

**Some comments on “Myanmar’s ‘Rohingya’ Conflict”  
by Anthony Ware and Costas Laoutides**

Page xvii

*“There is evidence that the term ‘Rohingya’ did exist prior to Independence.”*

I am not myself aware of any evidence that the term ‘Rohingya’ in this precise form in English or in its current Burmese spelling existed prior to 1961.

It is not safe to conclude from Buchanan 1799, a unique source, that his ‘Rooinga’ means anything more, as he himself reported, than ‘natives of Arakan’. It might be an ethnic designation, but probably isn’t. There is no other known ‘second source’ document prior to 1948 using any ‘R’ word, though Buchanan was quoted in encyclopaedias and similar reference works until the 1870s. Something may turn up one day. Meanwhile, the evidence of a single source of contested interpretation acquired in Amarapura in 1795 which might just possibly be related semantically to ‘Rohingya’ today needs to be assessed in its true perspective.

Soon after Independence, various designations possibly related to the generic term ‘Rohang’ (Bengali for ‘Arakan’) began to emerge, with various spellings and attributed meanings, but it is again not safe to say, as is often claimed, that today’s ‘Rohingya’ is derived from or related to any of them. There has been a marked tendency to replace retroactively almost any ‘R’ word found in a document between 1948 and 1961 with the now sacrosanct ‘Rohingya’. This could include the supposed group of ‘Rohingya Elders of North Arakan’ in 1950 (Jilani 1999) who were most probably the Jumiat ul Ulema of North Arakan, or “Council of Scholars”.

A term being bandied around in the late 1940s and early 1950s was [‘Rwangya’](#) defined by UK Ambassador James Bowker as “Arakanese as opposed to Chittagonian Muslims” and whose meaning puzzled such academic luminaries as E Maung, Gordon Luce, Bertie Pearn and George Merrells (see Page 8 of the ‘Rwangya’ reference). Quite possibly the ‘Rohingya Elders of North Arakan’ were genuine ‘Rwangya’, rebranded ‘Rohingya’ by Jilani, tracing their roots back to before the Burmese capture of Arakan in 1795. Jumping on the ‘Rwangya’ bandwagon though, especially by settled Chittagonians, was the sport of the day, indeed to this day.

As recently as this month, [Moshe Yegar wrote](#): “At the beginning of the twenty-first century, most of Rakhine’s Muslims lived in the Mayu region in the north. They call themselves Rohingya, Rohinja, or Roewengyah (variously interpreted as ‘the dear’, ‘the compassionate’, or ‘the brave’) and they are Sunni.” Confusion reigns. British Ministers are not sure whether Rakhine Muslims should be called ‘Rohinja’ or ‘Rohingya’; but then neither do they seem to know whether ‘Myanmar’ is dissyllabic or trisyllabic. At a meeting on 26 September 2018 of the US House Foreign Affairs Committee, both ‘Rohinja’ and ‘Rohingya’ were used by speakers, with a preference for ‘Rohingya’ against ‘Rohinja’. The pronunciation of ‘Rohingya’ internationally remains undecided.

Page xix

*“Arakan.....Arakanese pre-1989 – Rakhine after that.”*

Notification 5/89 of 18 June 1989 provided for the change of names in Burma/Myanmar. The change to 'Rakhine' however seems to have occurred in mid-1982, between the publication on 21 April 1982 of the [draft Citizenship Law](#) (note 'Arakanese' in Article 2(b) of the draft) and the publication of [the final text](#) on 15 October 1982 (note 'Rakhine' in comparable Article 3). See also the [1983 Census Report on Rakhine State](#). I have not yet traced any government announcement in 1982 about the change. No doubt one day a brief official announcement from 1982 will be discovered in the local press.

