organization of U Raschid – although there were those of its members who did join as individuals. Even some members of the leftist Pathi Congress joined the Kurbanî Committee. After the military revolution (March 2, 1962) General Ne Win allowed the slaughter of cattle throughout the country. In this manner the Muslims' problem was automatically solved, and the Kurbanî Committee was dissolved. The Revolutionary Government went even further and declared the "Feast of Sacrifice" (which in 1962 fell on May 15th) a public holiday<sup>2</sup>.

Other areas of cooperation among all the Muslims of Burma were:

(a) The Dār al-Mu'în (Society for Welfare), an institution established during the period of Japanese conquest, as an ambulance service, extending medical aid to the sick and the wounded of all communities. Today this institution confines its activities to the burial of Muslims only, handling all the aspects of the internment. It is financed by contributions alone.

(b) The care and maintenance of the Mausoleum of the last Mogul Emperor, Abu Za'far Sarāj al-Din Bahadur Shāh, who was exiled to Rangoon, died, and was buried there on November 7, 1862. The British authorities for several years did not permit the Muslims to visit the tombs of the Emperor and the members of his family who had been exiled with him and were buried beside him when they died. Early in 1936 the government deeded the land parcel to the Muslim community and a board of governors was appointed to look after the place. Once a year a memorial service is held on the spot. (On July 11, 1944, during the Japanese period, Chandra Bose visited and on that occasion a parade of the soldiers of the Indian National Army was held before the tomb.) The annual memorial ceremonies are always participated in by Muslim personages from India and Pakistan, the ambassadors of India and of Muslim countries stationed in Rangoon, and representatives of all the Muslim organizations and communities in Burma<sup>3</sup>.

(c) The concerted objection to the declaration of Buddhism as the state religion. A delegation of representatives of the Jam'īyyat al-'Ulamā', the Burma Muslim Organization (U Raschid himself), and the Islamic Council for Religious Affairs

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<sup>1</sup> Union of Burma, Ministry of Information, "Religious Tolerance", in *Foreward with the People*, by U Nu (Rangoon, 1955), pp. 42-44.

<sup>2</sup> *Nation*, May 6, 1962; *Union Express* (Rangoon), May 14, 1962.

<sup>3</sup> Bahadur Shah Dargah Trust, *Annual Report* for the years 1951, 1952, 1953 (Rangoon, n. d.); *idem*, *Report of the Renovated Zafer Shab Mosque* (Rangoon, Sept. 14, 1956).

(U Khin Maung Lat and Ghazi Hashim), on July 19, 1961, met with U Nu and laid before him their protest against his intention<sup>1</sup>. The organizations of Muslim students also expressed their objections to having any religion whatsoever declared the state religion<sup>2</sup>. The only exception was the Jam‘iyyat al-‘Ulamā’ al-Ḥaqq of Hasan Shāh. In his opinion, there were three reasons why the Muslims should not object to the declaration of Buddhism as the state religion: first of all, U Nu had promised complete religious freedom and guarantees to all other religions; second, there were many countries where Islam was the recognized state religion and it was only natural that in Burma Buddhism should be so recognized; third, it was the duty of the Muslims to be faithful and loyal to their government in all its decisions and not to object to its activities and declarations. Hasan Shāh even met with Buddhist monks in order to impart to them these opinions of his, thereby incurring the wrath and fury of the Muslims<sup>3</sup>.

There was another small organization of youngsters which came into being in Rangoon on January 28, 1954, and lasted only until 1955. This was the branch of the Aligarh Ahmadiya Society. This movement was devoted to the spreading of the thoughts and ideas of Dr. Ikbāl and of Sir Sayed Aḥmad Khān the founder of the Aligarh University (India). The emphasis in the propaganda work of the Burmese branch was not necessarily upon the clarification of the ideas of reform and modernization of Sir Sayed Aḥmad, in his exhortations on the need to study the culture of the West, its sciences and its languages, but on the school of thought opposing the Qādiyānī Ahmadiya movement of Mirza Gulām Aḥmad. The membership of the Aligarh Society in Burma never reached the hundred mark, most of them in Rangoon and a handful in Sandoway. They maintained contact with the Society’s centers in Karachi and in Aligarh. They excited no interest or reaction at all among the Muslim public of Burma<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> *Yuwaddi Daily* (Rangoon), July 21, 1961, in Burmese; *Nation*, Aug. 2, 1961. The Council for Religious Affairs wrote to ask U Nu to undertake the position of protector of all religions instead of introducing a state religion (*Guardian Monthly*, VIII [Oct., 1961]).

<sup>2</sup> *Guardian*, Dec. 24, 1960.

<sup>3</sup> *Nation*, July 26, 1960; *Rangoon Daily*, Aug. 8, 1961, in Burmese.

<sup>4</sup> *The Commentator* (Rangoon), June 26, 1954; *New Times of Burma*, Feb. 3, 1954; *Burman*, May 3, 1954, March 27, 1955, and March 25, 1956.



## *The Arakanese Muslims*

After World War II, the Muslims of Arakan had, again, a separate history, similar to their situation in previous periods. The dominating feature in the events that befell the Muslim community of Arakan in the post-war period was, undoubtedly, the armed rebellion known as the Mujahids' rebellion (*Mujāhid* means warrior in a holy war, *jihād*).

The Mujahids' rebellion was localized in the north of Arakan, in the regions of Maungdaw, Buthidaung, and that part of Rathedaung which borders on East Bengal. Most of the population of this area is Muslim<sup>1</sup>. During the period of British rule, disaffection between the Buddhist population and the Muslims in Arakan developed for the same economic and social reasons that caused similar hate between the two groups in the rest of Burma. The accumulated tensions reached an explosive point at the time of the British evacuation before the advancing Japanese forces. Gangs of Arakanese Buddhists in southern Arakan, where the Buddhists are in the majority, attacked Muslim villages and massacred their inhabitants. Whole villages were sacked and their inhabitants all murdered. Some Arakanese notables attempted to prevent the wholesale massacres, but without success. Muslim refugees streamed to northern Arakan, to those regions where the majority was Muslim, and some 22000 even crossed the border and fled to India. The refugees reaching Maungdaw incensed the local Muslim majority with their stories, and the latter began to mete out similar punishment upon the Buddhist minority in their midst. These acts of mutual murder soon caused the Buddhist population in northern Arakan to flee, even as the Muslims had fled from the south. It was in this manner that Arakan became divided into two separate areas, one Buddhist and the other Muslim<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> There are no authenticated figures. According to the 1931 census, there were 130524 Muslims in the regions of Maungdaw and Buthidaung. A significant section of these were not Arakanese Muslims, called Rohingas (see above, p. 25) – but Chittagongs who came from Bengal with the annual stream of immigrating cheap labor brought by landowners and merchants. Many of them remained and settled in Arakan. A great number of changes took place in the composition of the Arakan population during and after the war, and there are no reliable figures even today. Arakanese Muslim personalities indicate their number as being between 300000 and 500000 (*Nation*, May 17, 1961; Maung Ko Gaffari, "The Rohingyas of Arakan", *Times Mirror Magazine*, I, no. 5 [1957–58], 47), estimates exploited, apparently, to aid them in their argumentations, but which are not based upon fact or count, for no such count was ever made. The *New York Times*, of March 21, 1952, cites 400000 to 500000 Muslims in Arakan (Thompson and Adloff, *op. cit.*, p. 154). In the 1953 census of urban population in Burma, it was found that Buddhists constituted 70 percent and Muslims 22 percent; that is 21152 Muslims out of 95101 (Union of Burma, *First Stage Census*, 1953, Vol. I, *Population and Housing* [Rangoon, Superintendent, Government Printing and Stationery, 1957], pp. xxvi, 62–63). On the other hand, the majority of the Muslim population of Arakan was rural (see Appendix A).

<sup>2</sup> Anthony Irwin, *Burmese Outpost* (London: Collins, 1945), p. 23; "Muslims in Arakan", by Sultan Mahmud, *Nation*, April 12, 1959; "Frontier Administration", by Abdul Gaffar, *Guardian*, April 13, 1960.

The Japanese invaded Arakan at the end of 1942; they controlled the whole region of Buthidaung and half the region of Maungdaw. With the help of local Muslim leaders they established two Peace Committees, one in Buthidaung and the second in Maungdaw. These Committees were primarily engaged in enquiries into public affairs, since the courts had ceased to operate when the British left. The Japanese ruled in these areas until the beginning of 1945. Most of the Muslims were pro-British and many of them joined their service in work units, reconnaissance, and espionage on the other side of the border or in underground activities. In order to strengthen their standing in the region and encourage Muslim loyalty, the British had published a declaration granting them the status of a Muslim National Area. This entire area was reconquered by the British at the beginning of 1945. They, too, set up Peace Committees and organized civilian administrations which functioned until Burma was granted independence in January, 1948. Most of the office-holders were local Muslims, Rohingya, who had previously cooperated with the British. After the end of the war and during the following years, the region's Muslim population increased greatly, thanks to the immigration of the Chittagongs who came in the wake of the British, as well as to the return of thousands of the Arakanese Muslim refugees who had in 1942 fled from the south of Arakan and who returned to the north after the war<sup>1</sup>.

With the transfer of the regime to the AFPFL, and particularly after Burma was granted independence, a great many Muslim officers and officials were dismissed and replaced by Arakanese Buddhists. These latter tried to rehabilitate the deserted ruined Arakanese villages. Part of the Arakan population uprooted during the community riots at the beginning of the war was returned, and the Muslims who had grabbed their land were removed. These arrangements, together with the remembrance of British promises<sup>2</sup> unfulfilled – to establish a National Area – led the Muslims to acts of sabotage against the government. The Muslims boycotted the Arakanese villagers who were returned and resettled again on their own lands, deprived them of drinking water and food supplies, and found all sorts of other ways to bedevil them, until eventually these villagers were forced to leave and go back south. Gangs of Muslims began to roam about, armed with the guns and ammunition left over in large quantities in the region after the war. There were many clashes. Many Muslims even began to nurture hopes of separating the Maungdaw region from Burma altogether and of creating an independent Muslim state between the rivers Kaladan and Mayu, or of annexing the area to Pakistan<sup>3</sup>. Similar ideas had first been expounded in May, 1946, when Arakanese Muslims addressed themselves to Ali Jinnah and asked his assistance in the annexing of the region to Pakistan that was about to be formed. Two months later the North Arakan Muslim League was founded in Akyab, it, too, demanding annexation to Pakistan. Supporters of the idea were, particularly, the Muslims of Chittagong origin. The Rohingya did

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<sup>1</sup> Irwin, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

<sup>2</sup> I did not succeed in locating any written proof of the British undertaking to set up a "Muslim National Area" in Northern Arakan. Nevertheless, this is what interviews with Rohingya leaders indicated they believed.

<sup>3</sup> Tinker, *op. cit.*, p. 34; Asmi (pseud.), "The State of Arakan", *Guardian Monthly*, I (Aug. 1954), p. 29; Abdul Gaffar, *op. cit.*

not especially favor it. Jinnah himself assured General Aung San that he was not a supporter of the plan<sup>1</sup>.

For a time the Muslims were rather subdued and quiet on the subject, even after Pakistan became an independent state (in August, 1947); but in April, 1948, there was a renewal of excitement on this score in the wake of the return of lands to the displaced villagers of Arakan. The moulvis began to incite to *jihād* against the "Arakanese infidels". Within a short time many Mujahids gathered at a place called Taung Bazaar. An armed police boat sent out to disperse them met with fire. In the ensuing shooting, policemen were killed. With this head-on clash<sup>2</sup>, the Mujahids' rebellion had begun.

The rebellion spread quickly, for the central government was busy putting down rebellions that broke out in other places in Burma and was unable to devote itself to Arakan. In the beginning the Mujahids even cooperated with the Arakanese rebellion that erupted in the south. The two rebel organizations came to an agreement whereby, after the defeat of the AFPFL regime in Arakan, the region would be divided into two independent states<sup>3</sup>. Sober Muslim leaders tried, on the one hand, to influence the rebels to desist from their undisciplined behavior, and on the other, to explain to the government that the rebellion was the work of a handful of individuals, that the vast majority of the Arakanese Muslims did not support them and were even themselves among the victims of the rebels; and that actually the blame for this rash of rebellions was to be placed at the feet of the government itself for the mistakes made in handling the sensitive situation, and of the Arakanese leadership for its successful inciting which increased the embittered elements within the Arakanese Muslim community and the hate between the Buddhists and the Muslims. They further explained that the revolt was contrary to the precepts of Islam and that there was no justification whatsoever for the declaration of *jihād*. There were indeed some Rohingya leaders who in 1948 demanded arms from U Nu to enable them to fight the rebels; and they repeated this demand again in 1950 and 1951; their demands were not met. In any case, they accused the government of failure in putting down the revolt, a failure that made it impossible for many of these Rohingya to avoid surrendering to the rebels, being forced to help them against their will, under armed threats against which they had no defense. There were leaders who warned the rebels against the inevitable revenge by government and army. The pressure by the more moderate leaders grew greater with the increase in the rebels' losses – and their fallen were deprived of Muslim burial<sup>4</sup>.

The government also made attempts to negotiate with the rebels. In July, 1948, a government delegation came to them to hear them out: the rebels claimed that the Rohingya were indigenous sons of Arakan, descendants of Muslim settlers of

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<sup>1</sup> Abdul Gaffar, in his Press Conference Statement of April 8, 1960 (Mimeograph), emphasized his objection to any idea of unity with Pakistan.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*; Thompson and Adloff, *op. cit.*, pp. 154–155.

