

First paperback edition

Published 1989 in the United Kingdom by
Curzon Press Ltd., 42 Gray's Inn Road, London WC1
ISBN 0 7007 0219 9

Published 1989 in the United States of America by
The Riverdale Company, 5506 Kenilworth Avenue, Riverdale, MD 20737
ISBN 0 913215 45 7

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Sole distributors in Southeast Asia
Graham Brash (Pte.) Ltd., 227 Rangoon Road, Singapore 0821

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
The Crescent in the East: Islam in Asia Major
1. Muslims – Asia
I. Israeli, Raphael
297'.095

Printed and Bound in Great Britain by
Woolnough Bookbinding, Irthlingborough, Northamptonshire

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THE MUSLIMS OF BURMA*

Moshe Yegar

BURMA'S MUSLIM POPULATION

Burma's first population census was carried out in August 1872. The next was conducted in 1881; the others followed at ten-yearly intervals. The last, which took place in 1941, was interrupted by the Japanese invasion and never completed, most of the data collected having been lost in the war. Independent Burma has never conducted a full-scale population census (partial censuses were held in a few parts of the country in 1953 and 1954), so no exhaustive or authoritative data are available about the country's population in general or on the number of Muslims in it.

When the first census was conducted in 1872, British Burma consisted of the three provinces of Arakan, Pegu and Tenasserim. Hence the Muslims of Upper Burma, who were subjects of the King of Burma, were not included. The Muslims included in the census fell into two main groups, each of which broke down into several sub-groups: Indian Muslims and Burman Muslims. Two-thirds of British Burma's 99,846 Muslims - some 64,000 persons - lived in Arakan.

The census of 1881 supplied more information about Burma's Muslims who had meantime increased to 168,881. Of these 150,821 were Sunnis, 11,287 Shī'ites, 698 Wahhābīs, 551 Rāfidīs (a Shī'ite sect) and 5,524 others. These categories do not recur in later censuses.¹

The census of 1891 already took in all of Burma as we know it today. There were then 210,649 Muslims in Lower Burma, and 253,640 in the entire country. The categories into which they were divided were now the same as for India (the census of Burma was conducted as part of the census of India): Shaykhs, Sayyids, Moghuls and Pathans, of whom there were 204,846, 3,405, 5,053, and 15,689 respectively. The rest were entered as Burmans, Arakanis, Panthays and Shan Muslims, along with a few Turks, Arabs, Chouliās and others. It would seem that a large part of the Arakan Muslims, the Zerbadees² and the other Burman Muslims were registered as Shaykhs, for it does not seem likely that only 24,647 of the Muslims then in Burma were Burman Muslims, Arakanis and Panthays.

* This is an updated version of my 'The Muslims of Burma since Independence, *Asian and African Studies*, vol. 2, 1966, Jerusalem, pp. 159-205. For an extensive study see my *The Muslims of Burma: a study of a minority group*, Otto Harrassowitz, Wiesbaden, 1972.

The census of 1901 lists 331,298 Muslims, and by 1911 there were already 420,777 of them, of whom 59,729 were Zerbadees. Fifty-two per cent of all Muslims lived in the coastal areas, where they accounted for 14.72 per cent of the total population. One-third of all Muslims - as against only 7.5 per cent of all Buddhists - were urban. Only in the district of Akyab were there an appreciable number of Muslims engaged in agriculture. In all other districts Muslims accounted for less than one per cent of the agricultural population.

The census of 1921 lists 500,592 Muslims, i.e. 3.8 per cent of Burma's total population of 13,169,099.³ Almost one-quarter of the Muslims were entered as 'Burman Muslims': they included Zerbadees, Arakan Muslims, Arakan Kamans (recorded separately from other Arakan Muslims), Panthay, Malays, and a few persons who had described themselves as Burman by race but Muslims by creed. Most of the Muslims were of Indian origin - broken down further by the provinces from which they hailed: Bengal, Chittagong, Hindustan, Orissa, Punjab, Tamils (or Chouliās) and Telegus, also referred to in Burma as Coringhis from the name of the Madras port from which they originated.⁴ There were many more males than females among the Indian Muslims, while among the Burman Muslims the sex ratio was normal.

The last full census completed in Burma was the seventh, carried out in 1931. The term 'Mohammedan' had by then been replaced by 'Muslim'. There were now 584,839 Muslims in Burma, representing four per cent of the total population of 14,647,497.⁵ Of these 396,504 were Indian Muslims, 18,861 Burman Muslims of all categories and 1,474 Chinese Muslims. Forty-one per cent of all Muslims were concentrated in the one province of Arakan, the other residing mainly in the Delta and in the country's central provinces. With the exception of Arakan, they were largely an urban population: 52.1 per cent lived in towns (32.7 per cent if Arakan was included). The Muslims accounted for 12.6 per cent of Burma's urban population, and for three per cent of her rural population; excluding Arakan, they made up 12 per cent of the urban population and 1.3 per cent of the rural population.

The distribution of the Muslims by origin that year is given in the table below, which shows that 68 per cent were Indians while only 30 per cent belonged to the various Burman Muslim categories - mainly Zerbadees and Arakan Muslims, the rest being Kamans and Myedu. The number of Burman-born Muslims had gradually risen, owing mainly to the large number of Indian Muslims settling permanently in Akyab District, which accounted for 78 per cent of all Burman-born Indian Muslims. The steep rise in the number of Burman Muslims may be ascribed mainly to the spread of intermarriage.

Of the 1,017,825 Indians recorded in Burma by the census of 1931, 565,609, or 55 per cent, were Hindus, 396,594, or 39 per cent, were Muslims, and the rest Buddhists, Christians, Chinese and others.

Notwithstanding the various changes in classification methods that prevent the entries in Burma's seven censuses from being strictly comparable (e.g. only the census of 1881, as noted above, supplied a breakdown of the Muslims into Sunnis, Shī'ites and other sects), it is

clear that the country's Muslim population has been rising steadily and keeping pace with the overall population increase. The average ratio for the five censuses from 1891 to 1931 was 3.7 Muslims per 10,000, and while we have no statistical data for the position today we may assume that the proportion still stands at about four per cent, as in 1931;⁶ for while a great many Indians, including Muslims as well as Hindus, fled the country in the wake of the Japanese invasion during World War II, many of them came back upon the return of the British, and in addition there has been a substantial Chittagong migration from India to North Arakan, as well as expulsion of Indians, many of them Muslims, from Burma, since Ne Win's seizure of power. Burma's total population being estimated today at approximately 32,000,000, a ratio of 4 per cent would make about 1,080,000 Muslims. This figure cannot be proved.

1. The Muslims of Burma according to their origin, 1931⁷

Origin	Number in 1931			per cent	
	male	female	total	1921	1931
Indian Muslims					
born in Burma	116,240	107,521	223,761	39.5	38.3
Indian Muslims					
born elsewhere	155,274	17,559	172,833	32.6	29.6
Indo-Burmese					
(i.e. Burman					
Muslims)	87,092	89,022	176,114	24.9	30.1
Chinese	945	529	1,474	0.3	0.3
Burmese (?)	392	2,163	2,555	1.7	0.4
Malays	3,282	3,040	6,322	0.9	1.1
Others	599	1,181	1,780	-	0.3
TOTAL	363,824	221,015	584,839	100.0	100.0

2. Number of Muslims and their proportion in the total population

	1872	1881	1891	1901	1911	1921	1931
Numbers of							
Muslims	99,846	168,881	253,640	339,446	420,777	500,592	584,839
Per cent of							
population	-	4.52	3.33	3.28	3.47	3.80	4.00

The Muslims themselves have at various times published estimates of their numbers in Burma. Two letters written on 14 May

and 17 September 1947 by the President of the 'General Council of Burma Moslem Associations' (see below), to U Nu, and stating that the Muslims should be represented in the councils of an independent Burma on the basis of their numerical strength, put that strength at over one million. A figure in excess of a million is also cited in a book published in Burmese in 1951 by a Muslim professor at Rangoon University.⁸ Announcements published by the organizers of the Muslim rallies held to mark Maghrib Day on 11 September 1953, and Palestine Day on 28 May 1954, stated that there were one and a half million Muslims in Burma, while the Muslim ex-Minister, U Rashid, privately put their number at between one and one and a quarter million.⁹ Only a census, however, can arrive at reliable figures, and the above estimates appear arbitrary and tendentious.