Page 16(1)

*“Nonetheless, as a major rice-growing area relying on Chettiar moneylenders and Chittagonian seasonal labour, Arakan quickly deteriorated into one of the country’s poorest regions”.*

I doubt that the Chettiar moneylenders at any stage played all that important a role in Arakan. As Paragraph 427 of Part I of the [Report of the Burma Financial Business Enquiry 1929-1930](#) put it: “Akyab is the only large town in Burma in which the Chettiars are not the most important of the indigenous bankers, the principal ones there being the Marwaris”. As the context of Page 16 is Ne Win’s Burmese Road to Socialism (that is post-1962), the departure of the Chettiars, if they survived the war years at all in Akyab, would have had only marginal effect in Arakan.

The general remarks of the Arakan Division Commissioner noted on Pages 749-750 of [Part III of the Report](#) are worth noting. In reference to Akyab [Sittwe] District (which then included Maungdaw and Mrauk-U Districts as well as Sittwe District) he commented:

“(1) The District borders on Bengal, and is being gradually overrun by Chittagonians, who have a lower standard of living and are harder working than the Arakanese, and who have in the northern part of the District very largely ousted the Arakanese from their lands.

“(2) The Chittagonians are not remarkable for honesty, and both races are backward and slow at adopting new and improved methods of agriculture. The local paddy has therefore deteriorated rather than improved and has acquired a bad name and the European market has been almost lost.”

[Baxter 1941](#) does not include Akyab (Sittwe) or any location in Arakan in his list of the 13 principal rice-growing areas of Lower Burma on Page 27 of his report.

From 1950 I would assume that seasonal labour from Chittagong at the time of the rice harvest declined rapidly. Seasonal migration became hazardous and technically illegal after 1948, though illicit cross-border traffic in arms, rice and other goods thrived, with the active connivance of leading members of the Jamiat ul Ulema of Northern Arakan, Sultan Ahmed and Omar Meah, according to UK Ambassador James Bowker [in his letter of 12 February 1949](#).

The Arakan economy never recovered from the pogroms of 1942, the disruption of numerous post-war insurgent movements, including the Mujahid rebellion, and continual forays by the military and police to root out illegal migrants and to contain

revolts. The economic, social and political situation has slowly but steadily deteriorated over the 75 years since 1942.

Page 16(2)

*“The next exodus was in 1978, when some 200,000 Muslim refugees fled to Bangladesh. This was the result of military operations in north Arakan, codenamed Ye-The-Ha, targeting Muslim, Arakanese and communist insurgents (Smith 1995).....In tandem however the Tatmadaw launched a heavy-handed operation to check identity papers in the border regions, Operation Nagamin (King Dragon).”*

Martin Smith wrote:

“.....In north Arakan in 1978, a military operation codenamed ‘Ye The Ha’ was launched in the mountains around the Sittwe plain while, in tandem, a heavy-handed census operation, known as ‘Nagamin’ or ‘King Dragon’, was begun to check identity papers in the border region for the first time.

“Now whether it really was intended as a proper survey operation never became clear because the ‘Nagamin’ census quickly got out of hand, amidst widespread reports of army brutality, including rape, murder and the destruction of Muslim mosques. As a result, over 200,000 Muslim refugees immediately took flight in fear of their lives.”

I doubt that the two operations were planned to run “in tandem”. There is no mention of Ye The Ha in reports of the 1978 exodus in US, UK and Australian diplomatic archives as a related or contributory factor. Nor have I found mention in contemporary press reports, local or international. In any case, I interpret “as a result” in the final sentence of the above extract as referring only to Nagamin (more frequently known in English as “Dragon King”). The Muslims who fled became refugees only when they arrived in Bangladesh.