<sup>3</sup> Abdul Gaffar, *op. cit.*

<sup>4</sup> "Political Leadership in Arakan", editorial, *Burma Star*, Aug. 23, 1954; "Controversy in the Columns", editorial, *ibid.*, Sept. 9, 1954; Letter to the Editor from Maung Hla Maung entitled "Political Leadership in Arakan", *ibid.*, Sept. 10, 1954; Abdul Gaffar, *op. cit.*; Haji Noor Ahmed, [Special Notification] (Rangoon: Rohingya Associations, Aug. 21, 1961), in Burmese (mimeo.).

hundreds of years ago, differing from the neighbouring Chittagongs despite the similarities in language, culture, race, and despite the identity of religion<sup>1</sup>. The propaganda of the extremists among the Arakanese attempted to identify themselves with the Pakistan Muslims.

Muslims were not accepted for military service. The government replaced Muslim civil servants, policemen and headmen by Arakanese who increasingly offended the Muslim community, discriminating against them, putting their elders to ridicule, treating them as *Kalas*, and even extorting money and bribes from them, and arresting them arbitrarily. The authorities made no effort at all to correct the wrongs against the Rohingya by means of educational facilities and economic improvements. The Arakanese conducted propaganda against the Rohingya, accusing them of being pro-Pakistan and of aspiring to annexation to Pakistan, and cast suspicion upon their loyalty to the country.

The immigration authorities imposed limitations of movement upon Muslims from the regions of Maungdaw, Buthidaung, and Rathedaung to Akyab. The Muslims were not resettled in the villages from which they had been driven out in 1942 (with the exception of the villages they left in the Maungdaw and Buthidaung regions). Some 13000 Rohingya still living in refugee camps in India and Pakistan whence they had fled during the war, were unable to return; as for those who did manage to return, they were considered illegal Pakistani immigrants. The properties and lands of all these refugees have been confiscated. The Mujahids took to arms only after all their protests and complaints brought no results. They demanded that all these injustices be corrected and that they be allowed to live as Burmese citizens, according to the law, and not be subject to arbitrariness and tyranny<sup>2</sup>.

All the attempts to hold talks together failed. The rebels made rapid progress and banished the Arakanese villagers who had been resettled. There was heavy fighting against army units and police patrols in the region which for a long time had been under virtual siege. In June, 1949, government control was reduced to the port of Akyab only, whereas the Mujahids were in possession of all of northern Arakan, and other groups of Arakanese rebels had other districts in their control<sup>3</sup>. Because of the paucity of regular troops, the government formed special Arakanese Territorial Forces; they performed many acts of cruelty against the Muslims; and the rebels, for their part, returned the full measure of acts of cruelty against the Arakanese.

Political tensions between Burma and Pakistan were created when Pakistani newspapers began writing about the suppression of Arakanese Muslims by the

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<sup>1</sup> “[The Musulman Arakanese] are generally known as Bengalis or Chittagonians, quite incorrectly ... They resemble the Arab in name, in dress and in habit ... As a race they have been here for over two hundred years ... They are living in a hostile country, and have been for hundreds of years, and yet survive. They are perhaps to be compared with the Jews. A nation within a nation” (Irwin, *op. cit.*, pp. 22-24).

<sup>2</sup> Jamiat-al-Ulama, North Arakan, General Secretary, “Memorandum for the Arakan Enquiry Commission” (Rangoon, Aug. 1960 [?]) (mimeo.); Maung Ko Gaffari, “The Rohingya of Arakan”, pp. 47-48; Abdul Gaffar, Press Conference Statement. See also “In Defense of Maungdaw Muslims”, editorial, *Guardian*, April 13, 1960, which expresses pity for the Muslims, too, who are tyrannized by the Mujahids.

<sup>3</sup> Tinker, *op. cit.*, p. 47.

government of Burma<sup>1</sup>. In 1950, Prime Minister U Nu, accompanied by the Pakistan Ambassador, went to visit Maungdaw. In the wake of this visit, several changes in the personnel of the region took place. Senior officials and army units were replaced; but in 1952, accusations of Arakanese Muslim persecution were renewed in the press of Pakistan. The Burmese newspapers reacted by describing the persecution of Buddhists by fanatic Muslims in Pakistan who compelled them to convert to Islam. They reiterated the old rumors that had already been bruited about in previous years, that the Mujahids were getting arms and finances from Pakistan. These rumors were denied both by the government of Pakistan and by the government of Burma, but there can be no doubt that Mujahids were in the habit of crossing the border – which it was impossible to guard effectively – quite often, in order to bring back loot or in order to hide from the government forces that hunted them. The aid the Mujahids received in Pakistan was not given officially, but it cannot be denied that there were Pakistanis who supported the Mujahids, seeing them as national and religious heroes<sup>2</sup>.

In the years from 1951 through 1954, government forces annually conducted large-scale campaigns against the Mujahids. Despite the fact that the military operation always ended with the beginning of the monsoon season, and despite the extremely difficult terrain covered with jungles which hindered the army's movements, the Mujahids lost their grip on the region<sup>3</sup>. In the second half of 1954 the Mujahids again renewed their action and again reinstated their superiority over Maungdaw, Buthidaung, and most of Rathedaung. Arakanese Buddhist monks proclaimed protest fasts in Rangoon against the Mujahids. As a result of this pressure, the government launched an extensive campaign in November ("Operation Monsoon"). The major centers of the Mujahids were captured and several of their important leaders were killed. Since then their threat has been vastly reduced<sup>4</sup>. Their ranks broke up into small units which continued to loot and terrorize Muslims and Buddhist alike, especially in the remote regions difficult of access.

The Mujahids discontinued their organized fighting against the armed forces; some of them went in for smuggling rice from Arakan to Pakistan. They either bought the rice cheap or confiscated it from the villages and sold it in Pakistan, where rice was scarce, for greatly inflated prices. This smuggling was not confined to the north of Arakan alone; it went on from all the regions of Arakan, and was conducted with the cooperation of many non-Muslims, among whom were government officials and even army units. Some of them were apprehended and tried. Across the border, Pakistanis cooperated in the smuggling operations and in pro-

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<sup>1</sup> Thompson and Adloff, *op. cit.*, p. 155.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 155–156; Tinker, *op. cit.*, p. 357; Ba Chan, "Report on Arakan", *Guardian Monthly*, I (Nov. 1953), 35–36.

<sup>3</sup> According to the *Nation*, April 16, 1953, the Mujahid force in January, 1952, was estimated to be 2000. By the beginning of 1953, it had dropped to only 300 (Tinker, *op. cit.*, p. 54). As in other rebel units in Burma, the Mujahids too were unable to boast of stability in their numbers or strength. There were villagers who would join the fighting units for a specific period of time and then surrender or return to their homes, and others would replace them.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 56.

viding refuge for the Mujahids and their families<sup>1</sup>. The smuggling "season" was the dry season, from January to May, because the harvest of the rice crops began in January. This period is also suitable for military operations, and it thus often happened that the smugglers clashed with the Navy's river boats. From time to time they would also stage attacks on police stations. The chiefs of Mujahid bands would call the village heads together, levy a permanent tax upon them, and together with them organize the smuggling operation<sup>2</sup>.

The Burmese government accused the Mujahids of encouraging illegal immigration into Arakan of thousands of Chittagongs from over-populated East Pakistan. Because of the riots and the geographical difficulties, it was nearly impossible to identify or differentiate between them and the local population. The Mujahids brought over Pakistani laborers to work neglected lands and to raise rice crops in their service. The Rohingya leaders denied this accusation and claimed that not only was there no such immigration at all, but that the authorities invented the story so as to prevent the Rohingya refugees from returning from Pakistan on the excuse that they were Chittagongs. In this manner it was possible to discriminate against them. In the event that some immigrants of this category did arrive, they were handed over to the local authorities<sup>3</sup>. There were incidents when, in the process of deporting Pakistanis, Arakanese Muslims were also deported<sup>4</sup>.

In early 1954 the Pakistan Embassy in Rangoon announced that Kassem, the Mujahid leader, had been killed; somewhat later, however, it was revealed that he had merely been arrested in Chittagong, accused of "illegal entry into Pakistan"<sup>5</sup>. The government of Burma hoped that, as a gesture of good neighbour policy, the rebel would be handed over to her even though no extradition treaty existed between the two countries. However, this was not done. During debates in the Burma Legislative Assembly, representatives complained that despite the friendship between Burma and Pakistan the rebel leader was not handed over<sup>6</sup>. A large government

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<sup>1</sup> "Political Leadership in Arakan", editorial, *Burma Star*, Aug. 23, 1954; Letter to the Editor by Maung Hla Maung entitled "Political Leadership in Arakan", *ibid.*, Sept. 10, 1954; Letter to the Editor by Azhar Meah entitled "Chittagonians in Arakan", *Nation*, Sept. 13, 1956; "In Defence of Maungdaw Muslims", editorial, *Guardian*, April 13, 1960; and Letter to the Editor in the same issue from Abdul Gaffar, "Frontier Administration"; Abdul Gaffar, Press Conference Statement.

<sup>2</sup> *Guardian*, Jan. 14, 1961.

<sup>3</sup> *New Republic* (Rangoon), Sept. 25, 1961, in Burmese; *New Light of Burma*, Aug. 10, 1961, reported that the immigration authorities believed that 10 000 Pakistanis had destroyed their Pakistani documents, obtained Burmese identification papers, and disappeared within the population of Arakan (Letter to the Editor from Azhar Meah, *Nation*, Sept. 13, 1956; Abdul Gaffar, Press Conference Statement; *Guardian*, Aug. 5, 1959; *Nation*, July 18, 1960).

<sup>4</sup> In one case the Supreme Court set aside orders of deportation against a group of Arakanese Muslims rounded up by immigration authorities in 1959 in a drive against illegal immigrants ruling that in a country like Burma with so many minority groups there might be people who do not speak Burmese and whose customs were different from the Burmese, but who nevertheless were citizens (*Guardian*, Oct. 27, 1960).

<sup>5</sup> *Burma Star*, Aug. 23, 1954, editorial.

<sup>6</sup> *New Times of Burma*, March 24, 1955; *Nation*, Nov. 5, 1957.

price was put upon his head, dead or alive. After his release from jail, Kassem remained in Chittagong where he runs a hotel to this very day<sup>1</sup>.

Kassem's forces, although scattered, set up a camp for their families on the Pakistani side of the border<sup>2</sup> and continued their revolt by smuggling rice and by plunder – until July 4, 1961, when 290 Mujahids of the southern region of Maungdaw were captured by Brigadier Aung Gyi, then the Deputy Commander-in-Chief of Burma. The rebels felt that there was no longer any hope for their rebellion, especially since an agreement had been reached between Burma and Pakistan at the beginning of 1961 which also provided for cooperation between the border commands of Pakistan and Burma, making it difficult to cross the frontier. Both countries hoped that the Mujahid question would not become a stumbling-block between them. The establishment of the Mayu Area (see below), and the increase of military operations both contributed to their surrender. The balance of the Mujahid gangs, numbering just a few hundreds, surrendered on November 15, 1961, in east Buthidaung to Brigadier Aung Gyi. The capitulation rebels received gifts of money and Korans, and were settled in a special district of Maungdaw, in the vicinity of a Burmese army camp<sup>3</sup>.

Thus ended the Mujahid rebellion; but before it was over, it had given rise to political results which were also affected by the great hatred existing between the Muslims and the Buddhists in Arakan; the Muslims objected to the demand of the Arakan Party for the status of a state for Arakan within the framework of the Union of Burma. Because of the deep-seated suspicion existing, U Kyaw Min, leader of this party, failed in all his attempts, after the 1951 elections, to win over the Muslim Members of Parliament from Arakan to form an all-Arakan faction within Parliament, with the promise of securing their rights as Muslims in the

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<sup>1</sup> I learned details about Kassem (Qāsim) from an English merchant who was a resident of Rangoon and who traveled frequently to Dacca. He knew Kassem personally. See also *Burman*, July 15, 1957, which repeated a story in praise of Kassem which had appeared in *Morning Star* (Dacca), June 23, 1957, and which reported that Kassem walked about the city a free man, very popular, and was looked upon as a national hero.

The *Burman* story recounted that the Mujahids were organized for the purpose of self-defense immediately upon independence. The soldiers were given training as well as black uniforms, food, and four rupees a week. Kassem was given the title of Major General and the sum of fifty rupees per month. The battle-cry was: "Allah Akbar". The moulvis offered the inducement, by a fatwa, of holiness for those who fall in battle. Their flag was green with red and white stripes, with star and crescent. There were 20000 (!) Mujahids. Kassem during World War II, fought in the ranks of the British Army for three years. In 1952–53 there was a split in the ranks of the Mujahids, which benefited the Burmese, and Kassem fled to Pakistan. In 1953 he returned to Burma, regained control over several districts, appointed his own military governors, and returned to Pakistan. It was then that he was arrested (1954).

<sup>2</sup> *Nation*, July 18, 1960.

<sup>3</sup> *Guardian*, Nov. 13, 1961, Nov. 16, 1961; *Burman*, Nov. 13, 1961; *Guardian*, June 29, 1961, July 6, 1961, July 9, 1961; Tha Htu, "The Mayu Frontier Administration Area", *Guardian Monthly*, IX (Feb., 1962), 29–30; Tinker, *op. cit.*, p. 357; Thompson and Adloff, *op. cit.*, pp. 67, 283.