BURMA'S MUSLIMS BEFORE INDEPENDENCE

There were Muslim settlers in Burma as far back as the early centuries of Islam, but they made up a negligible proportion of the population. History records no Muslim attempts to conquer Burma from without or proselytize from within. The reasons were primarily geographical: 'Burma's mountain bastions presented formidable obstacles to overland invaders, and the great invasions that changed the face of Asia were approaching their furthestmost limits when they finally reached Burma. The conquests of the Mongols and the Manchus in China and Central Asia; the Turki, Mongol, and Moghul invasions of India; all these waves of domination rolled towards South East Asia, but spent their force before penetrating Burma's jungles and hills'.¹⁰ This is exactly what happened in the thirteenth century and thereafter, when Islamized Bengal was never able to muster the resources for a Muslim invasion of Burma. Muslim India was continually torn by internal conflict. Expansionary drives petered out and the frequent wars with the kingdoms of Arakan and Burma never entailed more than raids and border warfare.

Burma never afforded the commercial challenge presented by Malaya or Indonesia, where conquerors and missionaries followed traders and seamen. Muslim commercial activity in Burma was marginal and far inferior in importance to the active interchange that went on continuously between the Middle East and India on the one hand and Indonesia and Malaya on the other.

However, the most important reason why Islam did not spill over into Burma was probably religious. In addition to being commercial objectives of the first importance, Malaya and Indonesia represented a religious vacuum. Their Hinduism and Buddhism were in a low and degenerate state; nor had they been much more than the religions of the courts and the ruling classes without ever having penetrated to the masses, which embraced Islam readily when it came.¹¹ In Burma, as in Ceylon, Thailand or Indochina, the position was quite different. Buddhism had been a popular movement there ever since the end of the twelfth century. While never a state religion, it was a national religion shared by the bulk of the population of those countries. The king was traditionally considered the defender of Buddhism, and it

was official policy to protect the prevalent form of Buddhism - the Hinayana (or Theravada). Renegades were sometimes punished in keeping with the principle that Burmans could not change their faith. Public opinion too opposed apostasy, under the influence of a large and influential class of priests who watched over the people's spiritual well-being.¹² This did not prevent the rulers of Burma from regarding strangers of other faiths with tolerance and granting them as a matter of course, full freedom of worship, including the right to marry Burman women and raise their sons in the father's religion. The authorities imposed no restrictions on the widespread practice of Muslim settlers from other countries to take Burman wives, which created in due course the group known as Burman Muslims. But Islamisation never took on the dimensions of anything like a mass movement. No one interfered with the practice of Islam, but neither did Islam attract proselytes. While we have no information about any Muslim missionary activity in Burma, it may be presumed that if and where it did take place it encountered fierce religious resistance.

The British occupation brought about a radical change in the history of Burma's Muslim community, opening the country as it did to immigrants from India a large proportion of whom were Muslims. British-sponsored immigration from India began immediately after the first Anglo-Burman War, pouring into the province of Arakan and Tenasserim that had been annexed to India. The second Anglo-Burman War, leading to the takeover of Pegu, and the third, which ended in the fall of Upper Burma as well into British hands, gave a further impetus to emigration from India to Burma, creating in the latter country a socio-economic problem that persists to this day.

Burma being considered a part of the Empire of India, there were no restrictions whatever on the movement of Indians into it: they were considered merely residents changing their place of residence. The Indian immigrants were needed in Burma because of the radical change that had taken place in the country's economic structure. British development increased the demand for cheap coolie labour, particularly in the outdoor - work season of January to May. Burma had always been sparsely populated; India was its closest, cheapest and most convenient source of needed manpower. Burma's transformation from a subsistence to an export economy also necessitated the organization of hitherto non-existent services on the way from the farmer to the consumer. It was the immigrants from India who took up all these new functions, not only due to the manpower shortage but because the British preferred them in view of their adaptability and dependableness. Within a matter of years there were Indians in every civil and military department of the new administration that had arisen in Burma. These Indians were followed by others, who supplied services needed by Europeans and Indians. They formed the bulk of the employees in many of the public services and utilities, and practically monopolized commerce and retailing - especially the Muslims. After 1891 most of the new citizens of Rangoon were Indians, of whom Muslims accounted for at least

one-half.

The Burman-Indian tension rooted in these economic facts did not come to surface until World War I. Till then Burmans had manifested contempt for the Indians - Hindus as well as Muslims - as foreigners, and because of their low standard of living, their willingness to engage in hard and menial work and their having taken over entire occupations such as office work and commerce. In time, however, Burmans were driven from land for which Indians were ready to pay higher rent; few Burmans were taken on in the civil services, while others were dismissed; Indian concentrations in Rangoon and some other urban areas strengthened the Burmans' impression that the Indians were taking over their country. By the 1930s contempt and competition had given way to hatred, which grew during the Great Depression that Burma did not escape. Growing numbers of Burmans migrated to Rangoon, only to confront the tough competition for jobs of cheap and experienced Indian labour. These, together with the nationalist awakening that began in Burma in the 1920s, were among the reasons for the serious anti-Indian disturbances of 1930 and 1938. The riots of 1930, directed against Indian immigrants in general, were set off by a coolie strike in Rangoon harbour; those of 1938, directed specifically against the Muslims, were caused by the depression as well as by certain characteristics of Muslim culture and society that conflicted with Burman tradition (see below, n. 19).

Until the coming of the Indians, the Muslims of Burma had been a small minority whose presence hardly made itself felt - tolerated, loyal to the kings and communally inactive. But the arrival of the Indians created a large and developed foreign group among whom Hindus and Muslims alike incurred the hatred of the local population. The British occupation and the large immigration from India provided a catalyst for the crystallization of religious and civic communal activity among the Muslims of Burma. The immigrants engaged in numerous religious endeavours and established mosques, *madrassahs* and other institutions previously unknown among the local Muslims. There were a number of reasons for this development; as early as the beginning of this century Indian Muslims already outnumbered the original Burman Muslims in a proportion of two to one; their organisations had more funds at their disposal for communal activities; above all, the immigrants manifested more of an active interest in preserving their separate religious and social identity amidst their Buddhist environment. The Indian Muslims set up Muslim schools, fostered religious life, trained religious functionaries for Burma in India and established a number of social welfare institutions. Their customs, their dress and their religious observances influenced the Burman Muslims and particularly the Zerbadees - descendants of the many mixed marriages that followed upon the Indians' arrival in Burma - even though the Zerbadees tended to regard themselves as native Muslims rather than as Indians.

The Indian Muslims were the driving spirit of all Muslim activities that gained impetus in Burma on the eve of World War II. Rich Indian and Zerbadee merchants undertook philanthropic works

such as the erection and maintenance of schools, orphanages and mosques. Burman Muslims played a negligible part in these activities and to the extent that they engaged in them they were inspired by the Indians and modelled themselves on them.

From that time and down to this day, the pattern of Muslim life in Burma has been determined by the relations between Burman and Indian Muslim on the one hand, and the attitude of the Buddhist majority in Burma to the Muslims in their midst, and especially to the Burman Muslims, on the other.

The first manifestations of tension between Burman and Indian Muslims appeared during World War I, on the issue of Urdu as the language of instruction in Muslim schools. The vivid interest in Muslim education engendered the institution, beginning in 1905, of an annual 'All-Burma Muslim Educational Conference', attended by Indian and Burman Muslims alike but dominated by the former in view of their wealth and their active interest in education. The Indian Muslims desired that Urdu be the language of instruction in all Muslim schools, but in 1915 the Burman Muslims raised the question of instruction in Burmese, renewing each year the demand that it be introduced into all Muslim schools in the country. In 1929 they took the first concrete step to implement this claim, demanding that Indian Muslim teachers be given three years to perfect their Burmese, at the end of which knowledge of Burmese be made a prerequisite for teacher promotion and advancement. All attempts to work out a compromise between the Indians and the Zerbadees on this issue failed, and in 1931 the latter seceded, calling their own annual meeting 'All-Burma Burmese Muslim Educational Conference'. As the name implies, the Zerbadees sought to emphasize the Burmese character of their Islam, while the Indian Muslims sought to retain Urdu because they venerated that language, because it was a link with India and because they feared some Indian teachers stood to lose their positions if Urdu was replaced by Burmese.

