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Two Sides of the Same Arakanese Coin: 'Rakhine,' 'Rohingya,' and Ethnogenesis as Schismogenesis

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"Bengalis do not have any characteristics or culture in common with the ethnicities of Myanmar."
- Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, 19 March 2018[i]

"The patterns of behavior associated with elimination of other groups may be assimilated into their culture so that they are impelled to eliminate more and more."
- Gregory Bateson, 1935[ii]

Introduction: A Theory of *Longue Duree* Ethnogenesis

In the wake of ongoing cycles of ethnic cleansing of Myanmar's Rohingya minority, the most recent of which saw over 700,000 driven out of Myanmar's Rakhine State into Bangladesh beginning in August 2017, the world has been searching for answers to what has motivated these brutal pogroms. Journalistic and academic accounts have generally characterized the violence as deriving from some mixture of internecine conflict (between Buddhist Rakhine and Muslim Rohingya) and state-sponsored military cleansing operations. Although the modality of violence is quite different across these explanations, what they have in common is reducing the conflict to Buddhists versus Muslims, or the autochthonous Rakhine (with backing of their co-religionists, the Bamar, amongst other 'national races' of Burma) versus the putatively allochthonous Rohingya.

The problem with these accounts is that while religion and indigeneity have certainly proven to be potent discourses for mobilizing the violence, an exclusive focus on them ultimately obscures factors that would illuminate deeper motivations of the conflict. Specifically, while both folk and academic histories draw on particular interpretations of official British colonial records and Arakanese royal chronicles to present the Rakhine and Rohingya as unrelated ethnic groups – a division that has allowed elites of both to make political claims to autonomy within Myanmar – re-examination and retheorization of historical sources, linguistic patterns, archaeological records, and anthropological data casts doubt upon that conclusion and the very epistemological stance that insists upon such a project of categorization. Instead, we suggest that beginning after the migration of the Mranma people to Arakan around the 9th century,[iii] processes of schismogenesis[iv] (creation through differentiation) have been underway which have resulted today in the binary Rakhine/Rohingya, with the former considered "native" and the latter "foreign" to Arakan. We suggest here that both *emblems* of identity in fact are intimately related to one another rather than either preceding the other in a meaningful sense.

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Hence, contemporary conflicts over the status of the Rohingya - of the validity and legitimacy of the emblem itself - are animated by a misapprehension of the centuries-long process whereby the Rakhine identity (imagined as an ethnic group in relation to Burma's other national "races", chiefly the Bamar) has gone through fundamental change as its proponents appropriated as their *exclusive cultural patrimony* many of the symbols of the general "Arakanese" culture that preceded it. "Arakan" here is the name given to the political kingdoms derived from the preceding "Indic"[v] kingdoms which variously incorporated Buddhist, Hindu, and, later, Muslim subjects and symbols in what is now the trans-civilizational zone extended across Rakhine State[vi] and southeastern Bangladesh. While Rakhine/Rohingya *should* index changes in the complex trans-ethnic political-cultural system[vii] constituted by Arakan/Chittagong over a millennium, the dyad *instead* stands for the aggrandizement of the first term at the expense of the latter's erasure.

But even as we encourage the consideration of the Arakan/Chittagong system, it too is ensconced in other systems. Michael Charney has labeled the Rakhine ethnogenetic project of cultural-symbolic appropriation, the other side of which has been the denial of indigeneity to this Muslim population[viii] of whom some ultimately came to recognize themselves as Rohingya, as "Irrawaddy-ification."[ix] Charney describes this as a process deriving from the historical contingencies of the 17th and 18th century decline of Arakan,[x] followed by the policies of the derogatory Bamar conquerors that began with the annexation of Arakan in 1784/85. A review of the recent relative explosion of research on 17th century Arakan and Bengal[xi] brings those initial cycles of schismogenesis into focus - in which conceptions of difference were generated, boundaries drawn, cultural borders established that re-oriented Arakan east toward the Irrawaddy on one hand, and Chittagong (across the Naf river from Arakan[xii]) west toward Bengal and the wider Muslim world on the other. The early 19th century British colonial occupation that followed the Bamar conquest further exacerbated these divisions, compelling additional cycles of ethnogenesis often achieved through violent projects of separation. The British gave way to a further intensification of the essentialization of Rakhine identity in the post-colonial era, as Rakhine nationalists have sought to affirm their place within the post-colonial Myanmar state's "national races" pantheon, an imaginary animated by an ideology which privileges Buddhism and concomitant narratives of indigeneity, while Rohingya elites have insisted upon the ethnonym 'Rohingya' and privileged Muslim identity over non-Muslim traditions as way of connecting to Arakan. We conclude by arguing that the Rohingya/Rakine conflict can be perceived as microcosmic of a broader anxiety in Myanmar society about indigeneity – itself a metonym for belonging in the polity, in which the ability to claim membership may be the only way of securing access to scarce resources and opportunities. This is particularly potent given the current inefficacy and irrelevance of formal citizenship status.[xiii] Hence, deconstructing 'Rakhine' and contesting Rohingya exclusion together unravel the flimsy fabric with which Myanmar's indigeneity discourse is currently woven.

To describe these various processes, the article will proceed in a speculative vein, drawing from a four-fields (Biological, Linguistic, Archaeological, Sociocultural) anthropological methodology. This project, while ambitious in its theorization, is also humble – in that we are re-reading work generated by others, reassembling texts arranged by those who have come before us, and proposing new trajectories for research that either we have recently begun (through an ongoing multi-sited ethnographic project in Cox Bazar, Kuala Lumpur, and Yangon), or which

we ourselves cannot follow. By examining earlier claims, we ask: *are there other reasonable ways of interpreting the data?* Such questioning can critique current interpretive theories and advance alternative ones, based on what fieldwork conducted elsewhere in Burma (and beyond) has generated. This is especially necessary when many current arguments about the ethnogenesis of the Rohingya take colonial records as dispositive,[xiv] or fixate on the existence of the *ethonyms* "Rohingya" and "Rakhine" in various archives without considering the potential for, on one hand, radical cultural differences *within* those respective terms across time and space, and on the other, the existence of groups of people sharing culture, dress, religion, language despite the *absence* of a consistent ethnic name inscribed within discursive traditions.