“State” to be constituted<sup>1</sup>. The more conservative Muslim leaders, who wanted no part of the Mujahids, likewise did not wish for Arakanese Buddhist rule. The large majority of the Muslim organizations of the Rohingya of Maungdaw and Buthidaung<sup>2</sup> demanded autonomy for the region, to be directly governed by the central government in Rangoon without any Arakanese officials or any Arakanese influence whatsoever. Their minimal demand was the creation of a separate district without autonomy but governed from the center. The Muslim members of the Constituent Assembly, and later the Muslim M. P.’s from Arakan raised this demand also during the debates in Parliament and in the press<sup>3</sup>.

In the years 1960 to 1962, the Rohingya organizations and the respective Arakanese Muslim organizations initiated frantic activities with reference to the Muslim status in Arakan, and especially in the regions of Maungdaw and Buthidaung. This was in response to the promise made by U Nu on the eve of the general elections of 1960, that if his party won, he would confer the status of a “State” upon Arakan, within the framework of the Union of Burma, on a par with the “statehood” of

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<sup>1</sup> Asmi, “The State of Arakan”, *Guardian Monthly*, II (Nov., 1954), 15; *ibid.*, I (Oct., 1954), 17–20; Khin Maung Kyi, “The Mujahid Story,” *Guardian Monthly*, II (Jan., 1955), 38–39; Letter to the Editor from Azhar Meah, *Guardian*, Nov. 2, 1956.

In the Constituent Assembly the Arakanese Muslims had representatives. After the 1954 elections there were four. They were all members of the Sultan Mahmud family, a very influential family in the region. Sultan Mahmud himself had been most active at the time of the second world war in the Indian Independence League (Thompson and Adloff, *op. cit.*, p. 157; Burma, *Burma Handbook* [Simla: Government of India Press, 1944], p. 118). They constituted a separate group, independent of the AFPFL representatives for Arakan, but they supported the government that recognized them as a supporting faction, and appointed their leader, Sultan Mahmud, Parliamentary Secretary in the government.

<sup>2</sup> The two important Rohingya organizations: United Rohingya Organization founded in 1956 and the Rohingya Youth Organization founded in 1959. They have branches in Rangoon, Maungdaw, and Buthidaung (in the region called the Mayu Area [see later in the text]). Four additional organizations were established in the year 1960: Rohingya Students Organization, Rohingya Labour Organization, and Rohingya Rangoon University Students Organization, all three of which exist only in Rangoon, and the Rohingya Jam’iyyat al-‘Ulamā’, with branches in Rangoon and in Mayu. Their membership consists of young people; as a matter of fact, the same group is active in all of them. The Jam’iyyat was founded as early as 1936 and operated until 1956 as a general organization of Arakanese Muslims. In 1960 the new organization, as above, came into being. For the Muslims of Arakan outside the Mayu Area, and especially for those of Akyab, Kyaukpyu, Sandoway, and Ramree, there are other, separate organizations: Arakan National Muslim Organization and Arakanese Muslim Youth Organization. The president and the secretariat of each of these two bodies are located in Rangoon, and are in close contact with Sultan Mahmud. The first of these was set up in 1960; the second was founded earlier, in 1954, by Arakanese Muslim students attending the Rangoon University (Arakan National Muslim Organization [Ya-Ta-Ma-Pha], *Constitution of Ya-Ta-Ma-Pha* [Akyab: Nov. 21, 1961]).

<sup>3</sup> Thompson and Adloff, *op. cit.*, p. 157; Tinker, *op. cit.*, p. 30; Ba Chan, *op. cit.*, p. 35; Letter to the Editor from Sultan Mahmud entitled “Muslims in Arakan”, *Nation*, April 12, 1959; Letter to the Editor from Mg. Hla Maung entitled “Political Leadership in Arakan” *Burma Star*, Sept. 10, 1954.



the other integral states of the Union. After winning the elections, U Nu appointed an enquiry commission to study all the problems involved in the question of Arakan.

The Rohingya Jam'iyat al-'Ulamā' submitted to this enquiry commission a long and explanatory memorandum on the position of the Muslims of northern Arakan. The memorandum stated that the Muslims of this region constitute a separate racial group which is in absolute majority there; it called for the creation of a special district to be directly subject to the central government in Rangoon. Only such an arrangement would guarantee the cessation of the commercial smuggling movement across the border, and the illegal immigration, and would also restore order and quiet. The establishment of a special district would contribute to the raising of the extremely low standard of living of the population, the vast majority of whom were dependent upon the primitive underdeveloped agriculture obtaining in the area, to the improvement of the substandard level of education, and to the prevention of malpractices by Arakanese officials. The memorandum demanded, too, that the district have a "district council" of its own which shall be vested with local autonomy. As a compromise solution, the authors of the memorandum agreed to the district being a part of the Arakan "State"; however, they insisted that the Head of "State" was to be "counseled" by the Council in the appointment of officials and in all matters concerning the district and its problems. The appointed officials would also be briefed and advised by the Council. The district would also receive direct allocations for its needs and would enjoy particular attention in matters of culture, economies, and education<sup>1</sup>.

The Rohingya Youth Association held a meeting in Rangoon on July 31, 1961, where the call was issued not to grant the status of "State" to Arakan because of the community tensions still existing between Muslims and Buddhists since the 1942 riots<sup>2</sup>. A similar resolution was taken by the Rohingya Students Association, with the additional warning that if it is decided, despite all protest, to set up the "State", this would require the partition of Arakan and the awarding of separate autonomy to the Muslims<sup>3</sup>.

Muslim Members of Parliament from Maungdaw and Buthidaung likewise petitioned the government and the enquiry commission not to include their regions in the planned Arakan "State". They had no objection to the creation of such a state, but only without the districts of Buthidaung, Maungdaw, and part of Rathaung, where the Muslims were in the majority. These districts must be formed into a separate unit in order to ensure the existence of the Rohingya. Forcing the creation of a single state upon all of Arakan would be likely to lead to the renewed spilling of blood<sup>4</sup>.

The problem of the Muslims of Akyab and the other regions of Arakan where the Muslims were in the minority was more complicated and their position led to

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<sup>1</sup> Jam'iyat al-'Ulamā', North Arakan, General Secretary, "Memorandum for the Arakan Enquiry Commission".

<sup>2</sup> *Guardian*, Aug. 3, 1960.

<sup>3</sup> Shah Alam, "Arakan Autonomous State" (Rangoon: Rohingya Students Association, Aug. 1960) (mimeo.).

<sup>4</sup> *Nation*, Jan. 28, 1961; *New Republic*, May 12, 1961; Abdul Gaffar, Press Conference Statement; Sultan Ahmed, "Arakan Statehood", *Guardian*, June 25, 1960, a Memorandum to the Commission.

tensions among the Rohingya organizations. There were those who deemed it pointless to object to U Nu's plan of "Statehood" and therefore supported the granting of the status of "State" to the whole of Arakan, including the Muslim regions. They feared that separation of these regions would redound to the detriment of the Muslims in the rest of Arakan. They of course demanded guarantees and assurances for the protection of the Muslims; to this end they insisted that Muslims be co-opted to serve as members of the preparatory committee which would deal with the creation of the "State"<sup>1</sup>. In the memorandum submitted to the enquiry commission by the organization of Arakanese Muslims (of Sultan Mahmud), it was explained that they would support the "State" only on two conditions: if the Arakanese Buddhists would support their demands; and if the constitutions of the "State" would include, specifically, religious, cultural, economic, political, administrative, and educational guarantees for Muslims. The Head of State of the new "State" of Arakan would alternate: once a Muslim and once a non-Muslim. When the Head of State was a Muslim, the Speaker of the State Council would be a non-Muslim, but his deputy, a Muslim; and vice versa. The same arrangement would also be in effect in the appointments, committees and other bodies. No less than one-third of the "State's" ministers were to be Muslims. No law affecting Muslims would be passed unless and until the majority of the Muslim Members of the Council voted for it. In the matter of appointments to jobs in Muslim areas, the Chief of State would act on the advice of the Muslim Members of his Cabinet. In all appointments to government posts, to public services, to municipal positions and the like, Muslims would enjoy a just proportion in accordance with their percentage in the population. In filling the appointments allotted to Muslims, the Muslim candidates would compete among themselves. The government would attentatively meet the educational and economic needs of the Muslims. No pupil would be forced to participate in religious classes not of his own religion. Every religious sect would be allowed training in his own religion in all institutions of learning. Every and any religious sect would be permitted to set up its own educational institutions that would be recognized by the government. Muslims would be completely free to develop their own special Rohingya language (see above, p. 25) and culture, and to spread their religion. A special officer for Muslim Affairs would be appointed whose job it would be to investigate complaints and obstructions, and to report on them to the Chief of State. For a period of ten years from the date of the establishment of the "State", the right would be reserved to every district – and especially to those of northern Arakan – to secede from the "State" and transfer itself to the direct jurisdiction of the central government in Rangoon<sup>2</sup>. Those supporting these demands suggested bearing in mind the examples offered by the viable arrangements existing between the Muslims and Christians in Lebanon, between the Greeks and Turks in Cyprus, and among the Chinese, Malays, Indians, and Pakistanis in Singapore; only such just arrangements between Muslims and Buddhists could vouch for the success of the "State" of Arakan<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> *Nation*, Nov. 28, 1961.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, Oct. 27, 1960.

<sup>3</sup> Mohamed Akram Ali, "Unity among Ourselves: Need for Arakanese Unity", *Guardian Monthly*, VII (Aug., 1960), 31–32.

*The Arakanese Muslims*

At long last, it was on the first of May, 1961, in the provinces of Maungdaw, Buthidaung and the western portion of Rathedaung the government set up the Mayu Frontier Administration (MFA). It was not an autonomy, for the region was administered by Army officers; since it was not placed under the jurisdiction of Arakan, however, the new arrangement earned the agreement of the Rohingya leaders, especially as the new military administration succeeded in putting down the rebellion and in bringing order and security to the region.

At the beginning of 1962 the government prepared a draft law for the establishment of the "State" of Arakan and, in accordance with Muslim demand, excluded the Mayu District<sup>1</sup>. The military revolution took place in March, 1962. The new government cancelled the plan to grant Arakan the status of a "State", but the Mayu District remained subject to the special Administration that had been set up for it.

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<sup>1</sup> *Vanguard* (Rangoon), Jan. 8, 1962; *Guardian*, Feb. 6, 1962; Tha Htu, *op. cit.*

## Chapter IV

### CONCLUSION

#### *Major Aspects of Muslim Community Life*

The two major phenomena characterizing the life of the Muslims in Burma, in this century were in the fields of (1) inter-community relations, the relations between the Burmese Muslims and the Indian Muslims, and (2) external relations, the position of the Burmese majority in relation to the entire Muslim minority, but especially to the Burmese Muslims.

The tension between the Indian Muslims and the Burmese Muslims, brought about by the activity of the former and the reaction to it of the Buddhist majority, began at the Education Conference after World War I over the question of Urdu as the language of instruction. The Indian Muslims objected to the introduction of the Burmese language because of their desire to safeguard their ties with India and a semi-holy association with Urdu, as well as because of the fear of most teachers who were Indian Muslims lest they lose their jobs.

Further differences causing tensions and splits between the two groups were over religion and custom. The Burmese Muslims spoke Burmese whereas the Indians spoke mostly Urdu or other Indian languages. According to the accepted custom in Buddhist society, the Indian Muslim women covered their faces with *purdah*, a custom practically unknown among the Burmese Muslim women who were used to full equality with their men. Monogamy is the custom among Burmese Muslims, but not among Indian Muslims. The Zerbadees were in the habit of attuning themselves to their Buddhist environment and to be as much like them as they could; the Indians felt themselves to be different and kept to themselves. Indian Muslims on the whole displayed more fervor in the fulfillment of their religious duties – prayers, the fast of Ramadān, the Feast of Sacrifice, the Haj – than did the Burmese Muslims. Many customs took root among the Burmese Muslims which were copies of the customs of their Buddhist surroundings – consulting of astrologers, various ceremonial procedures customarily followed at the time of the engagement of couples, marriage, birth, and all the other events of family life.

One of the most serious concerns of the orthodox Indian Muslims was the fact that certain of the Burmese Buddhist beliefs, such as the belief in *nats* (ghosts) were being adopted by the Burmese Muslims, along with the various rituals connected with them<sup>1</sup>. All these differences led to the Burmese Muslims being considered by

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<sup>1</sup> For many details on this subject, see Khin Khin U, "Marriage in the Burmese Muslim Community," *JBR*, XXXVI (Dec., 1954), 25-33; Khin Khin Su, "The Acculturation of the Burmese Muslims", unpublished Master's thesis, Rangoon University, 1960.

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the Indian Muslims as being "outside the pale" from the religious point of view. To overcome these patterns of behaviour attempts were made to increase religious activity within the Burmese Muslim community. But these attempts met with resistance because of the status that the Indian Muslim leadership accrued to itself by virtue of their activity.

The immigrant Indian Muslims were the driving force behind all the activities developed prior to World War II. To a very great extent it was based on private charities and donations by rich Indian or Zerbadee merchants, for such things as building schools, orphanages, and mosques and their maintenance. In other words, the Muslim community was almost self-dependent in matters educational, religious and the like. But it should be noted that the share of the Burmese Muslims in all those activities was very little: and the little done by them was by way of imitation of methods introduced by the Indian Muslims or inspired by them. The activities of U Ba Oh are a case in point.