Among other tension-breeding elements were the differences in manners and religious observances between the two ethnic groups. The Burman Muslims spoke Burmese, while the Indians spoke Urdu or other Indian languages; Indian women veiled their faces *purdah*-fashion, something that was practically unknown among the Burmans, used to the full equality of the sexes in Buddhist society; the Burmans were monogamous, unlike the Indians; Burmans and Zerbadees tended to mix with their Buddhist environment, while the Indians did not; the Indians were stricter in their observance of religious precepts such as prayer, the fast of Ramadan, the Feast of Sacrifice, the pilgrimage to Mecca; the Burmans had adopted a number of the customs of their Buddhist environment which to the Indians Muslims were anathema, such as consulting astrologists and various rituals at births, betrothals, weddings and other family celebrations. The Indians viewed with particular horror the spread among the Burman Muslims of such Buddhist superstitions as the belief in spirits (*nats*) and various rites connected with their worship. All of these tended to disqualify the Burmans as real Muslim believers in the eyes of the Indians, who conducted various religious activities

among the Burman Muslims designed to make them better Muslims. But such activities tended to come up against resistance on the part of the Burman Muslims, who resented the claim of leadership that this implied.

Another divisive factor came into prominence during the period of the nationalist struggle, particularly in the 1930s. The Indian Muslims of Burma felt and acted in accordance with the interests of India's Muslims, while the Burman Muslims were in step with the Burman nationalist movement. The activities of the Muslim League and the Congress Party of India played little part in the lives of the Muslims of Burma, and what small role they did play was limited to the relations between Hindus and Indian Muslims and did not affect relations between the Muslims and the Buddhist environment; yet these activities, taken in conjunction with the riots of 1938, produced an awakening among the Burman Muslims, particularly in the north of the country, for they considered themselves Burmans and opposed the Indian Muslims' Indian orientation. An extreme expression of this mood was the No-Kyar-Ye movement (pron. Nohayey) which, however, did not manage to achieve much before the onset of the war.

The events of the twenties and the thirties, and the opposition of the Indian Muslims and of the two Burmese Muslim organizations which they dominated to the separation of Burma from India, increased the hostility of Buddhist Burmans to the Muslims. This led the Burman Muslims and the Zerbadees, particularly in Mandalay and in Upper Burma, to set up an organization of their own that was designed to assert their separateness from Indian Muslims and their identification with the Burman nation of which they considered themselves a part in every respect except religion. The organization named No-Kyar-Ye (meaning 'The Renaissance') was founded in 1937 and did not include a single Indian Muslim. It held three annual conferences before the onset of the war and the Japanese invasion put an early end to its activities, but some of its leaders were destined to play an important role in the life of Burma's Muslim community after the war,¹³ and its short existence sufficed to prove to the Burman Muslims that Buddhist Burmans considered them too foreigners, just like the immigrants from India. It was against this attitude that the Muslims were to attempt to take energetic steps immediately upon the conclusion of the war.

THE MUSLIM COMMUNITY IN INDEPENDENT BURMA AND ITS RELATION WITH THE BURMAN NATIONALIST MOVEMENT

Upon the end of World War II, the leaders of the Burman nationalist movement, represented by the Anti-Fascist Peoples' Freedom League (AFPFL), sat down to negotiate the country's independence with the British. The Muslims were engaged at the time in working out their position and planning the struggle for their rights in the independent Burma of the future. The Indian Muslims had by then discontinued all political activity, and were even trying to blur the traces of their erstwhile political links with India. Many of the Indian Muslims who

All the Muslims also collaborate in the work of Darul Moin (the Aid House). Established under the Japanese occupation as an ambulance service for the sick and the wounded of all communities, today it only handles burials and all burial arrangements. It is financed entirely by voluntary contributions.

The tombs of Abū al-Muzaffar Sirāj al-Dīn Bahādur Shah, the last Moghul Emperor who was exiled to Rangoon and died and was buried there on 7 November 1862, and of the members of his family, who were exiled together with him and later buried alongside him, have been maintained and guarded by the local Muslim community since 1910, until which date the British forbade Muslims to visit the tombs. Early in 1936 the government handed over the plot to the Muslim community, and a board of trustees was elected to take charge of maintenance on which all groups are represented. Annual memorial meetings are held at the tomb, attended by prominent Muslim visitors from India and Pakistan, the ambassadors of India and the Muslim countries and representatives of all of Burma's Muslim organizations and communities.⁶³

Another common concern of Burma's Muslims has been resistance to the establishment of Buddhism as the state religion. A joint delegation of the Jamiatul Ulema, the BMO (U Rashid himself) and the Islamic Religious Affairs Council (U Khin Maung Lat and Ghazi Hashim) called on U Nu on 19 July 1961 to protest against his decision to that effect.⁶⁴ The Muslim student associations also went on record as opposing the establishment of any faith as the state religion.⁶⁵ The only exception was Hasan Shah's Jama'at al-'Ulamā' al-Haqq, whose leader gave three reasons for his belief that the Muslims ought not to oppose the establishment of Buddhism: (1) U Nu's promise of full freedom of activity and of guarantees to all other faiths; (2) Muslims should not oppose the establishment of Buddhism in a predominantly Buddhist country at a time when Islam was the established religion of many Muslim countries; (3) Muslims ought to accept loyally any decision taken by the government to which they owned allegiance. Hasan Shah went so far as to arouse the Muslims' ire by meeting with Buddhist monks to inform them of his views.⁶⁶

Another small movement, made up mainly of young people, was the Aligarh Ahmadiya Society, founded on 28 January 1954. Like the Aligarh Ahmadiya centres in Aligarh and Karachi, with which it was in touch, it engaged in propagating the views of Dr. Iqbal and Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan, founder of Aligarh University, but its propaganda and information activities in Burma stressed less the modernist reformist side of Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan's philosophy than the Aligarh Ahmadiya Society's differences with the Qadiyan Ahmadiyya movement of Mirzā Ghulām Ahmad. The Aligarh Society had only a few dozen members, enlisted no adherents and wound up its activities in Burma in 1955.⁶⁷

THE MUSLIMS OF ARAKAN

One of the many revolts with which Burma was afflicted shortly after achieving independence - by national minorities, Communists and army units - was a Muslim insurrection, known as the Majahids' Revolt in the State of Arakan.

The insurrection affected only the northern part of Arakan: the districts of Maungdaw, Butidaung and part of the district of Rathedaung. All these lie on the Bangladesh frontier and are populated mainly by Muslims. Relations between Buddhists and Muslims in this area had grown hostile under British rule, for the same economic and social reasons to which we referred above with regard to the whole of Burma, and the tension led to an explosion upon the evacuation of the British troops before the advancing Japanese forces. Gangs of Buddhist Arakanis in the southern part of the province, where Buddhists constitute a majority, raided Muslim villages and slaughtered part of the population. The Muslims fled to the north, where they make up a majority, and 22,000 of the refugees even crossed the frontier into Bangladesh (then India). The stories of atrocities told by refugees reaching Maungdaw aroused the wrath of the local Muslims, who vented it on the Buddhist minority in their midst. Soon the Buddhists were streaming in droves from the north as the Muslims were streaming from the south, and Arakan stood divided into two distinct territories, a Muslim and a Buddhist one.⁶⁸

Under the Japanese occupation, which lasted in Arakan from the end of 1942 until the beginning of 1945, the bulk of the province's Muslims were pro-British. In order to bolster this loyalty the British proclaimed that they would make North Arakan a 'Muslim national area',⁶⁹ and when they reconquered the area early in 1945 local Muslims (Rohinga) who had collaborated with the British were appointed to most of the official posts. The Muslim population of this part of Arakan grew considerably during the last years of the war and in the period immediately following it due to immigration from Chittagong in the wake of the British, and to thousands of refugees from South Arakan who had crossed into India in 1942 and now returned to North Arakan.