Part I: Dueling Indigeneities

This section sketches features of Rakhine and Rohingya nationalist historiography to illustrate how *both* traditions seek to establish their bona fides as authentic ethnic groups within the purview of the modern racialized post-colonial Myanmar state. Although our ethnographic research suggests these are elite discourses that may not penetrate to the grassroots,[xv] these narratives circulate and hence affect political conditions, making deconstruction imperative. While scholarly debate has fixated on Rohingya nationalist claims,[xvi] we argue that by critiquing both ethnonyms, the presumption that 'Rohingya' is constructed while 'Rakhine' is trans-historically consistent (i.e. *ahistorically* eternal) can be contested.

Rakhine historiographies

Rakhine historiography elides the ethnogenetic process by asserting narratives of timeless, essentialist ethno-communities.[xvii] Here indigeneity is formulated in a linear historical framework in which authenticity correlates to antiquity, securing the group's, and by proxy an individual's, position within Myanmar society.[xviii] Consequently, Rakhine nationalist historians assert some variety of the claim that "Rakhaing culture is older and more advanced than that of Burma,"[xix] seeking to situate the Rakhine as the more "pure" and direct descendants of the progenitors of the modern Bamar "race." For instance, for Buddhist monk-cum-historian Ashin Nyanuttara, "Ancient Rakhaing entered into Rakhaing strip from the north-eastern parts of India," and while *other* races - "Aryans and Mongoloids" - may have "cohabited" with one another and "entered into Rakhaing strip," at no point did "the races [mix] *after* they entered into the Rakhaing strip."[xx] Nyanuttara invokes here a popular folk theory that the name "Rakhine" refers to upholding the "racial purity" of the group.[xxi] Similarly, many Rakhine nationalist historians assert that their dialect is identical with the earliest Burmese dialect, a fact purportedly evinced by the dialect exhibiting less change due to corrupting contact with non-Burmese dialects.[xxii]

Such maneuvers stand as attempts to account for the obviously Indic character of the earliest Arakanese civilization while simultaneously inoculating themselves from the taint of *kala* (the term, often used as a slur, for Indians or Muslims), by arguing that the Rakhine can trace a 'pure', impregnable channel to the Buddha through royal "Aryan" blood.[xxiii] For instance, the emblems of the Rakhine State flag and state seal bear iconic likeness with the symbols found on the coinage of the earliest (pre-Mranmaic migration) periods of Arakanese civilization,[xxiv] symbols that bear a striking correspondence to the emblems found on coinage from the

neighboring and associated ancient Harikela kingdom, north of Chittagong.[xxv] Critically, this linkage with symbols of Indic civilizations to the Buddha's homeland is more a mytho-cosmological than a historical one. Rakhine nationalists assert a genealogical relatedness to Indian qua Aryan royalty, even claiming that the Rakhine originate in India itself, while they fiercely reject as wholly alien links with actual South Asian *people*. Here the Rohingya constitute the example *par excellence*, as their links to ancient Bengal and hence India are foregrounded in the same moment they themselves are vilified.

Ultimately, Rakhine historians are confronted with a paucity of reliable historical material from which to support their claims. For instance, the folk theories on Rakhine dialect are unsupported by historical linguistic evidence, which shows that both the modern Rakhine and Burmese dialects are Mranmaic dialects deriving from the Old Burmese dialect,[xxvi] spoken during the earliest periods of Mranma settlement in the region of the Irrawaddy Valley (discussed further below). In his study of the Rakhine dialect, linguist John Okell states that, "the probability is that the earlier inscriptions were written by a people who had no ethnic or linguistic connection with the Arakanese," suggesting instead that it is more likely "that the Arakanese acquired their script much later from central Burma." This conclusion would not only "remove the aura of age from [Rakhine] culture,"[xxvii] but suggests connections with the 'Bengali' social system – as recent scholarship on epigraphic evidence appears to confirm.[xxviii]

Rakhine histories evade such challenges through imaginative readings of historical sources, such as royal chronicles,[xxix] not acknowledging the sources' various modern revisions and adjustments.[xxx] Rakhine vernacular histories are hence more revealing for what they exclude than include: scant consideration of the earliest social context of Arakan beyond a recitation of royal dynasties; a preoccupation with connecting Rakhine peoples and the semi-mythical era of the historical Buddha; and with inconsistent, inaccurate, and highly speculative accounts of the peopling of the earliest Arakanese civilization.

Rohingya Historiography

While Rohingya historiography often interprets the same sources in different ways,[xxxi] positing that Rohingya predated the Rakhine, it reflects a commitment to the same indigeneity imperative that privileges ancient origins.[xxxii] A common trope here is that shipwrecked Arabs brought their faith with them to Arakan in the late 8th century AD, establishing themselves as the progenitors of modern Rohingya. The lack of corroborating historical or archaeological records renders this claim highly speculative, however. While the claim appears reasonable – shipwrecks were common along Arakan's shores for many centuries and Arab traders were in communication with the Bay of Bengal even before the advent of Islam – the primary tradition of Islam practiced in areas where maritime Muslim Arab traders introduced the faith, Shafi'i, differs from the Hanifi tradition of Islam in Southeastern Bengal and Arakan.

Rohingya nationalists, for their part, in developing a theory of ethnogenesis linked first and foremost to the introduction of Islam to Arakan, dissociate themselves from those pre-existing Hindu-Buddhist Vedic cultural emblems, thereby amplifying the complementary schismogenic process, and abdicating those emblems to Rakhine nationalists. Rohingya historiography's focus on Islam, seeking to emphasize a distinctive and essential Rohingya identity, laminates "religion" on "race," excluding Arakanese Hindus and Buddhist Mramagyi (the

latter a recognized "national race" of Myanmar), groups which both share mutually intelligible dialects and common genealogical ancestry with Rohingya Muslims. This sacrifices a broader, more inclusive, notion of the Rohingya identity by adhering to the dominant model of authentic ethnic groupings under the "national races" ideology of the Myanmar state.

Ultimately, while the Rohingya and Rakhine historiographies hence stand as mutually exclusive, they can both be displaced by reconceptualizing ethnogenesis as a historical and cultural, rather than an essentialist biological or genealogical, process. We turn next to what such a pursuit might look like.