Another contributing factor to the cleavage between Burmese Muslims and Indian Muslims was particularly obvious during the period of national struggle, especially in the 30's. The Indian Muslims conducted themselves in thought and deed in accordance with the interests of the Muslims of India, whereas the orientation of the Burmese Muslims ran parallel to the aspirations of the Burmese National Movement. At the same time it must be remembered that the Indian Moslem League and the Indian Congress Party did not play a significant role in the life of the Muslims in Burma. Indian Muslims in Burma were also members of the Indian Congress Party branch existing in Burma, but even this limited activity (which had its importance only from the point of view of relations between the Indian Hindus and the Indian Muslims in Burma, and not at all from the point of view of the relations between Muslims and the Burmese Buddhists) and the anti-Muslim riots that broke out later led to an awakening within the body of Burmese Muslims, primarily in northern Burma. They saw themselves as part and parcel of Burma and resented the pro-Indian orientation of the Indian Muslims. The No-Kyar-Ye Movement, the most extreme expression of this trend, had little time to do much because of the outbreak of World War II. After the war, the Burmese Muslims discovered that they themselves were also considered foreigners, *kala*, no less than the immigrants from India; realizing this, they fought the attitude vigorously.

The Japanese conquest and World War II wrecked much of the organizational structures and previously existing relationships. At the very beginning of the Burmese national struggle toward independence, it became clear that U Razak had in the meantime organized the Burmese Muslims as an integral part of the struggle. U Razak was the standard-bearer of a united Burmese nation, and of partnership with the AFPFL, without any tie whatsoever with India. U Razak and the Burmese Muslims who constituted themselves a branch of the Congress Party, objected to the struggle of those demanding specific constitutional guarantees for the Muslim minority. This contest was carried on during the British period and continued on into the first few years after the war, led by Indian Muslims and participated in, too, by those Burmese Muslims of culture and of a modicum of "Indian Muslim" attachment. Both governmental authorities, the British, and then the independent Burmese, rejected these demands.

On the very eve of independence it became apparent that the Indian Muslims were about to lose their status as citizens of equal rights, and to become a foreign

minority within independent Burma. This change in status led to a partial reimmigration back to India, but the great majority remained. Among those Indian Muslims remaining there grew a conscious process of weakening of bonds with India and Pakistan out of the desire to adjust to the new situation and out of a reluctance to flaunt their communal identity in the face of the intolerant nationalist movement. Indian Muslims began increasingly to adopt Burmese names and customs, inspired as they were with the wish to penetrate Burmese society. This process was present among the Zerbadees as well, especially among those of them who, before the war, had already accepted Indian Muslim ways and manners as their own standard of correct religious and social behaviour.

These changes in mores were accompanied by the weakening of general feelings of religion, especially among the young generation. The Burmese Muslims wanted to differentiate between their nationalism and their religion; they wished to be "Burmese in public and Muslims in their homes", which was expressed in their manner of dress and in the whole gamut of behaviour patterns. This was true for the Zerbadee women as well. The process, of course, never attained any absolute degree. There were still many Zerbadees who brought up their sons as Indian Muslims, and the names they bear were Muslim names; and a great number of the Indian Muslims who took Burmese citizenship still cherish their close ties with India. But the clear tendency of the majority of Burmese Muslims was in the direction of the trend described above, followed by a great many Indian Muslims.

In other words, the problem of the Burmese Muslims was their national integration and hence desire to weaken their relationship with the Indian Muslims. Even their hostility can be interpreted as being a part of the general Burmese national hostility toward foreigners in general and Indian immigrants in particular.

By contrast, the Indian Muslims, knowing that they were an alien element in the society, with difficulty in their way to assimilation – not to mention the fact that actually there was no incentive to assimilate – stressed another identity: on the one hand religious orthodoxy, with the spiritual center in the Islamic institutions of India; and on the other hand some participation in "Pan-Islamic" activities in the form of statements, mass rallies, and the like in connection with all kinds of issues anywhere else in the world, with which Muslims happened to be associated. This process found expression in the formation of religious circles gravitating around the Jam'iyat al-'Ulamā', which attempted to hold firmly to the religious spirit in resistance to the overwhelming modern trends. And, indeed, the Burmese Muslims complained that the Jam'iyat encouraged the "Indian spirit" among the Muslims of Burma. Whereas the Burmese Muslims were anxious to demonstrate their loyalty to Burma by complete participation in all the developmental processes of their country and by unquestioning and complete identification with her, the Indian Muslims emphasized their spirit of Muslim solidarity and identity to which the Burmese Muslims were, by and large, indifferent and showed little, if any, interest. The sending of students, by the Jam'iyat, to religious institutions in India was much resented by Burmese Muslims.

The Burmese Muslims also objected to having the Indian Muslims call themselves "Burmese Muslims", too, after attaining citizenship. They did not want to be associated with the Indian Muslims because in the eyes of Buddhists *all* Muslims were considered foreigners. Such an association would interfere with their complete

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integration with the Burmese people. They were anxious to be an integral part of the majority of the land, while retaining only their religious character<sup>1</sup>.

The old cleavage between the Indian Muslims and the Burmese Muslims found some expression in the dispute between U Raschid and U Khin Maung Lat. The splinters caused by these struggles were due either to personality clashes or were the result of religious-ideological differences. U Raschid's Organization was to a large extent a front for the Indian Muslims despite their being Burmese citizens. In this Organization and in its affiliated Jam'iyat al-'Ulamā' were to be found all those who were more orthodox than the Burmese Muslims in following the precepts of their religion and all those with the most highly developed sense of community "belonging" who were vexed by the assimilation with the Buddhist majority. It was this group that reacted so negatively to the activities of the Congress, as, for example, to the Divorce Law which was advocated by U Khin Maung Lat.

The old rivalry between the Indian Muslims and the Burmese Muslims was renewed for the last time in 1963 in a dispute about the use of *waqf* funds. The Burmese Muslims claimed that many of those funds were transferred to India and Pakistan and demanded a government inquiry into the management of the *waqf* properties. They further protested that many Indian Muslims acquired Burmese citizenship for convenience and expediency rather than for any allegiance to Burma. That dispute was reflected in an angry exchange of letters in the Rangoon press in June, 1963<sup>2</sup>.

The limited cooperation that does exist among the otherwise divided Muslim organizations is confined exclusively to the areas of religious affairs, as in their joint efforts to obtain government relaxation of restrictions with reference to the Haj and permission for the slaughter of cattle for religious celebration, or in their combined protest against the installation of Buddhism as the state religion.

But, it is the Indian Muslims who still wield the most power in the various Muslim organizations. Most of the wealthy members of this community are Indian Muslim merchants. Their quarrel with the Burmese Muslims, although still prevalent, is no longer as bitter and sharp as it was in the days of British rule and in the first years after independence, nor is it as general, being confined now to a small group of leaders and public figures. Much of the sting has disappeared from the quarrel since most parties have taken Burmese citizenship and their previous large-scale political bonds with India have since been severed. Former differences have in this way been largely wiped out. Several of the Indian Muslims have even become active in the various organizations of the Burmese Muslims.

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<sup>1</sup> In the *Htoon Daily*, Sept. 19, 1962, a notice was published announcing that in the wake of a pronouncement made by the Jam'iyat-al-'Ulamā' against the Burma Muslim Youth League, several Burmese Muslims declared the establishment of a Committee To Denounce Indian Moulvis. This was done because the latter encourage Indian customs and opinions that are contrary to the interests of the Burmese Muslims. As the case with other Muslim bodies and organizations in Burma, there was no follow-up to the announcement and no activity was initiated; nevertheless, the announcement itself bears witness to the atmosphere obtaining, and to the style of the differences of opinion rampant in the Muslim community.

<sup>2</sup> *Nation*, June 17, 18, 19, 21, 22, 24, 26, 27, 1963.

The fact that the Indian Muslims still represent the major force in the community life of the Muslims of Burma is not only because of geographical reasons. Most of them are concentrated in the capital, Rangoon, and in the Irrawaddy Valley, whereas the majority of the Burmese Muslims are located in Mandalay and Upper Burma, far from the center of government, influence, administration, and culture of the country; but it should also be remembered that in spite of the fact that a minority of 800 000–900 000 might be considered to be a sizable group in Burma, their internal divisions challenge that image. There is, after all, very little in common – except common religion – between the Rohingya of Arakan and the Indian Muslims of Rangoon or the Burmese Muslims of the Shwebo district. These are different groups that do not identify with each other, do not share the same goals and aspirations, and hardly ever cooperated in any of that community's struggles. And after the premature death of U Razak, the Burmese Muslim community has yet to produce, to this very day, another great leader, of similar capacity and quality, who could have an impact on the course of their history and give them a different direction than the one described.

The Muslims of Burma found themselves locked in a second difficult position rising from the fact that the national movement in Burma was largely identical with the renaissance of the Buddhist religion in Burma, a process growing ever stronger especially since independence. The vast majority of the people of Burma are Buddhists and according to their concept there is identity in being Burmese and in being Buddhist.

This situation hardly created an atmosphere of religious tolerance nor did it make for the acceptance of the Burmese Muslim claim of equality by the Buddhist majority. It was for this reason that Burmese public opinion did not accept the differentiation between Indian Muslims and Burmese Muslims, as the latter had hoped.

The Burmese Muslims tried vigorously to refute this attitude, using the argument that religion is the private affair of every man and that his identity is determined by the nation he is a member of, and by that alone. These attempts by the Muslims to separate their nationalism and their religion did not succeed, because the realities of Burma were not conducive to this point of view. The Indian Muslims were as much foreigners in their eyes as in the eyes of the Buddhist majority. The Buddhists did not distinguish among the various groups of Muslims and tended to include them all, indiscriminately, in the term *kala*, "foreigners", or "Indians". The hate that developed toward the immigrant Indians because they accumulated wealth, because they married Burmese women, and because they attained supremacy in various fields, enveloped the Burmese Muslims as well; this all-inclusive hatred came to a head in the anti-Muslim riots of 1938. They began in Rangoon against the Indian Muslims, but they very quickly spread and were directed against Muslims generally, without any differentiation, especially in Upper Burma where the number of Indian Muslims was relatively small.

The Burmese Muslims tried to emphasize the difference between themselves and the Indian Muslims. The latter – uneasy about their fate as a minority in Burma – operated to a certain extent within the framework of the political organizations based in India and objected to the aspirations of the Burmese national movement: the Burmese Muslims clearly dissociated themselves from the activities of the Indian



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Muslims and identified themselves unconditionally with the Burmese national movement, seeing themselves as members of the same people<sup>1</sup>.

As pointed out, the majority in Burma does not distinguish, socially speaking, between "Burmese" and "Buddhist", hence the Muslim is a foreigner. The small class of the educated, however, did tend to accept the Burmese Muslims, the Zerbadees, as Burmese, especially if they spoke Burmese, were attired as Burmese and behaved as Burmese – an acceptance that was not offered to the Indian Muslims. This was true only of a small group, though; hence the feeling within the Burmese Muslim community, especially by those who retained Muslim-sounding names, of being discriminated against. They met with obstacles and difficulties when they applied for positions in the government services and suffered discrimination in commerce in those places where questionnaires ask the religion of the applicant for a permit or for a job<sup>2</sup>.

It is to be remembered that although most Buddhists have clearly not been liberated from feelings of antagonism toward and discrimination against Muslims, there were nevertheless three Burmese Muslims who succeeded in attaining the honorable position of Minister – U Razak, U Khin Maung Lat, and U Raschid. In addition to these three, Muslims are also to be found – although not many – in government service, in the army, in the universities of Rangoon and Mandalay, and in other public institutions. It therefore can be stated, with some justification, that the Muslims are, after all, much more accepted than they claim. A representation of three cabinet ministers since independence does not spell discrimination. In that respect the Muslims were treated equally with all other minority groups who were always represented in the cabinet. It seems safe to say that to a certain degree, Muslim grievances were exaggerated stemming from their lack of self-confidence. After all, and by way of comparison, it would be difficult to find a Muslim state in which a non-Muslim enjoys similar status.

Besides the hate for the Muslims as representatives of a foreign minority, another reason for this attitude was rooted in Burmese fears aroused by the separatist demands of this minority claiming special privileges. Because of their religion, Muslims in Burma have always been considered a minority that prefers separatism. The question of the status of the Muslims in Burma has been much discussed in the press: The consensus of Burmese opinion has been that the Muslims can certainly enjoy religious freedom but that they have no hope of ever realizing their political aim of obtaining representation on the basis of it<sup>3</sup>. In several instances threats and warnings were made to the Muslims not to "mix religion with politics", that is, to refrain from presenting claims as a minority, lest "unpleasant results" follow<sup>4</sup>. If, indeed, the Burmese Muslims are only a religious minority, was the Burmese argument,

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<sup>1</sup> U Mya, [*The Brief History of the Burmese Muslims*] (Rangoon, n. d.), p. 90, in Burmese; U Ba U, [*Mandalay Centenary History of Burmese Muslims*] (Mandalay, 1959), p. 51, in Burmese; U Kha, [*The Burmese and Muslims: Problems of Nationality and Religion*] (Prome, 1951), in Burmese.

<sup>2</sup> U Khin, *U Hla Pe's Narrative of the Japanese Occupation of Burma*, Data Paper no. 41, Southeast Asia Program, Department of Far Eastern Studies (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1961, p. 39. Even the Zerbadees are categorized, in that respect, as Indians.

