

THE ROHINGYAS



DR. ABDUL KARIM



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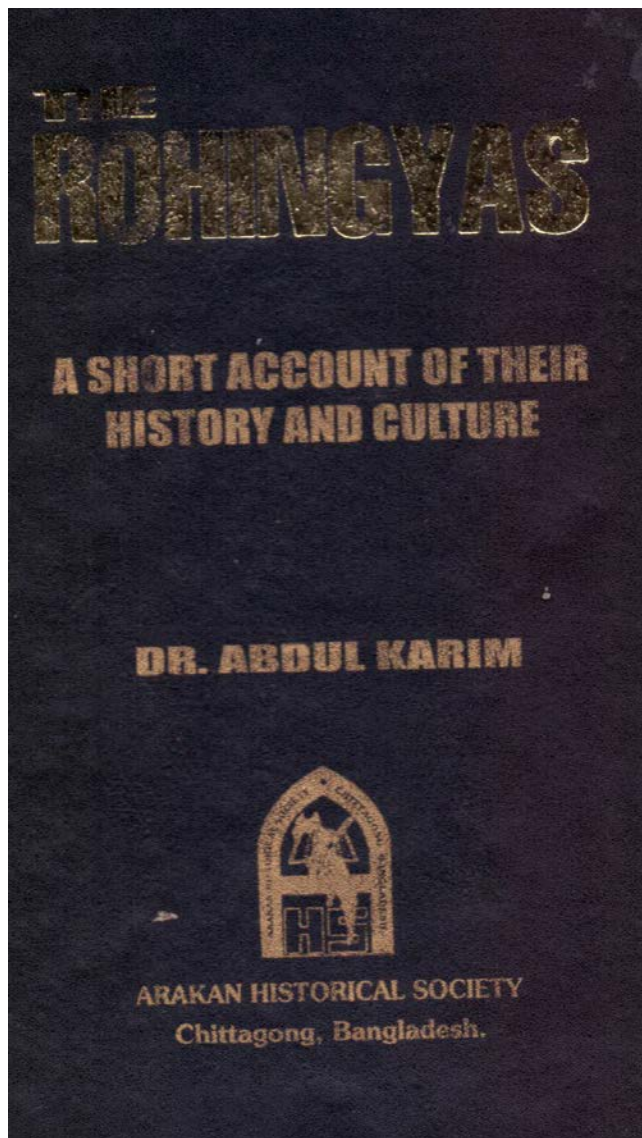
**A SHORT ACCOUNT OF THEIR
HISTORY AND CULTURE**

DR. ABDUL KARIM



**ARAKAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY
Chittagong, Bangladesh**

Prof. Dr. Abdul Karim's The Rohingyas : History and Culture



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Coins of Mrauk-U period.

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DEDICATED TO
THE ROHINGYA PEOPLE OF ARAKAN

PUBLISHER'S NOTES



The Rohingya Muslims of Arakan played a glorious role in the establishment and consolidation of the great Arakanese Empire known as Maruk-U Empire.

Unfortunately for us this part of history has been subjected to utter negligence. As a result, the glorious chapter of the history of the Rohingya Muslims of Arakan has uptill now remains unwritten.

The author of the following pages, Dr. Abdul Karim, is a great scholar and reputed historian of this Sub-Continent in his own right. The present work “ **THE ROHINGYAS : A SHORT ACCOUNT OF THEIR HISTORY AND CULTURE** ” is the result of his strenuous research work dedicated to the cause of unearthing that glorious chapter of Rohingya national history. In this work of historic importance, he not only gave a complete account of the coming or growth of Muslims in Arakan along with its socio-political and cultural background but also the impact that it created on the subsequent

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history of the Rohingya nation. Since this is the first book written in English by a reknown historian of the Sub-Continent, Arakan Historical Society, Bangladesh considers it an honour to publish this book and present it to the readers and researchers of Rohingya and Arakan, both at home and abroad.

We are thankful to Allah Almity for enabling us to bring out this wonderful work of national importance on behalf of the Arakan Historical Society, Chittagong, Bangladesh.

Mohamed Ashraf Alam

Secretary

Research and Publication Department

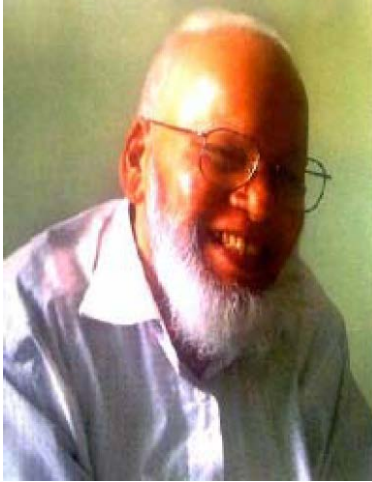
ARAKAN HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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Preface



The Rohingya problem has of late become a matter of great concern to the government and the people of Bangladesh. Several Lakh of uprooted Rohingyas, men, women and children, came out of their homeland Arakan and took shelter in Bangladesh. This happened not once but twice, in 1978-79 and 1991-92; the problem is not yet over; the reverse movement, i.e. the

repatriation of the Rohingyas had started already, but is not yet complete. Such a big number of refugees have given rise to many problems in Bangladesh-problem of food, shelter, sanitation and law and order. This is a man-made problem, created by the government of Burma (now called Myanmar); their deliberate policy to denationalise the Rohingyas and their oppression over and suppression of the Rohingyas, compelled the latter to leave the country and take shelter across the river Naf in Bangladesh. The government of Bangladesh are not in a position to bear this great responsibility of given food and shelter to such a big number of refugees. The international community, the United

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Nations High Commissioners for Refugees (UNHCR) have come to the aid of the refugees and Bangladesh government and to force the government of Myanmar to take back their people.

Who are the Rohingyas and why is this problem? There are about 18 lakh Rohingya Muslims in Arakan, a little less than half of the total population. By the new Citizenship Act of the ruling military junta in Myanmar, the Rohingya Muslims are denied of their rights, right to own property, and right of franchise. Even their basic human rights, i.e. right to live with dignity and honour has been taken away. The Rohingyas have been facing inhuman torture, in so much as they had to leave their hearth and home leaving all their properties. But how could such a huge number of people suddenly enter into Arakan, so that the government of Burma (Myanmar) could claim that they are not nationals of Burma? In the following pages we have sought to examine these and such other questions, in our study, we have found that the Rohingyas have got a history, they are descendants of those who have been settling there in Arakan from a thousand years before. The Rohingyas have got a language, a culture and a heritage, and above all the 18 lakh Rohingyas from a homogeneous group. This is eyesore to the ruling junta of Myanmar and this is the reason why they have been trying to expel the Rohingyas, men, women and children. Ours is just a preliminary study; it is felt that more intensive investigations have to be undertaken to get a total picture of the whole issue.

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The first Muslim settlers in Arakan were the Arabs; they were the shipwrecked people coming to the east for purpose of trade. So after the introductory chapter, we have discussed the different phases of the entry of the Muslims into Arakan. In our study we have seen that initially the Muslims did not enter into Arakan in their own interest, rather they were invited by the rulers of Arakan. In fact one of the outset king of Arakan Naramikhla (Min Sawmun) was restored to his throne by the Muslim arms of Bengal. He and his successors invited the Muslims to exploit their economic resources because their own people could not do it or did not know to do it. The economic development of Arakan and also of Myanmar has come to its present position due to the toil and labour of the foreigners, Kala as the call them. The key to development of Arakan is due to the Rohingyas, who are known being expelled by the Myanmar ruling junta. Even when Arakan was occupied by the king Bodawpaya of Burma, one third of the total population of Arakan were Muslims.

If I have been able to explain the Rohingya problem in its true perspective, and if the readers get a correct picture, I shall feel myself amply rewarded. While discussing the Rohingya culture and about Muslim ministers and Muslim poets flourishing in Arakan, I have quoted Medieval Bengali poems profusely. It may be mentioned that rendering the Bengali poems into English is quite a tough job, particularly translating the medieval Bengali poem. So at places I have made a free translation. But I hope, the real purport of the poets have not been distorted. Mr. Shamim Zubair, Professor of Islamic History and Culture, Ranguniya Degree College, and Mr. Ashraf Alam, former General Secretary, Arakan Historical Society, Chittagong encouraged me to write this essay. I am grateful to them.

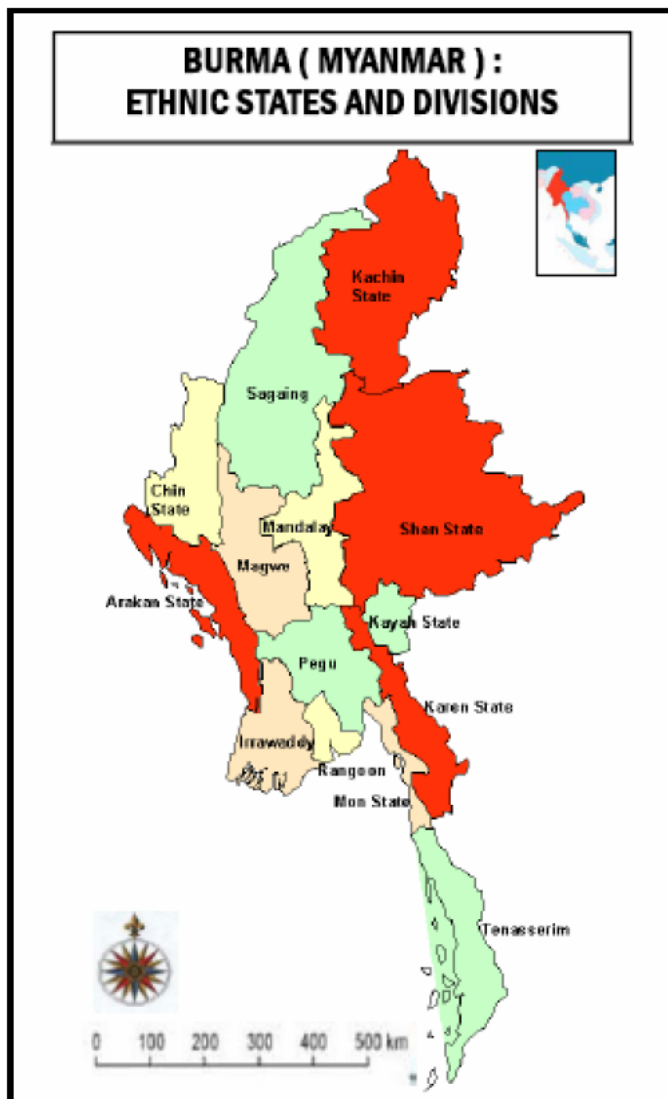
**Abdul Karim
Chittagong
05-07-1997**

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Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

Arakan is now a part of the Union of Burma (renamed Myanmar) but in the past she was independent. In ancient times, Arakan was divided into two kingdoms, south Arakan or Sandoway and north Arakan or Arakan proper. The two parts were united into one in the last part of the 13th century and this position of Arakan lasted till 1785 A. D. when the kingdom was merged with Burma (Myanmar).

Geographical Features

Arakan is bounded in the north by India, in the south and west by the sea (Bay of Bengal) and in the east by the Yoma Mountains. In the north and west Arakan had a common boundary with Bengal in the river Naf which is still the borderline between Bangladesh and Burma. The old kingdom of Arakan was stretched from north to south along the coastline, divided by the high, stiff and inaccessible Yoma Mountains from Burma. Though Arakan is now a part of Burma, land communication between Arakan and the rest of Burma is almost sealed except for the army and the armed forces; the two parts are however linked by water communication. Being situated on the sea, Arakan had harbours providing anchorage to maritime ships; the country is intersected by many rivers and streams of which three are important, Kaladan, Lemru and Mayu.

The Arakanese kings established alternately capitals in eight different towns, transferring from one to the other. The

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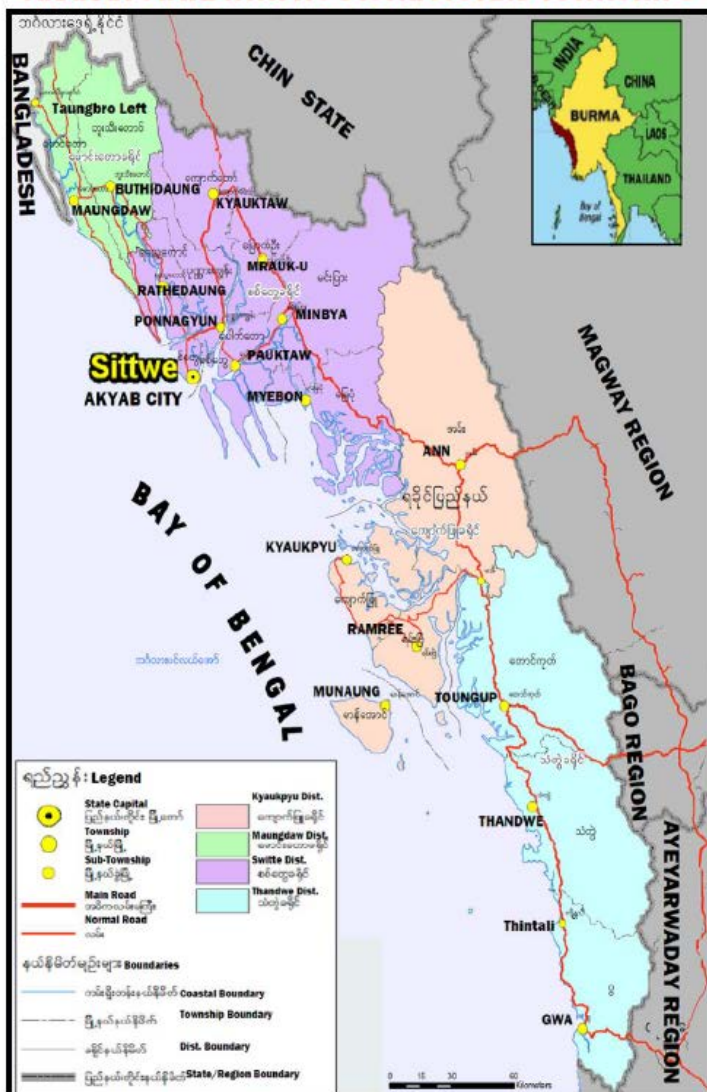
places were Thabeiktaung, Dinnyawadi and Vesali down to the eleventh century, Pyinsa (Pyinsa-Sambawut) till 1118, Parin 1118-1167, Krit 1167-1180, Launggyet 1237-1433, and Mrohaung (Mrauk-U) 1433-1785. All these capitals were situated in the Akyab district on or near the river Lemru.

The Area of Arakan is 20,000 sq. miles. But Arakan Hill-Tracts District (5,235 square miles) and southern most part of Arakan were partitioned from Arakan. So, it has now been reduced to 14,200 square miles. In the absence of census it is not possible to give the exact population figure, but the estimated population is 40 lakh excluding about 1.5 million of those Rohingya Muslims who had been expelled from Arakan since 1942. At present inside Arakan, the Buddhists and Muslims stand at almost in equal proportion, i.e. 20 lakh are Buddhists, 18 lakh are Muslims and the rest 2 lakh are Animists, Hindus and Christians.

Coming of the Foreigners

The wall of the Yoma hills rendered Arakan immune from attack from the east and kept her more or less safe from Burmese occupation. Both Burma and Arakan being maritime countries naval attacks from one to the other took place occasionally. The Shans overran part of Arakan, particularly the Akyab zone in the 10th century. Occasional raids from Bengal are also known; thus in the 13th - 14th centuries, in the reign of Minhti (1273 ?-1374) a naval attack from Bengal is recorded; Chittagong experienced attacks from Arakan more than once and in the ancient and medieval periods, Chittagong was often in the hands of the Arakanese kings.

ARAKAN STATE WITH ITS DISTRICTS AND TOWNSHIPS



NORTHERN ARAKAN



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Of the religious groups of people, coming to Arakan from outside, Buddhism reached Arakan earlier than all and Buddhists had entered there earlier than they reached the interior of Burma. The Mahamuni image of Buddha, usually placed in the shrine of Dinnyawadi, an old capital and 22 miles north of Mrohaung may be dated from the early centuries of the Christian era, the Arakanese assign it to Sandathuriya (146-98 A.D).¹ Compared to the Buddhist, the Hindus came to Arakan much latter, which is proved by their fewer number. Whatever that may be, after the 10th century Arakan was professedly a Buddhist country, and during about the same time Muslims traders from Arabia entered into her seaport in course of their trading voyages to the east. Still later came the Europeans with their large Ocean-going ships, and the Arabs and the Europeans established trade links between Arakan and the Eastern and Western countries.

The name of the Country

Arakan is a modern name, in ancient times the country was known as Rakhaing. A. P. Phayre says that Rakhaing was the name of a tribe in old Arakan and he could actually trace the existence of the Rakhaing tribe at Pegu.² Muslim writers called it Rakhang or Arkhang, in a few coins of Sultan Shams-ud-din Ghazi bearing the date 962 A. H. (1555 A. D.), the name of the mint is read as Arakan. If the reading proves correct, it may be assumed that even in the 16th century, Arakan was known by this name.³ The Rohingyas of Arakan believe that Arakan is derived from the Arabic word all-Rekan or al-Rukn,⁴ the Turkish Admiral Sidi Al-Reis called the place Rakanj⁵ and in the Bangali Punthi literature both Roshang and Rokam are used, but the used of Roshang is more popular. In the 16th century when the Europeans came, they wrote the name of the place

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Arakan and their maps also the country is known as Arakan. So by evolution the old name Rakhaing was turned into Rakhang or Arkhang of Muslim writers and later it becomes Arakan. It is stated above that the last capital of the kingdom of Arakan was at Mrohaung (Mrauk-U). The story of the transfer of the capital to this place will be told at a later stage in this essay. Mrohaung was called by the Bengali poets Roshang which in the month of the local people of both Arakan and Chittagong became Rohang, 'sha' being turned into 'ha' and thus the people came to be known as Rohangi or Rohingya.

The Rohingyas are the Muslim inhabitants of Arakan, and now they form a little less than half of the total population. The story of how the Muslims came to Arakan, how their number gradually increased and how did they fuse themselves into the political, social and cultural life of the country of Arakan, is the subject matter of this essay. They came to Arakan in several phases, some came as traders from as far places as Arabia and Persia, others came as conquerors and in the train of the invading army, some came as victims of pirates and still others came in peaceful pursuits. In the 17th century Arakan reached its pinnacle of glory through the contribution of Muslim poets, Muslim learned men, saints and administrators.

ENDNOTES

1. G. E. Harvey: **History of Burma**, London, 1925, (hereafter referred to as Harvey), p.313.
2. **Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal**, (hereafter referred to as JASB), Vol. XIII, 1944, part 1, p. 24.
3. This is a tricky problem and much has been written both for and against the reading by different scholars. We quote below the latest opinion given by Pratip Kumar Mitra and Sutapa Sinha "**Chandir Jhar Hoard of Silver Coins**" in **Pratna Samiksha**, Vols. 2&3, 1993-94,

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(Journal of the Directorate of Archaeology and Museums Government of West Bengal, Calcutta, 1995, p. 285). :

The coins of the Afghan rulers of Bengal are fairly well represented in the hoard. Only one coin (Sl. No. 199) of Shams al-din Muhammad Shah Ghazi, the first Sultan, is available which bears a date of 962 A. H. and mint name of Arakan. The coin is similar to those published by Marsden, Lane Poole and Wright. But a controversy had been raised regarding the reading of the mint name Arakan in these coins. G. S. Farid has very aptly summarised such controversy in the following words:

“According to Blochmann the correct reading on Marsden's coins is Sunargaon and not Arkat.

According to A.B.M. Habibullah the reading of the mint name Arakan is not acceptable. He writes Arakan is not only a foreign name, but the form was not known to the Muslims at that time. Muslim historians always use the name Rakhang. The reading is also not clear, it looks like Rikab.

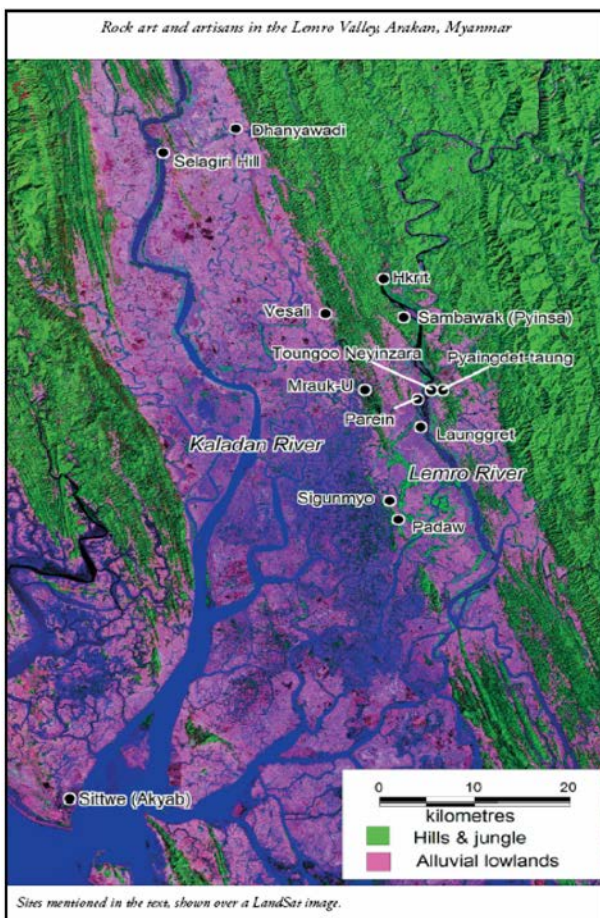
N. B. Sanyal justified the reading of the mint name Arakan. A. Karim holds a view similar to that expressed by Habibullah as regards the mint name, and concludes that Marsden has wrongly read (Te) instead of (Nun) and made Arakat of Arakan. By no stretch of imagination it could be read as Sunargaon, as suggested by Blochmann. It appears that Habibullah and Karim have consulted I.M.C. Plate, Alif, of 'Arakan' is partly visible which has been taken as a dot of (Be) of the word 'Zarb' which precedes the mint name, and this has created doubts in the mind of some of the scholars, although Wright and Rogers have correctly read as 'Arakan. Had they consulted the plates illustrated in Marsden's book and B.M. Catalogue, the controversy might not have arisen.”