Part II – Early Peopling of Arakan

The Arakan Littoral has for millennia played an important role in connecting diverse populations otherwise divided by the imposing geographic barrier of the Himalayas' associated ranges. Ancient population dispersals into Southeast Asia and beyond moved along this narrow band of coastline.[xxxiii] In the post-Neolithic period, population dispersals moved in the opposite direction, and the ancestors of many modern populations of Bangladesh's Chittagong Hill Tracts region reached the region well before the introduction of lowland wet rice cultivation and agricultural states.[xxxiv]

But such states did come. By the middle of the first millennium of the common era, an Indic civilization organized around wet rice cultivation and modeled on the city-states found to the regions Northwest and West, across the Bay of Bengal, had been established along the Littoral. Archaeological remains place the earliest organized states of Arakan around the 4th century CE. There has, since this period, been a continuous presence of wet rice cultivators organized by states oriented to cosmologies, religions, and models of political authority of Indic provenance.[xxxv] Alongside these influences came many others which have informed the peculiar character of Arakanese civilization, defying pat generalizations in every period of its history.

The Indic character of the earliest periods of Arakanese civilization is indisputably attested to in scripts evident in stone inscriptions, the images of sacred deities sculpted and engraved in local sandstone, and even the plans of important urban centers serving as capitals of kings with Sanskritic titles and mythic lineages. These dynastic lineages, while almost certainly apocryphal from a material point of view (no archaeological evidence before the 4th century corroborates them), point to ties to *traditions* originating in the civilizations of the Indian subcontinent, whose time depth extends many thousands of years deeper than those of the Arakan Littoral or adjacent regions in the Irrawaddy Valley or Gulf of Martaban, sites of Indic settlement and civilization in the first millennium as well.[xxxvi]

While the archaeological record clearly attests to Arakan's Indic sources and origins, and has been well understood for over a century now, the history of its *peopling* remains a source of controversy and dispute. It is certain that in the case of the Arakan Littoral, populations were long settled before the advent of Indic states practicing wet rice cultivation, but very scant evidence to support the generic legends represented in chronicles purporting to describe the ancient past. Human population genetic surveys including Arakanese and neighboring populations have begun to clarify our understanding of peopling events in the history of the region, resolving some questions left open by historical and archaeological records, while generating others.

Contrary to the theory that a small group of migrants from the Irrawaddy moved into the Arakan Littoral, these genetic surveys provide compelling evidence that a relatively large group reached the region many centuries after the advent of Indic Arakanese civilization.[xxxvii] The theory that a small collection of Irrawaddy migrants gradually "Irrawaddified" the existing society and populations of Arakan hence appears then to be untenable;[xxxviii] the evidence points rather to what amounted to a significant population movement which changed Arakanese social demographics - whether through assimilation or invasion is yet unclear.

Recent work on the genetics of Myanmar populations[xxxix] suggests that Rakhine retain a greater degree of the shared genetic heritage traceable to peoples of present day Southwestern China than the more genetically diverse Bamar group, indicating that Mranmaic migrants from the Irrawaddy to Arakan branched off from the ancestral population relatively early in the history of Mranmaic peoples in the Irrawaddy valley. While no specific study of Rakhine population genetics has yet been undertaken, all research clearly indicates that both Rakhine and Burmese populations both carry non-trivial genetic contributions of South Asian origins.[xl]

Mranmaic peoples leaving the Irrawaddy valley made initial forays into Arakan around the 9th century, increasing through the 10th and reaching a historic peak around the middle of that century. Despite Rakhine chronicles and histories suggesting that either Shan or Mongol people invaded Arakan in the middle of the 10th century, the genetic population structure of Rakhine included in these surveys[xli] is strongly associated with the Burmic populations from Southwestern China. The divergences between the modern Rakhine and Burmese dialects show evidence of continuous exchange and influence, mostly of Burmese on Rakhine, and a mid-10th century basal dialectal split is also consistent with these findings.[xlii]

The importance of these genetic findings for understanding the peopling of Arakan in the 1st millennium is significant, and provides insights that historical and archaeological records do not. These findings point to the fact that the Arakan Littoral has since prehistoric eras been a site of churning cultures and peoples, and coincides with evidence from the archaeological record indicating that Arakanese civilization's earliest cultural and demographic links are to related neighboring Indic civilizations.[xliii] Without further historical sources documenting the social and cultural context of Arakan before the emergence of the Mrauk U dynasty, we can only speculate as to the specific contours of the processes whereby these Mranmaic peoples assimilated to, and troped upon in innovative ways, established sociocultural norms in Arakan. These conclusions also appear to coincide with the present-day ethnographic reality of the highly diverse Arakan Littoral and adjacent areas of Southeastern Bengal, including the Chittagong Hill Tracts, a result of successive and continuous population movements from both the East and West.

Finally, *pace* the Rohingya historian story adumbrated above about Arab traders, the tradition of Islam now predominant amongst the Rohingya, as with the earlier introduction to Arakan of Vedic (i.e. Hindu and Buddhist) texts and traditions, came via the overland route connecting Arakan to Bengal via Chittagong, as will be discussed more at length in the next section.

Part III: Hindu/Muslim Arakanese history and iterative schisms

While such deep history is speculative for lack of primary source material, Thibaut d'Hubert's recent work on Muslims at the 17th century Arakanese court sheds some light on the historical

presence of non-Buddhists in Arakan. d'Hubert has illuminated that these Muslims were not a cloistered 'foreign' elite, as has long been assumed. d'Hubert refutes the assumption that they constituted "a community of foreign merchants only;" rather, Muslims "were present at virtually all levels of Arakanese society,"[xliv] from the court to the fields, where hundreds of thousands of slaves that were gathered from contemporary eastern Bengal were settled.[xlv] Regarding those elites, they generated a robust set of institutions - educational, religious, and legal - reflected in "a local administrative and political multilingual idiom [that] appears on coins, in inscriptions, and in later literary texts."[xlvi] As such they formed identities as *Arakanese Muslims* in particular,[xlvii] carving out a liminal position - by facilitating foreign trade - that was essential to the kingdom's prosperity. In this, d'Hubert observes that "it is not that Bengali Muslims were completely assimilated into Arakanese nobility; their otherness was crucial to their roles as cultural intermediaries."[xlviii]