<sup>3</sup> *Guardian*, Jan. 1, May 8, 1962.

<sup>4</sup> *New Light of Burma*, Oct. 10, 1961; *Guardian*, Jan. 18, May 8, 1962.

and not a national minority, as they insist they are, and if they differ from the Indian Muslims, then there is no foundation to the demand they make for recognition as a separate national group like the Shans and others. Religion is a personal matter and not organizational<sup>1</sup>, especially since the Burmese Muslims do not have a territorial center as do the other minorities (with the exception of the Muslims of Northern Arakan for whom the special Mayu Frontier Administration Area was created). Muslims cannot expect action on their demands that the Islamic religion be taught in the government schools, or that Muslim clerks be permitted to be absent from offices for Friday prayers. They may follow the dictates of their religion but without causing disruption to the order in the lives of the majority<sup>2</sup>. These were the basic feelings presented by the Buddhist majority to the Muslims.

The Revolution of General Ne Win in March, 1962, put an end to all Muslim political activity. The policy of the Military Revolutionary Government was to stop all agitation by the various minorities, all of which were demanding a larger measure of autonomy, more vociferously after U Nu's success in the 1960 elections which returned him to power. General Ne Win saw in all the claims of the minorities a threat to the national unity of Burma. The Muslims ceased all activity the more so since the outstanding leader of the community, U Raschid, who had also been Minister of Commerce, was arrested together with U Nu. The Revolutionary government's policy of nationalizing all branches of the country's economy dealt a severe blow to the many Muslim merchants, particularly in Rangoon, who had been the backbone of the entire community, to its leaders and public figures, and to the mainstays in the financing of the activities of the various groups and organizations within the community. Since the revolution there has been a steady stream of emigration from Burma of many Indians (Muslims and Hindus), especially those who had not yet become citizens. This emigration of Indian Muslims contributes much to the strengthening process of the Burmese Muslim section within the Muslim community in Burma as against the Indian Muslims, a process that had begun with the attainment of independence in 1948. With the advent to power of General Ne Win a new phase starts in the affairs of the Muslim minority in Burma.

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<sup>1</sup> *Ludu* (Rangoon), Nov. 7, 1960; *Hanthawaddy*, Dec. 7, 1960.

<sup>2</sup> *Tribune*, Feb. 2, 1961.

## APPENDICES

### A. HOW MANY MUSLIMS ARE THERE IN BURMA?

The first population census taken in Burma was in the year 1872; the next one after that was in the year 1881, and thereafter once in ten years. The last one, in 1941, was never completed because it was interrupted by the Japanese conquest of Burma. Most of the material that was collected in this partial census was lost during the war. In independent Burma a proper population census, full and detailed, as was conducted by the British, has not yet been organized. For this reason we do not have any exact figures since 1931 on the numbers of the inhabitants of Burma in general or on the numbers of Muslims in particular. Partial population counts in 1953 and 1954 were confined to selected regions in several places.

At the time of the first census, in 1872, British Burma comprised three areas: Arakan, Pegu, and Tenasserim. The Muslims of Upper Burma, who were the subjects of the King of Burma, were of course not counted.

Two major groupings of Muslims were found to exist at that time, each one of which had several subdivisions: Indian Muslims and Burmese Muslims. The first grouping included Muslims from the Indian regions of Surrat, Bengal, and Madras. Burmese Muslims were found mostly in Arakan, Tavoy and Mergui. The Arakanese Muslims then numbered 64000, or about two-thirds the total number of Burmese Muslims, which was 99846. The percentage of Muslims in Tavoy and Mergui was also high. There were likewise Malays there<sup>1</sup>.

The second general census of British Burma was held on February 17, 1881. Unlike the preceding one, this census included much more detailed information on the Muslim population and revealed an increase in the Muslim population in every district except that of northern Arakan.

In Akyab their number had grown from 58263 in 1872 to 99548 in 1881. And in Rangoon, from 12067 to 27169<sup>2</sup>. The large increase in Akyab can be explained in part by the many immigrants from Chittagong, some of whom returned to their homes there after the census. Many Muslims were also found in the districts of Bassein, Kyaukse, Hanthawaddi, Mergui, and Tavoy. The total Muslim population in the country increased from 99846 in 1872 to 168881 in 1881. Of these, the Sunnis accounted for 150821; the Shi'as, 11287; the Wahābis, 698; the Rafid (a Shi'a sect), 551; and miscellaneous others, 5324. This minute subdivision of Muslims was never repeated in future census-taking<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Meer Sulaiman, "Muslims in Burma: 1872-1931", *Islamia School Annual*, I (March, 1935), 35.

<sup>2</sup> In 1868 there were only 3361 Muslims in the District of Rangoon (Malcolm Lloyd, *Rangoon District Gazetteer*, Pegu Province, British Burma [Rangoon: Rangoon Central Gaol Press, 1868], p. 121).

<sup>3</sup> Sulaiman, *op. cit.*, p. 35.

The 1891 census included the whole of Burma for the first time. The Muslims of Lower Burma then numbered 210649, in comparison with the 168881 in 1881; the Muslims of all Burma numbered 253640. This census divided the Muslims along the accepted divisions in India (the census in Burma always being taken as a part of the general census of India): Shaykhis were listed at 204846; Sayyids, 3405; Moguls, 5053; and Pathans, 15689. The rest were listed as Burmese, Arakanese, Panthay, and Shan Muslims. Some Turks, Arabs, Chulias, Mappallais, and Lebbais were also recorded<sup>1</sup>. It would appear that a large proportion of the Arakanese Muslims, Zerbadees<sup>2</sup>, and other Burmese Muslims were included in the category of the Shaykhis; it just does not seem possible that there were only 24647 Burmese Muslims, Arakanese, and Panthays in Burma at that time.

The census of 1901 registered 331298 Muslims, in comparison with the 253640 of the 1891 census. The subdivisions there were: 269042 Shaykhis; 20423 Zerbadees; 9224 Pathans; 8970 Sayyids; 3983 Malays; and 19656 others<sup>3</sup>.

In the report of the census held on March 10, 1911, there were already 420777 Muslims recorded, of which 59729 were Zerbadees – that is, an increase of 81331 or 24 percent<sup>4</sup>. Thirty-two percent of the Muslims lived in the coastal regions, where they constituted 14.72 percent of the total population. Approximately one-third of the total Muslim population lived in the cities, as compared with 7.5 percent of the Buddhist population. Of the urban Muslims, 63.1 percent lived in the Delta region. In the other regions, especially of Akyab, where the Muslims numbered 186323, and where the Burmese Muslims or the Arakanese Muslims were in agriculture, the percentage of urban dwellers among the Muslims dropped to 13.9 percent. The Muslims of Akyab were 33.66 percent, or over a third, of the region's

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<sup>1</sup> Shaykhi (see Col. Henry Yule and A. C. Burnell, *Hobson-Jobson* [London: John Murray, 1903], p. 825). Sayyid: Muslims who claim to be descendants of Muhammad (*ibid.*, p. 746). Moguls, Moghuls: in India the word signifies foreign Muslims from the countries west and northwest of India, but does not include the Pathans. The Moguls themselves differentiate between Mughal Irani of Persian origin, which is Shi'a, and Mughal Turani, of Turkish origin, which is Sunni. The *Beg* at the end of a name is indicative of Moghul, as *Khan* is indicative of Pathan. In the early nineteenth century this appellation, *Beg*, was used for the forces of Hyderabad. The Moguls and others who settled in Burma intermarried with Burmese Muslims (see *ibid.*, pp. 570–571). Pathans: usually refers to Afghans, particularly to Indians of Afghan origin. The derivation of the word is not too clear (*ibid.*, p. 746). Mappallais, Moplah: the name is usually applied to the Muslim natives of Malabar, but it is also used to designate the Syrian Christians of Cochin and Travancor. The origin of the term is unclear (*ibid.*, p. 585). Their language is Malayalam (Bennison, *Census 1931*, p. 228). Lebbais, Lubbye (Lubbee): the name given in southern India to Muslims who speak Tamil. They are the "Moplahs" of the western coastal region; it is assumed that they, too, are the offspring of Arab immigrants who married local women (see *ibid.*, p. 523; also *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, s. v. India; Sulaiman, *op. cit.*, p. 36).

<sup>2</sup> The appellation Zerbadee appears for the first time in this census.

<sup>3</sup> Burma, *Census of India, 1911*, Vol. IX, *Burma*, Part I, *Report*, compiled by Morgan Webb (hereafter cited as Webb, *Census 1911*) (Rangoon, 1912), p. 245.

<sup>4</sup> Shaykhis numbered 237568, Pathans, 8041, Sayyids, 6871; the balance were Malays and others (*ibid.*).

population. It is here that over 44 percent of all Burma's Muslims were concentrated<sup>1</sup>. The Muslims of Rangoon made up 18.62 percent of the capital's residents<sup>2</sup>.

In examining the Muslim population distribution in urban and rural areas, it is important to pay special attention to the Akyab region where a great many Muslims were engaged in agriculture. Except for this one area, the Muslim rural population did not even reach one percent of the total rural population of the country.

In 1911, in all of Burma – including Akyab – 31.15 percent of the Muslims were urban and made up 13.11 percent of the total urban population of the country, and 2.48 percent of the total rural population. In all of Burma – excluding Akyab – 58.35 percent of the Muslims were city-dwellers, and constituted 12.14 percent of the entire urban population, but only 0.90 percent of the entire rural population of Burma<sup>3</sup>.

With reference to the large natural increase of Muslims in the decade 1901–1911 – which was far greater than that of the Hindus, who also immigrated from India – the census report attributed this phenomenon in large measure to the smaller difference in the number of men and women among the Muslims than among the Hindus. In 1901 there were 119347 Muslim women in Burma as compared with 48544 Hindu women. The natural increase was much higher among the Muslims especially because their rural population was greater by far than that of the Hindus, and their numbers included also indigenous Muslims, that is, Burmese Muslims, whereas there were almost no Burmese Hindus<sup>4</sup>.

Other category differences among the Muslims themselves, such as Afghans, Pathans or Shi'as and Sayyidis, tend to disappear, except in those places where there are large and powerful Muslim communities; in such cases the differences are likely to remain in existence for longer periods.

Malay Muslims were to be found mostly in the Mergui region. Their occupation were primarily connected with the sea, especially fishing, pearl-diving, and coastal trade. Further inland in the Mergui region it is possible to find a small number of Muslim farmers who are Burmese in language and traits, who are descendants of mixed marriages between the local population and the coastal Muslims. The

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<sup>1</sup> In the city of Sandoway itself, in the year 1901, the Muslims numbered 3900, almost half the city's total population (W. B. Tydd, *Sandoway District Gazetteer*, Vol. A [Rangoon, 1912], p. 20). In Kyaukse district they numbered 3000, which is 3 percent, most of them Zerbadees (J. A. Stewart, *Kyaukse District Gazetteer*, Vol. A [Rangoon, 1925], pp. 33, 36). In the Toungoo district the Zerbadees in 1911 numbered 769, as compared with their 1901 total of 580. By 1924 the district already had 3096 Muslims. The majority of the newcomers were immigrants from India (S. A. Smyth, *Toungoo District Gazetteer*, Vol. A [Rangoon, 1914], p. 17). In the district of Henzada, the number of Muslims rose from 1269 in 1881 to 4657 in 1911; of these 876 were Zerbadees (W. S. Morrison, *Henzada District Gazetteer*, Vol. A [Rangoon, 1915], pp. 34, 52). In the district of Mergui the Muslims accounted for 6.4 percent of the population (the Buddhists, 84 percent). Most of them were Zerbadees. In 1925 the Muslims in the cities of Mandalay district numbered 17, 916. The Muslims in the rural areas were not counted (H. C. Searle, *Mandalay District Gazetteer*, Vol. A [Rangoon, 1928], p. 80).

<sup>2</sup> Webb, *Census 1911*, p. 99.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 100.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 99.

Malays, all of whom concentrated in the Mergui region, numbered 4239 in 1911, as against 3983 in the previous census; that is to say, an increase of 256 in the ten-year period<sup>1</sup>.

In the 1921 census, 500592 Muslims were counted, of a total population of 13168099 in Burma; this is 3.8 percent of the total population. Of the 500592 Muslims, 314527 were male, and 186065 were female<sup>2</sup>.

Almost a fourth of the Muslims in Burma were listed as “Burman-Muslims”, which category embraced the Zerbadees; Arakanese Muslims; the Kamans of Arakan, who were counted separately from the rest of the Muslims of Arakan; Panthays; Malays; and “a number of people who called themselves Burmans by race and Muslims by religion”. Most of the Muslims were of Indian origins, as can be seen from table 1 (p. 134).

The Indian Muslims registered by their places of origin: Bengalis, Chittagongians, Hindustanis, Oriya, Punjabi, Tamil (or Chulia), Telugu (also called in Burma Coringhis, after the port town of the region of Madras from which they came)<sup>3</sup>. Among the Indian Muslims the large majority were males, whereas the proportion of men to women among the Burmese Muslims was more normal.

Prior to the 1921 census the Muslims demanded that the term “Zerbadees” be dropped as being offensive, and that the term, “Burman Muslims” be substituted for it. The authorities did not accede to this request, arguing that they would not know how else to differentiate among the various groups of Muslims. Furthermore, there are also some Buddhists and Christians who are the offspring of mixed origins who are also called “Zerbadees”. In this census, 93482 were registered as Zerbadee Muslims. Beginning with this census of 1921, the categories in use in India – Shaykhis, Sayyids, etc. – were dropped in Burma<sup>4</sup>.