Nagamin was conducted throughout several border regions of Myanmar under the direction of the Ministry of Home Affairs and Religion, that is, by immigration and police officials. In Arakan they were joined by the ubiquitous, glowering Tatmadaw, especially when fighting broke out in Buthidaung Township. An excellent contemporary account of Nagamin in Arakan may be found in a 1981 [book by Klaus Fleischmann](#) (in German) which goes into some detail about the course of the action, which began on 11 February 1978 quite normally and peacefully in Sittwe City, where in the first count 1,025 out of 36,824 interviewed were detained as illegal entrants – some 2.78%. The action then moved to Buthidaung where the count started on 11 March 1978. But by then Fleischmann notes that “Massenhysterie” had set in because of the arrests in Sittwe City and thousands fled before officials arrived. By the time the team arrived in Maungdaw on 8 May 1978 the exodus to Bangladesh was well under way. The Tatmadaw had taken control of Nagamin in Arakan.

[Nyi Nyi Kyaw’s informative account](#) “Unpacking the presumed statelessness of Rohingyas”, published in 2017, corroborates much of what Klaus Fleischmann wrote about the course of Nagamin. Neither she nor Fleischmann mentions Operation Ye The Ha at all.

The exodus was not “immediate” as Martin Smith wrote, but was rather the result of rapidly spreading fears over several weeks after the “alarming” (Fleischmann – “erschreckend”) number of detentions in Sittwe City, where the number of illegals would have been considerably lower than further north. Communities in Buthidaung and Maungdaw knew what to expect when immigration officials arrived. Illegals there would have been several times the 2.78% detained in Sittwe City in February, not counting those illegals who kept out of sight on the day scheduled for inspection.

### Page 23

*“Migrants and their descendants can become citizens, even under the much-touted 1982 Citizenship Law, just without the privileges or position granted to taing-yin tha. General Ne Win’s express vision of the law was that within two generations all generations all descendants would become full citizens (South and Lall 2018). Many Chinese and Indian migrants have become citizens that way, and are relatively accepted in Myanmar society – but they are not taing-yin-tha, so only have limited rights in terms of governance.”*

This is indeed not only [General Ne Win’s vision](#), but is also provided for [in the Law itself](#). Even though not *taing-yin-tha*, the grandchildren of those granted associate citizenship may become full citizens according to the Law, with all the civil and political rights accorded to full citizens. In practice, though, even many *taing-yin-tha* do not enjoy full rights. As a Christian or Muslim, it is well-nigh impossible to secure advancement in government service or the Tatmadaw, even if you are classified as ‘Bamar’. The Kaman, though *taing-yin-tha*, do not enjoy the full rights to which they are entitled. If you are not Bamar and Buddhist, the likelihood is that you will at some point meet discrimination. This is at the heart of the ethnic peace process today. *Taing-yin-tha* is seen by many as a fig-leaf for Bamar supremacy. On Page 205 the book rightly highlights the Annan Commission finding that “challenging entrenched Burman privilege” is important.

Apart from the Kaman, there are other quasi-indigenous groups of pre-1785 Muslim migrants into the heartland of the old Kingdom of Arakan who have an even better claim to *taing-yin-tha* than the Kaman, who are of Afghan origin, in that these groups came from areas under the control of the Arakanese, such as those unfortunate Muslims and Hindus brought as slaves from outlying regions of Bengal. As late as the 1973 Census – [see Appendix IX at this link](#) - they were included among the list of indigenous races. The ‘Rohingya’ juggernaut has however by now subsumed all but the Kaman in Arakan. It is a matter for research and discussion whether the decision to reduce the number of *taing-yin-tha* from 144 to 135 reflected government concerns at the absorption of these quasi-indigenous Muslim communities and the unwarranted appropriation of their identity, with its *taing-yin-tha* implications, by British-era Chittagonian migrants.

Outside Rakhine State, there are many tens of thousands of Muslims of Chittagonian origin who today enjoy full political and civil rights. Many are registered as “Bamar Muslims”. To declare themselves that they are ‘Rohingya’ would invite unwelcome

scrutiny. Yet there are also those in Yangon who bravely rejoice in their 'Rohingya' links, notably in the construction industry, secure at least in the knowledge that they have full citizenship. There are slightly more Muslims living outside Rakhine State than inside.