On a close examination of the coin found from the present hoard, we fully attest the conclusion drawn by Farid and maintain that there should be no room for any doubt regarding the reading of the mint name 'Arakan'. In view of N.B. Sanyal's assertion that Bengal was not weak vis-à-vis Arakan during Shams aldin Muhammad Shah's time, it seems likely that this Sultan conquered Arakan and issued coins from the Magh capital city. The coins of Shams al-din Muhammad Shah is (Sic) extremely rare and so far only four pieces are known to exist. The present coin is a welcome addition to this scare list.”

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4. **"The Call of Rohingya"** paper published by the Rohingya Patriotic Front, Arakan, Vol.1, No.1, 1981, quoted in Abdul Hoque Chowdhury: **Praehin Arakan Rohingya Hindu O Barua Bauddha Adhibhasi** (Bengali), (Hereafter referred to as A.H. Chowdhury 1), Bangla Academy, 1994. P, 3.
5. **Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bangladesh.** Vol. XVI, No. 3, P. 236.

THE HISTORICAL ANCIENT CITIES OF ARAKAN



**Chapter II
COMING OF THE MUSLIMS TO ARAKAN**

Coming of the Arab Muslims

The Muslim infiltration into Arakan has started earlier in history. The oft-quoted statements of the Arab geographers and traders are important sources to reconstruct the history of the coming of the Muslims. Referring to early geographers Harvey writes as follows:¹

“Ptolemy, the Greek geographer, writing in A.D. 140 even mentions a Tugma Metropolis, in a spot curiously like Upper Burma, as if it were Tagaung. But it is to Prome that the Chinese pilgrims chiefly refer when, in their travels, they speak from hearsay of Burma; and to the Arabs, whose shipping predominated in the eastern seas from the eighth to the sixteenth century, Burma was Arakan and Lower Burma: -

“They say that the king of Rahma (Lower Burma) has fifty thousand elephants. His country produces cloth made of velvety cotton and aloe wood of the sort called Kindi. (Ibn Khordadbeh years 844-8, Persian traveller from Basra, in Ferrand.)

“The king of Rahma enjoys no great repute ... His troops are more numerous than those of Ballahra, Gudjra and Tekin. They say that when he marches to battle he is accompanied by about fifty thousand elephants. He campaigns only in winter indeed his elephants cannot stand thirst and so they can go forth only in winter. They say that in his army the

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washermen amount to between ten to fifteen thousand. In his states are found cloths not found elsewhere; a dress made of such cloth is so fine and light that it can pass through a signet ring. It is of cotton. We have seen a sample. For barter the people use cowries, which form their currency. But gold, silver, aloes are also found and a stuff called camtara (yak hair) whereof fly-flaps are found. The same country produces ... the rhinoceros, an animal which has on his forehead a single horn, and in this horn is a human figure.... We have eaten the flesh. He is found in other parts of Ind. but here the horn is more beautiful, often containing the image of a man, peacock, fish or anything else. The Chinese make girdles of this horn and pay high price among themselves, upto three or four thousand *dinar* and even more according to the figure's beauty. These horns are bought with cowries. (Sulayman, Year 851

“In Ind. lies a realm called Rahma, bordering on the sea. Its ruler is a woman. It is revenged by the plague, and any man who comes from elsewhere in Ind. and enters the country, dies there. Yet many come by reason of the great profits to be made. (Ibn al-Fakih, Persian Traveller, Year 900-Ibid.)”

There are some of the extracts from the writings of old Arab and Persian writers, all of whom mentions a place or kingdom which they called Rahma and which Harvey identifies with lower Burma. Other Arab geographers, al-Masudi, al-Idrisi also refer to the kingdom of Rahma and historians of early Bengal have much speculated about the identify Rahma with the kingdom of Dharmapala of the Pala dynasty in Bengal or in other words they identify Rahma with Bengal.²

In the golden age of the trading activities of the Arabs, their merchant-vessels used to ply all over the sea- coast from

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the Red Sea to the Chinese coast, and this golden age of the Arabs continued at least up to the 17th century. With the coming of the Europeans with their superior vessels and huge capital, the Arabs began to lose hold on their eastern trade. It develop upon the geographers and scholars to do researches on all matters connected with trade and commerce, the location and nature of the sea-ports, availability of commodities, their places of origin, price and facts of other nature. In later time, i.e. during the hey-day of European trade with East Indies, European scholars and traders also did the same kind of research for the benefit of their traders. These Arab Geographers refer to various trade centres on the cost of the Indian Ocean and the Bay of Bengal, although unfortunately most of these places can not be identified at present with the knowledge at our disposal. The modern scholars have tried to identify two places- Samandar and Ruhmi. The first is identified with Chittagong³ and the second is identified with both Bengal and lower Burma as we have seen above. Whether or not, the kingdom of Rahma is to be identified with Bengal or Lower Burma, these accounts of the Arab geographers leave no doubt that the Arabs were acquainted with and the Arab traders frequented the ports of Bengal, Arakan, Burma and other coastal kingdoms. If the Arabs visited the Chittagong port, they were also acquainted with Arakan and came into contact with the Arakanese kings. So the identification of Rahma is immaterial for the purpose of our present study, there is no doubt that the Arabs had contact with Arakan during the 8th to 10th centuries of the Christian era. A part from the general statements of the Arab geographers, there is positive local evidence of the early Arab contact with Arakan. In the Arakanese traditional history, it is stated that in the reign of Mahatoing Tsandaya (788-810 A.D)

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several Arab ships wrecked off the coast of Rambi Island (Ramree), the Muslim sailors somehow escaped and swam into the shore. In the Arakanese history they are called kula-s or foreigners. When they were taken and produced before the king, the latter allotted a piece of land for them and they were allowed to settle there.⁴

This is the first evidence of the Muslim settlement in Arakan. R.B. Smart writes in the British Burma Gazetteer as follows:⁵ “The local histories relate that in the ninth century several ships were wrecked on Ramree Island and the Mussalman crews sent to Arakan and placed in villages there. They differ but little from the Arakanese except in their religion and in the social customs which their religion directs, in the writing they use Burmese, but amongst themselves employ colloquially the language of their ancestors.”

This is a very important piece of evidence regarding the origin of the Rohingyas. These shipwrecked Arab Muslims became the nucleus of the Muslim population of Arakan; later other Muslims from Arabia, Persia and other countries entered into Arakan. The important point to be noticed about these shipwrecked Muslims is that they have stuck to their religion. i.e. Islam and Islamic social customs. Though they used Burmese language and also adopted other local customs, they have retained the language of their ancestors (probably with mixture of local words) in dealing among themselves. Another point to be noted is that the Arab shipwrecked Muslims have retained their religion, language and social customs for more than a thousand years. Later on, of course other Arabs also come in the trading and other pursuits and some of them have stayed on in Arakan and in this way people of Arab blood

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increased as time passed by. So the Rohingyas have been staying in Arakan for more than a thousand years.

Second phase of the coming of the Muslims

The fifteenth century is a great turning point in the history of Arakan; during this time a large contingent of Muslim entered into Arakan from Bengal and they went there by invitation of the ruling prince. The cause was political. In the beginning of the 15th century, the Arakanese king Min-Saw-Mun attacked some area of Burma, but was defeated. The Burmese king retaliated by attacking and taking possession of Launggyet, the capital and the king was expelled from his kingdom. The story is given below in the words of A.P Phayre:

“The war between the Burman monarch, Meng-tshewl (Minkong) and the Arakanese king Min Saw Mun⁶ resulted in the latter's defeat and expulsion from his kingdom in the local era 768 (=1406 A.D). Min Saw Mum fled to Bengal, the governor of Chittagong took from him his queen, Tsan-mwe-sheng, on which the fugitive king went to Thura-tan where the king received him with distinction, For several years the Talaings (a hilly tribe who were fighting for the Arakanese) and the Burmans struggled for the possession of Arakan, and the latter were finally expelled in the year 788 (i.e. 1426 A.D) by the efforts of the Arakanese and Talaings.

“During this period, the dethroned king was residing at the king of Thu-ra-tan, who being engaged in war could not afford him any assistance, while there the Delhi king came to attack Thu-ra-tan, with a huge army consisting of elephants, horses, chariots and foot soldiers, also dogs are large as bullocks, trained to war. By the advise of Min-Saw-Mun, the dogs were disabled by means of iron-hooks baited with raw

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flesh, seizing which they were caught by the mouth and easily overpowered. The elephants and horses fell into pits dug for them, and covered over with straw and earth, at the bottom of which were iron spikes; thus the Thu-ra-tan king obtained a complete victory. The Arakanese exiled king taught the king's subjects the art of entrapping a herd of wild elephants by driving them into a space enclosed by a stockade and ditch; he also instructed them in the art of training elephants.

“Out of gratitude for these services, the king determined to assist the exiled prince in the recovery of his kingdom. He appointed a general called in the Arakanese U-lu-Kheng (Wali Khan) to command the army of restoration. This person however betrayed his trust, and joining with a Rakhine Chief, named Tse-u-Ka, they established a government and imprisoned Min-Saw-Mun. He escaped and fled to Bengal.

“The king of Thu-ra-tan now appointed two nobles; named Dan-ba-tsu and Ban-ba-tsu, to carry out his intentions together with a large army under the command of Tshat-ya-Khat (Sandi Khan). They arrived with orders to place Min-Saw-Mun on the throne and bring back the head skin of U-lu-Kheng. The expedition was successful. U-lu-Kheng suffered the fate his crime deserved and the historian records in glowing terms the joy of the people, from the inhabitants of the kingly city to those of the smallest village in the empire that the descendant of their ancient line of kings was restored to them.

“The restored king, however, was forced to submit to the degradation of being tributary to the king of Thu-ra-tan, from his time the coins of the Arakan kings bore on the reverse, their names and titles in Persian Character.⁷

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This event had far reaching effects on the history of Arakan and spread of Muslim influence there. The Arakanese king Min-Saw-Mun passed his exiled life in Bengal for a quarter of a century and he must have been accompanied by his family and retinue. During this twenty-five years the Arakanese people came in contact with the local people and became conversant with local language and local customs and culture. In the above quotation Phayre states that the Arakanese king taught the Bengali army as to how to face foreign invasion and deal with invading elephants, horses and dogs. Similarly, the Arakanese who accompanied the king must have also learnt many things from Bengali Muslim hosts.

When the Arakanese king Min-Saw-Mun took shelter in Bengal in 1406 AD. Sultan Ghiasud-din Azam Shah was on the throne, but he was restored by Sultan Jalal-ud-din Muhammad Shah in 1430 AD. During the interval, Bengal witnessed several palace intrigues, several kings were killed by kingmakers and several occupied the throne through their blessings. Thus the family of Ghias-ud-din Azam Shah was exterminated and a line of kings under their slave Shihab-ud-din Bayazid Shah occupied the throne, the latter were also removed, and Hindu king Raja Ganesh occupied the throne. A prince of his family Jadu became a Muslim and occupied the throne under the title of Jalal-ud-din Muhammad Shah. This man restored the Arakanese king to his throne. So the king Min-Saw-Mun and his family and retinue experienced all these events and happenings in the Bengal Court. The changes did not take place easily as we have stated in a few sentences. There were movements and counter movements, fightings, killings, political groupings and regroupings; at one stage the guardian saint of Pandua, Shaikh Nur Qutb Alam interfered and invited Sultan Ibrahim Sharqi of Jaunpur to intervene and save the

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Muslim kingdom. The Sharqi Sultan came and invaded with a large army, but had to return when by tricks, Raja Ganesh got his son Jadu converted to Islam and feigned to relinquish the kingship to his converted son. There was the scene of re-conversion of Jadu to Hinduism by passing him through a cow made of gold. The Arakanese king returned to his kingdom with all these experiences. Arakan had no proper coinage, they became now acquainted with minted coins; Arakan used Burmese script, literature was not developed, but in Bengal they found Bengali, Arabic and Persian languages and literature. So the Arakanese returned to their country with much commitment to a civilised life and a better living.

The next important point to be noted is the arrival of large Muslim population in Arakan. In those days Arakan's fighting force was predominantly navy and elephant corps, but Bengal was weak in both, Bengal was strong in army, or land force. And, in fact, not one but two expeditions were sent to Arakan by the Bengal king. The first expedition was sent under Wali Khan who proved a traitor, but the second expedition succeeded in seating Min-Saw-Mun to his throne. In both the expeditions, many people belonging to the auxiliary forces, like carriers, tent bearers, cooks and butlers, washer-men etc. accompanied the actual fighting force, or in other words combatant and non-combatant people taken together, several thousand Muslims entered into Arakan in 1430 AD. while reinstating the ousted king Min-Saw-Mun. It is almost certain that the first expeditionary force did not return to Bengal because they rebelled and they knew what could be their fate if they returned to Bengal. So it is very probable that they remained in Arakan hiding, and settled in villages and out of the way places. It is also doubtful if all soldiers of the second expeditionary force returned home, because their services were

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needed by the reinstated king. So these soldiers also helped in swelling the Muslim population as found in later times.

In the previous pages it has been stated that the king of one country was reinstated in his kingdom by that of another, but the enterprise was not so easy. It involved not two but three kingdoms, Bengal, Arakan and Burma. So it may reasonably be assumed that much diplomatic exercises preceded the actual restoration of the Arakanese king, and actually it took long twenty-five years to accomplish the task. The Bengali king did not certainly undertake such hazardous and expensive enterprise for no ultimate gain for himself. It is not possible to say for want of positive events, what was the agreement arrived at between the two parties, thought it may be reasonably surmised that the king of Arakan bound himself to be loyal to his benefactor, the king of Bengal. Events and facts prove that the Arakanese king not only bound himself to bear the cost of the expedition but also to pay tribute to the king of Bengal.

M. A Tahir Ba Tha in his **Short History of Rohingyas and Kamans of Burma** (translated by A.F.K Jilani, edited by Mohd. Ashraf Alam) says, "Narameikhla agreed to the following conditions:

1. To return the twelve towns of Bengal.
2. The kings of Arakan must use Muslim titles.
3. The court emblem must be inscribed with *Kalima Tayuba* in Persian.
4. The coins, medallions must be inscribed with *Kalima Tayuba* in Persian and to mint them in Bengal.
5. To use the Persian language as court language of Arakan.
6. To pay taxes and presents annually.

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The above points may not be accepted in all its details, but there is no doubt that the king of Arakan had entered into an agreement with the king of Bengal before he was restored. The terms of agreement must have been favourable to the Bengal king.

When the king Min Saw-Mun reached the capital, he was widely acclaimed by his people. The first thing he did was to transfer the capital from Launggyet to Mrohaung, which in the hands of Bengali poets and people became Roshang (Rohang). Min Saw-Mun probably received the idea of transferring the capital from his benefactor, the Bengal Sultan Jalal Uddin Muhammad Shah. The Bengal Sultan transferred the capital from Pandua to Guar⁸ because the former place saw many killings, including the killing of several kings as a result of the palace intrigues. The boy king Jalal Uddin did not like to reign from that cursed city. For Min Saw-Mun also the city of Launggyet was a cursed city from where he was ousted and which city also saw the rise and fall of many kings, Harvey writes:⁹

“The turmoil of foreign inroads showed that Launggyet was ill-fated and the omen indicated Mrohaung as a lucky site, so he decided to move there; though the astrologers said that if he moved the capital he would die within a year, he insisted, saying that the move would benefit the people and his own death would matter little. In 1433 he founded Mrohaung and in the next year he died. A populous sea-port, built on hillocks amid the rice-plain, and intersected by canals which served as streets, Mrohaung remained the capital for the next four centuries.”

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The Muslims who went to Arakan from Bengal built the Sandi Khan mosque at Mrohaung and thus the Muslims settled at the capital city in large number. In fact these were the people who followed the king to reinstate him there.

Seated on the throne, the king had to pay attention to the payment of cost of the expedition and pay the tribute as stipulated. The payment must have continued for several years. This payment, however, posed a problem, because Arakan had no regular coinage, unstamped silver pieces of various sizes were used in their transaction. But in Bengal, they used minted and stamped coins of superior dies and exquisite finishing. The Bengal coins were of standard size, weight and shape bearing inscriptions in Arabic characters giving the names and pedigree of kings, dates of issue and the name of mint. So if the Arakanese had to pay and they did so, in the coins of the same fashion. For this reason, they had to provide for minting coins in the Bengal fashion, i.e. with standard weight, size and shape. It is in this connection that the Arakanese king had to invite experts, mint masters, die staff, and artisans for minting the coins. The Arakanese coins that they produced reveal much more information than only the minting of coins. Their coins bore the name of the king and date, but the most important point to be noted is that though the kings were all Buddhists, they took a Muslim name along with their Buddhist name, the Muslim names were written in Arabic characters, sometimes both in Arabic and Bengali characters. This suggests that Arabic and Bengali calligraphers were also appointed along with mint experts.

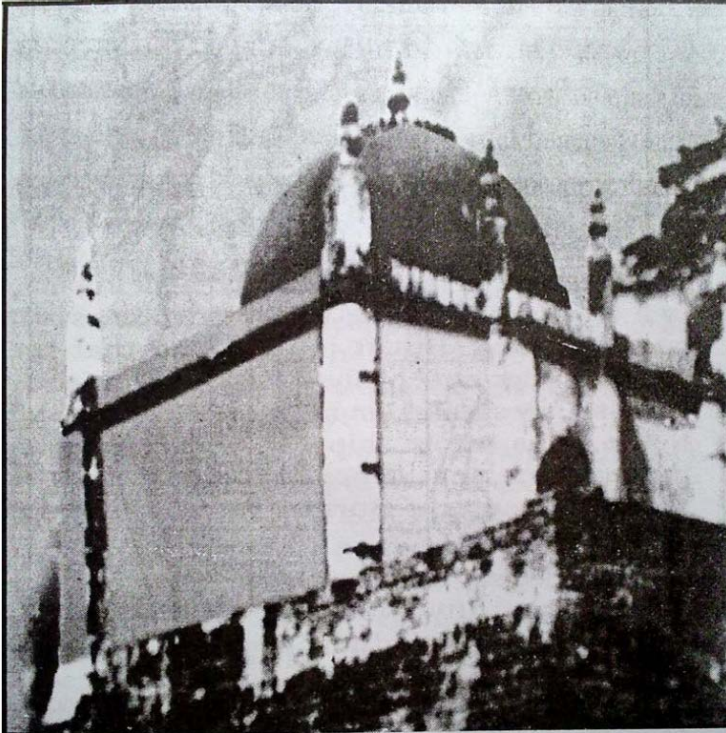
Min Saw-Mun bound himself to pay the tribute to Bengal, but he died in 1434 A.D. Sultan Jalal Uddin Muhammad Shah of Bengal had also died in the meantime, he

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died in 1432 A.D. So it is doubtful whether the pact or agreement reached between the two monarchs remained valid. As there is no written record, nothing definite can be said, but facts show that the practice of adopting a Muslim name by the Arakanese kings continued for more than two hundred years. The Arakanese kings who are known to have taken Muslim names are as follows:

THE ARAKANESE KINGS WITH MUSLIM NAME

SL No.	Name of the kings	Regning Period	Muslim Names
1.	Min Saw Mum or Naramaikhla	1430-1434	Sulaiman Shah or Min Saw Mum
2.	Naranu or Min Khari	1434-1459	Ali Shah or Ali Khan
3.	Basawpyu	1459-1482	Kalima Shah
4.	Min Dawlya	1482-1492	Mu-Khu-Shah
5.	Basawnyo	1492-1494	Muhammad Shah
6.	Yanaung	1494	Nuri Shah
7.	Salingathu	1494-1501	Shiek Abdullah Shah
8.	Minyaza	1501-1513	Ilyas Shah-I
9.	Kasabadi	1513-1515	Ilyas Shah-II
10.	Mim Saw O	1515	Jallal Shahs
11.	Thatasa	1515-1521	Ali Shah
12.	MinKhaung Raza	1521-1531	El-Shah Azad
13.	Min Bin	1531-1553	Zabuk Shah
14.	Min Dikha	1553-1555	Daud Khan
15.	Min Palaung	1571-1593	Sikandar Shah
16.	Minyazagyi	1593-1612	Salim Shah-I
17.	Min Khamaung	1612-1622	Husain Shah
18.	Thiri Thudamma	1622-1638	Salim Shah-II



The one-dome curious Badar Maqaam Mosque situated on the rocky coast in the Southern part of Akyab was said to be founded by the early Arabs in the later part of the 7th century A.D.

Col. A.P. Phayre who first discovered some of those coins and studied them says:¹⁰

“The restored king (Meng Yoan Mwyn- Min Saw-Mun), however was forced to submit to the degradation of being tributary to the king of Thuratan (Bengal) and from this time the coins of the Arakan kings bore on the reverse their names and titles in the Persian character. This custom was probably first made obligatory upon them as vassals, but they afterwards

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continued it when they had recovered their independence and ruled the country as far as the Brahmaputra river.”

.....
.....

“The Arakanese sovereign, no doubt wished to follow the kingly practice existing in Bengal, of coins being struck in the name of the reigning monarch. We learn from their annals about the middle of the fifteenth century of the Christian era that they conquered Bengal as far as Chittagong of which they kept possession for about a century. It was then that they first struck legendary coins. On the reverse of the earliest of these, we find the date and the kings names written in the Burmese character together with barbarous attempts at Muhammadan names and title, that they assumed as being successors of Mussalman kings, or as being anxious to imitate the prevailing fashion of India.”

.....
.....

“The Muhammadan Names are fanciful designations”

A. P. Phayre is in great confusion; in the first place he says that the Arakanese kings became vassals of the Bengal king, and became tributary to the latter. While he said this he was explaining the facts correctly. As a result of his restoration to his throne, the king Min Saw-Mun was obliged to pay for the cost of the expedition and pay tribute meaning that the Arakanese king accepted suzerainty of that of Bengal. In the second passage Phayre forgot what he had written earlier, and said that he made a barbarous attempt at imitation of the Bengali fashion of striking coins. In the third statement he called the Muslim names as fanciful designation. Phayre could

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not read the Arabic characters properly, so to him it was “barbarous imitation” and “fanciful designation”. Nowadays many scholars, European, Bengali and Arakanese, have deciphered the coins, and have read the Muslim names properly. There is no doubt that the names are clear Arabic words, e.g. Husain, Ilyas, Kalima, Mohammed, Nuri, Salim, Sikandar etc. Not only that, European writers like Fray Sebastien Manrique also have written the Muslim names of Arakanese kings. Manrique was himself in the Arakanese court for a pretty long time; he was present in the capital on the occasion of the coronation of the king Thiri Thudamma (Muslim name Salim Shah). So Manrique's evidence cannot be questioned. What is more important is that Manrique used the Muslim name (Salim Shah) only, he did not use the Buddhist name of the king. So there is no doubt that the Arakanese kings took the Muslim names purposely and deliberately, and not only one king but all reigning for more than two hundred years used the Muslim names and inscribed the same in the coins. So A.P. Phayre is wrong when he says that the Arakanese king made “barbarous imitation” and adopted “fanciful designations”.