After Burmese independence a number of local Muslim officers and officials were dismissed and replaced by Buddhist Arakanis. These attempted to rehabilitate some of the abandoned Arakani villages; some of the villagers who had deserted them because of the communal riots were brought back, and Muslims who had taken over lands held by Buddhists were driven off. These deeds, and failure to fulfil the British pledge to make the district a Muslim national area, progressively led to non-cooperation and sabotage on the part of the Muslim population. The Buddhist villagers restored to their lands by the authorities were boycotted, denied drinking water and food supplies and molested in many other ways, in an attempt to drive them back to the south. Muslim marauders roamed the countryside in bands equipped with arms left by the warring armies, and clashed with Buddhists. Some began to nurture hopes of seceding from Burma and setting up an independent Muslim state between the Kaladan and

Mayu rivers, or joining Pakistan.⁷⁰ These ideas were first voiced openly in May 1946, when a number of Muslim Arakanis appealed to Ali Jinnah to incorporate their territory in the Pakistan of the future. Two months later a North Arakan Muslim League, which also stood for annexation to Pakistan, was established in Akyab. The main adherents of the scheme were Muslims of Chittagong origin, the native Rohingya being less inclined to it.⁷¹ Jinnah, for his part, assured General Aung San that he did not support it, and relative calm reigned among the Muslims of Arakan for a while even after the proclamation of Pakistan's independence in August 1947; but in April 1948, following the restoration of further Buddhists to lands they had abandoned, unrest spread as mullahs began to preach *jihad* against 'the Arakani unbelievers' and within a short time a large number of *mujahids* had gathered at the locality of Maung Bazaar. An armed police boat sent to disperse them was fired on and some of the policemen were killed. Those were the first casualties of the *Majahids' Revolt*.⁷²

The insurrection spread like wildfire, the government being too busy with the other revolts that had broken out in various parts of Burma to spare any manpower for putting it down. In fact, at first the *Mujahids* cooperated with another group of rebels, in South Arakan, and reached with them an agreement to partition the province into two separate states after the AFPFL government had been driven out.⁷³

The revolt did not get any support from Burma's Muslims. Moderate leaders attempted to influence the rebels to desist, while trying to convince the government in Rangoon that the revolt was the doing of a handful of ringleaders and that the bulk of the Muslims of Arakan had been caught up in it against their will. Some Rohingya leaders even vainly approached U Nu for arms to fight the revolt in 1948, and again in 1950 and 1951, accusing the government that by failing to put down the revolt it had forced many Rohingya to give succour to the rebels under coercion. Other Muslim leaders warned the rebels that their deeds would ultimately bring down on their heads cruel repression by the government forces. As rebel casualties mounted - some even failing to get a Muslim burial - this pressure by the moderates grew more intense.⁷⁴

The government itself tried to negotiate with the rebels, sending to Arakan in July 1948 a special mission charged with hearing out their complaints. The rebels told it that unlike the more recently arrived migrants from Chittagong, with whom they shared the same language and racial and cultural characteristics as well as the religion of Islam, the Rohingya had been settled in Burma for centuries; yet extremist Arakani Buddhist propaganda had represented them as Pakistani Muslims. Muslims were not accepted in the army; Muslim officials, police and village headmen had been dismissed by the Arakan Government, which treated the Muslims unjustly, discriminating against them, slighting their notables, extorting money and bribes from them and imprisoning them arbitrarily; Muslim refugees had not been returned to the villages from which they had been driven in 1942 (except in the districts of

Maungdaw and Butidaung); thousands of Rohingya still confined to refugee camps in India and Pakistan whither they had fled during the war, were unable to go back to their homes, and those who had returned were being described as illegal immigrants from Pakistan; the lands and the property of all these refugees had been taken away. The *Mujahids* claimed that they had taken up arms only when all their protests and appeals had gone unheard; they demanded that all these evils be righted, and that they might live as behaved citizens of Burma, under the rule of law and not under the dominion of wanton tyranny.⁷⁵

The two sides did not come to terms. The rebels fought tough battles with army and police units stationed in the areas, holding several of them in a virtual state of siege for long periods. By June 1949 the government controlled only the port of Akyab, while the *Mujahids* held all of North Arakan and other rebel movements the rest of the province. Short of regular troops, the government formed a Territorial Arakani Force that harassed the Muslims most cruelly, the *Mujahids* retaliating with similar cruelty against the Buddhist population.

Relations between Rangoon and Karachi grew tense as the Pakistani press wrote about Burmese repression against the Muslims of Arakan and the Rangoon press retaliating with vivid descriptions of how Muslim zealots in Pakistan were persecuting Buddhists and seeking to force them to change their faith. Old rumours that the *Mujahids* were obtaining arms and funds from Pakistan were spread again. While these reports were officially denied both in Karachi and in Rangoon, the *Mujahids* unquestionably did frequently cross the frontier - which could not be guarded effectively - in order to hide away their loot or to escape pursuing government troops. While the *Mujahids* did not get government assistance in Pakistan, there is no doubt that there were Pakistanis who considered them patriots and religious champions and gave them aid and succour as such.⁷⁶

Every year from 1951 to 1954 was marked by a big government offensive against the *Mujahids*, and though each drive had to come to an end with the onset of the monsoon and the jungle terrain made military operations in any season a most difficult proposition, the *Mujahids* gradually lost their hold on the area.⁷⁷ A further offensive in November 1954, 'Operation Monsoon', dislodged the rebels from their main strongholds, some of their chiefs meeting their death in battle. Thereafter they were no longer a military threat: their forces gradually broke up into small bands engaged in looting and terrorizing Muslims and Buddhists alike, particularly in the more outlying and less accessible districts.

After the discontinuation of organized military operations, some of the *Mujahids* switched to smuggling rice, bought at low prices or siezed without payment from Arakani villagers, to Pakistan, where it brought in high profits due to the rice shortage. The Rangoon government also charged the *Mujahids* with encouraging the illegal migration of thousands of people from Chittagong in overpopulated East Pakistan into Arakan, where amid the unrest and in difficult terrain they melted away into the local population, cultivating waste

lands and growing rice. The Rohingya leaders rejected the charge, claiming not only that it was untrue but that it had been invented to prevent Rohingya refugees from returning home from Pakistan to Arakan by pretending that they were actually natives of Chittagong trying to penetrate illegally into Burma. Any Pakistanis that had arrived had been handed over to the authorities, they argued.⁷⁸ It is a fact that Arakani Muslims were deported from Burma along with illegal immigrants from Pakistan.⁷⁹

Early in 1957 the Pakistani Embassy in Rangoon announced that Kassem, the Mujahids' leader, had been killed. Later it transpired that he had only been arrested in Chittagong on a charge of 'illegal infiltration into Pakistan'. The Rangoon government hoped that for the sake of good-neighbourly relations the Pakistanis would hand Kassem over to it notwithstanding the lack of an extradition agreement between the two countries; but this hope proved vain, and during a debate on the issue in Burma's legislature several deputies complained that the Karachi government had failed to hand over the rebel leader despite the friendly relations between the two countries. After his release from prison Kassem remained in Chittagong, where he operated a hotel.⁸⁰ His forces dispersed, but after setting up a camp for their families on the Pakistani side of the border, they continued their acts of sabotage, contraband and looting until 4 July 1961, when 290 men from Chittagong from the southern part of the Maungdaw district surrendered to Brigadier Aung Gyi, then Deputy Chief of Staff of the Burmese Army. They felt that there was no longer any point to the revolt, particularly in view of the agreement for border control that had been signed earlier that year by Burma and Pakistan and that made passage across the frontier difficult. Both Burma and Pakistan were anxious that relations between them should not break down over the Mujahid issue. The creation of the Mayu Frontier Administration Area (see below) and the intensification of military activity in the region also helped to put an earlier end to the revolt. The remaining Mujahid forces - a few hundred men in all - surrendered to Aung Gyi in eastern Butidaung on 15 November of the same year. The men who had surrendered were given cash and Qur'ans and settled in a special area in Maungdaw district, in close proximity to a Burmese Army camp.⁸¹

The principal political effect of the revolt was to make the Muslim population of Arakan autonomy-conscious. Even the moderates among them opposed the programme of the Arakani Party, which called for making Arakan a state within the Union of Burma. The large majority of the Rohingya in Maungdaw and Butidaung demanded that the region be made autonomous and subject directly to the central government in Rangoon, eliminating all Buddhist Arakani officials and influences; or at least that a special region be created which, though not autonomous, would still be subject directly to the central government.⁸²