Migrants generally cannot become citizens. They can only become associate citizens provided they have already made application under the 1948 Union of Burma Citizenship Act. Their application then would have been for full citizenship, but this has been downgraded under the 1982 Law. If this Law had been put into immediate effect, by 1983 many such applicants would have been granted associate citizenship. Their grandchildren would have been entitled to full citizenship, even though not *taing-yin-tha*, with full political and civil rights, and by 1983 there would already have been many such grandchildren; they would no doubt be content with this. But declared policy has never been put into practice in Rakhine State. Associate citizenship has scarcely been implemented. It is doubtful that decisions on associate citizenship in Myebon made in 2014 were ever based on actual applications made under the 1948 legislation.

No legislation yet exists defining the limited rights to which the few hundreds of recently approved associate citizens are entitled. It is all a frightful shambles.

#### Page 24(1)

*"The Kofi Annan-led Rakhine Advisory Commission report describes this as being 'a hierarchy of different types of citizenship', between those who are national races and those who are not, with differing rights and with discrimination in how citizenship passes to the next generation."*

It is one of the very few weaknesses of the report that the Commission did not draw attention to the intended transitional nature of both associate and naturalised citizenship. The report does not even mention associate citizenship by name: it mentions only citizenship by birth and by naturalisation. But the latter is a restricted opportunity applying only to persons resident in Burma prior to 4 January 1948 and their descendants.

The report is in my view mistaken when it states: "The 1982 law and the accompanying 1983 procedures define a hierarchy of different categories of citizenship, where the most important distinction is that between 'citizens' or 'citizens by birth' on the one side, and 'naturalised citizens' on the other." In this context, naturalised citizens are largely an irrelevance. It is the difference between associate citizenship and full citizenship which is critical, and that would generally have been resolved already if the provisions of the law had been applied in a reasonable and timely manner. [It was estimated in 1982](#) that some 80,000 - 90,000 applications were outstanding, including dependants to the second or third generation, the number of people concerned could today be of the order of upwards of 300,000, mostly unprocessed applications from Arakan.

This weakness in the report is one reason why the Myanmar Government seems bound to resist the report's recommendations on citizenship. There are other reasons

as well, notably the general international acceptance that each state has the sovereign right to determine whom it will recognise as its nationals and citizens.

Page 24(2)

*“The 1982 law, which privileged taing-yin-tha for the first time, did not include ‘Rohingya’.”*

The 1982 Law neither included nor excluded ‘Rohingya’. There is no list of national races in the Law, only a reference in Article 3 to the eight main ethnic groups, paralleling a similar article in the [1948 Union Citizenship Act](#). The Law makes no reference to *taing-yin-tha*. The word “race” or “national race” is not to be found in the Law. In a legal sense, the 1948 and 1982 laws are identical in identifying the same ethnic groups. No list of national races was however ever issued following the 1948 Act. There is no provision in the 1982 Law that those belonging to a *taing-yin-tha* are specially privileged. That is rather our interpretation of the application of the Law.

Page 24(3)

*“The 1982 Law.....created pathways for new migrants to attain citizenship.”*

This is not correct. New migrants can benefit from the provisions neither concerning associate citizenship nor naturalised citizenship. New migrants are time-barred from either citizenship – see Articles 23 (associate citizenship) and 42 (naturalised citizenship) of the Law. They may acquire citizenship under Article 8 by which the Council of State (Government) may confer associate or naturalised citizenship at their discretion “in the interest of the State”. It might be that this discretion has been exercised in the Myebon 2014 cases and it could of course be used in the future.

Page 36

*“State media referred to them as ‘Bengali’.”*

It was soon realised that they were Kaman, and not “Bengalis”. One of the accused, Htet Htet (aka Rawshe), was an orphan from a Buddhist family adopted by a Kaman family. He was seen as the ringleader of the gang. He died in prison in unexplained circumstances. He was married, and his wife was found dead at the bottom of a well some days later.