But mid-17th century political-economic changes[xlix] deeply affected Muslim social positioning. First, as the Dutch VOC asserted itself in the Bay of Bengal, Muslims' lynchpin role in that foreign trade was displaced, allowing Arakanese elites to "trade directly with the European and other foreign merchants of the Bay of Bengal networks"[l] rather than through Arakanese Muslim middlemen. This decrease in Muslim importance to the kingdom dovetailed with Arakan's first "Buddhification," instigated by Narapati (1638), who "strove to appear as a pious king to compensate for the negative aspect of his accession to the throne."[li] d'Hubert's readings of the Arakanese Muslim poet Alaol's corpus of texts allows us to see how Buddhification and the declining role of Muslims in trade drove changes in Buddhist and Muslim self-identification, resulting in a "crystallization of religious identities."[lii] The Mughal invasion (1660-1666) of Arakan exacerbated these divisions, leading d'Hubert and Leider to observe that "Bengali Muslims were suspected to be on the Mughal side. A clear distinction was made between the Buddhist Arakanese power and the non-Arakanese Muslims."[liii] Charney finds a parallel process occurring for Buddhists, noting that King Sanda-thu-dhammaraza, previously impious and fairly disinterested in Buddhism, "after the turbulent 1660s... stressed [his] personal devotion to Buddhism" and made his Crown Prince ordain as a monk.[liv] The liminal position enjoyed by the Arakanese Muslims (previously simultaneously both integrated and differentiated from Arakanese Buddhist majority culture) seems to have then experienced a reorientation toward marginalization. Hence language, religion, and dress that had marked their difference perhaps took on additional meanings, becoming what we could call proto-ethnic material.

After the Mughal occupation of Chittagong in 1666, the decline of Arakan was swift, increasing ossification of religious identification. Charney finds that as central power waned, rural gentry became comparatively stronger, waging incessant mobilizations for domination of vulnerable villages and control of the crown itself. The destabilization wrought by these various conflicts led to a decline in food production, which spurred reinforcing cycles of food insecurity (even famine), and population flight,[lv] but it also led to "people consciously defin[ing] themselves according to their commitment to one or another religion."[lvi] For instance, rural gentry encouraged followers to "conver[t] to their own faith" – which meant either Buddhism and Islam.[lvii] After a Bengali (either Hindu or Muslim) named Gadra took the throne in 1737 and proceeded to destroy Buddhist images and occupy monasteries, "some Buddhist elites (many perhaps in association with monks), encouraged a closer identification between the kingship and Buddhism."[lviii]

Leider identifies certain texts emerging at this time that attempted to fortify and buttress the Buddhist quality of Arakan.[lix] The fact that apocrypha emerged is suggestive itself, indexing, conscious or not, intention by social actors to intervene in standard narratives. Leider identifies particular texts he analyzes as emerging *before* the 1784/85 Bamar invasion, and hence ascribes the source of the Arakan anxiety about Buddhism to the mid-18th century political context in which both *internal* Arakan instability and the looming presence of non-Buddhists in Chittagong and further west manifested as threat. It is noteworthy in this context that the author of the apocryphal sermon in question emplaces many Buddha relics around Arakan state, the effect of which was to not only demarcate the political contours of Arakanese dynastic rule, but also to construct "a representation of the… 'Buddhicized' parts of Arakan," both "sanctify[ing] the land," and "mark[ing] the territorial appropriation of the land by the Buddha… thus defin[ing] the topography of a fully "Buddhicized' territory."[lx]

Even as the Arakanese side was emphasizing Buddhist idioms and its (new) separation from Chittagong and the greater Bengal world, a parallel process on the western side of the Naf commenced. Rishad Chaoudhury describes a "cultural reification of the frontier,"[lxi] relaying how discourse written only decades after the Mughal invasion recasts Arakan as fundamentally other, a land of infidels and demonic treachery. Moreover, population movements, in which "the Mughals gave *jāgīrs* in the [Chittagong] area to families originally settled in the neighboring region of Feni," created tension between new arrivals and the Muslims of Chittagong, who the former referred to as "'Magh' (i.e., Arakanese)."[lxii]

Citing Persian language scholarship, d'Hubert describes how "tensions remained among" the two communities "until the end of the nineteenth century and the intervention of Muslim reformist movements in the region,"[lxiii] implying a parallel project of cleansing of Arakanese traces. This is consistent with d'Hubert's observations elsewhere in his book regarding the "pressure of reformist movements in the nineteenth century… to reject the Arakanese past of Bengali Muslims,"[lxiv] noting that Bengal rejected Arakanese Muslim culture due to its ostensibly Hindu roots.[lxv] When combined with Bengal's early 18th century state centralization project - involving the building of military installations and the expansion of taxation that "pressed Chittagong more tightly into the purview of Bengal proper"[lxvi] – we see a concomitant process of cleansing the memory of the other. Today, as Bhattacharya tells us, Bengalis maintain a popular imaginary of Rakhine (or 'Magh') that "recalls the dreadful memory of Luso-Arakanese piracy and slave raiding during the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries" and the "concept of a Magh community is inextricably linked with the still current Bengali expression 'Mager Muluk', i.e. world of disorder. It can be pointed out that this single expression alone symbolizes the degree of social and political chaos prevailing in Lower Bengal during the time period specified."[lxvii] Such texts served to establish a new cultural frontier between civilizations where fluidity and interchange had prior defined societal relations. Leider and Kyaw Minn Htin's identification that certain foundational myths of Bengali Muslim domination of Arakanese kings are both false and yet also persistent is consistent with this ideological project.[lxviii] Finally, the case of the Marma community dwelling in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, "who share [with the Rakhine] the same culture and practice the same religion" and yet "have developed a distinctive identity and are individualized by a different name 'Marma,'"[lxix] can also be interpreted as an outcome of this split, a process Kyaw Minn Htin calls 'de-Arakanization.'

Part IV – The colonial projects: Bamar and British

The purification project continued and was accelerated with the Bamar colonization of Arakan that began with the 1784/85 occupation. Bodawpaya's regime did not rule at a distance through intermediaries, but displaced existing institutions and replaced them with its own.[lxx] Charney identifies two sources of purification at the elite level: first, that Burmese occupiers *literally re-wrote* Arakanese history themselves, privileging narratives of Irrawaddy dominance.[lxxi] Second, the Arakanese also re-wrote their own history and redesigned their own cultural narratives to make these conform to the occupiers' standards. Leider highlights Arakanese resistance to Burmese rule after occupation, finding that it did not simply take the form of armed insurgency, but had cultural, symbolic, and discursive components that stressed ethnic/political autonomy of (Buddhist) Arakan. Leider demonstrates how Arakanese historiography sought to conform to the genre conventions of Burmese chronicles.[lxxii] We could add to this the fact of population mixing, in which large numbers of Bamar people immigrated to Rakhine. While Leider describes these "immigrant Burmese" as "melt[ing] with the majority of Buddhist Rakhine over time," he does not consider the hybridization that such incorporation likely entailed – in other words, evidence of a further pivot to the Irrawaddy.