From 1960 until 1962 Rohingya and Arakani Muslim organizations conducted feverish activities on the subject of the status of Arakan, and particularly of the Maungdaw and Butidaung districts. This was a direct reaction to U Nu's proclamation, on the eve of the general

elections of April 1960, that should his party emerge victorious he would confer statehood on Arakan on a par with the other 'states' of the Union of Burma. When, upon winning the election, U Nu appointed a committee of inquiry to look into all the aspects of the Arakan question, the Rohingya Jamiatul Ulema presented the committee with a long and reasoned memorandum setting out the views of the Muslims of North Arakan. It stated that the area's Muslims were a separate racial group which constituted an absolute majority, and demanded the creation of an autonomous region to be subject directly to the government in Rangoon. Only such an arrangement, it argued, would put an end to smuggling and illegal immigration and restore peace and order to the area. A separate administration would also help to raise the exceedingly low standard of living of the people, almost all of whom depended for their subsistence on primitive agriculture; it would raise the standard of education, and prevent abuses of the local population by Buddhist Arakanis. The region should have a Regional Assembly and enjoy local autonomy; as a compromise move, the writers of the memorandum felt, it might become part of a State of Arakan, but then in staffing the region's administration and in everything connected with the region's problems the executive of the 'state' would have to be 'guided' by the regional assembly. So would the administration appointed by the state for the region. The region would be eligible for direct allocations from the central government, and get special attention with regard to cultural, economic and educational questions concerning it.⁸³ Muslim deputies from Maungdaw and Butidaung in Burma's legislature also demanded from the government and the inquiry committee that their constituencies be excluded from the projected State of Arakan: while they had no objections to the creation of such a state, they did not want it to take in Maungdaw, Butidaung or the part of Rathedaung where Muslims constituted a majority. Those districts should become a separate unit to ensure the separate existence of the Rohingya; forcing all of Arakan into the framework of a single state might well bring about renewed bloodshed, they feared.⁸⁴

The position of the Muslims in Akyab and in other parts of Arakan where they did not constitute a majority was a more complex one, resulting at times in tension between them and the Rohingya organizations. Some felt it was no use opposing U Nu's scheme of a single state of Arakan, including the predominantly Muslim districts, and therefore gave it their backing, fearing that detaching the Muslim districts from the state would prejudice the position of the Muslims residing in other parts of it. They did, of course, want guarantees for the Muslims, for which purpose they demanded that Muslims be co-opted to the committee working out the framework of the future state.⁸⁵ A memorandum submitted by the Muslims of Arakan to the inquiry committee stressed that the Muslims would support state status for the territory only if the Buddhist Arakanis endorsed their claims and embodied in the constitution of the future state religious, cultural, economic, political, administrative and educational guarantees for the Muslims. Non-Muslims and Muslims

should alternate in the position of head of the state; whenever the head of the state was a Muslim the speaker of the state assembly should be a non-Muslim but his deputy should be a Muslim, and vice-versa; a similar arrangement should govern the membership of civil service appointment commissions and other such bodies; no less than one-third of the ministers should be Muslims; and no law affecting Muslims should be passed unless it secured the support of a majority of the Muslim members of the state assembly. In making appointments to administrative positions in the Muslim districts the head of the state should heed the advice of Muslim state ministers; and the number of Muslims holding posts in the civil service, on public bodies and in local government should be proportional to the percentage of Muslims among the local population. There should be competition among Muslims for posts allocated to Muslims under the above system. The government should devote special attention to meeting the Muslims' educational and economic needs. No pupil should be compelled to attend instruction in a religion not his own; the adherents of every faith should be provided with facilities for instruction in their religion in any educational institution; the adherents of any faith should be free to set up educational institutions of their own, and such institutions should benefit from government recognition; the Muslims should have full freedom to foster their particular language and their culture and to propagate their faith. A special official in charge of Muslim affairs should be appointed within the state administration, his function being to investigate complaints and to report on them to the head of the state. Finally, any part of Arakan, and specifically its northern districts, should reverse for a period of ten years the right to be detached from the state and come under the direct control of the central government in Rangoon.⁸⁶

On 1 May 1961 the government created the Mayu Frontier Administration Area covering the districts of Maungdaw, Butidaung and the western part of Rathedaung. It was a military administration, not autonomous rule, but as it did not involve subordination to the Arakan authorities the arrangement won the consent of the Rohingya leaders, particularly since the new military administration quickly succeeded in repressing the last vestiges of the revolt and in restoring order and security to the area. When, early in 1962, the government drafted a bill for Arakan statehood, the Mayu area was not included in the territory of the projected state.⁸⁷ After the coup of March 1962 the new regime cancelled the plan to grant statehood to Arakan, but the Mayu area remained under its separate military administration.

The problem of illegal infiltration of Muslims to Arakan continued to occupy the Burmese government. In 1975 about 3,500 Muslims were evicted across the Naaf river. Bangladesh protested and representatives of both governments met in order to discuss the issues, but little progress was made in the talks.

In April 1978 the Burmese government started a big scale operation to trace such illegal infiltrators. As a result, tens of thousands of Muslim refugees fled to Bangladesh from alleged

Burmese army harassment. Many who were thus evicted claimed that they were Rohingya and Burmese citizens and that the Burmese government had launched a de-Muslimization campaign against their community. According to sources in Dacca the number of those refugees totalled more than 130,000.

The Burmese government denied the accusations and claimed that the people involved were foreigners who entered Burma illegally from Bangladesh and fled across the border when Burmese immigration authorities began systematic checks of resident status papers in Buthidaung and Maungdaw. It was also claimed that such large - scale illegal immigration into Burma began during the 1971 East Pakistan war which led to the creation of Bangladesh. It was also reported that during the second half of April 1978 there were some armed attacks by Muslims on Burmese customs and police outposts in Arakan. Although it is difficult to ascertain the accuracy of the conflicting reports, yet it seems that one can assume that among the tens of thousands of evicted Muslims there were also Burmese citizens, of Rohingya origin. Some of them produced their national registration cards to back claims to Burmese nationality.

This mass exodus also brought about interference by the Saudi Arabian government that Burma should stop the eviction of Muslims.

CONCLUSION

World War II and the Japanese occupation broke up the previous framework of Burma's Muslim community. When Burma's struggle for national independence got under way, U Razak organized the Burmese Muslims to take part in that struggle. U Razak believed in a homogeneous Burmese nation and in Muslim partnership in the AFPFL, negating all links or loyalty to India. U Razak and the Burmese Muslims organized in the Burma Muslim Congress opposed those who demanded constitutional guarantees for the Muslim minority. The struggle for such guarantees was led under British rule and in the early postwar years by Indian Muslims, or by Burmese Muslims whose culture and loyalties were India-oriented, which is why both the British administration and the government of independent Burma rejected the demand for them. Even before independence it was becoming clear that the Indian Muslims in Burma were gradually losing the status of citizens enjoying equal rights, and becoming instead a foreign minority in independent Burma. This led some of them to migrate back to India, but most of them remained in Burma amid a powerful process of weakening loyalty to India and Pakistan as they sought to adapt themselves to new realities and forego assertion of their special communal characteristics lest they offend the intolerant nationalistic movement around them. Many Indian Muslims began to adopt Burmese practices and names in an attempt to become accepted by Burmese society. The same process was at work among those Zerbadees who before the war had set their religious and social conduct by Indian Muslim practice. As for the Burmese Muslims, they considered themselves Muslim by religion but Burmese by nationality, dressing and behaving like Burmese in every

respect. The same could be said more and more of Zerbadee women. Of course the process was a trend, not a universal pattern. Many Zerbadees continued to raise their children the Indian Muslim way and refer to themselves by their Muslim names, and many Indian Muslims who have become naturalized Burmese citizens preserved close ties with India; but the trend has been clear.

Simultaneously another process was gathering strength: the crystallization around the Jamiatul Ulema of religious circles seeking to preserve the spirit of religion amid the new trends. The Burmese Muslims were engaged in a bitter conflict with these circles, and the struggle is still going on, the Burmese Muslims claiming that the Jamiatul Ulema is fostering an Indian spirit among the Muslims of Burma. While all the Burmese Muslims want is to manifest their loyalty to Burma, to participate fully in the development of their country and to identify themselves completely with it, the Indian Muslims aspire to loyalty to such foreign causes as 'Muslim solidarity' and identification with the Arab countries or other foreign Muslim concerns (Algeria, Mauritania, Palestine, etc.) in flagrant contrast to the Burmese Muslims, who have no attachments to Muslim groups outside Burma; the Jamiatul Ulema even sends students to institutions of religious learning in India in order to maintain links with the Muslims of that country. The Burmese Muslims actually object to Indian Muslims who become Burmese citizens referring to themselves too as Burmese Muslims. They want to maintain a clear dividing line between the two Muslim cultural groups, fearing their fusion in the minds of the Burman Buddhists into one foreign entity in an identification that would jeopardize the Burmese Muslims' integration into the Burmese nation. They want to become part of the majority in every respect but religion.