The Arakanese kings used to take the title “Dhavala Gajeshwara” (Lord of the Red elephant) and they inscribed this title in their coins.¹¹ The following interesting account about white elephants is reproduced:

“White elephants are comparatively rare, and they are revered by the Buddhists, who believed that the Buddha had been a whit elephant in his last incarnation, before being born as a man. Possession of one was symbol of universal sovereignty. Determining white elephant is quite a science, and considerable literature is to be found on the subject but as a guide we can say here that the two main tests applied are that the elephant shall have five toe nails on its hand feet

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instead of four, and that if you pour water on a white elephant, he return red while a black elephant becomes even blacker.

“Written evidence of the existence of white elephant is found in several accounts of the time. In particular Ralph Fitch claims to have seen a white elephant in 1586 when he was at Pegu. It was shown to him as a “Siamese loot”, and he was some what surprised at having to pay half ducat to get in to see it. Manrique, a Portuguese Friar, who travelled to Arakan in 1630 saw the white elephant at Mrauk-U (Mrohaung or Roshang) probably the same one which Fitch and Manrique describe the luxury in which the elephant was kept, in a gilded stall lined with silks and cushions and with a retinue of servants to prepare and serve food in vessels of silver and gold, to attend to its daily bath, and other needs. Much later in Mindon's time (1853-78 A.D) we read that the Royal Elephant was even breast-fed by a succession of human mothers lined up specially for the purpose, and that the mothers actually queued up for the honour.”¹²

It is to be noted that the title “Dhavala Gajeshwara” was inscribed on their coins in Arabic script and in Arabic rendering which is “**Sahib-ul-Fil-ul-Abyaz**” and also in Bengali script. The Bengali Muslim poet like Alaol, Mardan and others also ascribed this “Dhavala Gajehwara” tittle to the Arakanese king of their time.

As stated above Min Saw-Mun made the pact with the Bengal Sultan to pay for the cost of the expedition and to pay tribute, but how long the Arakanese kings were obliged to honour the pact made by Min Saw-Mun with Sultan Jalal-ud-din is not known. Certainly all the monarchs of Arakan who ruled for more than two hundred years did not honour the pact, because there is positive evidence that some kings of Arakan did not only annul the pact unilaterally, but actually fought against the Bengal kings, or Mughal Viceroy of Bengal under

their control. Both sides fought between themselves on the possession of Chittagong in the Husain Shahi period (1493-1538) and Afghan period (1538-1576). Those kings of Arakan who fought against the Sultans of Bengal also adopted Muslim names and inscribed these names in their coins. To cite a few examples two Arakanese kings Minyazagyi (Salim Shah-I 1593-1612) and Min Khamaung (Hussain Shah 1612-1622) were contemporary of Jahangir, both invaded Bengal several times, but they also adopted Muslim names, Thiri Thudama (Salim Shah-II 1622-1638) was a contemporary of both Jahangir and Shah Jahan; he invaded Bengal in the later part of the reign of Jahangir, and actually looted the city of Dhaka, but he also adopted a Muslim name. Why then the Arakanese kings adopted Muslims names? There is no proof that any of them accepted Islam, they remained Buddhists although. Min Saw-Mun and a few of his successors were tributary, but later kings ruled and maintained their sovereignty without any let or hindrance. That is why, the question is why did they inscribe Muslim names in their coins.

Various writers have explained this question in their own way. As we have seen above, A.P. Phyre thinks that initially it was made obligatory upon the kings of Arakan to mint the coins with "Persian" inscription, but latter when they "recovered their independence", they just continued the previous practice. A Modern historian of Arakan entitled this period of the history of Arakan as "Muslim conquest of Arakan", meaning that the Bengal kings conquered Arakan in 1430 and kept it under their control for long two hundred years. He says:¹³

"Narameikhla embraced Islam and adopted the Muslim name of Solaiman Shah Eleven kings successively ruled Arakan for the hundred years from 1430 to 1530. The relation with Bengal remained extremely cordial. The

Arakanese paid tribute to Bengal and learnt history and politics. In 1531 Minbin (Zabuk Shah) ascended the throne. With him the Arakanese graduated in their Moslem studies and the empire was founded.”

It is probably a little too much to say that Min Saw-Mun accepted Islam, because there is no evidence to make such a positive statement. The writer speaks about one hundred years, 1430-1530. But he is silent about the next one hundred years 1530 to about 1638, during this second period also the Arakanese kings inscribed their Muslim names in Arabic and sometimes in Bengali characters. That they adopted Muslim names in this second period also is proved by the accounts of European writers apart from the coins themselves. Another writer says as follows:¹⁴

“রোঙ্গাং বা আরাكانের উপরোক্ত রাজাদের মুদ্রাংকনে ও মুদ্রামান নির্ণয়ে পৌড়ীয় নীতি অনুসৃত হয়েছিল। সে মুদ্রার এক পৃষ্ঠে ফারসী অক্ষরে কলেমা ও সেখানকার রাজাদের মুসলমানী নাম উৎকীর্ণ করার প্রথা প্রচলিত হয়েছিল। এই প্রথা ১৪৩০ খ্রিস্টাব্দ থেকে ১৬৪৫ খ্রিস্টাব্দ পর্যন্ত দু'শ পনের বছর কাল অবধি রোঙ্গাংগ স্বাধীন রাজাদের আমলে প্রচলিত ছিল। তাঁদের মুদ্রায় ফারসী অক্ষরে ইসলামী কলেমা ও মুসলমানী নাম উৎকীর্ণ করা এবং তাঁদের দরবারে মুসলমান মন্ত্রী নিযুক্ত মাসয় আধুনিক আরাكانের রোয়াইংগা মুসলমানদের অনেক বহুমূল ধারণা যে আরাكانের উপরোক্ত মুসলমান নামধারী মগ রাজারা ইসলাম ধর্মের অনুসারী ছিলেন। এটা তাদের অলীক ধারণা ছাড়া আর কিছু নয়। কারণ এর সমর্থনে কোন ঐতিহাসিক প্রমাণ নেই।”

English translation: “ In striking the coins and in fixing the value of the coins of the above mentioned kings of Roshang or Arakan Gaudina policy (Policy of Gaud or Bengal) was

followed. In those coins the policy of inscribing Islamic creed (Kalima) and the Muslim names of their kings in Persian character was followed. This policy was followed for 215 years for 1430 to 1645 during the reigns of independent kings of Roshang. Due to inscribing the Islamic creed (Kalima) and the Muslim name of their kings in the coins in Persian characters, and because in the court of the Arakanese kings Muslim ministers were appointed, modern Arakanese Rohingya Muslims believe for certain that those Arakanese kings adopting Muslim names accepted Islam. Such belief is baseless and there is no historical proof in support of this belief.”

This is another extreme, and the writers do not try to explain why the Arakanese kings adopted Muslim names, and why did they inscribe these names in Arabic characters. (It may be noted here in passing that the inscription on the coins is in Arabic and not Persian character). A third scholar, Sultan Ahmed Bhuiyan has tried to rationalise the point. He writes”:¹⁵

“আরাকানেশ্বর রাজাদের মুসলমানী নাম গ্রহণ বাধ্যতামূলক মোটেই ছিল না। কারণ বাধ্যতামূলক হইলে আরাকানেশ্বর রাজাগণ স্বাধীনতা অবলম্বন করিয়াও তাহাদের উক্ত নাম গ্রহণের কোন যুক্তিসম্মত কারণ থাকিতে পারে না। আমরা জানি খ্রীষ্ট মানব সমাজপ্রদায়ের আদর্শ অনুন্নতজাতির সভ্যতা, আচার ব্যবহার, নীতি নীতি, চলাফেরা, আদব-কায়দা, বেশভূষা, মতবাদ সমস্ত কিছুই নিয়ন্ত্রিত হয়। সকালে শিক্ষা-দীক্ষায়, জ্ঞান-পরিমায় ও রাজকীয় মর্যাদায় মুসলমান জাতি ছিল শীর্ষ স্থানীয়। বর্তমান কালে আমরা যেমন সর্ব বিষয়ে ও সর্বক্ষেত্রে পশ্চাত্য সভ্যতাকে অনুসরণ করিতেছি, তেমনি সকালেও মুসলিম সভ্যতাব অনুকরণ করা সর্বদা ফাশানে পরিণত হইয়াছিল। পঞ্চদশ ষোড়শ শতাব্দীর ভারতবর্ষে পাঠান ও মোগল রাজত্বের তথা মোগল সভ্যতার গৌরব মোগল পাঠান সভ্যতার অনুকরণে আরাকানেশ্বর রাজারা স্বাধীনতা অবলম্বন করিয়াও আপন

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**ଆମ୍ଭେ ବୌଦ୍ଧ ନାମର ସହିତ ମୁସଲିମ୍ ନାମ ଗ୍ରହଣ ଓ କଲେକ୍ତା ଭୂଷିତ ଯୁଦ୍ଧା
ଊଷ୍ଣକୌର୍ମ୍ୟ କରା ଶୀଘ୍ର ଜନକ ସାଧ୍ୟ କରିବେ।”**

English translation: “The adoption of Muslim names by Arakanese kings was not obligatory. If it was obligatory, there is no reason for them to accept Muslim names even after they assumed independence. We know that the culture and civilisation, daily life, etiquette, dress, education etc. of the undeveloped people are regulated on the ideals of developed communities. In those days, the Muslim nations were at the top in education, knowledge and kingly dignity. As we, in our time, are following the western culture in all aspects, similarly in those days it became a fashion (for the undeveloped people) to imitate Muslim culture. The 15th - 16th century was the glorious period in India of the Mughal and Pathan rule, and it was also the glorious period of Mughal and Pathan civilisation. So the Arakanese kings considered it glorious for them to inscribe Muslim names and Muslim creed (Kalima) in their coins along with their Buddhist names.”

At the present stage of our knowledge, we know for certain that a Sultan of Bengal, Jalal-ud-din Muhammad Shah reinstated an Arakanese king Min Saw-Mun (Narameikhla) to his throne. This must have been done through an agreement between the two kings; otherwise the Bengal Sultan would not have incurred such a huge expenditure for fitting an army. We do not know what were the points of agreement between the two kings, and in the absence of any written record it will not probably be possible to have any idea in future also. But from the events that followed in Arakan we may surmise the following points of agreements: 1st, the Arakanese king bound himself to pay for the cost of expedition. 2nd, the Arakanese king became a tributary to the king of Bengal. To meet these demands, the Arakanese kings started minting silver coins in

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the same fashion as the Bengal kings did. With the help of these coins he met cost of expedition and also paid the tributes.

So far so good, but the Arakanese kings did something more, they accepted Muslim names and inscribed these names in Arabic characters. There is no evidence that the Arakanese kings gave up their Buddhist religion and accepted Islam. So the reason for accepting Muslim names and inscription in Arabic, should be sought elsewhere.

With the restoration of Min Saw-Mun to his throne, a big contingent of Muslims entered into Arakan. The contingent included the army, not one army but two, of which the members of the first expeditionary force spread over the country and mixed with the people. The second army also must have been a big one, because they had to fight against both Arakanese and the first contingent of Bengal army. Next, the contingent included the administrators, officers and intellectual persons. Though we have no knowledge about the administration in Arakan in the 15th - 16th century, we find that not only soldiers and members of the subordinate staff but also the ministers and judges came from the Muslim community. The seventeenth century Bengali Muslim poets give in their writings an impression that the capital city of Roshang (Mrohaung or Mrauk-U) thronged with the Muslim population, so that the Muslim ministers maintained courts, i.e. religious, social and cultural assemblies of their own. Then in the third category came the Muslim artisan and craftsmen, the officers and men connected with the mint and other state establishments. Last but not the least came the traders and businessmen in the hitherto terra incognita abounding in agricultural and natural resources. Later, in the essay, we shall give an idea of the Muslims who entered into Arakan in large number. We shall also see that when the king of Arakan picked up quarrel with

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Shah Shuja, the former did not take action against the latter openly for fear of estranging his relations with the Muslim subjects. So it is possible that initially the Arakanese king accepted Muslim name and inscribed legend in coins in Arabic just to satisfy his overlord, the Bengal king, but later the practice continued. The kings found it expedient to continue the practice to keep his Muslim subjects in good humour.

We have seen above that the Muslims entered into Arakan in a body twice; first the shipwrecked Arabs and second with the restoration of Min Saw-Mun. The Arabs trade with the east continued up to the 16th centuries the Arabs traders visited the Arakanese ports quite often, may be once a year during trading season. Some traders must have remained there either voluntarily or out of necessity. In this way the Arab Muslims became familiar with the land of Arakan. But with the restoration of Min Saw-Mun, a large number of Muslims entered into Arakan and taken together, the Muslims in Arakan became a force in the body-politic of Arakan.

Third Phase of the coming of the Muslims

There was yet another group of Muslims to enter into Arakan. They were the people of the coastal areas of Bengal, but kidnapped and sold to slavery by the pirates. They belonged to both Hindu and Muslim community, but both became unfortunate victims. The pirates were the Portuguese and Maghs of Arakan. When the Portuguese first came to Bengal they came for trade and commerce, they were followed by missionaries whose purpose was evangelisation. But the Portuguese in course of their establishment of trade relations with Bengal often took recourse to violence and piracy. So from the beginning their religious and commercial motives were

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hampered by their wanton acts of piracy and their involvement in the slave trade. S.N. Sen says:¹⁶

“Nothing was unfair to a fanatical Christian, and fanaticism was the order of the day, particularly in the comparatively less civilised lands of the west, when a Moor or Muslim happened to be the victim. They had waged a long and Portuguese patriotism and bitter war against the Moor in their native country, and Portuguese piety equally demanded the extermination of the hated Moor in the neighbouring tracts of Africa. Commercial rivalry added further zeal to racial hatred and religious aversion, and a Moor was considered to be fair prey whenever encountered.”

There are various examples of Portuguese piracies in the ocean as well as in the coastal districts, and men, women and children, and valuable i.e. whatever came before them were lifted and carried away, so that the whole coastal area of Jessore, Khulna, Bakerganj were desolated and no habitation was to be founded there. The Magh king of Arakan employed the Portuguese to perpetrate their piratical activities into Bengal and later the Magh were also joined with the Portuguese, so that they jointly raided the coastal districts. Manrique, a Portuguese priest who visited Bengal and Arakan and who spent six year in the Angustinian Church at Dianga (Deang, opposite Chittagong town) was himself a witness to such piratical raids. He gives a picture as to how the Magh kings employed the Portuguese to loot and plunder the coastal districts of Bengal. He writes:¹⁷

“..... the Magh kings decided to always retain Portuguese in their service, granting the best of them the rank of Captain and conferring on them Bilatas, or revenue-producing lands, on the understanding that they maintained a certain force of their country men and also Geli as Beside the annual income they were authorised to take their vessels

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into the principality of Bengala, which belonged to the great Mogul. Here they would sack and destroy all the villages and settlements on the banks of the Ganges, to a distance two or three leagues up-stream, and besides removing all the most valuable things they found, would also take captive any people with whom they came in contact. This raiding was pronounced by the Provincial Council at Goa to be just, since the Mogors (Maghuls) were not only invaders and tyrannical usurpers but also enemies of Christianity They usually made there general attacks three or four times in the year, irrespective of minor raids which went on most of the year, so that during the five years I spent in the kingdom of Arracan, some eighteen thousand people came to the ports of Dianga and Angarcale.”

Of these eighteen thousand captives Manrique and other Portuguese priests baptised eleven thousand four hundred seven. Before Manrique, his predecessor priests baptised sixteen thousand ninety captives from Bengal. Manrique gives other examples of carrying away of captives from Bengal by the pirates. Manrique and other priests welcomed the piratical activities, because the more people the pirates enslaved, the better for them to baptise them. The Maghs also joined the Portuguese in piracy and they jointly carried on piratical attacks to the coastal districts of Bengal. Shihab-ud-din Talish, the famous 17th century historian gives a horrible picture as to how the Magh and Portuguese pirates carried away people from Bengal, oppressed them and sold them as slaves. He says:¹⁸

“As these (piratical) raids continued for along time, Bengal became day by day more desolated. Not a house was left inhabited on either side of the river lying on the pirates’ track from Chatgaon to Dacca. The prosperous district of Bakla (Bakerkung) was swept clean with the broom of plunder and

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kidnapping, so that none was left to occupy any house or kindle a light in that region.

“When they came from Chatgaon to ravage Bengal they skirted the imperial frontier post of Bhulua (Noakhali) on their right and the island of Sondip on their left, and reached the village of Sangramarh at the southern apex of the Delta of Dacca (some 30 miles from Dacca) and then point of junction of the Brahmaputra and the Ganges. From this place they sailed up the Ganges if they wished to plunder Jessore, Hughli and Bhushna, or up the Brahmaputra if Vikrampur, Sonargaon and Dacca were their objectives.

“The Arakan pirates both Magh and Feringi used constantly to plunder Bengal. They carried off the Hindus and Muslims they could seize, pierced the palms of their hands passed thin strips of cane through the holes, and threw the men huddled together under the decks of their ships. Every morning they flung down some uncooked rice to the captives from above as people fling grain to fowl. They sold their captives to the Dutch, English, and French merchant at the ports of the Deccan. Sometimes they bought their captives to Tamluk and Balasore for sale at high prices..... Only the Feringis sold their prisoners but the Maghs employed all whom they carry off in agriculture and other occupations, or as domestic servants and concubines.”

There are many such examples of piratical activities of the Maghs and Portuguese who carried away men, women and children from Bengal and as has been said by Talish, the Portuguese generally sold their captives in exchange of cash; the buyers English, Dutch and French sold them as slaves in slave markets. The Portuguese also handed over some of their captives to their priests for converting them to Christianity. But the Maghs generally did not sell their captives, they employed them in Arakan in low works particularly agriculture, cutting of

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wood, feeding the animals and felling the trees etc. Their number was not small and an idea of their member may be had from the fact that when the Chittagong fort fell into the hands of the Mughals, ten thousand Bengali (both Muslim and Hindu) captives got liberty and they went to their homes. Actually they were not slaves but free men; they were made to slavery. The Kaladan River originates from the Chin hills and falls into the Bay of Bengal. 'Kala' means place occupied by the foreigners. Actually the captives of Magh pirates were made to settle there and they were employed in tilling the soil and developing agriculture. So these captives also helped in increasing the Muslim population of Arakan.

Fourth Phase of the coming of the Muslims

The next large influx of Muslims from Bengal into Arakan took place in the middle of the 17th century. This was due to political upheaval in India, in the Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan (1627-1658) had four sons, Dara Shikoh, Shuja, Aurangzib and Murad. The Mughal princes were trained in the art of government. Shah Jahan could guess that his four able sons would eventually fight amongst themselves to occupy the throne after his death. So he tried to keep them separate giving each of them a share of governing the country. Dara Shikoh, the eldest was kept in the capital by his side, he was more refined, philosophic but less able in the art of governing. Shah Shuja, the second son was given the viceroyalty of Bengal and Orissa, he was able but a little devoted to pleasure. Aurangzib, the third son, was as learned as he was appointed viceroy of the Deccan province. Murad, the fourth son was the viceroy of Gujarat, but he was less experienced and more indolent. It is happened that Shah Jahan actually fell ill in 1658 and for some time all hope of his recovery was given up. Dara Shikoh

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being in the capital took control of affairs; he stopped leaking out information from the capital to the countryside. When the princes living in the provinces did not receive information of the emperor's health for some time, they took it for certain that the emperor had been dead and that Dara would not inform them before consolidating his authority. The princes therefore came out of their provinces with huge army, proceeded towards the capital and in this way war of succession began. In the contest Aurangzib, ultimately came out successful and occupied the throne. Dara and Murad had been killed by Aurangzib already; Shah Shuja was also defeated, but instead of surrendering he escaped and took shelter in Arakan.