As the Irrawaddy's influence on Rakhine in Arakan intensified, the British further exacerbated ethno-religious distinctions between Rakhine and Muslims "by identifying religious sites as either Muslim or Buddhist and granting their caretaker-ship on the basis of one or the other religious affiliation."[lxxiii] Further, the British identified Rakhine as 'indolent' and Bengalis as 'thrifty,'[lxxiv] favoring the latter in agricultural schemes, and in the 1880s facilitated significant resettlement and cyclical migration of laborers from Chittagong to exploit new lands.

Summing up the state of Arakan after the successive colonizations, Leider identifies an explicit project forged by Arakan Buddhist elites intended to rehabilitate the status of Buddhism by improvising new legitimating stories and inscribing them in authoritative texts.[lxxv]

Moreover, after the British claimed Arakan in 1824, Charney outlines a diffusion of this purification sentiment to local levels by identifying a two-stage process in which dislocations wrought by colonialism separated local clients from their patrons after which Buddhist institutions reinscribed those abandoned subjects. Specifically, people were mobilized to solve collective action failures through intra-religious bonds rather than inter-religious (community) ones, as had been the case previously under local leadership (see Buchanan's 1798 account for an example[lxxvi] of a patron organizing religiously diverse clients; Charney argues that such bonds soon thereafter "evaporated"[lxxvii]). Further, "Buddhist monastic education affected the rural population spatially and socially: monastic schools in large villages strengthened the Buddhist presence in rural areas and also provided a uniform influence upon elites and non-elites in such villages and towns."[lxxviii] As a result of these changes, locals sought prestige by patronizing religious institutions rather than village ones;[lxxix] the fact that they extended this patronage beyond the village, sponsoring temple repairs far away, for instance, indicates "that Buddhist Arakanese had come to view themselves as part of a larger Buddhist community."[lxxx]

Ultimately, by the end of the 19th century, 'Muslim' and 'Buddhist' had become communal identities which policed inter-marriage and conversion. Charney finds that "the overwhelming majority of Arakanese villages in 1891 appear to have been religiously endogamous," and that communities threatened "social exclusion to those who sought to change their religious identity."[lxxxi]

Part V – Theorizing Ethnogenesis

Contemporary accounts of the nature of the ongoing ethnic cleansing in Rakhine State typically skip the genealogy outlined above that shows increasing schismogenesis over time, to implant their interpretations exclusively in the British era (1824-1947). Such accounts emphasize how the British colonial project altered the ethnic relationships that existed in Arakan state - and indeed the entire country - due to the British endeavor to classify the peoples it subjugated according to a theory of race and ethnicity with roots in European anthropology. This theory attempted to establish the existence of distinct races of humans (of which White Europeans were claimed to be the most superior). Indeed, the Tatmadaw's "national races" ideology arguably owes its ideological foundations to the British colonial project and the conception of race it depended on.

Much has been made of colonization's putative impact on ethnicity in Myanmar. Anthropologist Michael Gravers is emblematic of many scholars when he argues that "culture and ethnicity became reified and bounded, based on absolute differences in race, religion and mentality."[lxxxii] But Gravers also notes another, often overlooked, aspect of the colonial system that compels us to reassess his own 'reification thesis': namely that "ethnic groups were bound together by the market economy and by the colonial administration."[lxxxiii] Donald Horowitz, scholar of ethnic conflict, elaborates this point in his seminal comparative volume: "What the colonialists did that was truly profound, and far more important for ethnicity, was to change the scale of the polity by several fold."[lxxxiv] This new scale meant that ethnicities were *produced*, as localized identities were aggregated and amalgamated into supra-local categories more capable of participating efficaciously in the colonial (and ultimately post-colonial) state political economy.[lxxxv] The question of what happens to those *local* identities after they are aggregated into larger ones is a function of the forms and degrees of intensity of states' respective governmentalities[lxxxvi]: strong states either obliterate local identities altogether or displace them to marginal domains ('cultural' or 'folklore'); but when state projects are weak, inconsistent, or desultory (as with the British colonizers, whose ethnic categorization project was woefully confused[lxxxvii]), to then become occasionally despotic but infrastructurally unsophisticated (as with the post-colonial regime[lxxxviii]), we have a situation such as Burma's, where 'transvestite' identities[lxxxix] can coexist. In other words, the reification thesis often implies *exhaustative* ascriptive categorization, ignoring the evidence of people retaining the ability to maneuver within the field of ethnic categorization, holding multiple identities at different scales simultaneously, and fractionally.

Tellingly, various forms of identification are still being generated and renegotiated in Myanmar today.[xc] We have found in our fieldwork that not only do Burmese persons often inhabit multiple ethnicities at once, but new identifications may presently be in the process of being formed: people often describe how their *lu-myo* (their race or "type of person") is "Buddhist,"[xci] for instance, an identity that does not neatly fit the schema described above by those such as Gravers.

Fortunately, ethnographic and theoretical research on Burma has long provided us with powerful tools for thinking about this kind of ethnic mutability and mutation. Edmund Leach's pathbreaking study of the Kachin/Shan oscillatory system demonstrates how the 'unstable equilibria' that define ethnic relations allow singular individuals to embody *multiple* ethnic

identities, being "simultaneously Kachin and Shans," for instance.[xcii] F.K. Lehman's observation that ethnicity in Burma must be conceptualized as 'reticulate' – such that a given ethnicity's "connection with Burma proper was systematically mediated by some third [ethnicity]"[xciii] – helps us understand that ethnicities take diverse meanings in different contexts depending on how they nest within broader networks and emerge under various circumstances.

Given these foundations, common dismissals of Rohingya claims to an authentic ethnicity appear less valid. For instance, Leider argues that, "Contemporary Rohingya writers claim that a local Rakhine Muslim identity to be called 'Rohingya' has existed for centuries, because they argue for the recognition of distinct ethnic credentials. But at the same time, they point to the great diversity of ethnic origins and social backgrounds of Muslims during the pre-modern period which makes the hypothesis of a single identity rather unlikely."[xciv] But if identities are *not* mutually exclusive, as Leach stresses, there is no reason why there cannot be a diversity of ethnicities *and* a super-ordinate ethnicity (eventually called 'Rohingya') that brings them together under certain conditions.