Page 38

*“In a bungled attempt at requesting assistance, on 11 July President Thein Sein aggravated tensions by asking the UN High Commissioner for Refugees to put displaced persons into ‘refugee camps’. In a statement posted on the government website next day (subsequently removed: see Vandenbrink 2012), the President said:.....”*

The importance of what the President said to the UNHCR António Guterres (today the UN Secretary-General) is that he effectively confirmed the legal residency status in the country of all migrants from the Indian Sub-Continent prior to 4 January 1948. The only illegal migrants accordingly are those who came from Bengal after Independence, a minority among Arakan Muslims, excluding individual family reunion and other special cases approved in advance by the authorities.

My translation of the extract of President Thein Sein's statement is consistent with the versions given on this page and in reports by the Democratic Voice of Burma and Radio Free Asia. However none of the versions suggests in any way that Thein Sein had asked UNHCR to put displaced persons into refugee camps. What he said was that illegal post-1948 migrants calling themselves Rohingya who had no right of residence in Myanmar should be put into camps awaiting their deportation. Thein Sein made it clear that British-era migrants from Bengal had settled legally in Myanmar and that their descendants were entitled to citizenship.

Thein Sein's statement was widely misreported outside Myanmar, possibly because there was no official English translation. [A Radio Free Asia broadcast on 12 July 2012](#), based on an RFA broadcast in Burmese, did however make Thein Sein's position clear in the body of the text, despite a misleading headline. So did reports in the Democratic Voice of Burma [on 12 July 2012](#) and [on 13 July 2012](#). The statement in Burmese remained on the presidential website until the new administration took over in 2016. [At this link may be found the Burmese text](#) of the statement which was downloaded on 5 February 2015. The statement was not continuously available from 2012-2016 as the website was down for some weeks from time to time, a result of hacking, according to a presidential adviser whom I contacted.

It is worth adding that in [a speech in May this year](#), Radhika Koomaraswamy, one of the three members of the UN Fact-Finding Commission on Myanmar, recalled that when she met General Thein Sein in 2011 he "was not a liberal on the Rohingya issue but in my conversation with him, he mentioned in passing that he wanted to negotiate a resettlement agreement, perhaps like [the Srimavo Shastri pact](#), with Bangladesh and India. I do not know whether that was the official position at that time." This suggests that a resolution of the problem of illegal migration from Bengal after Independence was very much on Thein Sein's mind when UNHCR visited in 2012.

I agree that there was bungling, but primarily because the international media misreported the event, not because of what Thein Sein actually said. It would obviously have helped if the President had been more articulate and if there had been an official translation of the statement. Subsequent comments by Guterres (see DVB of 13 July 2012) made it clear that "resettlement programs organised by UNHCR are for refugees who are fleeing a country to another, in very specific circumstances".

Page 102

*"Indeed, even General Ne Win used the name Rohingya in a 1954 speech (Thawngmung 2016)"*

Dr Ardeth Maung Thawngmung has made an error in attributing to General Ne Win a speech reportedly made on 25 September 1954 by U Nu. Her reference is to Page 40 of a National Democratic Party for Development monograph circulated on 4 July 2012 (of which I have a copy). The Burmese word used by [U Nu was not 'Rohingya' but 'Ruhangya'](#) (in transliteration from the Burmese): an excellent example of retroactive historical correction to improve the consistency of the Rohingya narrative.

#### Page 134

*"Bengalis and Chittagonians....migrated mainly during the first five decades or so of colonial rule."*

The main migration from Bengal during British rule occurred after the first five decades of British rule, not before. The opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 was a major incentive for the development of the rice trade in Burma.