The king of Arakan [Sanda Thudhama- Chandra Sudharma (1652-1684)] agreed to grant asylum to Shah Shuja and his family and send them to Mecca in favourable season. The Portuguese and Maghs escorted Shah Shuja and his entourage to Mrohaung (Roshang) and they reached there in 1660. But unfortunately, the Arakanese king did not keep his word; rather he proposed to marry a daughter of Shah Shuja. When Shah Shuja did not agree to the proposal, the relation was estranged. Ultimately, Shah Shuja was treacherously murdered with his family by order of the king of Arakan. It is not known how many people were in the retinue of Shuja. It is, however, probable that about one thousand Muslims entered into Arakan during this time. ¹⁹

So by the seventeenth century, the Muslims entered into Arakan in a big way on four different occasions; the Arabs in course of their trading activities including the ship-wrecked ones; the Muslim army, actually two big contingents, in course of restoring the king Min Saw-Mun to the Arakanese throne; the captive Muslims carried by the pirates in the 16th-17th centuries; and the family and retinue of Shah Shuja in 1660 A.D. Of them, the army contingents who entered into Arakan

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with the restored king Min Saw-Mun were numerically very great, they also influenced the Arakanese society and culture in a great manner. In the 17th century the Muslims thronged the capital Mrohaung and they were present in the miniature courts of ministers and other great Muslim officers of the kingdom. An idea of their presence is available in the writings of Muslim poets. The great Bengali poet Alaol, for example writes as follows:²⁰

বাবা দেশী বাবা লোক শুনিয়া রোসায় ভোগ
আইসন্ড বৃন্দ ছায়াতল।
আবতী, শিহতী, মাঙ্গ তু তুল্লী, যাবসী, তুল্লী
খোরাছানা উপবেশী মালা।।
লাহতী মুলতানী সিকি কাশ্মীরী, দক্ষিণী হিন্দী,
কামরুপী আব বঙ্গদেশী।
অহপাই, খাটনচারী(?) কর্ণালী, মলয়াবারী
আচি, কুচি কর্ণাটক রাসী
বহু সেখ, হৈয়দজাদা স্নোগল পাঠান যোদ্ধা
রাজপুত হিন্দু বাবা জাতি।
আভাই, বরমা, শ্যাম জিপুতা, কুর্কীর বাঙ্গ
কতক কহিব ভাতি ভাতি।।
আরকানী ওলন্দাজ দীনমার ইমরাজ,
কামিলাল আর ফরাঙ্গিস
হিসপানী, আলসানী ছোলদার বহরানী
বাবা জাতি আছে পূর্ভকিস।।

The above evidence of Alaol is very important, as will be discussed below. Alaol, originally a Bengali national, went to Arakan being captive by the Portuguese. He wrote various poetical works in Bengali in the second half of 17th century. Being a poet, he was honoured by the Muslim Wazirs and other

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high officers of Arakan. He had access both in the court as well as assemblies of ministers and high officials and so he was in a position to write confidently about the people of Arakan. In the above passage, Alaol says that people from various countries and belonging to various groups came to Arakan to be under the care of Arakanese king. He mentioned the people from Arabia, Egypt, Syria, Turkey, Abbyssinia, Rumi (actually by Rumi, he mentioned Turkish), Khurasan, Uzbekistan, Lahore, Multan, Sind, Kashmir, the Deccan, Hind (north Indian), Kamrup and Bengal, Karnal, Malayese, Achin, Cochin and Karnatak country. The poet also refers to the Shaikhs, Sayyids, Mughal, Pathan, Rajputs, Hindus, and people of Ava, Burma, Shyam (Indo-China), Tripura, Kukis (of Assam and Tippera); the Armenians, the Dutch, the Danish, the English, the French and the Spanish and the Portuguese were also found in the capital city of Mrohaung.²¹ Alaol's evidence gets support from the European writers. For example, Ferdinand Mendez Pinto, a 17th century European traveller says that the Arakanese army comprised of the following nationalities and countries: "Portugals, Grecians, Venetians, Turks, Janizaries, Jews, Armenians, Tartars, Mogores, Abyssiens (Abyssinians), Raizbutos (Rajputus), Nobins, Coracones (Khurasanis), Persians, Tuparass (people from Tripura or Tippera), Gizares, Tanulos, Malabares, Jaos (Jens), Achem, Moens, Saims, Lussons of the Islands, Borneo, Checomes, Arracons, Predin, Papuaas, Selebres, Mindancas, Pegus, Bramaas, and many other whose names I know not."²² The Portuguese Padre Fray Sebastien Manrique visited Arakan and stayed for some time; he was also present in the coronation ceremony of the Arakanese king held on 23 January 1635. He gives a description of the coronation procession and says that of the several contingents of army that took part in the coronation, one contingent wholly comprised of Muslim soldiers, let by a

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Muslim officer called Lashkar Wazir. The leader rode on Iraqi horse, and the contingent comprised of six hundred soldiers. In other contingent, led by Arakanese commanders also there were Muslim soldiers. This evidence of Sebastien Manrique combined with the fact that there were several Muslim ministers in Arakan gives a good picture of the presence of the Muslim in Arakan in the 17th century. The influence of the Muslim officers over the king of Arakan is also evident from the following episode mentioned by Sebastien Manrique.

The Arakanese king Min Khamaung Husain Shah (1612-1622) was succeeded by his son Thiri Thudhama, but his coronation was delayed. The astrologers said that the king would die one or two years after the coronation. So the king was in no mood to perform the coronation, but after 12 years had passed, the great officers of the state desired that the old custom of coronation of the king be observed. The king felt that their desire should be performed. But before acceding to their demand, he consulted his preceptor, who was a Muslim. Manrique says that his man was a Haji, he visited the holy cities of Makka and Madina, but he was held to be a saint by the king and his Magh subjects. Manrique writes: ²³

“But first of all he consulted his false preceptor, a Mahammadan, who, having twice visited the hateful Mausoleum where the obscene sandals of the descendant of Hagar are said to preserved, was held to be a saint by these Barbarians.”

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Actually Manrique confused here; he was ignorant of the Muslim rite of the performance of Haj. Manrique's editors write:²⁴

“The hateful Mausoleum” is strictly speaking, at Madina, where Muhammad was buried, but here Manrique confuses Madina with Makka, the place of regular pilgrimage. There is no support to the statement that the prophet's shoes are shown either at Madina or Makka, though soon after Muhammad's death his servant Anas used to show his shoes to the faithful, presumably at Makka.”²⁵ Any way, the main point here is that the Arakanese king's preceptor was a Muslim, so an idea of the Muslim influence in Arakan may be obtained.

Notes and References

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3. **Journal of the Asiatic Society of Pakistan**, Vol. VIII. No. 2, 1963, pp. 13-24
4. **JASB**, Vol. X. Part I, 1844, p. 36.
5. **British Burma Gazetteers. Vol. A, 1917, District Akyab. P. 90.**
6. A.P. Phayre writes the name “**Mengh-tsan-newun**”. I have modernised the spelling.
7. A.P. Phayre: **History of Burma**, London, 1884, p. 78.
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17. **Travels of Fray Sebastien Manrique**, ed. Luard & Hosten, Vol. 1, p.285.
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19. Abdul Karim: **History of Bengal, Mughal period**, Vol. II, Rajshahi, 1995, p. 363.
20. Abdul Karim and Enamul Huq: **Arakan Rajsabhaya Bangla Sahitya**, Calcutta, 1935, p. 12.
21. **Ahpai, Khotanchari, Almani, Kastilan could not be identified**. According to another reading Ahpai is actually Bhopali (i.e. from Bhopal) in India.
22. **The Voyages and Adventures of Ferdinand Mendez Pinto**, Translated by H. Cogan, London, 1981, quoted in S.A. Ahsan: Padmavati (Bengali), Dhaka, 1968, p. 87.
23. **The Travels of Fray Sebastien Manrique**, Vol. I, p. 352.
24. **Ibid.**, p. 252, note 6.
25. If **Anas** showed the shoes it was at **Madina** (and not Makka), because the prophet passed away in **Madina**.

Chapter III

MUSLIM MINISTERS AND OTHER OFFICERS IN ARAKAN

We have seen above that the coming of the Muslims in Arakan, Muslim influence there could be seen in a great measure. They occupied the government offices, occupied the posts of ministers, judges and other subordinate posts. It is gratifying to note that at least three Prime ministers, three defence ministers and two ministers were Muslims. They are mentioned below:

Burhanuddin, Defence Minister or Lashkar Wazir

With the restoration of Min Saw-Mun to the throne of Arakan, Muslim High Officers particularly the army officers must have entered into Arakan but unfortunately we have no clear idea for want of sources. At the present state of our knowledge, we can say that Burhanuddin was the first Lashkar Wazir (Defence or War Minister), of Arakan. His name is found in Nasurllah Khondkar's **Shariatnamah**. In giving his genealogy the poet writes:¹

ধৈর্যবন্ত বীর্যবন্ত সর্বাদার নাট্য অভ
নাম হামিদুদ্দৌল সতির মাব।
পৌড়দেশে বাহালা নাম তসে কসে অনুপাম
সবুহ পাল উজির প্রধান।।
তান পুত্র গুণবানঅস্রে শাস্রে পূজামান
জগে ঘোষে বুরহানউদ্দৌল নাম।

দৈবগতি দেশ ছাড়ি ইষ্ট মিত্র সম্মে করি
 ব্রহ্মদেশে তৈল্য ধাম্নে॥
তখন ব্রহ্মদেশে কিবা আদে কিবা শেষে
 অশু আছোয়ার ন আছিল।
হয় গজ বহু সম্মে দেখি তানে নুপরম্মে
 স্বর উজির তানে কৈলা॥

Translation: “He was patient, heroic and there was no end of his honour, his name was **Hamid-ud-din**, the intelligent. In Bengal of Gaur, he was a great minister. His son **Burhan-ud-din** was virtuous and eminent in using arms. By chance he left the country and with relatives settled in the country of Roshang. In those days there was no horse and horsemen in Roshang. Seeing him with horse, elephant, the king appointed him the **Lashkar Wazir**.”

The poet says that in Bengala (East Bengal) in the kingdom of Gaur, there was a Wazir named Hamid-ud-din. His son Burhan-ud-din left the country with his followers and soldiers and settled in Roshang. In those days there was no cavalry in Arakan. Considering that Burhan-ud-din was an efficient soldier, the king appointed him Lashkar Wazir or head of the army or defence or war minister. Nasrullah Khondkar wrote his book in 1749 (or 1755), and he was the 7th descendant of Burhan-ud-din. So Burhan-ud-din was alive about the last half of the 16th century.

Lashkar Wazir Ashraf Khan

He was a **Lashkar Wazir** (Defence Minister) of the king Thiri Thudamma, who ruled Arakan from 1622-1638 AD. Poet Qazi Daulat wrote his book *Sati Maina Lor Chandrani* under the

patronage of Ashraf Khan. The poet writes about him as follows:

ধৰ্মপ, তে শ্ৰীযুক্ত আশরাফ খান নান৷
হান্নাফি, মজাব ধৰে চিশতি থ
পীত্ৰ শুৱৈঅভ্যাগ পুস্কত তৎপত্ৰ,
লোক উপকাৰ কৰে নাহি আশ্ব পত্ৰ৷
ৰাজনীতি লোক ধৰ্ম বুজন্ত সকল,
মিছেত্ৰ সহায় কৰে অতি রসাতল৷
মসজিদ পুস্কৰ্নি দিলা বিবিধ বিধান,
শ্যামতনু যুক্তিস্ত বচন মিস্কতা।
শুক্কমতি ছোট বড় লোকেত ইশ্কতা৷
মহাৰাজা আয়ুশেষ জানি শুক্কমন।
তান হসে ৰাজনীতি কৈল মস্কৰ্ণ৷
সৈব্য মনে অভিষেক কৰিলা ৰাজন।
মহামাত্যে কৰিলেক ৰাজ্যও ভজন৷
ময়ল বিধানে সৰ্ব কৈলা মস্কৰ্ণন।
বিবিধ প্ৰসাদ দিল কল্যাণ কাৰণ৷
ছক্ৰসমে দিলা সৈব্য পতাকা দুন্দৰ্ভ।
স্বৰ্ণ অস্ত্ৰ ৰাখ দিলা আত্ৰ বহু মূল্য টুপি৷
দশ হস্তি প্ৰদান দিলেক বহু ঘোড়া।
ৰাজ খড়গ মস্কৰ্ণিলা লক্ষ্মী কাপড়া৷
সেনাপতি হৈলা নানা সৈব্য অধিপতি।
আশরাফ খান নামে শোভ হৈল অতি৷
শ্ৰী আশরাফ খান লক্ষ্মী উজিত্ৰ।
যাহাৰ প্ৰতাপ বজ্জে চূৰ্ণ অতি শিত্ৰ৷
বৃপতি মস্কৰ্ণপাসে বৈসন্ত দিবা ত্ৰাতি।
যথা যাত্ৰ ৰাজা তথা চলত মস্কৰ্ণতি৷

सयाफदी अखक भाविल मूविष्ठत॥
राजपूत यत्त धिक मूपात विष्ठत॥
वृप्रतिष्ट पूत भावि यदिस म्मादत॥
सयासात कर्तिलक आशराफ थावेत्त॥

Translation: “The sage Srijukta Ashraf Khan, belongs to *Hanafi Mazhab* and *Chishtiya tariqa*. He patronises Pir, teacher and wayfarer and in doing favour he does not discriminate friend or foe. He understands both political and social problems. He helps the friends and punishes the wicked. He erected mosques and excavated tanks and he is friendly to both great and small. When the king felt that his end was drawing near, he left political matters to his care. The king celebrated his coronation, and gave many presents to him and also gave him gold, cap and ten elephants and many horses. He was also given king's dagger and robes meant for the Lashkar (Wazir). He became the head of the army. He was known as Lashkar Wazir Ashraf Khan. His power breaks the thunder and the proud head. He sits with king day and night and accompanies the king to whatever the latter goes. The queen thinks that he is better than a prince, the king also consider him to be his son and so made him a great minister.”

So the poet Qazi Daulat says that Ashraf Khan was a religious minded man, he was a Hanafi and accepted Chishtiya tariqa. He was the follower of Pir, did good to the people and understood political affairs. He built mosques and excavated tanks and he was a generous man. When the king felt that his end was drawing near, he celebrated the coronation ceremony and entrusted Ashraf Khan with the responsibility of governing the country. The king gave him the umbrella, flag and drum and honoured him with many presents. The king also gave him gold

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emblem, cap and horse and robe of honour (robe of the Lashkar - Wazir). In this way Ashraf Khan became a great minister of the state. Abdul Karim Sahitya-Visharad and Enamul Huq think that Lashak Wazir Ashraf Khan was originally a man from Chittagong, the ruins of his place are seen at village Charia in P.S Hazhazari, Dist. Chittagong, a big tank in this village bears his name and the Lashkar Wazir dighi (big tank) at Kadalpur village in Raozan also bears his name. ² Sebastien Manrique also refers to this Lashkar Wazir when he says that the Lashkar Wazir led the Muslim contingent of army in the coronation procession of the king Thiri Thudhamma in 1635 A.D.

Lashkar Wazir Bara-Thakur

The third Muslim **Lashkar Wazir** in Arakan was **Sri Bara-Thakur**, father of his more illustrious son Magan Thakur. Alaol says about Sir Bara-Thakur as follows:

রাজ্যপাল সৈন্যমন্ত্রী আছিলেক তাত।
শ্রী বড় ঠাকুর নাম জগত বিখ্যাত।
রাজসৈন্য মন্ত্রী ছিল শ্রী বড় ঠাকুর।
প্রভাতে মাগিয়া পাইল কুলদীপ শূত্র॥

Translation: “There was a high officer who was a minister in charge of the army (war or defence minister), he was known by his title Sir Bara Thakur. The war minister Sri Bara Thakur was blessed with a son by praying to God.”

Sri Bara Thakur was the Lashkar Wazir or war minister of the king Narapatigyi (1638-1645 A.D). His actual name is not known, Bara Thakur was his title.

Then we have names of three Prime ministers of the kings of Arakan in 17th century; they were (1) Magan Thakur, (2) Sayyid Musa, (3) Nabaraj Majlis.

Magan Thakur

He was a son of Sri Bara Thakur, mentioned above and who was a Lashkar-Wazir or War Minister of the king Narapatigyi (Narapagiri of Bengal writers). Magan Thakur was born of Siddiq family, family or descendants of the first Calipha Hazarat Abu Bakr, giving family background Alaol writes:³

ଏନ ସଂଗ୍ରହେଷ୍ଟିଶ୍ଚ ସାମନ ଉପେକ୍ଷି
ରୂପେ ତାମ୍ଭ ଜିବିୟା ଉପେକ୍ଷା ନାହିଁ ଅନ୍ତ।
ସର୍ବଦେଶେ ପ୍ରାପ୍ତିତ ତାମ୍ଭ ଅତୁଳ ସହୃଦ୍ଵେ
ସିଦ୍ଧିକ ବଂଶେତ ଜନ୍ମା ଶେଖଜାମା ଜାତ।
କୁଳଶୀଳ ସଂକର୍ଷେ ଭୁବନ ବିଖ୍ୟାତ॥
ଆମ୍ଭେ ଆଲିମ୍ଭ ଠିକ୍ ବିଦ୍ୟା ଏ ନିପୁଣ।
ଉପେକ୍ଷା ଯଥାଳେ ବୁଦ୍ଧି ଏ ଉପେକ୍ଷା॥
ତାମ୍ଭ ଦେଶୀ ସାଧକ୍ ଆଲିମ୍ଭ ଉପେକ୍ଷା।
ସାଧକ୍ କର୍ମ ଆମ୍ଭ ବିଦ୍ୟା ଆମ୍ଭେ ପୂଜିତ॥

Translation: “He was the famous Magan who possessed excellent qualities, he was extremely handsome, and there is no end of his virtues. His generosity was known throughout the country, he was born in the family of Siddiq and he was a Sheik and he was well known in the world by his high birth and good deeds. He was an Alim himself and was learned and he recognised merit. He brought learned men of his country and honoured them.

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So according to Alaol, Magan Thakur was not only a high born one, he was also a learned man and he respected the learned people. He gathered the learned people of the country by his side and showed them much respect. The name Magan Thakur baffles many, Sukumar Sen, for example, says:⁴

“মাগন ঠাকুর মুসলমান ছিলেন বলিয়া কোন প্রমাণ নাই। তখন কোন কোন হিন্দু মুসলমান পীরের শিষ্যত্ব গ্রহণ করিতেন। মাগন ঠাকুরও হয়তো তাই করিয়াছিলেন। মাগন ঠাকুরের নাম তাঁহার অমুসলমানত্বের প্রকৃষ্ট প্রমাণ (দেবতার কাছে মাগিয়া পাওয়া বলিয়া ‘মাগন’, রাজপুত্র বলিয়া ‘ঠাকুর’)। তিনি যদি কোরেশী আরবের বংশধর হইতেন তবে আলাওল নিশ্চয়ই তাহা উল্লেখ করিতে ভুলিতেন না। মাগন ঠাকুর ছিলেন দ্রোণাসেনের রাজপুত্র, অতএব মগ। মগেরা পুরাপুরি হিন্দু না হোক মুসলমান ছিল না।

Translation: “There is no proof that Magan Thakur was a Muslim. In those days some Hindus became disciples of Muslim Pirs. Magan Thakur may have done the same thing. The name Magan Thakur is the best proof that he was not a Muslim: he was Magan because he was obtained by begging from God and he was Thakur because he was a prince. If he belonged to the family of a Quraishi Arab, Alaol would surely not have forgotten to mention it. Magan Thakur was prince of Roshang, so he was a Magh. The Maghs were not fully Hindus, but they were not Muslims.

Sukumar Sen is not only wrong, but it seems that he has deliberately distorted facts to make Magan Thakur an Arakanese Magh. Alaol categorically says that Magan Thakur was born of Siddiq family and he was a Shaik. In spite of such

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categorical evidence, how could Sukumar Sen make him a Magh, is not comprehensible.

Any way, Alaol also says why his name was Magan Thakur:⁵

রাজ ঐশ্বর্য মন্ত্রী ছিল শ্রী বড় ঠাকুর।
প্রভাতে মাগিয়া পাইল কুলদীপ সূত্র।।
প্রভু-মুখে মাগি পাইল প্রার্থনা করি।
তৎকারণে মগন ঠাকুর নাম ধরি।

Translation: “Sri Bara Thakur was the war minister of king. By begging to God he got the offspring in the morning. Because he was obtained by praying or begging, he was given the name of Magan.”

So it is clear that Bara Thakur prayed to God for a son and God Almighty blessed him with a son and the offspring of prayer (i.e. Magan in Bengali) was named Magan. Thakur was the official title given by the king.

Magan Thakur came to prominence in the reign of the king Narapatigyi or Nripagiri. The king had a daughter, when the king became old, he thought of appointing a fit person as guardian of the daughter and he selected Magan Thakur for his job. Alaol says:⁶

পরমা সুন্দরী কন্যা অতি সুচরিতা।
বহু স্নেহে নৃপতি পোষিলা নিজ সূতা।।
... ..
কন্যাত শৈশবে দেখি ভাবে নরপতি।
এতক সম্পদ সমর্পিত কার প্রতি।।

এক মহাপুত্রসি আছিল সেই দেশ।
মহাসজ মুসলমান সিদ্ধিকের বংশে।
বাবা গুণে পাত্রগ মহন্ত কুলশীল।
তাহাকে আনিয়া বৃপ কন্যা সমর্পিল।।
বৃদ্ধ বওপতি যদি গেল স্বর্গপুত্রি।
এই কন্যা হৈল জ্ঞান মুখ পাঠেশুত্ৰী।।
শৈশবেত্ৰ পাজ দেখি বহু স্নেহ ভাবি।
মুখ পাজ করিয়া রাখিল মহাদেবী।।

Translation: “The princess was extremely pretty and polite, the king brought up his daughter with great care Seeing the tender age of the princess the king was thinking as to whom the guardianship of the princess was to be given. In that country there was a great man he was a Muslim, virtuous man. The king made him the guardian of the princess. When the king died the princess became the chief queen. She appointed her guardian the Prime Minister of the kingdom.”

The fact is that the king Narapatigyi had no son, but only a daughter. When the king became old, he appointed Magan Thakur, who was a minister, and who belonged to a good Arab family, guardian of his daughter. After the king's death she was married to Thado Minthar (Sad Umedar of Bengali writers), nephew of the king, i.e. the king's daughter was married to her cousin. This Thado Minthar became king, and the king's daughter became the chief queen of the kingdom. From the above discussion, it is evident that Magan Thakur was a minister in the reign of king Narapatigyi, but after the latter's death, during the reign of Thado Minthar and his queen, Magan Thakur was promoted to be the chief or Prime Minister of the kingdom.

Magan Thakur was a learned man, he gave asylum to the learned people and patronised the great poet Alaol. Alaol also says about him as follows;⁷

বহু বহু মুসলমান দ্বোপাশ্বে বৈসন্ত।
সদাকারী কুলীল পণ্ডিত গুণবন্ত॥
সবে কৃপা করন্ত সন্তোষি বহুতর।
তালিম-আলিম বলি করন্ত আদর॥
মুখ্য পাঠেশ্বরীর অমাত্য মহাজন।
সত্যবাদী জিতেন্দ্রিয় ঠাকুর মাগন॥
ভাণ্ড্যাদয় হৈল স্নাত বিধি পরমন।
দুঃখ-বাস হেতু তান সঙ্কশ দরশন॥
বহল আদর করি বহল সম্মানে।
সতত পোষন্ত আসা অনু বসন্ত দানে॥
মধুর আলাপে বশ হৈল স্নাত মন।
তান গুণ সূত্র হৈল গ্ৰীবাঽ বন্ধন॥
শুণিগণ থাকন্ত তাহান সভা ভরি।
গীত নাট যন্ত বাদ্যেত রত্ন চয় করি॥
নানা সুপ্রসঙ্গ কথা কহিয়া বসদ।
তান সভাস্থাণে যাঁকো হৈয়া সভাসদ॥
একদিন সভা করি বসিছে মাগন।
নানা রত্ন প্রসঙ্গ করন্ত শুণিগণ॥
কেহ গাহে কেহ বাহে কেহ খেলে খেলা।
সুধাকর বেড়ি যেন তারা কুল স্নেহা॥
হেনকালে শুনি পন্ন্যাতরীর কথন।
পরম হরিশ হৈল সভাজন মন॥
.... ..
দ্বোপাশ্বেতে অনেকে না বুঝে এই ভাষা।
পয়ারে রচিলে পুরে সভানের আশা॥

.....