The Burmese Muslims have been handicapped in this endeavour by the fact that the rise of the Burmese nationalist movement has been accompanied by a revival of Buddhism in Burma, a process which has, if anything, been gathering strength since independence. This had not been conducive to tolerance and has made it difficult for the Buddhist majority to accept the argumentation of the Burmese Muslims. It was also the reason why Burmese public opinion failed to draw a distinction between Indian and Burmese Muslims, as the latter would have like to do.

Indian Muslims still constitute the leading element in most Muslim organizations in Burma. Most of the country's wealthy Muslims are Indian Muslim traders. While they undeniably clash with Burmese Muslims in some respects, the conflict does not extend to every field, nor does it affect anyone beyond the limited circle of communal leaders and men active in public affairs. Much of the sting of the differences had been removed now that most of the leading Indian Muslims have become naturalized, severing the political link between them and their country of origin. Some of the former Indian Muslims even take part in the activities of Burmese political organizations.

If the Indian Muslims still constitute the centre of gravity of Muslim community life in Burma, this is due not only to their superior

numerical strength but also to their geographical location. Most of them are concentrated in the capital and in the Irrawaddy valley, while most of the Burmese Muslims reside around Mandalay and in Upper Burma and are thus further removed from the area that constitutes the country's political, administrative and cultural focus.

The differences of opinion between Indian and Burmese Muslims have been reflected in the conflict between U Rashid and U Khin Maung Lat. U Rashid's Burma Muslim Organization was largely a covert organization of Indian Muslims, though most of them were Burmese citizens. This group, and the Jamiatul Ulema that is connected with it, groups together all those who are more profoundly concerned with the preservation of Islam and those who are permeated by a strong communal consciousness and fear assimilation into the Buddhist majority. They are the ones who objected to such activities of the Burma Muslim Congress as the Dissolution of Marriage Act; and while such differences are no longer as sharp as under the British or during the first years of independence, they are still quite in evidence. Collaboration between the divided Muslim organizations is today limited to catering to religious needs by seeking to obtain from the authorities concessions in such matters as the pilgrimage to Mecca, cattle slaughtering quotas for the Feast of the Sacrifice or the opposition to the establishment of Buddhism as the state religion.

While most Buddhist Burmans see no distinction between Burmese and Indian Muslims and regard them both as foreigners, the educated class is more likely to accept the Burmese Muslims and the Zerbadees as Burmese particularly if they speak Burmese and dress and behave like Burmese, than they are to extend such recognition to the Indian Muslims. But this educated class is a small minority, and the Muslims of Burma, particularly those who retain Muslim names, find that they are an object of discrimination by the vast majority of the Burmese population. They encounter difficulties in being accepted into the civil service, or even in engaging in commerce, where questionnaires require that applicants for a licence state their religion. Yet three Muslims - U Razak, U Khin Maung Lat and U Rashid - have risen to the rank of cabinet minister; and there are Muslims, though not many, in higher government posts, in the army, the faculties of universities of Rangoon and Mandalay and other public institutions.

One additional reason that must be mentioned for the hostile attitude of the Burmese majority toward the Muslims is its misgivings about the guarantees they demanded, which it viewed as the demand for special privileges. The Muslims are considered a minority that tends to keep to itself because of its religion. The question of the Muslims' status in Burma has often been debated in the Burmese press, the consensus of opinion being that while they should enjoy freedom of worship, they have no prospect of fulfilling their aspiration to political representation as a religious minority.⁹⁸ Occasional threats and warnings have even been voiced that the Muslims should beware of mixing politics with religion in this matter, lest they be in for unpleasant surprises.⁹⁹ It has been argued that if

the Muslims are really only a religious minority, as they claim, and not a national one, then there is no basis for their demand for recognition as a separate group on a par with such national minorities as the Shans and others. Religion is a personal matter and not an organizational one;⁹⁰ and the Muslims, unlike other minorities, are not even concentrated in one territory (except for those of North Arakan, but then a special Frontier Administration has been formed for them). Muslims ought not to demand that Islam should be taught in state schools, or that Muslim civil servants be allowed to leave government offices for Friday Prayers: they may follow the dictates of their religion, but not if this affects the life of others.⁹¹

General Ne Win's coup of March 1962 put a sudden end to Muslim political activity. The policy of the military régime was to stop the activities of all minorities that sought a wider measure of autonomy, particularly after U Nu's victory at the polls in 1960 and his return to power. General Ne Win considered all such minority demands a threat to Burma's national unity. There is also the fact that the Muslims' chief leader, U Rashid, who was Minister of Commerce at the time of the coup, was arrested together with U Nu. The revolutionary régime's policy of nationalizing various sectors of the economy has hit many Muslim traders hard, particularly in Rangoon; and several of these were the very backbone of the country's entire Muslim community - its chief leaders, men of public affairs and financial backers of its various community activities. Since the coup a number of past immigrants to Burma from India, both Muslims and Hindu, have emigrated back to India, particularly those that had not yet taken on Burmese nationality. This migration has strengthened yet further the relative importance among Burma's Muslims of the Burmese Muslim element as against the Indian Muslim one - a process that began with the achievement of independence in 1948.

NOTES

- ¹ Meer Sulaiman, 'Muslims in Burma (1872-1931)', *The Islamia School Annual*, vol. 1, no. 1, Rangoon, March 1935, p. 35.
- ² The Zerbadees are offspring of intermarriage between Indian Muslim men and Burman Buddhist women, but under the British this term was also applied to Burman Muslims who had resided in the country since the days of Burman kings. For the Pathay, see present writer's note in *Hamizrah Hehadash*, vol. 13, no. 3 (41), Jerusalem 1963, pp. 269-76.
- ³ S.G. Grantham, *Census of India*, 1921, vol. 10, Burma; part 1, Report, Rangoon, 1923, p.107.
- ⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 91-2.
- ⁵ The Buddhists made up 84 per cent, animists 5.2 per cent, Hindus 3.9 per cent, Christians 2.3 per cent, miscellaneous denominations the remainder.
- ⁶ In his *Report on the mission to Burma* (UNESCO, May 1951, p.13) Tissinger states that the Muslims make up 4.5 per cent of the total population, but the author does not indicate the source of this figure.
- ⁷ J.J. Bannison, *Census of India*, vol. 11, Burma; part 1, Report; Rangoon 1933, p. 213.
- ⁸ U Kha, *The Burmese and Muslims, problems of nationality and religions* (in Burmese), Prome, 1951, p.95
- ⁹ In private conversation on 7 February 1962.
- ¹⁰ H. Tinker, *The Union of Burma*, London, 1959, p.338.
- ¹¹ D. G. E. Hall, *A History of South-East Asia*, London, 1958, p. 131.
- ¹² This also explains why Christian missionaries had so little success in Burma centuries later, even though the authorities did not interfere with their activities.
- ¹³ For interesting material on this organization see Shwe Myaing Aung, *Burmese Muslim Cause (No-Kyar-Ye)*, Rangoon, n.d. The pamphlet was translated into English for the present writer, other information being filled in orally by some of its past members.
- ¹⁴ The antecedents of the name go back to the General Council of Burma Moslem Associations (GCBMA) founded in 1936 on the pattern of the General Council of Buddhist Associations (GCBA) that was established in Burma in 1920. Among those who participated in the activities of the GCBMA in those early days were a number of active members of yet another organization founded back in 1904, the Society of Burma Moslems, including several Indian Muslims. The members of the old GCBMA stressed their Burman nationality, and while they did not collaborate with the Burmese nationalist movement they were passively friendly to it.
- ¹⁵ General Council of Burman Muslim Associations (G.C.B.M.A.),