The first properly conducted peace-time annual census for the capitation tax in 1829 assessed the population of Arakan at 121,288 by which time many of those, both Muslims and Buddhists, who had sought refuge in Bengal during Burman rule, had returned home. By 1832 the population had risen to 195,107 and by 1842 to 246,766. [The Rev GS Comstock \(1847\)](#) recorded that the 1842 Annual Census estimated the population at the time at some 257,000. "Of these about 167,000 were Mugs [Rakhine], 40,000 are Burmese, 20,000 are Mussulmans, 5,000 are Bengalese, 3,000 are Toungmroos, 2,000 are Kemees, 1,250 are Karens and the remainder are of various races, in smaller numbers and sundry other ethnic groups."

The population of Arakan trebled during the first 25 years of British rule from 100,000 or so to more than 350,000 (352,348 recorded in the 1852 Annual Census). This was, as former Chief Commissioner of Burma Lt. Gen Albert Fytche put it, "due to immigration from provinces under Burmese government, and notably from Pegu". This meant "the desertion of their own sovereign and country by these masses, and their voluntarily placing themselves under an alien rule, coupled with the vast increase of prosperity in every shape of the portion of Burma which has become British." These migrants were overwhelmingly Buddhist, not Muslim.

[The 1872 Census](#), the first decennial Census in Burma, records in Appendix I on Arakan Division that there were only some 58,263 Muslims in Akyab District and 64,315 in the whole of Arakan. "There are between 24,000 and 25,000 Mahomedans of the country who differ from the others in little besides their religion. The natives of India are immigrants and call for no remark." Muslim migrants from India, mainly Chittagong, would thus number only about 30,000. The Mahomedans include both voluntary and forced settlers from the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, notably the Yakhain-kala who spoke both Arakanese and their own hybrid dialect: Buchanan's 'Rooinga'. By 1872 they roughly balanced the new arrivals.

The decennial Censuses of 1881, 1891, 1901, 1911, 1921 and 1931 confirm the growing migration from Bengal since the 1872 Census. By the 1931 Census Chittagonian migrants from Bengal outnumbered Muslims in Arakan identified as

indigenous by about four to one. The figures recorded in this Census show that in Arakan migrant British-era Chittagonians and their descendants numbered 186,327 and other immigrant British-era Bengalis and their descendants 15,585, a total of 201,912, while the descendants of quasi-indigenous (that is, pre-1785) settlers (Yakhain-kala, Kaman, Myedu etc.) numbered only 56,963. The ratio of 1:1 in 1872 was by 1931 4:1 in favour of Chittagonian settlers. It was during the six decades following the 1872 Census that Chittagonian migration mainly took place.

During the first five decades, Chittagonian labour was overwhelmingly seasonal. [An article in 'Arakan News' of 4 August 1785](#) (see page 34 at this link) noted that: "Chittagong has an over-abundance of population - say 487 to the square mile – while Arakan has only about 24 to the square mile. The former cannot find employment or raise sufficient means to pay their highly rated revenue, 'and about one tenth of the population migrate annually to Akyab where the demand for labour is much greater than at Chittagong;' [quotation from another publication, the Calcutta 'Friend of India and Statesman'] and thus the trade of Akyab helps to pay the taxes of Chittagong, and by doing so takes away from Arakan what, with a larger population, would remain in and help to develop and enrich the country."

#### Page 135

*"While the 'Rohingya' narrative is based partially on falsehood, any extent to which it is a political ploy is only to gain their legitimate political rights. Any recourse to falsehood or manipulation should never have been necessary."*

I should point out that the recourse to falsehood started soon after the Second World War. The Members of the Jamiat ul Ulema of North Arakan (Council of Scholars) hinted at a special ethnic history on 24 February 1947 in [representations made to the UK Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State](#) Arthur Bottomley. The Council included Sultan Ahmed and Omar Meah (see notes to Page 16(1)). Both helped the British run 'Peace Committees' in Maungdaw during the Second World War and had a finger in every pie (or bag of rice). [On 25 October 1948 the Council](#) told Prime Minister U Nu:

"We are dejected to mention that in this country we have been wrongly taken as part of the race generally known as Chittagonians and as foreigners. We humbly submit that we are not. We have a history of our own distinct from that of Chittagonians. We have a culture of our own. Historically we are a race by ourselves....Our spoken language is an admixture of Arabic, Persian, Urdu, Arakanese and Bengali...."