তেম পন্ন্যবতী রচ স্নাত আছা ধতি।
একথা শুবিত্তে মনে বহু শ্রদ্ধা কতি।।
তাহান আদেশ মালা কতিয়া মস্কত।
অশীকার কেঁলু মুই রচিত্তে পুস্কত।।

Translation: “Many Muslims live in Roshang, they are all learned, virtuous and come out good family. All help me and treats me well because I am an educated man. Thakur Magan, the truthful and saintly person was the minister of the Chief queen. As the end of the days of my grief appeared, I happened to meet him. He brought me up with great care. He treats me well and his generosity bound my neck towards him. The learned people sit in his assembly and enjoy vocal and instrumental music. I was also a member of that assembly and in one such assembly there were many who engaged themselves in various amusements. Some sang songs and some played instruments. When they heard the story of Padmavati they became happy. The people of Roshang do not understand the language, so if it was composed in Bengali poem, all will be happy. So Magan Thakur ordered me to compose Padmavati and by his order I promised to compose the book.”

In this passage Alaol gives a picture of the miniature court of Magan Thakur, the Prime Minister. Magan Thakur gave Alaol shelter and at his order Alaol composed his famous poetical work Padmavati. We have said about that Magan Thakur was appointed Prime Minister by Thado Minthar and his queen. But the king Thado Minthar died in 1652 and was succeeded by his minor son Sanda Thudhamma (Chandra Sudharma 1652-1684 A.D). As the king was minor, the

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dowager queen (Thado's queen and Narapatigyi's daughter) ruled the country as regent. She gave her guardian Magan Thakur the authority to rule the country on her and her son's behalf. Magan Thakur's power and influence was further enhanced. It is stated above that Magan Thakur ordered Alaol to compose Saiful Mulk Badiujjamal. Alaol began the work, but before completing the book Magan Thakur died and the composition of the book Saiful Mulk Badiujjamal remained incomplete. Later another Arakanese Prime Minister Sayyid Musa (discussed below) ordered Alaol to complete the book and he did so in 1669 or 1670 A.D. It was thought that Magan Thakur died before 1660 A.D.⁸ Of all the Muslim ministers and officers of Arakan in the medieval period, Magan Thakur was undoubtedly the best and his name is immortalised in the pages of history.

Sayyid Musa, Prime Minister

The next Muslim minister of Arakan was Sayyid Musa. He was appointed Prime Minister after the death of Magan Thakur. Sayyid Musa remained in this office for about a decade under the king Sanda Thudhama (Chandra Sudharma). Alaol received patronage from him and at his order completed the composition of Saiful Mulk Badiujjamal. Alaol writes about his patron in the following words:⁹

সৈয়দ মুসা এক পুত্রস্ব মনস্ত।
অভিনু বদন রূপ মহা গুণবস্ত।।
আমি বৃদ্ধ ফকিরেতে অতি বহুতর।
তালিত আলিম বলি করন্ত আদর।।
দানে পরিপূরন্ত পোষন্ত অনুক্ষণ।

প্ৰেম বসে মাঝ রাসে বাঁধা মোর মন॥
একদিন ডাকিয়া যে আপন আল এ।
বহল করিয়া কহিলা যে মহাশয়॥
পুস্তকের আজ্ঞাকারী শ্রী যুক্ত মাগন।
আছিল তোমার শিষ্য মোর বন্ধুজন॥
থলু বাক্য আছিল পুস্তক মনোহর।
সমাপ্ত হৈলে রস হএ বহুতর॥
আম্মার পৌরব মনে তাহার বচন।
আজ্ঞা করি তোম যত পাঠকের মন॥
ভাবিয়া উত্তর দিলু শুন দয়াময়।
বৃদ্ধকালে গ্রন্থ কর্ম উচিত না হএ॥
রচিলুঁ বহল গ্রন্থ নানা আলা আলা।
বহিতে ঈশ্বর ভাবে যুক্ত হই কাল।
বিশেষ অভাবে পরি চিন্তায়ুক্ত মন।

.....

তুমি না করিলে থলু বাক্য (কায়?) নহে প্রোথা।
একপে করিতে আর কেবা আছে এথা॥
তিন মতে কায় সায় করিতে উচিত।
প্রথমে মাগন নিষ্ঠা গুণিগণ বিদিত॥
দ্বিতীয় কুমার যে রছিল বন্ধনে।
না রছিল পুস্তক দুঃখ উপজএ মনে॥
তৃতীয় আম্মার মন রাখিতে জুয়াএ।
এড়াইতে না পারিতা রচিতা সর্বথায়া॥

Translation: “Sayyid Musa is a great man. He is a learned man and loves this poor man (Alaol himself) because I am a seeker of knowledge. He is a bounteous man and I am bound to him by his love. He called me once to his house and said that Magan who ordered you to write the book was your

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disciple and my friend. The book remains half-finished, but if it is completed it will please many. For my sake you write the book. I said, "composing the book is not possible at old age. I have written many books, now it behoves me to remain engaged in remembering God." He said that if you do not do it the incomplete book will not be finished, there is no one else who can do it. For three reasons you should do this work, first, your love for Magan, second, (in the story) the prince is now in prison, and third, to please me. So you cannot but complete the book."

Alaol says that Sayyid Musa was a great man, he used to patronise learned man and loved Alaol because he was a *talib alim*, seeker of knowledge, here meaning a learned man. Sayyid Musa was a friend of Magan Thakur, it is possible that he was a minister, when Magan Thakur was a Prime Minister. Above all Sayyid Musa liked poets and poetical works, so he requested Alaol to complete the half-finished poem Saiful Mulk Badiujjamal, which was originally ordered to be written by Magan Thakur. Alaol begged to be excused on ground of old age but Sayyid Musa said that Alaol should complete the work for three reasons: first, his love for deceased Magan Thakur, second, the book was written up-to a stage where the prince (i.e. the hero) was living in prison, and the third, Alaol should complete the composition of the book to please Sayyid Musa himself. Alaol could not deny, he completed the work in 1669-70 A.D.

Nabaraj Majlis, another Prime Minister

The next Muslim Prime Minister whose name is known to us was Nabaraj Majlis, it is not known whether it was his name or title. He ordered Alaol to compose the famous Persian

book Sikandarnama of Nizami Ganjavi. Alaol says how he got the order to write the book:¹⁰

শ্রীমন্ত মজলিস অতুল মহতু।
নবরাজ পাইয়া যদি হৈল মহামাত্য॥
মধুর বচন স্নাত শুনিয়া বসদ।
সাদরে আনিয়া আশ্মা কৈল সভাসদ॥
অল্প বস্ত্র তুমিয়া পোষন্ত নিরন্তর।
তান দানে সুসময়ে শুধি রাজকার্য॥
বহু গণবন্ত আছে তাহান সভাপ।
তথাপিহ স্নাত বাক্য মনে অনু ভাপ॥
একদিন মজলিস করি স্নেহমানি।
মহাসহ মুসলমান আনি॥
চৰ্চ, চৃষ্ণ, লেখ, প্ৰেয় বিবিধ বন্ধন।
চন্দন কল্পুরি আদি গোলাপ সুগন্ধ।
কপূর তাম্বুলে সভা বহিল আনন্দ॥
বান্দ্য কপি বাস আদি যন্ত্র সুললিত;
কেহ কেহমধুর মুস্বরে গাহে গীত॥
মজলিসে সকলে করন্ত আশীর্বাদ।
বিধি পুরাউক তোম্মা মনে যেই সাধ॥
আনন্দেত স্থল মাত তোম্মার সমীপ।
মুসলমানী দীনে তুমি উজ্জ্বল প্রদীপ।
মসজিদ পুঙ্কৰ্ণি আদি কৈলা পূণ্য কাম।
স্বদেশ বিদেশ পূর্ণ তোম্মা কৃতি বাস॥

.....

শুনি মজলিস বাক্য তুলন্ত রসাল।
মসজিদ পুঙ্কৰ্ণি রহিতে কতকাল॥
পূর্বকালে মহন্তে করিছে বাবা কাম।
সাত মাত কেতাবে এখন আছে বাস॥

মসজিদ পুঙ্খনি নাম নিজ দেশে রাহে।
গ্রন্থ কথা যথা তথা উক্তিভাবে কহে॥
গ্রন্থ কহি সকলের তুষ্ট হয় সব।
নাম স্মৃতি স্মৃতিয়া কহ এ সর্বজন॥
মূর্থ হয় সুপাণ্ডিত শুনি পাত্রে জাল।
গ্রন্থ মম স্মৃতিয়া কথাত্রে আছ আলা॥
প্রলয় আধি রাহে শুভ কৃতি যশ।
নামের স্মৃতিয়া বাক্য সবে কবে বশ।

Translation: “The benevolent man Srimanta Majlis became his great minister getting Nabaraj. Hearing about me he made me his courtier and brought me up by giving food and clothes. By his grant I paid government dues in proper time. There are other learned men at his court, but he gives weight to what I say. One day he invited many Muslims and entertained them with all kinds of food and drink. People became happy, some sang songs, and others played instrumental music. All present blessed the Majlis saying that God Almighty will fulfil his wishes. They also praised him for his good deeds like building mosques, excavating tanks and they also said that his name will be remembered in his own country and outside. The Majlis replied that mosques and tanks would not last long only books will last. In the past great men built mosques and excavated tanks, but only books lasted. Mosques and tanks are known in one’s own country, but books are read in all countries. Illiterate people get knowledge through books. Books last till the days of resurrection.”

Alaol says that Srimanta Majlis became a *mahamatya* or chief or prime minister after getting Nabaraj; seems therefore that his name was Srimanta Majlis, Nabaraj was his

official title. It is possible that after the death of Prime Minister Sayyid Musa, Nabaraj Mujlis obtained the job. It seem further that Alaol was not acquainted with Nabaraj Majlis before; hearing the name and fame of Alaol, Nabaraj Majlis called the poet to his Court and gave him much support, so much so that Alaol was able to clear the state dues. Once the Prime Minister sat in the assembly of learned man, arranged food and drinks for the guests. Those present in the assembly praised the Prime Minister for his good works, particularly the construction of mosques and excavation of tanks. In reply Nabaraj Majlis said that mosques and tanks are not permanent, in old days great men did these beneficial works, but they did not last. Only books have lasted, books please the readers, books impart education, illiterate people became learned by reading books; books and poets are honoured not only in their own country but outside, and books last until the day of resurrection. The book **Sikandarnama** was written in 1673 A.D.

Nabaraj Majlis was not only the Prime Minister of the kingdom, he was so important a personality that he administered the coronation oath to the king Chandra Sudharma. The king must have his Magh Ministers also, but this Muslim Minister got prominence. Also Alaol says about this:¹¹

এব ধর্মশীল রাজা অতুল মহত্ব।
মজলিস নবরাজ্য তাব মহামাত্য॥
দ্বোদশ দেশে আহুত যত মুসলমান।
মহাপায়ে মজলিস সবার প্রধান॥
মজলিস পায়ে মহত্ব শুন এবে।
নবরপতি স্বর্গ আদোহন হৈল যবে॥
যুবরাজে আইস যবে পাটে বসিতাবে।

দাশাঐ পূৰ্ব মুখে তজ্জৰ বাহিৰে॥
মজলিস পৰি দিব্য বস্ত্ৰ আভৰণ।
সম্মুখে দাশাঐ আগে দঢ়াঐ বচন॥
পুত্ৰবৎ প্ৰজাৰে পালিতা বিবৰ্ভৱ।
না কৰিতা হুলবল লোকেৰ উপৰ॥
শাস্ত্ৰনীতি ৰাজকাৰ্য্য হৈবা ব্যায়বস্ত।
বিৰ্বলীয়ে বল না কৰৌক বলবস্ত॥
দয়াল চৰিত্ৰ হৈবা সত্য ধৰ্মবস্ত।
সুজনেৰে সন্তোষিতা নাশিতা দূৰবস্ত॥
ক্ষমা ধৰ্ম আচৰিতা চঞ্চল না হৈবা।
পূৰ্ব অপৰাধে কাৰ মন্দ না কৰিতা॥
আৰু নানা বিধি প্ৰকাশন্ত ৰাজনীতি।
সত্য কৰিয়া যদি দঢ়াঐল বৃপতি।
প্ৰথমে মজলিসে তৰে সালাম কৰ ঐ।
শেষে মাতৃকুল আদি সবে প্ৰণাম ৐॥

Translation: “The great religious king had a prime minister known as Nabaraj Majlis, he was a great Minister and Chief of all Muslims of Roshang. Now I will tell something about Majlis. When the king went to heaven, the crown prince came to sit on the throne. Out side the throne, he stood facing the east. The Majlis wore his dress and standing before the prince advised him in the following words. Treat the people as your sons; do not deceive upon the people. According to religious rites, be just in state duties, and see that the strong do not oppress the weak. Be kind, be true to your religion, be kind to good people, and punish the wicked. Try to forgive and do not be impatient; do not punish anybody for pass offences. The king accepted all these principles, then bade salam to the Majlis and then all others of the family of his mother.”

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This is an important evidence about the king and his Muslim Prime Minister Nabaraj Majlis. The poet first praises king and then says that Nabaraj Majlis was the Chief among all Muslims there living in the country of Roshang. When the king died and his prince (new king) came to occupy the throne, he was made to stand outside the throne facing the east. Majlis, i.e. Nabaraj Majlis then appeared before him wearing his official dress. Nabaraj Majlis then administered the oath as follows: treat your subjects as your son: do not oppress the people; be just in religious and legal matters; do not allow the strong to oppress the weak; you should be kind, truthful and religious; behave well to the good people and destroy the wicked; always be generous and do not vacillate or be restless; do not harm anybody for pass fault; and he advised the king in many other matters. The king agreed to abide by his advice and follow his admonition. Then he saluted Nabaraj Majlis and then others of his family.

The king Chandra Sudharma ascended the throne in 1652 after the death of his father. As he was minor, his mother became regent and Magan Thakur held the reins of government on their behalf. Most probably, the boy king was not then coronated, if at that time coronation took place, Magan Thakur would have administered the oath, because he was not only the Prime Minister, he was also the guardian of the dwager queen and the boy king. So it appears that the king was coronated around 1670. i.e. about 18 years after his accession, and about 30 years of his age. It may be remembered that a former king of Arakan Thiri Thudamma was coronated twelve years after his accession to the throne.

Sayyid Muhammad, Minister

Sayyid Muhammad Khan was a minister of the king Chandra Sudharma, Alaol composed his book *Half Paikar (or Sapta Paikar)*, being requested by his minister. Alaol says:¹²

एव महाराजेश्वर अथञ्च मन्त्रप्रद।
तात मूथ सैवमन्त्री सैयद शोहाब्दद॥
अथ दूर्वादल श्याम मूथ पूर्ण शशी।
आसिया सिप्रित वाक्य मूदू मन्द यामि॥
नावा शास्त्र पत्राण विद्वान विदध्।
आरवि, फारसि आर हिन्दुयानि मशध्।
शोहत्त मश्रीत जाता भावरास लीन।
राश राश विनोद थाकत्त निशीदिन॥
सतत पशित शयी ताहान मभाण।
तत्त रस कथा कहि थाकत्त सदा ए॥
नावा परम्याव नावा ग्रन्थ सूकथन।
आनन्दे शनत्त रसि ऐया एकमना॥
आसिह मभाण तान थाकि आविरत।
अनुवस दाने आसा पोसत्त सतत॥
शोर मन वाक्कए लवण यवा शयाण।
विशेष करत्त वत्त आदरुण कृपाण॥
मभासद्ये थाकि मभासद ऐया।
शास्त्र नीति रस कथा प्रसन्न कहिया॥
मश्र पयकर कथा अति मनोहर।
मनोगत प्रकाशिलु ताहान पोचरा॥

Translation: “He was a king of kings, owner of huge wealth and his chief war minister was Sayyid Muhammad. His

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body is blue and his face is like a full moon. He speaks smilingly and he is learned in many subjects, in Arabic, Persian, Indian and Maghi languages. He is a good singer and remains busy with music day and night. Many scholars adorn his court and remain busy discussing philosophical subjects. I attend his court and he brings me up giving food and drinks. He keeps me obliged to him by giving salt, grain and betel nut. He shows me favour and I attend his court as a member of his assembly. I discuss many tales about religious subjects and I related to him the most fascinating story of *Sapta Paikar*.”

In the above passage we find that the Minister Sayyid Muhammad was the chief army minister. We have seen above those three ministers, Ashraf Khan, Bara Thakur and Burhanuddin were called Lashkar Wazir, which we have rendered as war minister or defence minister. This man Sayyid Muhammad is not called Lashkar Wazir, through he was also attached to the army. It appears that he was also a war minister, but not a Lashkar Wazir. He was a learned man and well-versed in several languages like Arabic, Persian, Hindi and Maghi. He also liked music and always lived in the company of learned and cultured people. In his house, which was a miniature court, many people remained present and they gave demonstration of their talent in their respective fields, for example, some recited poems, some sang songs. In this way they entertained the audience. Alaol used to remain present in that assembly; he received patronage and various types of help from the minister. At his request Alaol composed the *Haft Paikar* in 1660 A.D.

Srimanta Sulaiman

He was a minister of the king Chandra Sudharma. At his request, Alaol composed *Tuhfa* and completed the unfinished *Satimaina Lor Chandrani*. The first was a book on Fiqh, while the second was written by Qazi Daulat at the request of Lashkar Wazir Ashraf Khan. Before completing the book the poet died and the book remained incomplete. Alaol completed the last part of the book. He says as follows about the minister Srimanta Sulaiman in his *Lor Chandani*.¹³

শ্রীমন্ত সোলেমান মহান গুণবন্ত।
পরদেশী গুণী পাইলে আদরে পোষন্ত॥
মহা হরসিত হৈল পাইয়া আশ্মাতে॥
অনু বস্ত্র দানে বিত্যা পোষন্ত সাদরে॥
তাহান সভাত গুণিগণ অবিবৃত।
জ্ঞান উক্তি রস কথা শুনন্ত সতত॥
একদিন হরিসে বসিয়া গুণবিধি।
জিজ্ঞাসন্ত কাব্য কথা রসের অবধি॥
প্রসন্ন হইল লোর চন্দ্রাবীর কথা।
অসাম্ম রহিল এই রস কাব্য গাথা॥
সাম্ম হইলে পুস্তক সম্বর্ধূর্ণ রস হঞ।
স্রোতা পাঠকের মন আৱতি পুৱাঞ॥
.....

এতক ভাবিয়া সোলেমান মহাস্বতি।
হরসেতে আদেশ করিল আশ্মা প্রতি॥
এই খণ্ড পুস্তক পুৱাও স্মার নামে।
দুধ্ধ মধু দোহ আনি মিলাও এক ধামে॥
মহন্ত আৱতি যে গুণিয়া আলাওল।

ଅନ୍ନୀକାର ବୈକଳ ଖାତ୍ରି ହିନ୍ଦୁଦେବ ବଳ॥
ସହାଜାଣର ଆଦେଶ ସହଜେ ପୂଜାସାଧ।
ଅନ୍ନଦାତା ହୟ ଯାତା ଜନକ ମସାନ୍ନ॥
ଶ୍ରୀମନ୍ତ ସୋଲେସାନ୍ ସତେ ବ୍ରହ୍ମାକଠ।
ଞ୍ଜିତେ ମତୀର କଥା ହରିମ୍ ଅନ୍ତର॥
ଆଦେଶ କୁସୁମ୍ ତାନ୍ ଶିରେତ ଧରିୟା।
ହୀବ ଆଲାଠେ କହେ ମଝାଲି ବଚିୟା॥

Translation: “Srimanta Sulaiman is a very virtuous man and he brings up virtuous foreigners with care. He became extremely glad to receive me and always entertains me with food and clothes. Learned people always discuss in his assembly on philosophical subjects. Once he sat in his court and discussed on various subjects. By chance the story of Lor Chandrani came up for discussion. This poem remained incomplete, and if completed, readers and hearers will be happy Considering this the great Sulaiman ordered me to complete the book so that milk and honey meet at one place (i.e. both stories of Satimaina and Lor Chandrani are found in one place). At his order Alaol promised to complete the book depending on the will of God..... The orders of great men are to be carried on because he was like a father giving food and shelter. Srimanta Sulaiman is a man of virtue. He becomes glad on hearing the story of Sati (chaste woman). At his order Alaol composed the poem in Bengali verse.” In his Tuhfa, Alaol writes about Srimanta Sulaiman as follows: ¹⁴

ସୁଧବ ଦୋସାନ୍ତ ଦେଶ ବାହି ମନ୍ଦ ପାପ ଲେଶ
ଶ୍ରୀ ଚନ୍ଦ୍ର ସୁଧର୍ମା ତତେ ରାଜା।
ଅଧିକ୍ ଯତ୍ନିୟା ସାତ୍ତ ଦେବେର ବିବକ୍ତ ଧାତ୍ତ
ବ୍ରହ୍ମକୂଳେ ଆସି କରେ ପୂଜା॥

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knowledge, God created him at an auspicious hour. He excuses (the offenders), he is kind, he is lucky and joyous, and he is a singer and plays instrumental music. He helps the lowly persons and works for other's benefit, giving up his own work. In the company of the learned, he discusses religious principles He said to me that it is very profitable to read the Tuhfa, but people do not understand it. So he asked me to render it into Bengali and I promised to do so."

Srimanta Sulaiman was an amatya or minister, and he was in charge of finance, or he was a finance minister. He was a learned man and he patronised the learned people including the poets. Like other ministers of Arakan, he also held court, in his assembly various people attended and held literary discussions, some sang songs and entertained the audience. In such assemblies, Srimanta Sulaiman ordered Alaol to complete the Lor Chandrani (began by Qazi Daulat) and to compose Tuhfa. The poet says that Srimanta Sulaiman loved the learned people so much so that he used to provide them food, clothes and shelter, particularly the foreigners on coming to Arakan received help and patronage from him. So at the present stage of our knowledge, we get the names of eight Muslim ministers of Arakan, three of them were Lashkar Wazir or defence or war ministers and two ministers.

Officers of the Judicial Department

We have seen above that many Muslims entered into Arakan by the 17th century and in their day to day life Muslim law was prevalent. For this reason, Muslim judges had to be appointed. They were called Qazis, and it appears that the Qazi were appointed following the examples of Bengal. Names of several Qazis are available in the writing of poets.