This is particularly relevant when we consider Mandy Sadan's research on the problematic nature of the exonym 'Kachin.' Sadan begins by identifying the now classic, but still regularly (willfully) ignored, fact that domineering textual cultures often define oral ones without their consent or participation[xcv] – relevant for those who spuriously find in the absence of evidence of the ethnonym Rohingya in colonial records the evidence of the non-existence of the people who came to see themselves as Rohingya. Sadan then explains a double-bind for those Kachin who recognize that "Kachin" "has so singularly failed to attain status as an indigenous form" for people labeled Kachin,[xcvi] even as the term is politically expedient, even *necessary*, for Kachin autonomy projects in the context of a de facto imperial state that has demonstrated preference for ruling through division.[xcvii] Relevant for our Rohingya discussion is that Sadan shows that those labeled "Kachin" have searched for an indigenous term, finding some success in "Wunpawng," which Sadan calls "a relatively recent innovation… derived from a nationalist interpretation of archaic oral tradition."[xcviii] The (potential) conceptual parallels between "Wunpawng" and "Rohingya" are apparent: both groups have been labeled ("Kachin" in the former case, "Bengalis" in the latter case) in ways they reject. The critical difference, of course, is that "Kachin," imperfect as it might be, confers legitimate belonging in the polity as *taing-yin-tha*. "Bengali," of course, does not.

The task becomes to consider the empirical data vis-à-vis Rohingya given these theoretical tools. It is commonly asserted that the British installment of a system of migrant agricultural labor into Arakan, a region which remains relatively underpopulated compared to the neighboring Irrawaddy valley and the Bengal delta, imported the 'Bengalis' who would eventually become those who claim to be 'Rohingya' identity today. Indeed, even those historians who acknowledge the existence of Muslims before this period assert, albeit without evidence, that the mass migration facilitated by the colonial agricultural machine effectively overran previous Muslim society and culture, replacing it with Chittagonian Bengali: "in the three decades that proceed the First World War… the local Muslims seem to have been largely absorbed by the newly immigrant Chittagonian Bengalis."[xcix]

Yet the community of Muslims east of the Naf river spoke and continue to speak a different dialect than Chittagonian,[c] and have aggressively denied that they are precisely the same as those on the Chittagonian side of the border. Colonial records, for instance in the 1923

census, tell us as much: "the race of Arakan-Mahommedans, numbering 24 thousands… object to being classed with their co-religionists the Chittagonians, and consider themselves much more closely related to the Arakanese Buddhists amongst whom they live."[ci] Later the census writers elaborate further: "Although so closely connected with Chitagonians 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."[cii] It seems that in the 1920s, after most of the British-facilitated immigration, the local Arakanese Muslims (the proto-Rohingya) thought of themselves as distinct. Given that the Rohingya of today speak a different dialect and continue to differentiate themselves from Chittagonian Bengalis, it seems a slow process of ethnogenesis was occurring even amidst mass immigration, and that this migration may even have fed into the complementary schismogenic process of differentiation between Rakhine and Rohingya, as contrastive icons are accumulatively subordinated under each emblem.

The post-colonial period has only seen more schismogenesis, with Rakhine and Rohingya differentiation proceeding along both spatial and social-institutional forms. In regards to the former, Leider shows how inter-communal violence under the Japanese occupation in 1942 effectively led to a project of mutual ethnic cleansing, sending Rakhine Buddhists south, and Rohingya north to areas bordering Bangladesh.[ciii] Regarding sociocultural appropriation, everything from coins, to flags, to wrestling has been rendered exclusively Rakhine. For example, de Mersan's study of Rakhine spirit cults shows how Rakhine are in the process of 'writing out' the Chittagonian from their myths, re-construing a historically linked world as divided.[civ] 'Rakhine traditional wrestling' is increasingly restricted to Rakhine people, even though Rohingya had long participated in it;[cv] our interviews reveal that some Rohingya insist that Rakhine 'stole' it from them, and similar forms of wrestling culture exist in Chittagong.[cvi] Finally, for all the insistence on ethnic impregnability, intermarriage continues: Wade presents Rohingya 'becoming' Rakhine',[cvii] while our interviews have found that both Rakhine men and women have crossed the ethnic threshold the other direction. Finally, while more research must be done on the extent of the dialectal differences along the continuum connecting Rohingya with Chittagongian Bengali, the issue of dialectal differentiation is important for the Rohingya's claims to distinctiveness as an ethnic group. To wit, while the fact of dialectal variation alone does not *prove* that a sociologically meaningful ethnic distinction exists, it is held up by Rohingya themselves as a way of marking difference, as a way of generating, constituting, and defending ethnic identity.

Part VI: Post-colonial Struggles for Recognition

Ultimately, rather than imagining ethnicities as billiard balls - impregnable and rigid, such that when they smash together ('Chittagonian Muslim' meets 'Arakanese Muslim'), one breaks the other - we consider the possibility of the production of hybridity, particularly considering their intermingled pasts. In general this orientation is necessary in the context of a multi-ethnic social setting in which many ethnic groups share co-ethnics across national borders (and who should not 'lose' status as 'belonging' because of complex histories of intercourse across those cartographic lines). This is not to dismiss the possibility of complete absorption by 'Chittagonians' and the eradication of Arakanese Muslim (Rohingya) traces, but this is

theoretically unlikely. More importantly, given that people today call themselves Rohingya, it seems strange to advance the claim that they were absorbed by "Chittagonians" simply because the term "Rohingya" did not gain wide purchase as an ethnonym during the colonial moment.

And yet, there is a disheartening tendency in much academic literature to assume that Rohingya claims of indigeneity are invalidated because migrant Chittagonians assimilated and adopted Rohingya patterns of life and speech. Or to go further and suggest, without evidence, that Chittagonians subsumed "Rohingya", and/or that inter-ethnic mixing is so recent that 'Rohingya' is a mere cynical ideology. We turn here to writings on the Rohingya by Jacques Leider, a scholar who has not only laudably identified Rakhine marginalization and contested an international discourse that reduces all Rakhine to incorrigible racists,[cviii] but has also made claims about the Rohingya that warrant retheorization so as to open up ways of both understanding ethnogenesis and of interrogating extant historical materials.