During the first year of independence, in the pursuit of their political rights, the Council was thus pressing a narrative of breath-taking if not preposterous implausibility, denying any historical links at all with Chittagong even though Chittagong itself had been part of the territories of the former Kingdom of Arakan until captured by the Mughals in 1666. They also claimed to speak on behalf of 90% of the North Arakan Muslim population who supposedly had no historical connections with Bengal even though British Census records show that 80% were British-era migrants from the

Chittagong region of Bengal. This statement has remained the template for the 'Rohingya' narrative until this day.

Page 199-200

*".....the Burman and Rakhine [are] wrong to exclude the Muslim population from the definition of 'indigenous'. There was rapid growth due to migration, but there is also a genuinely indigenous aspect to the Muslim community of norther Rakhine State. The Rohingya have a genuine claim to a hybridized or mixed-indigenous ancestry. Some ancestors of most of those who call themselves Rohingya almost certainly do pre-date the arrival of the British....."*

While I agree that some Rohingya today can trace an ancestor back to pre-1785, most would find it difficult to do so, even if they had access to reliable data. [The 1921 Census](#) had this to say about the old settlers:

"The Arakan-Mahomedans are practically confined to Akyab district and are properly the descendants of Arakanese women who have married Chittagonian Mahomedans. It is said that the descendants of a Chittagonian who has permanently settled in Akyab district always refuse to be called Chittagonian and desire to be called Arakan-Mahomedans; but as permanent settlement seems to imply marriage to an Arakanese woman this is quite in accordance with the description given. Although so closely connected with Chittagonians racially, the Arakan-Mahomedans do not associate with them at all; they consequently marry almost solely among themselves and have become recognised locally as a distinct race."

The telling phrase here is "marry almost solely among themselves". Until the Second World War, they general kept themselves apart from the British-era Chittagonian settlers mainly in Maungdaw and Buthidaung, while speaking their own archaic dialect (not Bengali) but using Arakanese for business and residing mostly in the region around Mrauk U. Immediately after independence, they sought to re-identify themselves as 'Rwanga' in order to define their ethnic independence from the Chittagonians. In this they have failed. They have now been subsumed by the Chittagonians, who have usurped their historical identity.

The British recognised their distinctiveness. In the words of the 1921 Census:

"The Arakanese Buddhists asked the Deputy Commissioner there [Arakan] not to let the Arakan-Mahomedans be included under *Arakanese* in the census. The instruction issued to enumerators with reference to Arakan-Mahomedans was that this race-name (in Burmese *Yakaing-kala*) should be recorded for those Mahomedans who were domiciled in Burma and had adopted a certain mode of dress which is neither Arakanese nor Indian and who call themselves and are generally called by others *Yakaing-kala*."

The book states that "some ancestors of most of those who call themselves Rohingya almost certainly do pre-date the arrival of the British". The logical corollary of this is that "some ancestors of most of those who call themselves Rohingya almost certainly do not pre-date the arrival of the British". It follows that some Rohingya may well have a claim to a genuine hybridized or mixed indigenous ancestry, while others may well not

have such a claim. The book seems to be saying that all Rohingya have a genuine claim. This cannot be true. It is only true of the Rohingya as a community as a whole, but not of the majority of individual Rohingyas.

The Rohingya claim to *taing-yin-tha* has been a spectacular failure. The claim is resented by Burmese generally, even I suspect by many Muslims living outside Rakhine State, because they know that it is not based on historical fact.

**Derek Tonkin**

27 September 2018