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We know Qazi Daulat is a poet and he wrote Sati Maina Lor Chandrani at the request of Lashkar Wazir Ashraf Khan. But it appears that he was a Qazi or judicial officer (or Judge) and the judge was also a poet. In those days Qazi was an official title and not a family title. It is from the late 18th centuries that Qazi became a family title when the Muslims lost their political power. When the post of Qazi was abolished, the descendants of those who once occupied the post of Qazi began to adopt this as a family title. Qazi Sayyid Sawood Shah or Maswood Shah was another Judge, whose name is available in the writings of Alaol. He writes:¹⁵

ছয়দ ছউদ শাহ রোসায়েব কাযী।
জন অন আছে বলি মোরে হৈল রাজী॥
দয়াল চরিত পীর অতুল মহত্ব।
কৃপা করি দিলা মোরে কাদেরী খেলাফত॥
যদ্যপিও অসক্ত আমি লৈতে সেই ভার।
পরশে পরশে তাম্বু হয় স্ফটিকার॥

Translation: “Sayyid Sawood Shah, the Qazi of Roshang accepted me as a disciple because I have a little learning. The king and good-natured Pir took pity on me and granted me Khilafat in the Qaderiya order. Through I am unable to take such a responsibility, continuous touch turn copper into gold.”

Alaol calls him “*Roshanger Qazi*” (Qazi of Roshang), which means he was Chief Justices of the kingdom of Arakan. It appears, however, that he judged the cases according to Muslim law, applied to the Muslims. It is not clear whether he also tried the cases of the Magh citizens, and it seems doubtful whether the Maghs had their own legal system. Sayyid Sawood Shah was not only a Qazi, he was also a Sufi belonging to the

Qaderiya order, because Alaol says that he became a Khalifa or chief disciple of the Qazi in the Qaderiya order. Names of some other Qazis are also available; they are Shuja Qazi, Gawa Qazi, Nala Qazi, Abdul Karim, Muhammad Husain, Usman, Abdul Jabbar, Abdul Gaffar, Muhammad Yusuf, Nur Muhammad and Raushang Ali. Details about them are not available.

Pir Masum Shah

Here we may refer to another saintly and religiously devoted person who was living there in the capital city of Roshang with family. He was Sayyid Masum Shah. His son Sayyid Mustafa was also a very learned and religious person. Alaol writes about him as follows:¹⁶

ত্রসাম্র দেশত এক মহা গুণবান।
রাজার অমাত্য শ্রীযুত জালালমান।।
হেমবন্ধু নৃপতির যথক ভাণ্ডাও।
সকলের উপরে তাহান অধিকার।।
আরো মহাগুণবন্ত গুণবন্ত প্রিয়।
অস্ত্র শস্ত্র বিশারদ নাটিক দ্বিতীয়।।
ধর্মশীল পর উপকারী মহাদানী।
নানা শাস্ত্র পাঠ্য রসিক মহাস্থানী।।
শ্রীযুত মাগন আর শ্রীমন্ত ছালালমান।
কায়া ভিন্ন দুই মথা একই পরাণ।।
দোহ মধ্যে কুটুম্বিতা আছে এ ঘনিষ্ঠ।
নিত্য প্রেম বাড়ে জদি হএ দুই প্রেষ্ঠ।
দুই মহাশয় মধ্যে তহল পিতৃত।
এক পীর স্থানে দোহ হইল স্মৃতিদ।।
পীর মাতাছুম শায়া বিদ্যা সিদ্ধা পীর।

মহাদাতা জ্ঞান গুৰুজিৰাপাৰ শতীৰাৱা

.....

হৈয়দ মোস্তফা তান প্ৰধান তনৱ।

ৰূপে কামদেব জিৰি জ্ঞান অতিশয়৷

.....

একদিন শিষ্য সোলেমান মহাশয়।

পীত্ৰেৰ আৰ্জিয়া নিয়া আপনা আল৷

আছিল পীত্ৰেৰ সত্ৰ পীত্ৰেৰ সন্ততি।

নিম্নিয়া আনিলে মাপন মহামতি৷

আৰু বহু আলিম ওলমা গুণবান।

নিম্নিয়া আনিলে শ্ৰীমন্ত সোলেমান৷

ততু কথা গীত রসে আনন্দিত শুনি।

সম্বোধিয়া কহিলা মাপন গুণমণি৷

নানা রস বচনে রজনী গেল আধা।

পুত্ৰাণ প্ৰসন্ন এক কহ পীত্ৰজাদা৷

এত শুনি হৈয়দ মোস্তফা গুণবানি।

হয়ফল মুলুক কথা কহিলা প্ৰকাশি৷

বদিউজ্জামাল নামে ছিল অপসতী।

বহু দুঃখে পাঠিলে নানা যত্ন কৰি৷

যথেক প্ৰসন্ন আদি যথ দুঃখ শোক।

শ্ৰীযুত মাপন মনে আৰ্জি বড় সুখ৷

আস্মাৰে তুলিলা গুৰুজয় অবধান।

ফাৰসি ভাষেত এই প্ৰসন্ন পুত্ৰান৷

সকলে না বুঝে এই ফাৰসি কিতাব।

পয়াৰ প্ৰবন্ধে রচ এই প্ৰস্তাব৷

Translation: “There is a great man in the country of Roshang, he is Sriyut Sulaiman, the minister of the king. He

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has got control over the treasury of the king containing gold and jewels. He is himself a learned man loves other learned people, he is also unparalleled in using arms. He is religious minded, he is a great donor and does good to others. He is expert in many subjects, he is humorous appreciative and respected by all. Sriyut Magan and Srimanta are such good friends that though they have two bodies, they have one soul. They have cordial relations, if both are great, their love increases. They have cordial relations and both became disciples of one Pir. Masum Shah is a learned, accomplished and sinless Pir..... Sayyid Mustafa, his eldest son, is also a learned and fine man The disciple one-day invited his Pir with his family and Magan was also present by invitation. Srimanta Sulaiman also invited many other learned men. In course of philosophical discussion Magan said, night has already passed half-way, so he requested the Pirzada to tell a story. So Sayyid Mustafa told the story of Saiful Mulk. There was a fairy named Badiujamal, after much hardship Saiful Mulk got her. He related the whole story and Sriyut Magan heard this and became happy. Magan told me that the story is written in Persian books, so compose this in (Bengali) poem.”

Here Alaol says that Srimanta Sulaiman was in charge of finance of the king. i.e. he was finance minister. He was a learned man and patronised learning and learned people. Magan Thakur, the Prime Minister and Srimanta Sulaiman were very good friends and both were disciples of the same Pir. The name of the Pir was Sayyid Masum Shah and his son was Sayyid Mustafa. One day, Srimanta Sulaiman invited his Pir to a feast, the Pir attended with his son, Magan Thakur and many learned people also attended the feast. After taking the meal when everybody engaged in merrymaking in their own way, Magan asked Sayyid Mustafa, the Pir's son to tell a story from

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old legends. Sayyid Mustafa related the story of Saiful Mulk Badiujjamal, it was liked by all and Magan Thakur was so pleased that he asked Alaol to write the story in Bengali so that all people who do not know Persian, may read and understand it.

We have seen above that Alaol started writing the book Saiful Mulk Badiujjamal by the order of Magan Thakur, but before the writing of the book was completed, Magan Thakur died and the book remained incomplete. Later another Prime Minister Sayyid Musa requested Alaol to complete the book and it was completed by his patronage.

We have given above the names of Muslim ministers in the court of Arakan in the 16th - 17th centuries. In the 17th century, the Muslim ministers continued in their service for about half a century consecutively from the time of Thiri Thudamma to Sanda Thudamma. As they occupied high posts their names have come down to us through the writings of poets, but there may have been many other Muslims occupying the subordinate posts, their names are not known. In fact an idea of the numerous Muslims holding subordinate posts and engaged in trade and other profession may be obtained if we remember that every minister held courts and assemblies, the poets further give an idea that these assemblies were attended by many Muslims.

Many Muslims were also there in the army. We have seen above that two big contingents of Muslim army entered into Arakan while restoring the king Min Saw-Mun in 1431 AD. Cavalry was not known in Arakan before the coming of the Muslims and the Muslims going from Bengal organised the cavalry. Lashkar Wazir Burhanuddin probably first organised cavalry as a fighting force. Poet Alaol was first appointed a

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horseman in the Arakanese army. In the coronation procession of Thiri Thudamma in 1635, the Lashkar Wazir led the Muslim cavalry contingent consisting of six hundred men. This is known from the evidence of the Portuguese Fray Sebastine Manrique. There were Muslim soldiers in the other contingents of the coronation procession led by other commanders. Taking all these into consideration it may be stated with confidence that there were many Muslims in Arakan engaged in their several professions.

Notes and References

1. Karim ed.: **Shariatnamah** of Nasrullah Khondkar, p.91.
2. **Arakan Rajsobhaya Bangla Sahitya**, p. 9.
3. **Sahitya Patrika**, Winter, 1364 B.S., pp. 59-60.
4. Sukumar Sen: **Bangala Sahityer Itihas**, part II, 1st Ananda edition, p.298.
5. **Sahitya Patrika**, Winter, 1364, B.S., p. 83.
6. **Ibid.**, p.83
7. **Ibid.**, pp. 57-58.
8. **Ibid.**, pp. 63-65.
9. Ahmad Sharif: **Bangali O Bangla Sahitya**, Part II. P. 483.
10. Ahmad Sharif: **Alaol Birachita Sikandamama**, Dhaka 1977/ 1384 B.S., pp.29-30.
11. **Ibid.**, pp. 26-27.
12. Ahmad Sharif: **Bangali O Bangla Sahitya**, Part II, P. 487.
13. **Sahitya Patrika**, Winter, 1364, B.S., pp. 66-67.
14. **Ibid.**, pp. 140-141.
15. Abdul Karim & Enamul Huq: **Arakan Rajsabhaya Bangla Sahitya**, p. 46.
16. Abdul Karim Sahityavisharad: "**Alaoler Atma Kahini**" in **Monthly Muhammadi**, 22nd Volume, No. 1, Kartik, 1357 B.S., pp. 44-45.

Chapter IV

MUSLIM POETS OF ARAKAN

In the above pages, we have given accounts of the Muslim ministers of Arakan in 16th - 17th centuries. They were not only the ministers; some of them were Prime ministers, army commanders, judges and some were saints and religious priests. They had vast influence in the country and court of the kings. The Arakanese king reposed great confidence in them. The ministers and high officers were learned men, who patronised learning and Muslim poets and writers. The poets wrote in Bengali, a good number of their poems have been discovered. Their writings prove that those who assembled in the court of ministers were all Bengali speaking people, or in other words many of them entered into Arakan from the neighbouring country of Bengal. Chittagong is adjacent to Arakan, and for some time Chittagong was under the Arakanese kings. So it may be presumed that most of the Bengali speaking people of Arakan went there from Chittagong. They could not forget their own language and that is why Bengali language and literature prospered in Arakan. This is the secret of the culture of Bengali language and literature in Arakan, where the Arakanese had their own language, but their language and literature did not develop. In this chapter we propose to give an account of the poets and their writings: the poets were not only Bengalees, but so far as known, they were mostly from Chittagong.

Abdul Karim Sahitya-Vishared should be given credit for collecting hundreds of *puthis* from different part of Chittagong. He also collected Bengali manuscripts written by Bengali poets living in Arakan. He and Dr. Muhammad Enamul Huq together

wrote a book entitled **Arakan Rajsabhaya Bangala Sahitya** giving accounts of their books and the subject matter discussed in those books. They thought that the poets adorned the court of the Arakanese kings, and so their book was entitled Bengali literature in Arakanese court. But actually it was not so, some of poets were in the service of the government, but they were patronised by the Muslim ministers and the poets adorned the court of the minister. There were also some poets, who live in Arakan, but was neither in the government service nor did they receive patronage from the ministers.

Qazi Daulat

The earliest known Bengali poet in Arakan was Qazi Daulat or Daulat Qazi. He was probably holding the post of Qazi, or a judge but he wrote his book by order of Lashkar Wazir Ashraf Khan. The poet also refers to the name of the reigning king of Arakan Thiri Thudamma. His book was entitled **Satimaina Lor Chandrani**. The poet says as follows about how he was influenced to write the book:¹

শ্রীযুক্ত আশরাফ অস্বাত্য প্রধান।
শালকলা পূর্বে যেন চন্দ্রিয়া সম্মান॥

.....

হেনকালে সভা করি বসিয়া থাকিতে।
কহেস্ত মানন্দ চিত্ত প্রসন্ন শুনিতে॥
আরবি ফার্সি বাবা তত্ত্ব উপদেশ।
বিবিধ প্রসন্ন কথা আছিল বিশেষ॥
ভুক্তরাতি ভুয়াতি ঠেঠ ভাষা বহুতর।
সহজে সহৎ সত্য আনন্দ বিয়ত॥

শেষে পূৰ্ণি কৌতুকে কহিলা মহামতি।
শুনিতে লোকক ব্রাজ ময়নার ভারতী॥

.....

ঠেঠা চৌপাইয়া দোহা কহিলা সাধন।
না বুঝে গোয়ারি ভাষা কোন কোন জন॥
দেশী ভাবে বহু তাক পঞ্চালীর ছন্দ।
সকলে শুনিয়া যেন বুঝে এ আনন্দ॥
তবে কাজী দৌত বুঝি সে আনতি।
পঞ্চালীর ছন্দ কহে ময়নার ভারতী॥

Translation: “Sriyut Ashraf Khan was a great minister, he was like a full moon.....Sitting in the assembly, he expressed his willingness to hear tales. There were many stories in Arabic and Persian, Gujarati, Gohari and Teth (Gohari and Teth were local languages used in Gohar area bordering West Bengal).

He was willing to hear the story of Lorak and Mai-nar Bharati (Satimaina Lor Chandrani) The poet Sadhan told the story in Teth Gohari, but these languages are not understood by many people. So wanted that the book should be composed in Panchali, Qazi Daulat felt the intention of the minister and composed Mainar Bharati in Bengali.”

Satimaina was a ballad composed and sung by local bards in Bhojpur area bordering ancient and medieval Bengal. There were such other ballads, which were very popular and entered into East Bengal including Chittagong, and crossed over to Arakan. Two famous compositions were Mulla Daud's Chandain and Sadhan's Mainasat. When these ballads were

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sung in the court of Lashkar Wazir Ashraf Khan, he took interest in the poem and asked Qazi Daulat to write the book in Bengali. So Qazi Daulat's work was a translation but it was a free translation and thus the poetic talent of the poet was maintained.

The story in brief was as follows: Lor, the king of Gohari married a beautiful princess name Maina or Mainabati. They were living a happy life, when once a yogi showed Lor a picture of another very beautiful lady Chandrani, the princess of Mohari. Chandrani was also married, but her husband was a short fellow and an impotent person, Lor went to Mohari, and began meeting Chandrani in private, but when their illicit connection was known, Chandrani's husband fought against Lor but was killed. Lor then married Chandrani. In the meantime, in his own kingdom at Gohari, his first wife Maina was living in anguish and sorrow due to his separation, and another person named Saton tried to win over Maina, but failed. Maina remained faithful to her husband Lor. Later Lor came back with Chandrani to his kingdom and joined Maina, thereafter all lived in happiness.

Qazi Daulat could not complete his work Saimaina Lor Chandrani; before completion he died and later Alaol completed the work at the request of another Muslim minister Srimanta Sulaiman about 1659 A.D. i.e. about 20 years after the death of Qazi Daulat. The poet was originally from Chittagong; it was said that he was born at village Sultanpur in Raozan Police Station, Chittagong District. His homestead is shown in the village but his family is no more to be seen.²

Poet Alaol

The poet Alaol was the most prominent of all the poets of Roshang, in fact he was one of the greatest Bengali poets of the 17th century, some scholars say that he was Rabindranath Thakur of the 17th century. From his own testimony, it is known that he was the son of a minister of Majlis Qutb of Fathabad in Bengal. He along with his father was going by boat, on the way they were met by Firingi pirates. Both the parties fought for some time, the father died a martyr, but the son, i.e. Alaol was made a captive and was taken to Roshang. Probably he was sold to the king of Arakan. First he was appointed a horseman in the army. While he was passing his days like this, he chanced to come across the Muslim ministers and high officials of the kingdom. Alaol was a learned man, he knew various languages, Bengali, Arabic, Persian, Hindi and Sanskrit and he was acquainted with famous literary works of those languages. He was also well-versed in vocal and instrumental music. When the ministers and other high officers came to know of his various qualities, they appointed him to teach their children and in this way he became well known to the learned and court circle. He was invited to attend the assemblies in the houses of ministers including the Prime Ministers. Magan Thakur, a leading Muslim of Roshang, who was minister and later Prime Minister under several kings took interest in him and patronised him in various ways. After Magan's death, other ministers and Prime Ministers also patronised him. In this way, Alaol was in the limelight of Arakan social and literary circle for thirty years as a leading figure in the kingdom of Arakan.

With the patronage received from the ministers, Alaol wrote six books (1) Padmavati (2) Saiful Mulk Badiujjamal (3) Haft Paikar (or Sapta Paikar) (4) Thufa (5) Sikandarnama and

(6) Last part of Satimaina Lor Chandrani. It may be mentioned that all these were poetical Bengali translations of books of the same name in other languages and written by great and renowned poets. But the translation was not literal but free, and Alaol maintained his poetical talents in all these books throughout. At times he became free from the text and his knowledge in various subjects have been very appropriately exposed. Dr. Muhammad Shahidullah writes in his praise as follows:³

“মধ্যযুগের বাঙ্গালী কবিদের মধ্যে আলাওলের স্থান অতি উচ্চ। সংস্কৃত, বাঙ্গলা, আরবি, ফারসি ও হিন্দি ভাষায় তিনি সুপাণ্ডিত ছিলেন। বাস্তবিক এই মুসলমান কবির সমকক্ষ ভাষাবিদ সেই যুগে কোনও কবি ছিলেন না, একথা জোরের সঙ্গে বলা যায়তে পারে।”

Translation: “Alaol’s name stands very high among Bengali poets in the medieval period. He was a good scholar in Sanskrit, Bengali, Arabic, Persian and Hindi languages. In fact it may be said in great confidence that there was no poet in those days who was equal to this Muslim poet.”

Dr. Dinesh Chandra Sen also praises him in the following words:⁴

“পদ্মাবতী কাব্যে আলাওলের গভীর পাণ্ডিত্যের পরিচয় আছে। কবি মথুরাচার্যের মগন, রূগন প্রভৃতি অষ্ট মহাগণের তত্ত্ব বিচার করিয়াছেন। খণ্ডিতা, বাসক সজ্জা,

কলহান্তরিতা প্রভৃতি অষ্ট নায়িকার ভেদ ও বিবাহের দশ অবস্থা পুণ্ড্রানুপুণ্ড্ররূপে আলোচনা করিয়াছেন, আয়ুর্বেদ শাস্ত্র লইয়া উচ্চাশ্বর কবিরাজী কথা শুনাইয়াছেন, জ্যোতিষ প্রসঙ্গের লগ্নাচার্যের কাহ্ন যাত্রার শুভাশুভের এবং যোগিনী তন্ত্রের বিস্তারিত ব্যাখ্যা করিয়াছেন; একজন প্রতীক এয়ার মত হিন্দুর বিবাহাদি ব্যাপারে সূক্ষ্ম সূক্ষ্ম আচারের কথা উল্লেখ করিয়াছেন ও পুরোহিত ঠাকুরের মত প্রশস্তি বন্দনার উপকরণের একটি শুদ্ধ তালিকা দিয়াছেন, এতদ্ব্যতীত টোলের পণ্ডিতের মত অধ্যায়ের শিরোভাগে সংস্কৃত শ্লোক তুলিয়া দিয়াছেন।”

Translation: “In the Padmavati, there is mark of profound scholarship of Alaol. The poet examined the nature of ‘*magan*’ *ragan*’ etc. eight ‘*mahaganas*’. He discussed in details the quarrels and separation of ten conditions of eight heroines like Khandita, Bashakshajja and Kalhantarita; he discussed the truths about Ayurvedic medical science; he discussed the good and evil of timing of journeys like ‘Lagnacharya’ of astronomical science; he explained ‘Yoginitantra’; he explained the abstruse rites followed in the Hindu marriages like an old Hindu married woman (whose husband is alive); he has supplied a correct list of praises and hymns uttered by Purohits. Besides he inserted Sanskrit and verses at the head of chapters like the Pandits of tools (Sanskrit and vernacular schools).”

Abdul Karim Sahitya Visharad discovered his manuscripts, brought the poet and his books from oblivion into

the limelight of history by writing more than fifty articles in various Bengali journals. Before him some of Alaol's books were published from Battala in Calcutta but these were not scientifically edited and so are not dependable for scholarly discussion. Abdul Karim Sahitya Visharad also edited the famous Padmavati of Alaol and Alaol was his most favourite poet. So his evaluation of Alaol is worth quoting:⁵

“মহাকবি আলাওল বঙ্গীয় মুসলমান সমাজে একজন ক্ষণজন্মী পুত্রসি। ‘সতী ময়না’র কবি দৌলত কাজীকে বাদ দিলে তাঁহার সদৃশ প্রতিভাবান পণ্ডিত লোক এই সমাজে আর দ্বিতীয়টি জন্ম গ্রহণ করেন নাই বলিলেও অতুষ্টি হয় না। মধ্যযুগীয় বহু সাহিত্যে তিনি মধ্যাহ্ন ভাস্করবৎ দেদীপ্ৰসন্ন। তাঁহার প্রতিভার ভাস্কর দ্যাতিতে সমগ্র বঙ্গ সাহিত্য আলোকিত হইয়া রহিয়াছে। তিনি একদিকে মুসলমান জাতির মধ্যে মহাকবির স্বর্গে সিংহাসনে সমাসীন, অপরদিকে তাঁহার সমসাময়িক হিন্দু কবিকূলেও তাঁহার আসন অতি উচ্চ। বায়লা ও সংস্কৃত ভাষায় তিনি যেমন অসাধারণ পণ্ডিত ছিলেন আরবী ও ফারসী ভাষায়ও তিনি তেমন অসামান্য তুৎপন্ন ছিলেন। একদিকে হিন্দু শাস্ত্র ও সাহিত্যে এবং অপরদিকে মুসলিম শাস্ত্র ও ফারসী সাহিত্যে তাঁহার যেরূপ গভীর জ্ঞানের পরিচয় পাওয়া যায়, তেমনটি আর কোন মুসলমান কবির মধ্যে পাওয়া যায় না। তিনি অতি উচ্চ স্তরের কবি প্রতিভা লইয়া জন্ম গ্রহণ করিয়াছিলেন।”

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Translation: “The great poet Alaol was genius in the Muslim society of Bengal. Apart from Daulat Qazi, the author of Satimaina, no second man like him in scholarship was born in this society. The statement is not an exaggeration. He is shining as the mid-day sun in Medieval Bengali literature. The whole Bengali literature has been illuminated by the light of his genius. On the one hand, he is seated on the golden throne of the great poets among the Muslims; on the other hand, among the contemporary Hindu poets also his position is very high. As he was well versed in Bengali and Sanskrit languages, so he was well-versed in Arabic and Persian languages. As he was a versatile genius in Hindu religion and literature so he was a great scholar in Muslim religion and Persian literature. Such erudition is not found in other Muslim poets. He was born with poetic genius of very high standard.”