The number of Arakanese Muslims registered in this census (1921) reached the approximate figure of 24000<sup>5</sup>. In previous census-takings there were completely different numbers for the category of “Muslims of Arakan”. The discrepancies were caused by the differences in the concept of the meaning of the term. In the years 1911, for example, only 4675 Arakanese were listed<sup>6</sup>. The Arakan Kamans were for the first time listed separately; there were 1054 men and 1126 women.

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<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 245; see also U Tin Htoo, “The Mergui Archipelago and Isthmus of Kra, *Guardian Monthly*, IX (March, 1962). In 1882 there were 4131 Muslims in the Mergui district, 1129 of whom were Malays (Capt. J. Butler, *Mergui District Gazetteer* [Rangoon, 1884], p. 6). In 1901 there were 7000 Muslims in the district. Some 2000 to 3000 of them were Malays. Many of them were Zerbadees (G. P. Andrew, *Mergui District Gazetteer*, Vol. A [Rangoon, 1912], p. 7). The situation was similar in other coastal districts, such as Akyab.

<sup>2</sup> Burma, *Census of India, 1921*, Vol. X, *Burma*, Part I, *Report*, compiled by S. G. Grantham (hereafter cited as Grantham, *Census 1921*) (Rangoon, 1923), p. 107.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 90–91.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 212–213.

<sup>5</sup> Descendants of the Chittagonians who settled in Akyab district and married Arakanese women refused to be called Chittagonians and preferred to be known as Arakanese Muslims. They also tended to marry among themselves and were considered to be a separate racial group (*ibid.*, p. 213).

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 214.

They were all Muslims except for ten men and seven women – who were Buddhists<sup>1</sup>.

The Arakanese Muslims were the second largest subdivision of the category “Burman Muslims”, after the Zerbadees<sup>2</sup>.

The seventh and last complete census in Burma was held in 1931. Here for the first time the category “Muslim” was used in place of “Mohammedan” which had been in use until then. This census listed 584839 Muslims out of a total population of 14647497, or 4 percent<sup>3</sup>.

The number of Muslims rose from 500592 in 1921 to 584839 in 1931, that is, by 84247, or 16.8 percent. Of them, there were 396504 Indian Muslims; 186861 were Burmese Muslims of various groupings; and 1474 were Chinese Muslims<sup>4</sup>.

Forty-one percent of all Muslims were to be found in the single region of Arakan. Most of the others concentrated in the Delta and in the other central regions of the country. Except for the Arakan region, the Muslims mostly settled in the cities. The urban Burmese Muslims were 32.7 percent; if Arakan Muslims were excluded, the percentage shoots up to 52.1 percent. Among the total urban population the Muslims were 12.6 percent, and only 3 percent of the rural population. When excluding Arakan, then the Muslims constituted 12 percent of Burma’s city-dwellers, and 1.3 percent of her rural population. The relationship of men to women also rose from 119 : 100 in 1901, to 156 : 100 in 1931. That resulted because immigration into Burma increased, especially the immigration of men.

Table 2 gives the division of Muslims by origins in the year 1931. The Myedus, who in 1921 were included in the category of Indian Muslims, were here listed within the grouping of “Burman-Indians”, that is, Burmese Muslims. The table shows that 68 percent of the Muslims of Burma were Indian, and only 30 percent belonged to the Burmese Muslim groups. The majority were Zerbadees and Arakanese Muslims while the remainder were Kamans and Myedus. The number of Indian Muslims listed as having been born in Burma increased; this is accounted for by the large numbers of immigrants who settled down permanently in the Akyab region. Seventy-three percent of the Indian Muslims born in Burma were registered in the Akyab region. The large swelling of the numbers of Burmese Muslims was the result of the continuous spreading of the custom of mixed marriages. The increase in the numbers of Burmese Indian Muslims in the years 1921–1931 was as high as 42 percent, while the Indian Muslims grew by only 10 percent. These figures are not altogether exact because in the 1921 count many Arakanese Muslims were listed as Indians<sup>5</sup>. In the 1931 census, too, many Arakanese Muslims claimed Bengali as their mother tongue; the same is true of those in the regions of Chittagong and Sandoway, although the Zerbadees usually indicated Burmese or Arakanese (depending on where they lived) as their mother tongue<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> “Though they look like Indians, their language and habits are Arakanese. Most of them are concentrated in the districts of Akyab and Kyaukpyu” (*ibid.*).

<sup>2</sup> Sulaiman, *op. cit.*, p. 38.

<sup>3</sup> Buddhists, 84 percent; Animists, 5.2 percent; Muslims, 4 percent; Hindus, 3.9 percent; Christians, 2.3 percent; the balance, miscellaneous others (Burma, *Burma Handbook* [Simla: Government of India Press, 1944], p. 11). See Tables 2 and 3, pp. 134–135.

<sup>4</sup> Bennison, *Census 1931*, p. 211; Burma, *Burma Handbook*, p. 11.

<sup>5</sup> Bennison, *Census, 1931*, p. 213.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 194.

Of the 1017825 Indians registered in the 1931 census, there were 565609 (56 percent) Hindus; 396594 (39 percent) Muslims; and the balance, Buddhists, Christians, Sikhs, and others.

Among the Indian Muslims listed there were Chulia, Lebbais, Moplah, Kaka (from the Malabar region, in 1931 numbering 10012, most of them Hindus), Telugu, Deccanis, Gujerati, Soorti, Chittagong, and others<sup>1</sup>. The Burmese Muslim groupings included Zerbadees, Arakanese Muslims, Kamans, and Myedu. Their number increased by 56904, or 45 percent. Most of the Arakanese Muslims were in the Akyab region, but there were large numbers of them to be found in other regions as well: in Chittagong, 1597; and in Sandoway, 1658. Their total number in 1931 was 51615, more than twice their number in 1921, which was 23775<sup>2</sup>. The Kamans increased their numbers from 2180 to 2686; they were concentrated in the regions of Akyab and Chittagong<sup>3</sup>. The Myedus increased from 4991 to 5160<sup>4</sup>.

It should be pointed out that in the various census-takings of Burma – except for that of the year 1881 – the division of Muslims into sects, such as Sunni, Shi'a, and so forth, is not to be found. Those interviewed were not asked to which sect they belonged; they merely indicated that they were "Mohammedans" of this or that kind – of Indian origin, or Zerbadee or Arakanese, or the like. On the other hand, the Christians were asked to what religious sect they belonged, and this was noted down.

The results of the 1941 census are unknown; the Japanese conquest interrupted the work and the data was lost. The few facts that are known: the total population in 1941 was 16823798 (as compared with the 1931 population figure of 14647736). The 15 percent increase was attributed to the fact that for the first time in 1941 the census-takers were successful in reaching and including areas difficult of access such as the Naga Hills, the Wa regions, parts of the Myitkyina region in the north which had never been included before<sup>5</sup>. These regions are free of Muslims.

In the years 1953 and 1954 partial census were conducted. That of 1953 embraced 248 cities and towns of Burma proper, four cities of Kachin State and sections of the Chin region<sup>6</sup>.

Out of the total population of 2940704 of the 252 cities and towns covered, 234512 Muslims were recorded<sup>7</sup>. The Buddhists of these urban areas comprised 83 percent of the population, and the Muslims, 8 percent. The remainder were Hindus (5 percent), Christians, Animists, and others. In Arakan there were 22

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<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 229.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 230.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 231.

<sup>5</sup> *Burma Facts and Figures*, Burma Pamphlets no. 8 (Calcutta: Longmans, Green, 1946), p. 3; see also Kyaw Thet, "Burma: The Political Integration of Linguistic and Religious Groups", in P. W. Thayer, ed., *Nationalism and Progress in Free Asia* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1956), p. 166. Kyaw Thet, without quoting his source, states that in 1941 the total population of Burma numbered 18 million: Buddhists, 84 percent, Animists, 5 percent, Muslims, 4 percent, Hindus, 4 percent, (remainder, miscellaneous).

<sup>6</sup> Union of Burma, *First Stage Census, 1953*, Vol. I, *Population and Housing* (Rangoon, 1957), p. xvi.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 62-63.



percent Muslims in the urban population<sup>1</sup>. In the city of Rangoon, 77 159 Muslims were counted from among the city's total population of 737 079. In Kachin State there were 2920 Muslims out of a total population of 261 982. Of the areas of the Chin region, where the general population numbered 185 069, twenty-six Muslims were registered<sup>2</sup>.

The partial census of 1954 included 2143 villages of Burma proper, located generally in areas close by those cities and towns that had been included in the partial census of the previous year. Out of a total of 2 679 719 counted in these villages, 73 642 were Muslims; by percentage: Buddhists, 94.87 percent; Muslims, 2.76 percent. In the villages of Arakan included in the census, 56.75 percent Buddhists were found and 41.70 percent Muslims<sup>3</sup>.

Despite the changes in the methods of recording the residents from one census to another, throughout the seven (complete) census-takings in Burma, their results point to the fact that the Muslim population grew steadily along with the general increase of the population of the country. Since 1891, there have been on the average about 347 Muslims to every 10 000 residents in Burma. We have no statistical data on the situation today, but it may safely be assumed that the relationship of Muslims to the rest of the population today remains the same 4 percent<sup>4</sup>. The generally agreed estimate of Burma's population at the time of the military coup was twenty-two million. According to this, it can be assumed that there are some 880 000 Muslims in Burma. It is true that many Indians – Muslims and Hindus alike – fled to India with the Japanese invasion of Burma, but a great many of them returned with the British; even larger numbers of Chittagongians penetrated into northern Arakan, so that, basically, it would seem that the balance and proportion remain the same as in 1931.

The Muslims themselves, from time to time, published their own figures on their numerical strength in Burma. In letters from the President of the General Council to U Nu, written on August 14, 1947, and on September 17, 1947, the writer claimed that the Muslims number more than one million (hence, they have the right to proportional representation in the governmental institutions to be created in independent Burma). This number was also quoted in a book published in Burmese in 1951 by U Kha, a Muslim professor at Rangoon University<sup>5</sup>. The organizers of the mass rallies for the Maghreb Day on September 11, 1953, and for Palestine Day on May 28, 1954, claimed in their announcements published after the respective events that the Muslims of Burma numbered a million and a half. The Muslim Cabinet

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<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. xxvi.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 62–63.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. III, *Chin Special Division*, p. 27.

<sup>4</sup> Union of Burma, *Second Stage Census, 1954*, Vol. I, *Population and Housing* (Rangoon, 1957), pp. 2, 4, 105.

<sup>5</sup> According to Hernandez Tisinger and Fairey Tisinger, (*Report on the Mission to Burma* [UNESCO, May, 1951], p. 13). the Muslims constitute 4.5 percent of the population. There is no reference to source.

<sup>6</sup> U Kha, [*The Burmese and Muslims: Problems of Nationality and Religion*], (Promo, 1951), p. 95, in Burmese.

Minister, U Raschid, also expressed the opinion that there were a million to a million and a quarter Muslims in Burma<sup>1</sup>.

Most of these figures are overstated. Only a new, exact census will reveal the exact number of Muslims in Burma. There is no doubt but that the above figures are obvious exaggerations rooted in the Muslim desire to emphasize their strength so as to justify their demands for special constitutional rights. Unfortunately, even in the results of the partial census of 1953 and 1954 there is nothing that can help us know the proportion of the Muslims within the general population, since their distribution throughout the country is most uneven. The Muslims of Arakan, too, when they came to demand special status for the Muslim districts of northern Arakan (Mayu District), also cited figures that seemed to be exaggerated. According to their claim there are 650 000 Muslims in all of Arakan, out of a total Arakan population of 1 400 000. Mayu alone, they insist, has 450 000 Muslims<sup>2</sup>. An estimate of Muslims in Burma today more nearly approximating the real situation can be assumed to be 4 percent (see table 3).

A second important conclusion is that the Indian Muslims are the vast majority – some two-thirds – of all the Muslims of Burma. There are significant results flowing from this fact, from the point of view of the inner structure of the Muslim community in Burma, the hue of its political activity as well as religious and social, and the quality of its leadership. It can be assumed that the proportion of 1 : 2 between the Indian Muslims and the Burmese Muslims has changed a bit since then, to the benefit of the latter, this, because Indian immigration stopped after independence while the mixed marriages continue and increase the Zerbadee factor – without taking into consideration the political factors which likewise have their influence in this direction, and which have been treated separately.

## B. LEGISLATION ON ISLAMIC SUBJECTS

### 1. *The Kazis Act*<sup>3</sup>

#### Preamble.

Whereas by the preamble to Act No. XI of 1864 it was (among other things) declared that it was inexpedient that the appointment of the Kazi-ul-Kuzaat, or of City, Town or Pargana Kazis, should be made by the Government, and the same Act the enactments relating to the appointment by the Government of the said officers were repealed; and whereas by the usage of the Muhammedan community the presence of Kazis appointed by the Government is required at the celebration of marriages and the performance of certain other rites and ceremonies, and it is therefore expedient that the Government should again be empowered to appoint persons to the office of Kazi: It is hereby enacted as follows: –

<sup>1</sup> In a private conversation on Feb. 7, 1962.

<sup>2</sup> Conversation with the President of the National Arakanese Muslim Organization on June 15, 1962.