- The Document*, Rangoon, 22 July 1947.
- ¹⁶ 'G.C.B.M. Conference: U Maung Maung's Presidential Speech', *The Businessman*, Rangoon, 26 September 1945; G.C.B.M.A.: *Draft Constitution*, Rangoon, 23 September 1945.
- ¹⁷ Letter from the Secretary to the Governor of Burma to the Secretary-General of the GCBMA, Rangoon, 15 January 1946 (unpublished, in possession of Mr. A.E. Madari, Rangoon).
- ¹⁸ GCBMA handbill, probably from March 1947; letter from the Secretary-General of the GCBMA to the editor of the *Voice of Burma*, 1 May 1947.
- ¹⁹ Letter signed by A. E. Madari, President of the GCBMA, to the Prime Minister of Burma, Thakin Nu, 4 August 1947 (see Note 17). The question of jurisdiction over personal status had exacerbated Muslim-Buddhist relations in Burma in the past as well, intermarriage between Muslims from India and local Buddhist women being exploited as an anti-Muslim argument by Burmese nationalist propaganda. According to Burman Buddhist practice marriage is a private contract entailing no religious ceremony. Nor is it stipulated that both parties must be Buddhist. According to Muslim law, on the other hand, marriage is a contract signed in the presence of witness; and the woman must be a believer in the Scriptures. The fact that before marrying Muslims women first had to be converted to Islam aroused the Buddhists' ire. Further, after her husband's death a woman married to a Muslim received a certain part of the estate, depending on family status and on the number of heirs, but always less than did a woman married to a Buddhist who had died in the same circumstances because according to Buddhist practice a woman holds the same share of the family property as does her husband and upon his death she inherits it. In addition to these differences, there was the fact that many Muslims immigrants to Burma had taken wives without wedding them formally. According to Buddhist practice those were lawful marriages, but Islam did not consider them marriages at all, as many a Buddhist woman found out after her husband's death, or upon being abandoned by a man who had cohabited with her for years and then returned to India. A committee appointed to inquire into the background of the riots of 1938 found that one of the critical elements had been the pressure of Buddhists public opinion on this issue. The committee recommended legislation to protect Buddhist women marrying foreigners, which led to the Buddhist Women Special Marriage and Succession Act of 1938 which provided that a Buddhist woman married to a non-Buddhist may demand that he should go through a civil marriage with her, and that the children of mixed marriages may inherit.
- ²⁰ Letter from U Chan Htoon to A.E. Madari, 2 October 1947 (see note 17).
- ²¹ Letter from A.E. Madari to U Chan Htoon, Rangoon, 4 October 1947 (see note 17).
- ²² This was not quite correct. U Khin Maung Lat, a member of the Constituent Commission, was an important Muslim leader though

- not all Muslim circles considered him their representative (see *Guardian* (monthly), Rangoon March 1962). The claim that the Muslims were Burma's second largest minority was also inaccurate.
- ²³ Memorandum submitted by A.E. Madari to Burma's Supreme Court, 19 November 1948 (see note 17).
- ²⁴ The Burma Muslim Congress is also referred to as Ba-Ma-Ka.
- ²⁵ A. Razak: 'The Burman Muslim Organization', *The Cry*, Rangoon, 1946. Razak was Minister of Education and National Planning in the cabinet of General Aung San, Burma's national leader, and was assassinated together with him on 19 July 1947 (*The Nation*, Rangoon, 20 July 1962).
- ²⁶ U Khin Maung Lat (Abdul Latif) was also an AFPFL leader. The AFPFL asked him, together with U Razak, to organize the Muslims of Burma as part of its plan to mobilize all the country's political forces for the struggle for independence. U Khin Maung Lat was Secretary-General of the BMC from its very inception, and one of its delegates to the supreme council of the AFPFL. He also served as U Razak's parliamentary secretary. From March 1950 until June 1958 he was Minister of Justice. When the AFPFL split in 1958 he joined the 'stable' faction that opposed U Nu. See *Guardian* (monthly), March 1962. Died in 1977.
- ²⁷ The Dissolution of Muslim Marriages Act, VIII of 1939. See Kashi Prasad Saksena: *Muslim law as administered in India & Pakistan*, Lucknow, 1954, pp. 275-87.
- ²⁸ The Muslims Divorce Act, 1953. *The Burma Code*, vol. 11 (Act XIV of 1953). Translated from Burmese.
- ²⁹ Information sheet published by the GCBMA on 6 December 1952; also GCBMA memorandum of 22 September 1952 to Burma's Parliament on the subject of the Act proposed by the BMC.
- ³⁰ The Religious Commission of the BMC in Akyab District protested against the Act (information sheet published by the Islamic Religious Affairs Council on 27 December 1952).
- ³¹ The government did not interfere with the local practices of the various national and religious communities, especially in matters of personal status. Section 13 (1)b of the Burma Laws Act, 1898, stipulates that in matters concerning inheritance, marriage, religion and personal status the laws of Islam would be applied to Muslim litigants. This principle was also upheld by a few judgments, one of which ruled that a dispute over the legacy of a Zerbadee would have to be decided according to the principles of Muslim law and not by Buddhist practice (Ahmed and another v. Ma Pwa, 1895, *Upper Burma Rulings*, 1892-6, vol 2, Civil, Rangoon, 1960, pp. 529-35), while another applied the same principle to a case involving divorce and the custody of an adopted daughter (ibid., pp. 536-9). With regard to Shī'ites, the courts ruled that Shī'ite Muslim law would apply (ibid., pp. 540-5). Some of the laws of Burma concerned Muslims alone. The India Cadis Act applied automatically to Burma as well, and in the theory it is still in force there today, but actually it was

never implemented. No qādīs were ever appointed in Burma, apparently for lack of suitable candidates. The Muslims were generally tried by non-Muslim judges. Two other laws still in effect in Burma today deal with the question of religious endowments and supervision over them.

³² *Nation*, 29 and 31 December 1955; 21 September 1956.

³³ *Nation*, 2 November 1956; 8 August 1960; 12 September 1960; *Guardian*, 1 February 1961; *New Times of Burma*, 26 July 1960.

³⁴ *Vanguard*, Rangoon, 3 January 1962.

³⁵ *Nation*, 6 March 1961; 9 January 1962.

³⁶ *All Burma Pathi National Congress* a pamphlet in Burmese; also a letter from the secretary-general of that organization to the present writer dated 2 August 1962.

³⁷ All-Burma Muslim Congress, New Ba-Ma-Ka, Mandalay District, *Fifth anniversary celebrations, Chairman's speech*, 1 October 1962 (a pamphlet in Burmese).

³⁸ *Guardian*, 7 May 1962.

³⁹ U Rashid, born in India in 1912, was brought to Burma at the age of three, becoming naturalized there. Connected with the Burmese national movement since its beginnings, he was early handicapped in his activities with it by his being an Indian Muslim. Co-opted by U Nu to the cabinet after independence, he was Minister of Construction in 1952, Minister of Commerce in 1954, Minister of Mines in 1956, and Minister of Commerce and Industry from 1960 until March, 1962, when he was arrested by General Ne Win's regime. He was kept in his various cabinet posts almost entirely through the insistence of U Nu in the teeth of pressure by Buddhist opponents that he be dismissed in view of his Indian Muslim origin and the fact that he had a brother in the Indian foreign service. U Rashid turned down U Nu's request that he adopt a Burmese name, agreeing only to prefix the U (meaning Mr.) to it. On this subject of names, as well as of others relating to the way of life of the Muslims, there were profound differences of opinion between U Rashid and U Khin Maung Lat, who advocated the quicker adoption of Burmese ways. See *Guardian*, (monthly) December 1956, pp. 27-34; and Tinker, pp. 6, 65, 82, 396. See also P.W. Thayer, *Nationalism and progress in free Asia*, Baltimore, 1956, p. 247. In 1975 U Rashid emigrated to Pakistan.

⁴⁰ See *Times of Burma*, 27 March 1960; *Nation*, 5 February 1962; *Guardian*, 5 February 1962.

⁴¹ U Rashid made no reference to Muslim missionary activities in Burma, which he was believed to oppose.

⁴² *Nation*, 24 December 1960; *Guardian*, 29 September 1960.

⁴³ *The Constitution of Union of Burma Burman Muslim Organization (BMO)*, second draft (in Burmese).

⁴⁴ Advertisement in *Guardian*, 15 May 1962.

⁴⁵ Madrasa Jamiatul Ulema (alias) Arabic College, *Sixteenth anniversary report for 1961*; Sagone Village, P.O. Kanbalu (Dist. Shwebo). Also letter from the institution's director, Saya Pone, to present writer dated 5 July 1962.

⁴⁶ Two earlier translations of the Qur'ān, financed by U Ba Oh, President of the Burma Moslems Society, had been carried out in the 1930s. Work on a new translation accompanied by a *tafsir* started at the Quran Translation Bureau on 1 November 1950, and the various Muslim organizations have continued to collaborate on this project notwithstanding the differences between them on all other issues. The new translation is to consist of 30 volumes, some of which have already been issued. While the Bureau receives allocations from the Muslim Central Fund Trust, work has at times been delayed by budgetary difficulties. See Burma Moslems Society, *Annual reports for 1937, 1938 and 1939*, p.9; Muslim Central fund Trust, *Ninth annual report*, Rangoon, 1960; conversation with Hajji Ghazi Muhammad Hashim, the chief translator, on 12 May 1960.