Padmavati

The first book written by Alaol was the **Padmavati**. It was originally written by Malik Muhammad Jaisi in Hindi, he started writing the book in 923 A.H./ 1520 A.D and he completed it in 1540 A.D in the reign of Sher Shah. Jaisi probably died in 1542 A.D. i.e. two years after completing the book. The story centred round Raja Ratna Sen of Chitore, the famous beautiful lady Padmini, the princess of Ceylon and King Alauddin Khalji of Delhi. Raja Ratna Sen was leading a happy life with his queen Nagmati, but one day he heard about the beauty of Padmini. The king went to Ceylon with his retinue in the guise of a Yogi, on the way he underwent inhuman sufferings, but at the end he was able to marry Padmini and lived there happily. Nagmati, on

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the other hand, was passing her days in grief at Chitore in the absence of the king Ratna Sen. Ratna Sen later came back to his capital and lived with the two queens, Nagmati and Padmini. Ratna Sen once turned out one of his courtiers Raghav Cehtan from his Court, the later went to Dehli, met Sultan Alauddin Khalji, and related to him the story of the beauty of Padmini. The Sultan attacked Chitore to Padmini, but in the meantime king Ratna Sen had died and the two queens, Nagmati and Padmini gave their life in the pyre of their husband. Alauddin came back without achieving anything. This is in short the story of Padmavati. We have said above that Alaol composed the poem Padmavati by order of Magan Thakur in 1651 A.D.

Saiful Mulk Badiujjamal

After completing the composition of Padmavati, Magan Thakur ordered Alaol to write **Saiful Mulk Badiujjamal**. Alaol began writing this book, before completing it Magan Thakur died and so the composition of the book was left incomplete. After about a decade Sayyid Musa, another Prime Minister of Roshang requested Alaol to complete the book and the poet did so. This is a legendary tale in which there is love story of man and fairy. The story is found in the Arabic Nights, Alaol probably got the story from a Persian book.

Saiful Mulk was the son of king Sifuan of Egypt and Badiujjamal was the princess of Shapal, king of the fairy land Iran-Bostan. The prince along with his friend Sayyid, the son of Wazir, went to the fairyland and after great hardship met the lady of his love and ultimately married. His friend Sayyid also married the princess of Sarandeeep. Alaol completed composing Saiful Mulk Badiujjamal during 1669 – 70 A.D.

Haft Paikar (or Sapta Paikar)

This is the third book written by Alaol. The book was originally written in Persian by the great Persian poet Nizami Ganjavi. There are seven stories, which have found place in this book. King Numan of Ajam had a son named Bahram, according to the advice of the astrologers, the king sent his son to live in Yemen. An artist named Samna built for the prince seven towers in the palace; each tower was of different type and colour. In his absence the king died and the Wazir occupied the throne. The prince however returned and defeating the Wazir got back his throne. Thereafter he conquered seven neighbouring kingdoms and married seven princesses of those kingdoms. He allowed each of the princesses to live in each of the seven towers he had built earlier. When Bahram went to live with the princesses in the tower, he asked each of them to tell a story to please him. In this way seven princesses related seven stories which pleased the king, the seven stories from the subject matter of the book **Haft Paikar**. The story began on Saturday and ended on Friday, the first story that of Saturday is the longest. The stories are all interesting and pleasing. Needless to say, the stories were all educative and full of moral principles. The chief aim of the stories was to please the people. The book was written in 1660 A.D.

Tuhfa (or Tuhafat-un-Nasaih)

The book was originally written in Persian by Shaikh Yusuf Gada in 795 A.H. / 1392-93 A.D. It is a book on religious principles, and contains also advice and admonition that are helpful to lead a religious life of the Muslims. In those days books were not easily available, printing was not known,

learners and teachers had to copy books for them. Shaikh Yusuf Gada had a son named Abul Fath. Shaikh Yusuf wrote this book to serve as a guide to his son. So the book is not properly a Fiqh. It contains religious principles on the basic of Fiqh and general moral principles that help regulating an honest and religious life. Alaol, in the preface, gives the subject matter of the book in the following words: ⁶

আবুল ফতহ নামে পুত্র গুণবান।
রচিলা তোহফা গ্রন্থে বিস্মিতে তায়ান।।
আর যেবা পড়ে, শুনে তার হিত লাগি।
শাস্ত্র পান্থ জানাই হইলা পুণ্যভাগী।।
চারি দশ পঞ্চ বাব আছে ভিনু ভিনু।
শরীয়ত তরিকত ইমলাসী স্বীন।।
হাকিকত তৌহিদ ঈমান মহারত্ন।
সকল আছে এ যদি পড়ি বুঝ যত্ন।।
স্বারকে বোলএ বাব আরাবি ভাষা এ।
বিনু স্বারে গৃহ প্রবেশন নাহি যাএ।।
তোহফা কেতাব জান শরীয়তের ঘর।
পঞ্চ উপর চল্লিশ স্বার মনোহর।
কিবা স্বীনি কিবা দুনি কিবা ধর্ম-কর্ম।
ভোজন পিয়ন রতি বাথ শৌচ কর্ম।।
গৃহস্থিতি কর্ম নীতি লক্ষী বাড়ে টুটে।
কোন কর্ম নরকে পড়এ স্বর্গ উঠে।।
নামাজ, জাকাত, রোজা ফরজ নফল।
ওজু তয়ম্মম আদি যথেক গোসল।।
গোরের সওয়াল আদে যথেক কখন।
কোন কর্ম কৈলে হএ পাপ বিষোচন।।

आत तह नीति शास्त्र नावा कथा आहे।
विविध्या प्रकल कथिमु जाग आहे॥
कन्नना तदन नाष्ट माफ्ती फुतकान।
द्विसान प्रवेत्त कथा यादिस फदसान॥
एदाया काफया कुञ्जी कुफुतीर कथा।
ग्रामिला जादि क्तेतावेत्त यथेक चवश्चा॥
आतति कित्तव अल्ल फातमि भासाय
रुचिला वयेत छन्द ईसूप गदा ॥

Translation: “(Yusuf Gada) had a son named Abul Fath, the book Thufa was written for him, whoever reads the book will be benefited. There is forty-five Bab (chapters) written on Shariat, Tariqat, Haqiqat, Tauhid, and Iman according to Islamic religion. In Arabic door is called Bab, and without door one cannot enter the house. The book Thufa is the house of Shariat, which has forty-five doors. The book deals with religious and worldly matters like eating, drinking, cohabiting, and washing, auspicious matters on houses, works by which to go to heaven or hell etc. It also deals with Namaz, Roza, Zakat, Faraz (obligatory), Nafal (optional), Wazu (ablution), Tayammum (purification by dust), and all kinds of bath. It also deals with questions to be asked in the grave, acts for removing the Sin, and moral principles. These are not told out of imagination, they are found in the Furqan (Quran) and traditions of the Prophet, in books on Fiqh like Hidayah, Kafiya etc. Yusuf Gada composed the book in Persian verse on the basis of Arabic books.”

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The life of Muslim from birth to grave is regulated by Shariat or Islamic law and the sources of Islamic law are the Quran, the Hadis and Sunnat of the Prophet, Irma and Quays. Muslims jurists have explained these sources from time to time for the benefit of the Muslims. Apart from obligatory baths etc. matters like passing urine and going to the privy, purification there of, greetings among Muslim brethren, going to one's house and taking proper permission from the owners before entering, all these are guided by Shariat or Islamic law. The subjects have been discussed in forty-five Bab or chapters and these chapters are as follows:

- (1) Tawhid (oneness of Allah), (2) Iman (belief in Allah and his Prophet, Angels, divine Book, life in the next world, Taqdir, and day of Judgement), (3) Question-Answer in the grave, (4) Knowledge, (5) Injunctions of Shariat about Wazu, Ghusal, going to the privy and purification thereof, (6) Ibadat, performing namaz, (7) Payment of Zakat, (8) Fasting in the month of Ramazan, Shab-I-Qadr, (9) Musafir or way farers, and how to go, when to go, the auspicious days for travelling. In this chapter Hajj and Ziarat of Madina have also been discussed. (10) Recitation of the Quran and dowah, (11) Qasr, i.e. to offer Qasr prayer, this is applied to Musafir, (12) Marriage, (13) Cohabitation of husband and wife, (14) Eating, (15) Drinking, (16) Wearing dresses, (17) Sleeping, (18) Trading, (19) Darveshi, (20) Good behaviour, (21) Debt, (22) How to sit in majlis or assembly, (23) Scandal mongering, (24) Namaz, (25) Qaza Namaz, (26) Patience, (27) Tauba or repentance, (28) Miserliness, (29) Doing good deeds, (30) Charity, (31)

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Order, ordering to do good and prohibiting from doing bad things, (32) Good voice, (33) Games, (34) Hunting, (35) What to do when first moon is sighted, (36) Old age, to remain engaged in prayers in old age (after forty years), (37) Morning, (38) Shahid, i.e. martyrdom, (39) Forty type of good works, (40) Acquisition of wealth, (41) Heaven, (42) Hell, (43) Sunnat, (words and deeds of the Prophet), (44) Murder, (45) Various prescriptions.

The subject matters discussed above give an idea of the book. It is not a literary work. It does not discuss love affairs, nor does the book deal with legendary tales. Such books were rarely written in Bengali in the medieval period, in fact, this is the first book of its type. Later, however, a few more such books dealing with religious subjects were written, such as Nasrullah Khandakar's **Shariatnamah**, Nuruddin's **Daquaeq-ul-Haqaeq** and Sheikh Muttalib's **Kifayet-ul-Musallin**. Alaol wrote this book Tuhfa in 1663-64 A.D.

Sikandarnama

Sikandarnama was originally written by Nizami Ganjavi in Persian that the book was very popular to the scholarly world. Alaol composed it in Bengali by order of Nabaraj Majlis, the Prime Minister of Sri Chandra Sudharma, the Arakanese king. The book was very difficult to comprehend, it is presumed that the great Persian poet Nizami used words of five languages, Arabic, Persian, Hebrew, Pahlavi (Old Persian) and Nasrani (Armenian). Alaol himself says:

নিযাসীত স্মারত বাক্য তুচ্ছব কর্শ।

ভাষিয়া কহিলে তাহে আছে বহু ত্রসী।

সমুদ্র সঞ্চর সম গ্রন্থের গ্রন্থন।
বিশেষ ফারসী ভাষের বয়েত ভাষন।।
মহন্ত নিযামী বাক্য ইঞ্জিত আকার।
বিশেষত পঞ্চভাষ কিতাব মাত্মার।।
আরবি ফারসি আর নসরানী ইহুদী।
পহলবী সম্ব পঞ্চ ভাষের অবধি।।

Translation: “It is difficult to understand the difficult sentences of Nizami, but if they are explained they give pleasure. Writing book is like swimming in the sea, especially if it requires to explain Persian poems. Nizami uses similes, particularly he uses Arabic, Persian, Nasrani, Hebrew, Pahlavi etc. five languages.”

Sikandarnama contains the heroic exploits of Sikandar or Alexander. He was the son of King Philip of Macedonia; after the father's death Sikandar ascended the throne, his tutor or friend Aristotle was made his minister. Alexander became famous by conquering various countries; he even came to India, and defeated Porus of the Panjab. But his chief opponent was Darius of the Persia, by defeating him Alexander conquered the kingdom.

He is said to be the same as Sikandar Zulqarnain of the Holy Quran. It is a big volume and among Alaol's books Sikandarnama was next to Padmavati in terms of popularity. Fortunately a standard text of the book has now been published by the Bangla Academy under the editorship of Ahmad Sharif. As stated above Alaol completed the writing of this book in 1672 A.D. This was probably the last book written by him. The famous Alexandria port in Egypt was founded by

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Sikandar and he is also said to be the inventor of looking glass. He tried to get the water of life but failed and again to be immortal he went to Amaranagar, from there also he came back disappointed. A man gave him a handful of dust and he will be merged with dust after death.

Satimaina Lor Chandrani (Concluding part)

It may be remembered that Qazi Daulat started writing this book, but before concluding it he died. Alaol completed this book by order of Sulaiman in 1658 A.D. Satimaina is a big book, consisting of three parts. Qazi Daulat wrote first two parts, Alaol added the third part. In his part Alaol wrote "**Rattan Kalika O Madan Manjari Prasanga**" and "**Ananda Barmar Galpa**". In writing about Qazi Daulat's part we have said that while Lor was passing his days with Chandrani, leaving Maina alone, the later was passing her days in grief due to separation. She bore her grief with extreme patience, and at last patience bore fruit. Lor could realise his mistake, he returned home with Chandrani, and all three began to live a happy life. Alaol in his part of the book showed that God rewards those who have patience, and he completed the book saying that Lor was united with Maina.

Poet Mardan Nuruddin

Mardan wrote his book in Kanchi a place in Roshang. Abdul Karim Sahitya-Visharad discovered a manuscript of his book of which some pages both at the beginning and end were lost. In the available pages the title of the book is not found, in one place the word Nasira is found and so Abdul Karim Sahityavisharad and Dr. Enamul Huq write that the name of the

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book was **Nasiranama**, the book deals with Nasib or luck. So it is also believed that the name of the book was **Nasibnama**. The poet refers to the king Thiri Thudamma, who reigned from 1622 to 1638 A.D. So the book must have been written in between these two dates. Poet Mardan was therefore a contemporary of Qazi Daulat. In the colophon the poet's name is Mardan Nuruddin and the name of his Pir was Sayyid Ibrahim.

The poet praises the town of Kanchi saying that in that town there were living the Muslims, the Brahmins and the Kayasthas. Among the Muslims there were Alims or learned men who were busy with the Kitab and Quran, i.e. they were busy in religious pursuits. The Brahmins were also learned Pandits and they were busy with their books or Kavyas. The Kayasthas were also there busy in their respective works. Kanchi was probably the name of a township within the kingdom of Roshang.

The subject matter of the book is fate, whatever is in fate will happen, God does not help the proud people and pride hastens their fall. The story is as follows: Abdul Nabi and Abdul Karim, two friends were engaged in business. They were so friendly that they wanted to make their friendship lasting and for this reason they promised to get their children married. The agreement was that if one had a son and another had a daughter they would get them married and vice versa. Abdul Nabi had a son, while Abdul Karim had a daughter, but unfortunately Abdul Karim lost his wealth and became poor. Abdul Nabi forgot his promise and prepared to get his son married elsewhere. Abdul Karim tried to remain Abdul Nabi about his promise but the later did not pay heed to it, rather returned Abdul Karim insulted. Abdul Karim's wife consoled her husband saying that destiny is irrefutable. Later it so happened

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that their promise was fulfilled and Abdul Nabi's son married Abdul Karim's daughter. ⁷

Quraishi Magan and his book Chandravati

Quraishi Magan's forefather came from Arabia to Gaur and from there one member of the family moved towards the east, came to Chittagong and ultimately moved to Arakan. Quraishi Magan wrote a book entitled **Chandravati**. Dr. Enamul Huq discovered a manuscript of which pages both at the beginning and end were lost. So his antecedents and his identity can not be ascertained. Abdul Karim Sahityavisharad and Dr. Enamul Huq thought that the poet Quraishi Magan was the same person as Magan Thakur, the Prime Minister of Arakan and the patron of the poet Alaol.⁸ But nowadays scholars hold a different opinion. They say that Quraishi Magan was a different person, he had no connection with Magan Thakur, the Prime Minister.⁹

There are some families at Nawazishpur (old Fatehnagar) in Raozan P.S. of Chittagong district who claims that they belong to the family of Quraishi Magan. Late Abdul Huq Chowdhury, a famous local historian of Chittagong, belonged to the same family. He collected information about his family and he is also of opinion that Quraishi Magan was a different person from Magan Thakur, the Prime Minister of Roshang. Quraishi Magan's manuscript was collected from his family. From the genealogical tree that Abdul Huq Chowdhury could collect from his family, it appears that from Quraishi Magan ten generations have so far passed and by this calculation. Quraishi Magan seems to have been alive in the beginning of the 18th century or in other words, Quraishi

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Magan flourished about 50/60 years later than Magan Thakur. According to family tradition of Abdul Huq Chowdhury, Quraishi Magan had a brother named Bhikan, on the death of both the brothers, Magan left a son named Shujaul and Bhikan a son named Mujahid. Quraishi Magan probably wrote his book while he was living in Arakan. Shujaul and Mujahid, due to some reason, killed a Magh officer and to avoid consequences fled to Chittagong. It may be remembered that Chittagong was then a part of the Mughal Empire in the Bengal subah. So by fleeing to Chittagong, they escaped and came out of the reach of the Magh government. Shujaul and Mujahid first stayed for some time at Silimpur in Sitakund P.S. but later moved to Fatehnagar (now renamed Nawazishpur) in the Raozan Police station. Here they acquired lakhiraj or rent-free land. They belonged to a family of poet, may be they were also educated persons, and one of their descendants Tita Ghazi Faqir was probably a Faqir or a man of saintly disposition. This is why probably the Mughal Government granted them rent-free lands. The family still holds the landed property and is widely known as a respectable family.

Abdul Karim Khondkar

The poet Abdul Karim Khondkar was born in Arakan, and his forefathers were engaged in state services of Roshang. The poet writes about his genealogy as follows:¹⁰

ଏତେ ମୁନ ଏ କିତାବ ଡେଲ ଝେନ ସ୍ମୃତି ।
କହିବସ କିଛିତ ମୁନେ ତାର କୃତି॥
ରମାନ୍ତ ମୟତେ ଏକ ଗ୍ରାମ ସବୁହତ ।
ଦିତା ଭୂସି ଦିତା ବାସ ଧରିଛେ ବନ୍ଦ୍ରା॥

কাজি মুফতি তালিম আলিম জখ আত্র।
ফকীর দ্রবেশ আত্র সে গ্রাম মাজার।।
বড় ২ মুসলমান তাহাত নিবাস।
বুপ মস্ত্র কেহ কথা করি পরিত্যাস।।
দরিদ্র দুঃখিত জদি আটল দুয়ার।
শূন্য হস্ত কেহ ন ফিরা এ পুনর্ব্বার।।
মহজিদ উঠাইল নামাজ করিতে।
তে কারণে নাম কৃতি রাখিলা জগতে।।
বহুজন আলিম আনিয়া একাত্র।
দান দিয়া নামাজ করা এ নিরন্তর।।
কাহাকে খতিব করে কাহাকে ইমাম।
কাহাকে মহল্লি করি করে প্রনাম।।
বুপ মস্ত্রি আদি জখ সবেত দুর্লভ।
তেকারণে দিন দিন ব্যতিল বৈভব।।
সামলা সুন্দর তনু আশে আতোহন।
প্রতিদিন চলি জাএ বুপের সদন।।
ভাল নাম পাইয়াছে প্রসাদে রাজার।
সাদি উক বাবা তুলি প্রশংসা জাহার।।
সাদি উক তুলে জোরে বন্ধিক উপর।
স্রষ্টা হই পাইলেস্ত তেহা মাল ঘর।।

.....

আতিবর নাম থিছে নিজ বাপ মাজ।
বাবা নাম খুইলেস্ত মরউশ্বা স্নোহং রাএ।।

.....

একদিন আমাকে ডাকিয়া সেই জন।
পর্যাইয়া শুনিলেস্ত কিতাব কখন।।

দুল্লা মজলিশ নামে কিতাব প্রধান।
হরষিত হৈল মন শুনিয়া তাহান॥
তোলিলা ফারসি ভাষা ন বুঝে সকলে।
কেহ বুঝে কেহ লুকে সুনিয়া বিফলে॥
মনে ভাষ্য করিলেন যত্রে সইজন।
জাহাৰ কিত্বিতি জশ থাকে এ ভুতন॥
আর ভাবে পুণ্য আছে পশু জানাইলে।
আশির্বাদ করিতেহু পরিয়া শুনিলে॥
তাতে মহাজন আজ্ঞা ন জাএ লঙ্ঘন।
অধিকার কেহু; তান মাবিলু তচন॥

.....

রমছুল মিয়া নামে প্রপিতা আসার।
বিসএ পদবি পাইল প্রসাদে রাজার॥
ডিম্বার হাছিল জখ তাহার কারণ।
লইয়া ভেট এ সব নূপের চরণ॥
তানপুত্র মহন আলি ডিম্বার দুবাসি (দোভাষী)।
দিত্য বস্তু হৈল নূপ স্থানে দেএ আসি॥
রসায়ত জখ সদাগর আইসে জাএ।
নূপের সম্মুখে নিয়া তচন ফিরাএ॥
তান পুত্র আলি আকাবর ধরে নাম।
শুদ্ধ মতি মোহাজন সর্ব গুণে ধাম॥
আসি তান পুত্র আবদুল করিম খুন্দকার।
আশা কেহু এই কিতাব রচিত পয়াত্র॥

Translation: “Now hear how this *kitab* became a *puthi* (i.e. rendered in to Bengali verse). I will tell you something about it. In the town of Roshang, there is

a beautiful and heavenly village named Bandar. In that place many Qazis, Muftis, teachers and students, Faqir and *darvesh* live. Wealthy Muslims live there and talk to the king in friendly terms. If any poor man comes to a house he does not go disappointed. The people there erected mosques to say prayer and thus left their names to be remembered. Muslim learned people were brought there, some were appointed **Khatib**, some **Imam**, some offer prayer as **musulli**. Some of the people were minister of the king, they all work for increasing the wealth. There was one man there who received title from the king, the title was Sadi-uk-Nana. He was the chief of the merchants, and he became in-charge of the mint His name was Atibar, he was so named by his parents, but the Magh king gave him the title of 'Nana' One day he called me and heard the book **DullaMajlis**, read to him. He was happy and said that many persons cannot understand Persian, some understand, other hear it from those who can read and understand. So if it is rendered into payer (or in Bengali) people will bless you. At his order I promised to write the book in Bengali..... The name of my great grandfather was Rasul Mia, the king was kind to bestow him wealth and title. His duty was to collect dues from boats or ships and to send state dues to the king. His son was Machan Ali, he was interpreter of ships. If he came across a good thing, he used presented it to the king. His duty was to present before the king all traders who came to Roshang. His son was good souled and good charactered Ali Akbar. I am Abdul Karim

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Khondkar, his son. I hope to compose this book in Bengali verse.”