<sup>3</sup> Burma, *The Burma Code*, Vol. XI, C, Muhammadan, India Act XII, 1880 (Rangoon).

1. The President of the Union may, by notification, extend this Act to the whole or any part of the Union of Burma.

Local extent.

2. Whenever it appears to the President of the Union that any considerable number of the Muhammadans resident in any local area desire that one or more Kazis should be appointed for such local area, the President of the Union may, if he thinks fit, after consulting the principal Muhammadan residents of such local area, select one or more fit persons and appoint him or them to be Kazis for such local area.

Power to appoint Kazis for any local area.

If any question arises whether any person has been rightly appointed Kazi under this section, the decision thereof by the President of the Union shall be conclusive.

The President of the Union may, if he thinks fit, suspend or remove any Kazi appointed under this section who is guilty of any misconduct in the execution of his office, or who is for a continuous period of six months absent from the local area for which he is appointed, or leaves such local area for the purpose of residing elsewhere, or is declared an insolvent, or desires to be discharged from the office, or who refuses or becomes in the opinion of the President of the Union unfit, or personally incapable, to discharge the duties of the office.

3. Any Kazi appointed under this Act may appoint one or more persons as his naib or naibs to act in his place in all or any of the matters appertaining to his office throughout the whole or any portion of the local area for which he is appointed, and may suspend or remove any naib so appointed.

Naib Kazis.

When any Kazi is suspended or removed under section 2, his naib or naibs (if any) shall be deemed to be suspended or removed, as the case may be.

4. Nothing herein contained, and no appointment made hereunder, shall be deemed -

- (a) to confer any judicial or administrative powers on any Kazi or Naib Kazi appointed hereunder; or
- (b) to render the presence of a Kazi or Naib Kazi necessary at the celebration of any marriage or the performance of any rite or ceremony; or
- (c) to prevent any person discharging any of the functions of a Kazi.

Nothing in Act to confer judicial or administrative powers; or to render the presence of Kazi necessary; or to prevent any one acting as Kazi.

## 2. *The Mussalman Wakf Validating Act*<sup>1</sup>

1. . . . .

2. In this Act, unless there is anything repugnant in the subject or context.-

Definitions.

(1) "wakf" means the permanent dedication by a person professing the Mussalman faith of any property for any purpose recognized by the Mussalman law as religious, pious or charitable:

(2) "Hanafi Mussalman" means a follower of the Mussalman faith who conforms to the tenets and doctrines of the Hanafi school of Mussalman law.

3. It shall be lawful for any person professing the Mussalman faith to create a wakf, which in all other respects is in accordance with the provisions of Mussalman law, for the following among other purposes: -

Power of Mussalmans to create certain wakfs.

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, India Act VI, 1913.

- (a) for the maintenance and support wholly or partially of his family, children or descendants, and
- (b) where the person creating a wakf is a Hanafi Mussalman, also for his own maintenance and support during his lifetime or for the payment of his debts out of the rents and profits of the property dedicated:

Provided that the ultimate benefit is in such cases expressly or impliedly reserved for the poor or for any other purpose recognized by the Mussalman law as a religious pious or charitable purpose of a permanent character.

Wakfs not to be invalid by reason of remoteness of benefit to poor, etc. Saving of local and sectarian custom. Act to apply retrospectively. 'Extent.

4. No such wakf shall be deemed to be invalid merely because the benefit reserved therein for the poor or other religious, pious or charitable purpose of a permanent nature is postponed until after the extinction of the family, children or descendants of the person creating the wakf.

5. Nothing in this Act shall affect any custom or usage whether local or prevalent among Mussalmans of any particular class or sect.

6. This Act shall apply also to wakfs created before the 7th March, 1913.

### 3. The Mussalman Wakf Act<sup>1</sup>

- 1. (1) . . . . .
- (2) The President of the Union may, by notification, direct that this Act, or any specified part thereof, shall extend to the whole or any specified part of the Union of Burma.
- 2. In this Act, unless there is anything repugnant in the subject or context, -
  - (a) "benefit does not include any benefit which a mutwalli is entitled to claim solely by reason of his being such mutwalli;
  - (b) "Court" means the Court of the District Judge or, within the limits of the ordinary original civil jurisdiction of the High Court, such Court, subordinate to the High Court, as the President of the Union may, by notification in the Gazette, designate in this behalf;
  - (c) "mutwalli" means any person appointed either verbally or under any deed or instrument by which a wakf has been created or by a Court of competent jurisdiction to be the mutwalli of a wakf, and includes a naib-mutwalli or other person appointed by a mutwalli to perform the duties of the mutwalli, and, save as otherwise provided in this Act, any person who is for the time being administering any wakf property;
  - (d) "prescribed" means prescribed by rules made under this Act; and
  - (e) "wakf" means the permanent dedication by a person professing the Mussalman faith of any property for any purpose recognized by the Mussalman law as religious, pious or charitable, but does not include any wakf, such as is described in section 3 of the Mussalman Wakf Validating Act, under which any benefit is for the time being claimable for himself by the person by whom the wakf was created or by any of his family or descendants.

Definitions.

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. IX, India Act XLII, 1923.

Statements of Particulars

3. (1) Every mutwalli shall furnish to the Court within the local limits of whose jurisdiction the property of the wakf of which he is the mutwalli is situated, or to any one of two or more such Courts, a statement containing the following particulars, namely: –

Obligation to furnish particulars relating to wakf.

- (a) a description of the wakf property sufficient for the identification thereof;
- (b) the gross annual income from such property;
- (c) the gross amount of such income which has been collected during the five years preceding the date on which the statement is furnished, or of the period which has elapsed since the creation of the wakf, whichever period is shorter;
- (d) the amount of the Government revenue and cesses, and of all rents, annually payable in respect of the wakf property;
- (e) an estimate of the expenses annually incurred in the realization of the income of the wakf property, based on such details as are available of any such expenses incurred within the period to which the particulars under clause (c) relate;
- (f) the amount set apart under the wakf for –
  - (i) the salary of the mutwalli and allowances to individuals;
  - (ii) purely religious purposes;
  - (iii) charitable purposes;
  - (iv) any other purposes; and
- (g) any other particulars which may be prescribed.

(2) Every such statement shall be accompanied by a copy of the deed or instrument creating the wakf or, if no such deed or instrument has been executed or a copy thereof cannot be obtained, shall contain full particulars, as far as they are known to the mutwalli, of the origin, nature and objects of the wakf.

(3) Where –

- (a) a wakf is created after the 1st August, 1924 or
- (b) in the case of a wakf such as is described in section 3 of the Mussalman Wakf Validating Act, the person creating the wakf or any member of his family or any of his descendants is on the 1st August, 1924, alive and entitled to claim any benefit thereunder, the statement referred to in sub-section (1) shall be furnished, in the case referred to in clause (a), within six months of the date on which the wakf is created or, if it has been created by a written document, of the date on which such document is executed, or, in the case referred to in clause (b), within six months of the date of the death of the person entitled to such benefit as aforesaid, or of the last survivor of any such persons, as the case may be.

4. (1) When any statement has been furnished under section 3, the Court shall cause notice of the furnishing thereof to be affixed in some conspicuous place in the Court-house and to be published in such other manner, if any, as may be prescribed, and thereafter any person may apply to the Court by a petition in writing, accompanied by the prescribed fee, for the issue of an order requiring the mutwalli to furnish further particulars or documents.

Publication of particulars and requisition of further particulars.

(2) On such application being made, the Court may, after making such inquiry, if any, as it thinks fit, if it is of opinion that any further particulars or documents are necessary in order that full information may be obtained regarding the origin, nature or objects of the wakf or the condition or management of the wakf property, cause to be served on the mutwalli an order requiring him to furnish such particulars or documents within such time as the Court may direct in the order.

### Statement of Accounts and Audit

5. Within three months after the thirty-first day of March next following the date on which the statement referred to in section 3 has been furnished, and thereafter within three months of the thirty-first day of March in every year, every mutwalli shall prepare and furnish to the Court to which such statement was furnished a full and true statement of accounts, in such form and containing such particulars as may be prescribed, of all moneys received or expended by him on behalf of the wakf of which he is the mutwalli during the period of twelve months ending on such thirty-first day of March or, as the case may be, during that portion of the said period during which the provisions of this Act have been applicable to the wakf:

Provided that the Court may, if it is satisfied that there is sufficient cause for so doing, extend the time allowed for the furnishing of any statement of accounts under this section.

Audit of accounts.

6. Every statement of accounts shall, before it is furnished to the Court under section 5, be audited –

- (a) in the case of a wakf the gross income of which during the year in question, after deduction of the land-revenue and cesses, if any, payable to the Government, exceeds two thousand rupees, by a person who is the holder of a certificate granted by the President of the Union under section 144 of the Burma Companies Act, or is a member of any institution of association the members of which have been declared under that section to be entitled to act as auditors of companies throughout the Union of Burma; or
- (b) in the case of any other wakf, by any person authorised in this behalf by general or special order of the said Court.

### General Provisions

Mutwalli entitled to pay cost of audit, etc., from wakf funds.

7. Notwithstanding anything contained in the deed or instrument creating any wakf, every mutwalli may pay from the income of the wakf property any expenses properly incurred by him for the purpose of enabling him to furnish any particulars, documents or copies under section 3 or section 4 or in respect of the preparation or audit of the annual accounts for the purposes of this Act.

Verification.

8. Every statement of particulars furnished under section 3 or section 4 and every statement of accounts furnished under section 5, shall be written in the language of the Court to which it is furnished, and shall be verified in the manner provided in the Code of Civil Procedure for the signing and verification of pleadings.

9. Any person shall, with the permission of the Court and on payment of the prescribed fee, at any time at which the Court is open, be entitled to inspect in the prescribed manner, or to obtain a copy of, any statement of particulars or any document furnished to the Court under section 3 or section 4, or any statement of accounts furnished to it under section 5, or any audit report made on an audit under section 6.

Inspection  
and copies.

#### Penalty

10. Any person who is required by or under section 3 or section 4 to furnish a statement of particulars or any document relating to a wakf, or who is required by section 5 to furnish a statement of accounts, shall, if he, without reasonable cause the burden of proving which shall be upon him, fails to furnish such statement or document, as the case may be, in due time, or furnishes a statement which he knows or has reason to believe to be false, misleading or untrue in any material particular, or, in the case of a statement of accounts, furnishes a statement which has not been audited in the manner required by section 6, be punishable with fine which may extend to five hundred rupees, or, in the case of a second or subsequent offence, with fine which may extend to two thousand rupees.

Penalties.

#### Rules

1. (1) The President of the Union may, after previous publication, by notification in the Gazette, make rules to carry into effect the purposes of this Act.

Power to  
make rules.

(2) In particular, and without prejudice to the generality of the foregoing power, such rules may provide for all or any of the following matters, namely: –

- (a) the additional particulars to be furnished by mutwallis under clause (g) of sub-section (1) of section 3;
- (b) the fees to be charged upon applications made to a Court under sub-section (1) of section 4;
- (c) the form in which the statement of accounts referred to in section 5 shall be furnished, and the particulars which shall be contained therein;
- (d) the powers which may be exercised by auditors for the purpose of any audit referred to in section 6, and the particulars to be contained in the reports of such auditors;
- (e) the fees respectively chargeable on account of the allowing of inspections and of the supply of copies under section 9;
- (f) the safe custody of statements, audit reports and copies of deeds or instruments furnished to Courts under this Act; and
- (g) any other which is to be or may be prescribed.

12. Nothing matter in this Act shall –

- (a) affect any other enactment for the time being in force in the Union of Burma providing for the control or supervision of religious or charitable endowments; or
- (b) apply in the case of any wakf the property of which –
  - (i) is being administered by the Treasurer of Charitable Endowments, the Administrator-General, or the Official Trustee; or

Savings.

- (ii) is being administered either by a receiver appointed by any Court of competent jurisdiction, or under a schema for the administration or the wakf which has been settled or approved by any Court of competent jurisdiction, or by any other authority acting under the provisions of any enactment.

Exemption.

13. The President of the Union may, by notification in the Gazette, exempt from the operation of this Act or of any specified provision thereof any wakf or wakfs created or administered for the benefit of any specific section of the Mussalman community.

#### 4. *The Muslim Divorce Act*<sup>1</sup>

1. (a) This Act shall be called the 1953 Muslim Divorce Act.
  - (b) This Act shall come into force on the date the President of the Union of Burma so notifies in the Gazette.
  - (c) Nothing in this Act shall affect the original Islam Code of Law nor any legally contracted marriage, except the divorce affected by the provisions of this Act.
2. Any (married woman/wife) may sue for divorce on any one or more of the following grounds, namely: –
  - (a) that the husband's whereabouts is unknown.
  - (b) that the husband has failed to maintain her for six months continuously without sufficient reasons or has refused to maintain her.
  - (c) that the husband has failed to live with her as man and wife without sufficient reason for one whole year.
  - (d) that the husband at the time of the marriage was impotent and has been so up to the date of the suit.
  - (e) that the husband has been of unsound mind for a period of not less than one year or has been infected with leprosy or venereal disease.
  - (f) that where there is no consummation, if the girl is below the age of 15 years, the marriage is null and void unless the father or the grandfather has given the girl in marriage, in other words agreed to its solemnisation.
  - (g) that if the husband inflicts cruelties. Cruelty means
    - (aa) Physical cruelty or mental cruelty.
    - (bb) any other ground of divorce by Muslim Law given as a reason for divorce.