While Leider notes that, "The building of a communal identity referred to as 'Rohingya' is… a social process that has hitherto not been studied by anthropologists,"[cix] he effectively proceeds in his writings to make a number of anthropological claims that he does not support with evidence. For example, Leider argues that Rohingya ethnicity was a political movement that remained cloistered in elite circles, "mostly associated with Muslim guerrilla organizations fighting against the Burmese government."[cx] He claims that while Rakhine and Muslim tension across the post-independence period – which the government apparently prevented from developing into full-blown internecine conflicts[cxi] – made "individuals beg[i]n to produce exclusive narratives to describe their history and identity,"[cxii] it was only "leaders of the Muslim diaspora of Arakan" who "became the mainstay of the acclaimed Rohingya identity."[cxiii] "Muslims in Arakan," conversely, "kept on identifying primarily as Muslims." [cxiv] Leider also claims that the "visceral rejection of the Rohingya identity by the Buddhists in Arakan and by many ethnic groups of Myanmar has a lot to do with the distortions and contradictions built into the political DNA of the Rohingya movement."[cxv]

The obvious problem with these claims is that none are supported by evidence. When Leider claims that after independence "Muslims in Arakan" continued identifying as *Muslim* (rather than Rohingya), he not only does not substantiate the claim, but elsewhere he acknowledges that there is little known about how average Muslims conceived of their identity, conceding his own claims are *impossible to confirm.*[cxvi] Yet, despite all that we do *not* know about Rohingya, Leider asserts that the Muslims in Rakhine state, indoctrinated by "Rohingya ideology" essentially constituted a *Chittagonian Bengali* society.[cxvii]

The deeper problem with such claims[cxviii] is that they refuse to imagine different explanations. This compels us to ask, in turn: why is there such an insistence, on the part of both nationalists and certain researchers, to see the Rohingya as irredeemably infested with the taint of 'Bengali-ness' – and hence allochthony? We suspect it stems from the subtleness, even slipperiness, of our argument – that admittedly could be construed as trying to "have it both ways," in the sense that we are identifying that Rohingya are claiming ethnic *difference* from Chittagonian Bengalis (and hence indigeneity), while also showing that there is enough *similarity* between the groups that when they interacted over generations in Rakhine state, the latter amalgamated into the Rohingya.

But this is not such a fanciful claim when we consider it within the social systems or 'transethnic' model urged by Robinne and Sadan.[cxix] When broadening our consideration of what the Arakanese/Chittagonian world looked like *before* the tyranny of the map compelled many to see Rakhine 'belonging' in Arakan and Muslims 'belonging' in Bengal (later, Bangladesh), the apparent mutability/differentiation paradox dissolves. The view of the colonist – he of the map and the census and the ethnic categorization chart – sees a horde of Muslims 'invading' Arakan. But if we expand our view back in time, to the Indic civilizations of Vesali and Lemro of ancient Arakan, we might say that these Bengalis were not invading, but *coming home*. This 'homecoming' is not meant to be construed in terms of 'ancestral homelands,' nor for those *specific* persons, but as a reconstitution of the stubborn Chittagong that was always already within Arakan, a reminder of that past that has been effectively reterritorialized elsewhere, where not obliterated entirely.

Part VII – Conclusion: Unraveling Indigeneity Discourses

Yet, a broader question persists:[cxx] why does the rest of the country so intently reject the Rohingya? We suspect that generalized hatred of Rohingya illuminates the entire system of belonging in the Myanmar polity, even as the conflict generates changes in that system. Not only does the eager participation of Rakhine nationalist elites in Rohingya exclusion elevate the former's standing in the system, but nationalists of all ethnic orientations have capitalized on processes of formal democratization and a liberalization of the public sphere to generate a robust, if revanchist, national conversation over belonging in the polity, through exclusion of the Rohingya, which enhances each group's position within it.[cxxi] As other ethnic groups in Burma have uniformly rejected the Rohingya, discourses that a shared primordial 'blood' subtends superficial differences in ethnic groupings and religious affiliations amongst officially ratified 'national races' are increasingly prevalent.[cxxii] By establishing the Rohingya as the extimate other, these groups inscribe themselves inside.

But that only addresses the in-group forming inertia that motivates Rohingya exclusion. Burma's trans-social antipathy – spanning right-wing nationalists to former political prisoners – goes far beyond that project. Rather, the hatred suggests an anxiety that the constitutive foundation of belonging in Myanmar is corrupted and collapsing, incoherent and increasingly consumed by its own internal contradictions. Following Rene Girard's theory of the scapegoat,[cxxiii] the Rohingya are not hated because they are *different*, but because there is fear that they are actually the *same*, revealing that purportedly natural categories are, indeed, relatively arbitrary emblems. Consequently, 'Rohingya' contests the entire colonialist cartographic ontology in which 'races' belong to certain territorial domains. In so doing, they threaten to expose a gaping hole in this logic. The question is whether, even as this unraveling produces violent attempts to restitch the torn fabric, space is created in the caesura for other idioms and foundations – a broader sense of indigeneity, a broader sense of cultural citizenship – to take their place.

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[i] Quoted in Democratic Voice of Burma, "Min Aung Hlaing warns against anti-military sentiment,"

[ii] Bateson, Gregory. "Culture Contact and Schismogenesis." *Man* (1935): 178-183

[iii] Gutman, Pamela. *Ancient Arakan, with special reference to its cultural history between the 5th and 11th centuries*. Diss. Australian National University, 1976.

[iv] "A process of differentiation in the norms of individual behaviour resulting from cumulative interaction between individuals" in Bateson, Gregory. *Naven,* 2d. ed. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1958.

[v] The role of people and traditions emanating from ancient Bengal played a central role in these earlier polities.

[vi] Parts of Myanmar's southern Chin State and areas now incorporated into India which were once part of the ancient kingdom of Harikela were associated with early Arakan, just as the kingdom extended its influence to present day Bago, or Pegu, at the height of its power.

[vii] Robinne, Francois, and Mandy Sadan, "Postscript: Reconsidering the dynamics of ethnicity through Foucault's concept of 'spaces of dispersion,'" in Francois Robinne and Mandy Sadan, eds. *Social dynamics in the highlands of Southeast Asia: Reconsidering political systems of highland Burma by ER Leach*. Vol. 18. Leiden: Brill, 2007a.