In the above passage, the poet Abdul Karim Khondkar gives a good picture of Muslim Society in his area, Bandar, probably port area of Roshang, the capital city Mrohaung. There an officer established a settlement, his name was Atibar, he was given the little of Sadi-uk Nana, he was a mint officer, and probably had some control over the merchants. Atibar's father name was Umar, it is not known whether Umar held any state service. Atibar's Pir was Hamidullah. In the place of Bandar, where Atibar established a settlement, many rich Muslim families built their houses; Atibar built there a mosque. Alims or Muslim learned men were settled there, some were appointed as **Khatib** and some as **Imam**. The residents were busy in offering prayers and helped the poor, if any happened to come over there. Such a bright picture of the Muslim Society in Arakan is really encouraging because it shows how the Muslims lived there as an affluent people.

The poet gives the names of his ancestors. His great grand father was Rasul Mia, he was a custom officer in the king's service. His grand father was an interpreter in the customs office of the same king, his duty was to present foreigners before the king and to interpret one's views to the others. In this way he used to come in contact with all traders who came to Roshang and he must have been very trusted officer of the king. The poet's father Ali Akbar was probably a private person, if he was in the state service, the poet would have mentioned it proudly. The poet himself was a learned man, probably he was also a private person and he adorned the court of Atibar, the Sadi-uk. It was at the requested of Atibar that the poet wrote his book **Dulla Majlis**.

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Dulla Majlis was a book dealing with religious subjects, it was a big volume consisting of 33 chapters. The book was composed in 1200 A.H./1785 A.D. In this same year the Burmese king Bodawpaya conquered Arakan and annexed it to the kingdom of Burma. So the poet wrote this book in the last year of the independent kingdom of Arakan. Before that the poet wrote two other books **Tamim Ansari** and **Hazar Masail**.

Poet Abdul Karim

He was also known as Shuja Qazi, he wrote in versical form a story of Roshang known as **Roshanger Panchali** (History of Roshang). He was an inhabitant of Shadarpara of Arakan and the poet was alive during the first part of the 18th century.

Qazi Abdul Karim

He was an inhabitant of Qaim of Arakan and was the author of five books: **Rahatul Qulub**, **Abdullar Hazar Sawal**, **Numama**, **Madhumalati** and **Darige Majlis**. The first three books deal with religious matters, Madhumalati was a love story, and the subject matter of the last book cannot be ascertained.

Poet Abul Husain

He lived at Bandar near Mrohaung, the capital of Arakan. He wrote a book entitled **Adamer Larai** (Battle of Adam). The subject matter cannot be determined.

Ismail Saqib

He was a man of Qaim, and wrote a book entitled **Bilqisnama**. It is probably a love story, in which a woman named Bilqis was the heroine.

Qazi Muhammad Husain

He was a man of Bandar, a place near Mrohaung of Roshang. He wrote three books entitled **Amir Hamza**, **Dewalmati** and **Haidar Jung**.

We have given above the names of poets who flourished in Arakan and the titles of their books. We find that Bengali literature produced in Arakan was very rich. Qazi Daulat and Alaol were very famous for their works; they were greatest of all Muslim poets in the whole medieval period. The presence of so many Muslim poets in Arakan and the production of so many books in Bengali, show that there was a Bengali Muslim Society there who were ready to receive and read them. This is a supporting evidence to show that there were many Muslims living in Arakan who were literate and highly cultured. This is also a strong evidence to prove that Muslims had entered into Arakan from various parts from long past.

Notes and References

1. **Arakan Rajsabhaya Bangla Sahitya** op. cit., p. 14.
2. **Ibid.**, pp. 13-14.
3. Dr. Muhammad Shahidullah: **Bangla Sahityer Katha**, 2nd part, Dhaka 1371 B.S., p. 133.
4. D.C.Sen : **Bangla Bhasha O Sahitya**, 8th edition, p. 321.
5. **Arakan Rajsabhaya Bangla Sahitya**, p. 44.
6. **Sahitya Patrika**, Winter, 1364, B.S., pp. 139-40.

7. Abdul Karim: "**Roshang Bangla Sahitya**". Bangla Sahitya Samity, Chittagong University, 1994, pp. 22-23.
8. **Arakan Rajsabhaya Bangla Sahitya**, pp. 30-33.
9. **Roshang Bangla Sahitya**, pp. 41-45.
10. **Descriptive Catalogue of Bengali Manucrits in Munshi Abdul Karim's collection**, tr. By S.S. Husain, pp. 217-18.

ARAKAN AND SOUTH EAST ASIA 1500 A.D.



ARAKAN AND SOUTH EAST ASIA : THE GREEN AREAS ARE MARKED AS ISLAMIC STATES IN 1500 AD. The Times Complete History of the World, showing cultural division of Southeast Asia (distribution of major religions) in 1500.(Edited by Richard Overy, Eighth Edition 2010, page 148.)

Chapter - V

ROHINGYA MUSLIMS OF ARAKAN

In the last part of the 18th century, Arakan faced fierce political crisis due to factional fights and in the turmoil that followed the Burmese king Bodawpaya conquered Arakan in 1785 A.D. and annexed her to his Burmese kingdom. By that time the neighbouring kingdom of Bengal had already passed to the control of the English East India Company. Burma was soon to feel the brunt of the English rule. It happened as follows. In 1760 Chittagong was ceded to the English and there were border clashes between the two neighbours - English of Chittagong and the Burmese king. In the first Anglo-Burmese war of 1825, the English occupied Arakan, according to the Yandaboo treaty Burma ceded Arakan, Tenasserim, Manipur, Kachar and Jaintia to the English and promised to pay Taka one core to the English as war indemnity. The English laid the foundation of the town of Akyab in the same year at the confluence of Kaladan River. Akyab now became the capital of the English occupied Arakan.

Mr. Robertson who was a district magistrate of Chittagong was appointed the first civil ruler of Arakan. He assessed the condition of Arakan and sent a report to the governor general of India. In this report he said that Arakan had great potentials of growing agricultural commodities, particularly rice. Arakan had huge quantity of fallow land, and the forest-land also remained unutilised. The Arakanese or Burmese were lazy; they were not accustomed to hard work. Moreover the Society was

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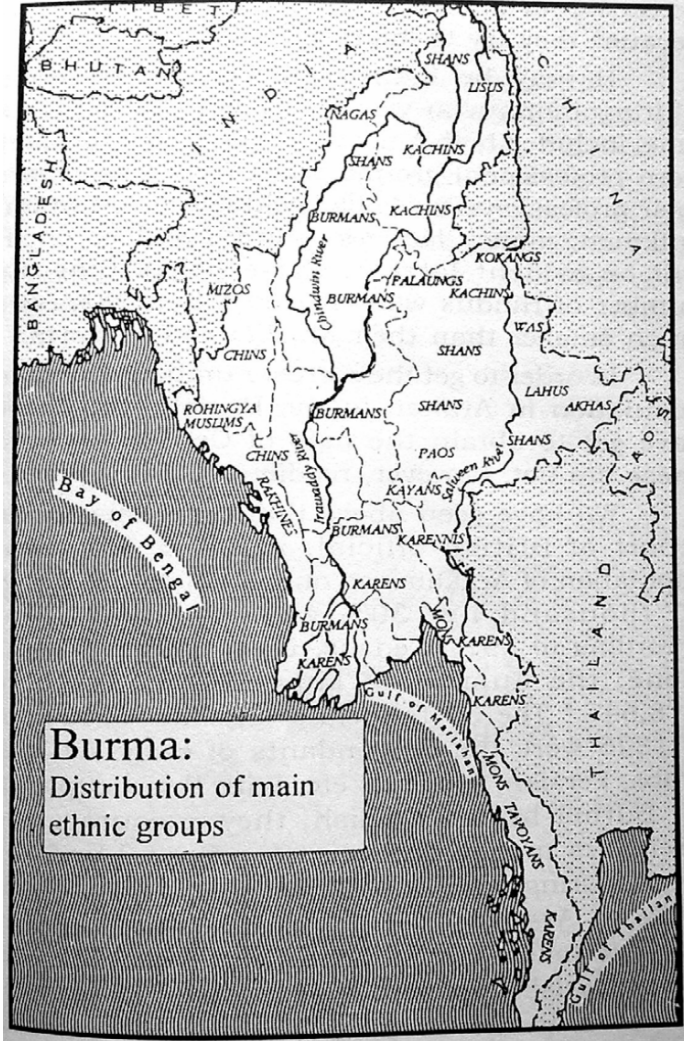
matriarchal, in which females mostly did outdoor works. So Robertson suggested that to cultivate lands and to grow rice and other agricultural commodities, farmers from Bengal particularly Chittagong should be sent to Arakan and settled there. Mr. Paton succeeded Robertson as the ruler of Arakan. He supported Mr. Robertson's opinion about importing Muslim agriculturists from Chittagong to Arakan. In his report we get an important evidence about Muslim population in Arakan. He gives the population figure in Arakan as follows: Maghs 60 thousand, Muslims 30 thousand and Burmese 10 thousand. So on the date of the conquest of Arakan by the English, there had already been living 30 thousand Muslims and these 30 thousand Muslims were living there from before, now their descendants and successors have increased by leaps and bounds.

We have got here a starting point to get the number of Muslims in Arakan, it is around the year 1825, and the number of Muslims was 30 thousand, that is 30 percent of total population. Then followed another wave of Muslim migration into Arakan. This time they were encouraged to go there from Chittagong by the English rulers¹ because their settlement was essential to encourage agricultural. A report says: ²

“After the land has been got into working Chittagonians are recognised as the most capable of development and some Arakanese landlords have expressed the view that Chittagonians are preferable as tenants to any other races, both because they are willing to pay a better rent, and because they try to improve the land.”

It may be mentioned here that those Chittagonians who went to Arakan during this time, included both Muslims and Hindus;

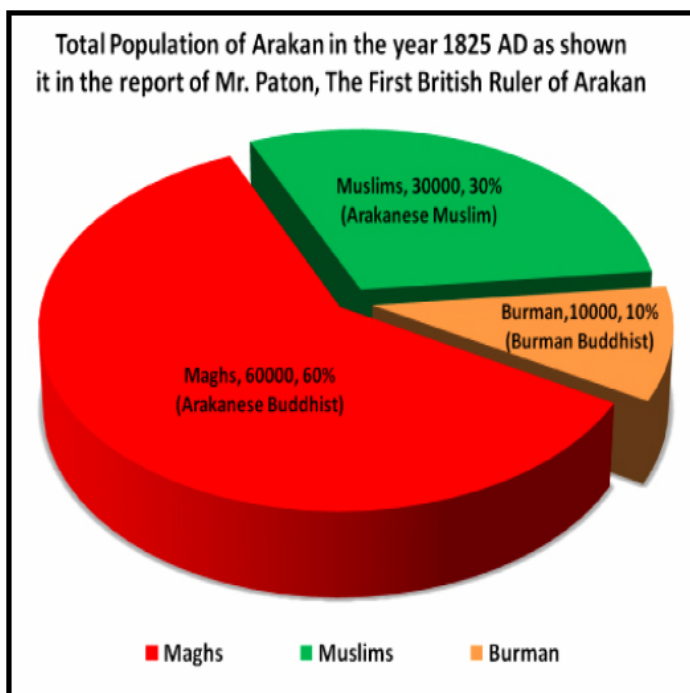
BURMA: DISTRIBUTION OF MAIN ETHNIC GROUPS



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the later were professional groups and they started there their professional trade like gold and black smith, milkmen, money lenders, grocers and so on; it will be evident later in these pages that the number of Hindus who entered into Arakan was much smaller than their Muslim counterparts.

In order to get the correct number of Muslim population in Arakan in the British period, we have got to obtain the help of Census reports. These are not, however, readily available.



We have seen above that according to the report of British official, in 1826, the total population of Arakan was only one lakh, of which 30 thousand i.e. 30% were Muslims. Now according to 1911 Census, in the Akyab district alone, the

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number of Muslims increased to 1,78,647. The 30 thousand Muslims of Arakan of 1826 were the descendants of early settlers, Arabs, Persian, Mughals etc. With the occupation of Burma by the English, they encourage the foreigners mostly farmers from Bengal and the neighbouring district of Chittagong to come and settle in Arakan. The object of English was to cultivate fallow lands and extract resources. But it is surprising to note that though the number increased, in the 1911 Census also, the number of Muslims was only 33%. It means that not only the Muslims increased, but the people of other religious groups also increased. Taken an over-all view, the increased was not due to import of the Muslims by the British.

The Muslims of Arakan are divided into Thambaikkya, Zerbadi, Kamanchi and the Rohingyas. The Rohingyas are the most predominant, they form about 80% of the Muslim population of Arakan. In 1981 Census, the Burmese government declared that all Muslim groups of Arakan were foreigners and they were divided as follows: ³

Chittagong Kollar (Rohingya).....	1,86,327
Bengali Kollar	15,586
Indian Kollar	3,587
Uriya (of Orissa) Kollar	3,527
TOTAL	<u>2,09,027</u>

Kollar means foreigners, probably, the word was derived from Kuli, labour. This is however, a wrong calculation, the Burmese Government deliberately distorted the figure to show that the number of Rohingya was very small. In 1978, when Rohingya entered into Cox's Bazar, to escape from Burmese torture, it was known that the number of Muslims in

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Arakan was 10 lakh or one million. In 1992 the Human Rights group of **Asia Watch** of U.S.A. reported in one of their bulletins that there are 14 lakh Rohingyas in Arakan.⁴ In fact it is not possible to ascertain the exact number of Rohingyas in Arakan due to suppression of facts by the government. But we may accept the figure supplied by the **Asia Watch** that the number of Rohingyas of Arakan is 14 lakh.

Arakanese Muslims, i.e. Rohingyas mainly settled on the fertile banks of the rivers, Lemru, Kaladan, Mayu, Mingan and Naf. Naf River is the border between Bangladesh and Arakan, so the Rohingyas settled on the Arakanese side of the Naf. The villages or places where the Rohingya settlement is most predominant are given bellow:

On both sides of the Lemru river - villages or settlements are: Sara, Bandar, Kualong, Rajarbil, Baldipara, Pangdu, Kambao, Shishruk, Melatudyng, Batang, Shendong, Piparang, Daspara, Meyonbu, Butlu, Halingbong, Halimpara, Chenbbli, Puran para, Chittapara, Kottipara, Paikpara, Kaim, Barbassa etc.

On both sides of the Mingan river - villages and settlements are: Nisa, Padong, Julapara, Mainakachcha, Manjundak, Sakhariperang, Rajapara, Babudong, etc.

On both banks of the Kaladan river - villages and settlements are: Chandana, Miurkul, Kainiperang, Bakaim, Shuling perang, Tangfak, Bhave, Afskau, Keri, Qazipara, Keyeda, Rohingya para, Ramju para, Ambari, Keyakta Khenda, Baharpara, Lakhnanpara, Kulwari, Tangtangnirang, Pallarpara, Meyoktang etc.

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On the both sides of the Mayu river - villages and settlements are: Rathedaung, Machchari, Angperayang, Rajarbil, Raushenpereng, Jopepereng, Samila, Puimali, Rowainga-daung, Alikhang, Moi-daung, Suofang, Maruchang, Khnachang, Gaulengi, Buthidaung, Lawadang, Taimongkhali, etc.

On south and eastern side of the river Naf - villages and settlements are: Maungdaw, Amtala, Battala, Walideng, Kazirbil, Bolibazar, Nagpura, Bara Sikdarpara, Kaaripara, Habshipara, Arabshah para, Shuja para, Rajarbil, Nurullahpara, and Ali Chanjaw, Udaung, Shilkhali, Andaung.

The etymology of the above place-names is worth examination by scholars. For example Rajarbil (Rajapara on the Mingdon River) is common in all the above lists. Julapara, Kazipara, Nurullahpara, Habshipara, Paikpara are all indicative of the founders of the places, some of these were settled by the professional classes. I have a feeling that if proper survey is made and the origin and developments of the Rohingyas are studied from historical and sociological points of view, the historical perspective of the Rohingyas will be more clear and apparent.

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1. **Prabasi**, Vol. VII, 1351 B.S.,p. 242.
2. R.B Smart: **British-Burma Gazetteer**, Vol. A. **Akyab District**, p.129.
3. **Ibid.**, pp. 222-245.
4. **Dhaka Digest**, Vol. V. No. 4, 1991, p. 17.

Chapter - VI

CONCLUSION

In the above pages we have tried to place the Rohingyas in proper historical perspectives. Of late the Rohingyas have lost their former position, and they have been forced to leave their heart and home and take shelter in the neighbouring Bengal. It is not due to the fault of the Rohingyas themselves and the reason is political and coercive policy of the Burmese government. In Arakan, the Rohingyas form a solid group, which is an eyesore to the Burmese government.

Burmese became independent in 1948, and the misfortune of the Rohingyas began. The tales of the Rohingya misfortunes are out of context here, so we shall not discuss them. In short we may say that the Rohingyas were victims of military rule established by General Ne Win. He and his Revolutionary Council and Burma Socialist Party Programme, made it a policy to suppress and oust the Rohingya Muslims out of the country. Their first step was to declare the Rohingyas as aliens, and to restrict their movements. Next the Arakanese administration was Buddhaised, expelling the Muslim or transferring them to out of the places, and thus reduced their number day by day. Next step was to ban all Rohingya socio-cultural organisations and the Rohingya language programme broadcast from Rangoon Radio (BBS) was also discontinued. Side by side the government also perpetrated oppressions against the Rohingya Muslims. Police and army personals entered into the

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house of prominent Muslims, made arrests indiscriminately, extorted money, insulted women and harassed and tortured all who opposed them in their illegal and inhuman activities.

Under these circumstances the Rohingyas had no alternative but to leave the country in search of safety. In fact the Burmese government began oppressing the Rohingyas from the beginning, i.e. after Burma became independent. But we have omitted the past history and we would like to discuss in short the two exoduses of the Rohingyas across the Naf River to Bangladesh. Arakan state authorities under the supervision of the Burmese Council of State started a cleansing operation against the Rohingya Muslims in 1978. The operation was named Nagamin or King Dragon operation and its object was to intimidate the Muslims and compel them to leave Arakan. The operation was started in March 1978 and such oppression was perpetrated that within a short time the number of Rohingya refugees to Bangladesh exceeded 3,00,000 who were given shelter on humanitarian grounds by the Bangladesh government.

When the government of Bangladesh took up the matter through diplomatic channel, the government of Burma denied the allegation, they rather said that due Census checking, some Bengali illegal immigrants fled to Bangladesh for fear of being detected. Through intense diplomatic exercises, in which the United Nations were also involved, the international community paid attention to this humanitarian problem. The government of Burma was ultimately forced to take back their people. The United Nations High Commission for Refugees took active part in sending back the refugees to their homes; according to their estimate 3,00,000 Rohingyas entered into

REFUGEE FLOW FROM BURMA



Source: Institute for Asian Democracy

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Bangladesh, stayed there for nine months. During this time about 40,000 men, women and children died of hunger and diseases, 2,00,00 returned to their homes and the rest, majority of them left Bangladesh for India, Pakistan,U.A.E, Saudi Arabia and Malaysia.

The refugees returned under an agreement between the Bangladesh and Burma, but the government of Burma was not sincere in their commitments. In 1982, they enacted a Citizenship Law in which the citizens were grouped into three - National, Associate and Naturalised.

The national citizens are those who settled in Burma before the occupation of the country by the British.

Associate and Naturalised citizens are those who entered into Burma during the British rule. Those people who have been granted citizenship on submission of application under the Citizenship Act of 1948 were grouped as Associate citizens. Those who did not apply and were not granted citizenship under the Citizenship Act of 1948 were grouped as Naturalised Citizens.

It is not difficult to understand that the Rohingyas did not apply for Associate citizenship under the Citizenship Act of 1948, because they had been old settlers and were eligible to be National. But the most important point to be noted is that the Associate and Naturalised Citizens could not own property, and participate in political activities. Another section of the Act provided that whether a person was National or not to be decided not by the court of law, but by the Council of State. The sole aim of this Act was to exclude the Rohingyas from

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Citizenship and make them a people without any right or any State. This gave the government the handle to drive the Rohingyas out of the country.

So another wave of oppression over the Rohingyas started, and the Rohingyas had no other alternative but to leave the country to save their life, property and honour. The result was that in 1991-92, again there was a Rohingya refugee problem in Bangladesh, and about 3,00,000 Rohingyas crossed over the Naf River and entered into this side of the border of Bangladesh. Again there started diplomatic exercises, again the involvement of the United Nations and the international community. The Burmese government are again taking back the Rohingyas, but their return is not yet complete.



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The Rohingya refugee problem is a creation of the Burmese ruling Junta, it was created by denying the Rohingyas their citizenship rights which is inalienable, a right that cannot be taken away by enacting discriminatory law. The Rohingyas have been settling in Arakan from long before the British occupation of the country. In fact the forefathers of Rohingyas had entered into Arakan from time immemorial. The Burmese ruling Junta do not know, that the Rohingyas have a long history, tradition and culture that they had built up in Arakan by their long and historic settlement. In fact the Rohingyas have been settling in Arakan for more than a thousand years. ###

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Professor Abdul Karim M.A. Ph.D. (Dhaka), Ph.D. (London), FASB, was born at village Chapachari, P.S. Banskhali, in the district of Chittagong, Bangladesh. He was educated in the Chittagong Islamic Intermediate College, Dhaka and London Universities. He was in the teaching staff of the Dhaka and Chittagong Universities and was for same years a senior Fellow in the Rajshahi University. He, in turn, occupied the posts of Professor of History, Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Vice-Chancellor of the Chittagong University. He has so far published 29 books (9 in English and 20 in Bengali) and more than 200 articles both in Bengali and English.

Professor Karim was honoured by various national and international institutions. Important of these are as follows:

- 1) The Numismatic Society of India awarded him Akbar silver medal in 1960 for his contribution to the Bengal numismatics.
- 2) Ekushey Padak 1995.
- 3) On the occasion of the celebration of 50th anniversary of the United Nations, the IARF (International Association for Religious Freedom) awarded him peace prize 1995.
- 4) World Citizenship Identity Card 1995.
- 5) FASB (Fellow of the Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, Dhaka).
- 6) Honorary visiting Professor of world spiritual University of New York, 1995.
- 7) On the occasion of the 75th anniversary of the Dhaka University, the Dhaka University Alumni Association awarded him the honorary Crest, 1995.

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