3. Subject to the provisions of Sub-section (1), para (a), if the proper Court is of the opinion that the husband is at fault, that Court shall pass the preliminary Divorce Decree. However, no final divorce decree shall be passed before the completion of four years from the date of the preliminary decree.

*Exception:* Provided that if the husband or his duly authorized agent can file an application and satisfy the Court that he is ready and willing to fulfill his marital duties, the Court may nullify the preliminary divorce decree.

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<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol. XI, Act XIV of 1953.



*C. Various Documents of the General Council of Burman Moslem Associations*

4. Subject to the provisions in Sub-section (1) para (d) the Court concerned must pass the preliminary divorce decree if it thinks that the husband is impotent. However, if the husband can prove to the satisfaction of the Court that he is no longer impotent, the so called preliminary decree shall be nullified. If it is not to the satisfaction of the Court, the final decree order shall be passed at the completion of one year after passing of the preliminary decree.

5. In the suit instituted under Section 2, subsection 1, para 1.

- (a) the Court shall affix the notice at a place in the Court where the public can see.
- (b) that the person or persons entitled to inherit from the husband on his death shall mention their names and addresses in the application.
- (c) subject to para (b) the Court shall issue notice to the persons mentioned in the application, such persons shall have the right to file applications.

6. That the divorce is affected if the married muslim woman changes her religion.

7. Notwithstanding anything contained in this Act, when a divorce takes place the dower and or any part of the dower which a married woman is entitled to according to Islam Code of Law shall not be affected.

## C. VARIOUS DOCUMENTS OF THE GENERAL COUNCIL OF BURMAN MOSLEM ASSOCIATIONS

Declaration of December 12, 1947, supporting the Nu-Atlee Agreement on the independence of Burma; expressing a stand against the partition of Palestine; a demand that the government claim war reparations from Japan; a call for the establishment of an additional university; the expression of Support for Daw Soe Shwe, the leader of the Burman Muslim Women's Organizations, who had been elected to the Legislative Assembly. (Several years later the Council did an about-face, entertaining open animosity to Daw Soe Shwe.)

A letter, dated April 28, 1948, to Thakin (later: U) Nu, Prime Minister, demanding that the Feast of Sacrifice ('Id al-Adḥa or Baqr-i-'Id) be declared an official holiday; that both the Feast of Sacrifice and the Birthday of the Prophet be declared community holidays; and that Muslims in government service be granted official permission to participate in Friday prayers between the hours of noon and two o'clock.

The Council's petition to U Nu of June 24, 1948, to use his influence to cancel the government's negative decision in the matter of the Feast of Sacrifice. According to this decision: "Only holidays important to the Burmese people will be recognised as public holidays".

Press release of July 14, 1950, in support of the Government of Burma in its support of the United Nation's Security Council's Resolution calling upon member states of the United Nations to help South Korea.

The date September 11, 1953, was declared Maghreb Day. A large mass meeting was organized, chapters of the Koran were read, anti-French slogans were popularized, and speeches were made in Urdu, Burmese, Tamil, and English. A resolution was taken to offer thanks to the countries of the Arabic-Asian bloc for their support of the Maghreb countries' struggle. France's policies were condemned and a call

was issued to the United Nations to intervene. The resolution emphasized the solidarity of the Muslims in Burma with the rest of the Muslim world in general and with the national movements of Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia in particular. Appreciation was expressed for the special prayers conducted on the Friday in several mosques in Rangoon and on other places throughout Burma, in answer to the request of the al-Maghreb Committee for the liberation of the Maghreb.

In a special proclamation on May 28, 1954 – Palestine Day – the council declared its opposition to the “conquest of Palestine” by the Jews and the Zionists and the establishment of what is called “The State of Israel”. It contained the demand that the Government of Burma, other Asian governments, and the United Nations assist the Arab refugees, and the appeal to the Government of Burma to sever diplomatic relations with the State of Israel.

Letter dated May 19, 1960, written by the President of the Council (the organization was no longer active by then, but its president Ahmad Madari was still attempting to function) to the Chairman of the Committee for the State Religion, which was engaged in preparing the constitutional amendment that would stipulate Buddhism as the State religion, protesting against the proposal. In his opinion it would create clear discrimination against all non-Buddhists. At least certain guarantees should be undertaken sufficient to protect Burmese Muslims in accordance with the commitments promised by the constitution.

Declaration of November 22, 1960, in the matter of Mauritania and Morocco, signed by the Committee for the Liberation of Mauritania. The declaration stated that Mauritania belonged to Morocco.

Similarly, a proclamation of the Front To Save Palestine dated May 15, 1961, against the State of Israel.

There were no reactions to all these activities which were ignored not only by general Burmese public opinion, but even by the Muslim community itself.

#### D. MUSLIM PRESS

The first Muslim press in Burma was the Chanea Press, established in Mandalay in 1905 by the Chanea family of the Rander-Soortis community, one of whose members was, in 1907, appointed first deputy supervisor of Muslim schools. This Press printed general material in Burmese and in English, as well as Muslim religious books in Burmese, distributed for the most part among the Burmese Muslims of Upper Burma.

The first Muslim periodicals began to appear in the second decade of the century. Almost all were short-lived. The *Burma Muslim News*, in Burmese, was founded in 1912 and discontinued in 1915 or 1916. (For lack of records, there can be no certainty about the dates connected with the Muslim publications and press of Burma. The details included here have been garnered from oral reports and talks.) Before this an Urdu-language weekly, *Akhbar-i Burma*, was begun that existed three years. An interesting point is that the Urdu-language periodicals were less successful in Burma than those in Burmese because of the regular import of Muslim Urdu-language publications from India which were bought by the Indian Muslims in Burma. The most popular of these was the monthly *Ar-Rafik*, published in Aligarh.

### E. Persons Interviewed

During the decade preceding World War II, numerous Muslim publications appeared in Burma: two daily newspapers and one monthly in Urdu; one daily and one monthly in Burmese; and the *Rangoon Daily News*, a general daily in English published by an Indian Muslim who gave preferential treatment to Muslim news. The Urdu press preached the use of Urdu as the language of the Muslims in Burma, whereas the Burmese press called for differentiation between Burmese and Indian Muslims, and for the exclusive use of the Burmese language. They all ceased to appear at the time of the anti-Muslim riots of 1938, or shortly thereafter.

During the period of the Japanese occupation not a single Muslim paper was published in Burma.

After World War II, twenty-six Muslim newspapers were issued – dailies, weeklies, and monthlies – most of which lasted for from three or four months to a year or two. Of these, thirteen were in Burmese, two in Tamil, ten in Urdu, and one in half Burmese and half Urdu. The majority of these publications were published by Muslim individuals or organizations, and were discontinued because of budgetary difficulties, lack of a reading public, or lack of writers. The only Muslim publications appearing in Burma today are *Burman Muslim*, Burmese monthly of the Burma Muslim Organization; *e-Jadid*, an Urdu daily of the Jam'iyat al-'Ulamā', and *Istiqlāl*, its weekly version; *Parwaz*, an Urdu daily newspaper, independent and opposed to the Jam'iyat, and *Inquilāb*, its weekly; *Niggar*, a small, privately owned weekly; and a daily newspaper in Tamil.

### E. PERSONS INTERVIEWED

(All in Rangoon unless otherwise noted)

	<i>Subject of interview</i>
Fazle Abbas	Dawoodi Bhora community
H. K. Abdul Karim	All-Burma Tamil Muslim Association
Abdur Rahman Nadir	Burma Muslim Educational Conference
K. C. Abu-Bakr	Malabar Muslim Association
Moulvi Husain Ahmad	Rohingya associations
Ahmed Than Maung	Burma Muslim Youth League
K. B. Ahmed	Ahmadiya Community (Qadiani Movement)
C. I. Ariff	The Rander Sunni Bohras Soorti Mahomedan Association
Bashir Aung Gyaw	General information
Dr. Ba Cho	Panthays (Chinese Muslims)
U Ba Sein	Burma Muslim High School; Koran in Burmese
Col. Ba Shin	Islamic Religious Affairs Council; general information
U Ba Thaug, Deputy Secretary, Chamber of Nationalities	University Muslim Old Students' Association; No-Kyaw-Ye Association
Cassim M. Aboo	Muslim press
Rauf Chowdhri	The All-Burma Pakistan Association
M. Dawood	Panthays

*Appendices*

- Major C. M. Enriquez  
I. M. Fakruddin  
Saya M. A. Gany  
J. Gauld  
Maung Ko Gaffari
- Dawood Ahmed Ginwalla
- Habib Ullah (alias Hla Maung U)  
Hamid al-Munshi  
M. S. Hamid  
Maulana Sayed Hasan Shah
- Haji Ghazi Mohammed Hashim
- Adamjee Kadibhai  
Haji Mohamad Kamal el-Din  
Hajiz Ahmed Kasmet  
U Khin Maung Lat, former  
Minister  
Younoos H. V. Lodhia
- A. E. Madari (alias U Htwe)  
Moosa S. Madha  
U Maung Myint, Mandalay  
Maulana Noor Muhamad Mazahiri  
Meer Sulaiman  
Abdur Rahman Nadvi  
W. K. H. Dina Nath  
Haji Noor Mohammed  
Dr. A. A. Nulla Mohammed
- Haji M. A. Raschid, former  
Minister  
R. A. Shooshtry  
Daw Soe Shwe  
U Shwe Tha Aung  
C. M. Soorty (alias U Mg Mg)  
U Than Tin  
U Tin Ngwe  
U Tin Win  
U Zwa Win  
U Yone Chan  
Mohammed Yusuf
- Panthays correspondence  
Zinat Islam Boys' Home  
Burma Muslim Youth League  
Mujahids  
Rohingya associations, Muslim Burma pub-  
lications; general information  
The Muslim Students' Society in Maymyo and  
Rangoon; Islamic School, Maymyo; general  
information  
Muslims in Arakan  
General information  
Cholia community  
All-Burma Moulvi Association and "Jam'iy-  
yat al-'Ulamā' al-haqq"  
Islamic Religious Affairs Council, Qur'ān  
Translation Society; "Jam'iyyat al-'Ulamā'"  
Dawoodi Bhora Community  
Panthays  
Aligarh Ahmadiya Society  
General information
- Rangoon Meiman Jamaat; Muslim Chamber  
of Commerce; Propeht's Birthday Cele-  
bration Committee  
BMS; GCBMA  
Muslim Central Trust Fund; BMO  
Burma Muslim Youth League  
Muslim press  
General information  
Muslim Education Conferences  
Indian Independence League, Burma  
Panthays  
Muslim Free Dispensary and Medical Relief  
Society  
General information
- Shi'a Community (Iran Club)  
Zinat Islam Girls' High School  
Arakanese Muslim Organization  
GCBMA  
Burma Muslim Youth League  
General information  
University Students' Rohingya Association  
University Students' Rohingya Association  
Panthays  
The Bengali Sunni Mohammedan Mosque

F. BURMA NEWSPAPERS CONSULTED

English	Burmese
<i>Burman</i>	<i>Hanthawaddy</i>
<i>Burma Star</i>	<i>Htoon Daily</i>
<i>Guardian (Daily)</i>	<i>Ludu</i>
<i>Nation</i>	<i>New Light of Burma</i>
<i>New Times of Burma</i>	<i>New Republic</i>
<i>Rangoon Gazette</i>	<i>Rangoon Daily</i>
<i>The Commentator</i>	<i>Tribune</i>
<i>Voice of Burma</i>	<i>Vanguard</i>
<i>Union Express</i>	<i>Yuwaddi (Daily)</i>

*Appendices*

Table 1

The Muslims of Burma by Countries of Origin – 1921<sup>1</sup>

Origin	Male	Female	Percentage of total number of Muslims in Burma
Burmese Muslims	57869	59388	23.4
Burmese	2683	5913	1.7
Chinese	1076	441	0.3
Indians:			
Born in Burma	103461	99429	40.6
Born elsewhere	146139	17242	32.6
Others	3299	3652	1.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>314527</b>	<b>186065</b>	<b>100.0</b>

<sup>1</sup> Grantham, *op. cit.*, p. 110.

Table 2

The Muslims of Burma by Countries of Origin – 1931<sup>1</sup>

Origin	Their numbers, 1931			Percentage of total numbers of Muslims in Burma	
	Male	Female	Total	1921	1931
Indian-Muslims born in Burma	116240	107521	223761	39.5	38.3
Indian-Muslims born outside of Burma	155274	17559	172833	32.6	29.6
Burman-Indians (i. e., Burman-Muslims)	87092	89022	176114	24.9	30.1
Chinese	945	529	1474	0.3	0.3
Burmese	392	2163	2555	1.7	0.4
Malays	3282	3040	6322	0.9	1.1
Others	559	1181	1780	—	0.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>363824</b>	<b>221015</b>	<b>584839</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

<sup>1</sup> Bennison, *op. cit.*, p. 213.

*Appendices*

Table 3

Percentage of Muslims in the Population of Burma – Summary table<sup>1</sup>

	1872	1881	1891	1901	1911	1921	1931
Total population		3 736 771	7 722 053	10 490 624	12 115 217	13 212 920	14 667 146
Number of Muslims	99 846	168 880	253 640	339 446	420 777	500 592	584 839
Percentage of total population		4.52	3.33	3.28	3.47	3.8	3.99

<sup>1</sup> Bennison, part II, Tables, p. 6.

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