⁴⁷ Muslim Central Fund Trust, *Tenth annual report*, Rangoon, 1961.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ Moosa S. Madha 'Problems of education of Muslims in Burma'. *The Times Mirror Magazine*, Rangoon, vol. 1, no. 5. 1957-8, pp. 7-8.

⁵⁰ *Opening ceremony of the Burma Muslim High School*, Rangoon, 21 June 1962 (mimeograph); Zinat Islam Boy's Home and Educational Society, *Annual report, 1955-6*, Rangoon; *Annual report, 1960-1*, Rangoon.

⁵¹ *Guardian*, October 1960, *The constitution of the University Muslim Old Students' Association*, Rangoon.

⁵² The Association's leaders put the number of residents of Burma originating in Pakistan at 300,000 to 500,000. Lack of authoritative statistics makes it impossible to check the accuracy of this estimate.

⁵³ According to the Articles of Association of the Chamber of Commerce the term 'citizen of Burma' denotes any citizen of Burma irrespective of the national origin or former nationality of his parent (*Memorandum and Articles of Association of Burma Muslim Chamber of Commerce*, Rangoon, 6 January 1947, section 21b), making it specifically possible to include Indian Muslims in this category.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, section 3.

⁵⁶ Burma Muslim Chamber of Commerce, Rangoon, *Annual report of the Managing Committee, 1956-57; 1957-58; 1959-60*.

⁵⁷ To judge by what some mullahs say, an even earlier organization appears to have been established under the reign of King Mindon (1853-78), but I was unable to obtain any information about its activities or even its correct name, which may have been Jamiatul Ulema or A'imma Masajid (no connection with later organizations bearing similar names).

⁵⁸ Muslims in various parts of Burma maintain *madrasahs* of varying standards. Cf., for instance Madrasa Talimul Qur'an, Maymyo, *Yearly report, 1960*; and a letter from the principal of the Islamia Arabic School of Bassein to the present writer, dated 28 July 1961.

- ⁵⁹ *Nation*, 23 and 29 March 1962.
- ⁶⁰ Burma Muslim Society, *Annual report for 1937, 1938 and 1939*, p. 13. The Society and the Seerat Committee also held a joint memorial public meeting on the occasion of the death of Kemal Atatürk (*ibid.*, p.25).
- ⁶¹ U Nu, 'Religious Tolerance, Broadcast from BBS on August 18, 1953', *Forward with the People*, Rangoon, 1955. pp. 42-4.
- ⁶² The revolutionary government even proclaimed the Feast of Sacrifice, which in 1962 fell on 15 May, as a public holiday. *Nation*, 6 May 1962; *Union Express*, Rangoon, 14 May 1962
- ⁶³ Bahadur Shah Dargah Trust, *Annual report for the year 1951-52-53*, Rangoon. *Report of the renovated Zafer Shah Mosque*, 14 September 1956, Rangoon. Zafer was the name under which the Shah wrote his literary compositions.
- ⁶⁴ *Yuwaddi Daily*, Rangoon, 21 July 1961; *Nation*, 2 August 1961. The Islamic Religious Affairs Council even addressed U Nu a letter in which it appeals to him to take upon himself the task of defender of all faiths instead of establishing a state religion. *Guardian* (monthly), vol. 13, no. 10, October 1961.
- ⁶⁵ *Guardian*, 24 December 1960.
- ⁶⁶ *Nation*, 26 July 1960.
- ⁶⁷ *The Commentator*, 26 June 1954, *New Times of Burma*, 3 February 1954; *Burman*, 3 May 1954, 27 March 1955, 25 March 1956. All these were papers of secondary importance, published in Rangoon.
- ⁶⁸ A. Irwin, *Burmese outpost*, London, 1945, p. 23; Sultan Mahmud, 'Muslim in Arakan', *Nation*, 12 April 1959; Abdul Gaffar, 'Frontier Administration', *Guardian*, 13 April 1960.
- ⁶⁹ While the present writer has found no written evidence suggesting what the wording of such a British undertaking might have been, all the Muslim Arakanis queried about this subject affirmed that it had been given.
- ⁷⁰ Tinker, p. 34; Abdul Gaffar, *Guardian*, 13 April 1960; Asmi; 'The State of Arakan', *Guardian* (monthly), vol. 1 no. 10, August 1954, p.29.
- ⁷¹ Abdul Gaffar at a press conference on 8 April 1960 (mimeograph).
- ⁷² Abdul Gaffar, *ibid.*, V. Thompson, and R. Adloff, *Minority problems in South-East Asia*, Stanford, 1955, pp. 154-5.
- ⁷³ Abdul Gaffar, *ibid.*
- ⁷⁴ Editorials in the *Burma Star*, Rangoon: 'Political leadership in Arakan', 23 August 1954, and 'Controversy in the columns', 9 September 1954.
- ⁷⁵ General Secretary for Jamiatul Ulema, North Arakan, *Memorandum for the Arakan Enquiry Commission*, August 1960 (?); Abdul Gaffar, *ibid.* Cf. an editorial in the *Guardian* of 13 April 1960, 'In Defence of Maungdaw Muslims', which also deplores the lot of the Muslims oppressed by the Mujahids.
- ⁷⁶ Thompson and Adloff, pp. 155-6; Tinker, p. 357; Ba Chan, 'Report on Arakan', *Guardian* (monthly), vol. 1, no. 10, November 1963, pp.35-6.

- ⁷⁷ *Nation*, 16 April 1953, estimated the Mujahid forces in January 1952 at 2,000 men; by the beginning of 1953 they were estimated at 300 only (Tinker, p. 54). The personnel of the Mujahid forces, as of other rebel forces in Burma at the time, fluctuated widely: villagers would join and after a time surrender or drop out, to be replaced by others.
- ⁷⁸ *New Republic* (Burmese), 25 September 1961. A letter in *New Light of Burma* (Burmese) of 10 August 1961 reported that the immigration authorities put at 10,000 the number of Pakistanis who had destroyed their Pakistan papers, obtained Burmese identity documents and vanished into the population of Arakan.
- ⁷⁹ In one case the Supreme Court cancelled a deportation order, ruling that the persons against whom it had been directed had been born and raised in Burma and were therefore citizens although they spoke no Burmese and their customs were different, and declaring that Burma was a country where there were many such minorities. *Guardian*, 27 October 1960.
- ⁸⁰ Editorial in *Burma Star*, 23 August 1954; *New Times of Burma*, 24 March 1955; *Nation*, 5 November 1957. The present writer was told about Kassem by an English trader residing in Rangoon who often visited Dacca and knew Kassem personally. Cf. a story in the *Dacca Morning Star* of 23 June 1957 praising Kassem, reproduced in *Burman*, 1957. It was said that Kassem walked about freely, was very popular and considered a national hero.
- ⁸¹ *Guardian*, 13 and 16 November 1961; *Burman*, 13 November 1961; *Guardian*, 29 June and 6 and 9 July 1961; Tha Htu, 'The Mayu Frontier Administration Area', *Guardian* (monthly), February 1962.
- ⁸² Thompson and Adloff, p. 157; Tinker, p.30; Ba Chan, p. 35; Sultan Mahmud, *ibid.* Hla Maung, 'Political leadership in Arakan'. *Burma Star*, 10 September 1954.
- ⁸³ General Secretary for Jamiatul Ulema, North Arakan, *Memorandum for the Arakan Enquiry Commission*.
- ⁸⁴ *Nation*, 28 January 1961; *New Republic*, 17 May 1961; Abdul Gaffar at press conference of 8 April 1960; Sultan Ahmed, 'Arakan Statehood', Memorandum to the Commission, *Guardian*, 28 June 1960.
- ⁸⁵ *Nation*, 28 November 1961.
- ⁸⁶ *Nation*, 27 October 1960.
- ⁸⁷ *Vanguard*, 8 January 1962; *Guardian*, 6 February 1962; Tha Htu, *loc. cit.*
- ⁸⁸ Cf., e.g. *Guardian*, 1 January and 8 May 1962.
- ⁸⁹ *New Light of Burma*, 10 October 1961; *Guardian*, 8 January and 8 May 1962.
- ⁹⁰ *Ludu* (Burmese), 7 November 1960; *Hantawaddi* (Burmese), 7 December 1960.
- ⁹¹ *Tribune* (Burmese), 2 February 1961.