[viii] The Kaman, another Muslim minority of Arakan, *are* recognized as a "national race," however.

[ix] Charney uses the term in "Beyond State-Centered Histories in Western Burma, Missionizing Monks and Intra Regional Migrants In the Arakan Littoral, C. 1784-1860," in Jos Gommans and Jacques Leider, eds *The Maritime Frontier of Burma Exploring Political, Cultural and Commercial Interaction in the Indian Ocean World, 1200-1800*, Amsterdam: KITLV Press, Leiden, 2002. While he describes the process as "Burmanization" in *Where Jambudipa and Islamdom converged: Religious change and the emergence of Buddhist communalism in early modern Arakan (fifteenth to nineteenth centuries)*. Diss. University of Michigan, 1999, many of the arguments and materials therein are relevant.

[x] Charney 1999.

[xi] d'Hubert, Thibaut. *In the Shade of the Golden Palace: Alaol and Middle Bengali Poetics in Arakan*. Oxford University Press, 2018; Choudhury, Rishad. "An eventful politics of difference and its afterlife: Chittagong frontier, Bengal, c. 1657–1757." *The Indian Economic & Social History Review* 52.3 (2015): 271-296.

[xii] This border was established by Mughal invaders in 1666, who fixed, for the first time in Arakan's history, this East/West divide.

[xiii] Cheesman, Nick. "How in Myanmar 'National Races' Came to Surpass Citizenship and Exclude Rohingya," *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, vol 7.3: 461-483, 2017.

[xiv] The colonial encounter and its forms of knowledge creation are often privileged by national and foreign researchers alike, despite the incompetence of such categorization (that the colonists themselves acknowledged), and the potential for subjects to evade state enumerating exercises. See Tonkin, Derek. "Exploring the Issue of Citizenship in Rakhine State," in Ashley South and Marie Lall, *Citizenship in Myanmar: Ways of Being in and from Burma*, Singapore: ISEAS, 2018. For a brief critique, see Prasse-Freeman, Elliott. "The Rohingya Crisis," *Anthropology Today* 33.6, December 2017.

[xv] Our fieldwork indicates that non-elite Rohingya do *not* relay common tropes described by Rohingya elites. Many convey, simply, that they are Rohingya of Myanmar, and trace no origin story beyond their family's experiences in Rakhine.

[xvi] Jacques Leider has critiqued Rohingya narratives on a number of occasions without attending to the constructed nature of 'Rakhine' [see, *inter alia,* "Background and Prospects in the Buddhist-Muslim Dissensions in Rakhine State of Myanmar," in K.M.de Silva ed. *Ethnic Conflict in Buddhist Societies in South and Southeast Asia*. Kandy: International Centre for Ethnic Studies, p. 25-55, 2015b]. Nick Cheesman, who admittedly has different objectives, juxtaposes a key Rohingya text with a sermon by a Burman monk ["The Right to Have Rights," in *Communal Violence in Myanmar*. Yangon: Myanmar

Knowledge Society and Australia National University, 2015]. Ardeth Thawnghmung ["The politics of indigeneity in Myanmar: competing narratives in Rakhine state." *Asian Ethnicity* 17.4: 527-547, 2016] gets the closest to deconstructing Rakhine by critiquing how a particular Rakhine text *elides* a discussion of its own historical origins by focusing on refuting Rohingya claims to authenticity.

[xvii] Myat Moe. "Striving to achieve lasting peace," *Global New Light of Myanmar*, 7 February 2018

[xviii] As Cheesman (2015) notes, citizenship rights are literally tied to an individual's status as indigenous.

[xix] Nyanuttara, *A Study of Buddhism in Arakan*, 2014.

[xx] Nyanuttara 2014, emphasis added.

[xxi] Charney, Michael. "Theories and Historiography of the Religious Basis of Ethnonyms in Rakhaing (Arakan), Myanmar (Burma)." The Forgotten Kingdom of Arakan: A Public Seminar on the People of Present Day Arakan State of Myanmar. Bangkok, 23 November 2005.

Maung Tha Hla, *The Rakhaing*, Buddhist Rakhaing Cultural Association, 2004. Both modern Rakhine and Burmese are Mranmaic dialects deriving from Old Burmese (Hill, Nathan. "The merger of Proto-Burmish *ts and *č in Burmese," SOAS Working Papers in Linguistics, Vol. 16, 2013.), John Okell states that, "the probability is that the earlier inscriptions were written by a people who had no ethnic or linguistic connection with the Arakanese." This conclusion not only "remove[s] the aura of age from [Rakhine] culture,"[xxii] but also suggests connections with the Bengali social system – as recent scholarship on epigraphic evidence appears to confirm (Griffiths 2015:286).

[xxiii] Maung Tha Hla, for instance, allows that "the inhabitants of Rakhaing assimilated immigrants Aryans such as Kan Razagree and his followers."

[xxiv] See generally Gutman, Pamela. "The ancient coinage of Southeast Asia." *Journal of the Siam Society* 66.1 (1978): 8-21.

[xxv] Wicks, Robert S. *Money, Markets, and Trade in Early Southeast Asia: The development of indigenous monetary systems to AD 1400*. No. 11. SEAP Publications, 1992, pp 91-2.

[xxvi] Hill, Nathan. "The merger of Proto-Burmish *ts and *č in Burmese," SOAS Working Papers in Linguistics, Vol. 16, 2013.

[xxvii] Okell 2005:5.

[xxviii] Griffiths 2015:286

[xxix] Nyanuttara 2014; Similarly, San Tha Aung follows dynastic lists taken at face value from Rakhine royal chronicles to conclude, in the absence of any corroborating archaeological evidence, that the royal lineage of ancient Rakhine kings extends to "about 3000 B.C." (San Tha Aung, *The Buddhist Art of Ancient Arakan*, 1979), a date which quite conveniently situates Arakan within the ancient Indic *oecumene* of the historical personage of the Buddha.

[xxx] "Rakhine dynastic lists linked to a succession of "capitals" are desperately messy and inconclusive" (Leider 2015b).

[xxxi] Leider 2015b.

[xxxii] See Ba Tha, *A Short History of Rohingya and Kamas of Burma*, translated by A.F.K Jilani, edited by Mohd. Ashraf Alam. Rakhine: Kaladan News, 2007 [1963]. Many Rohingya elite texts do not, as Nick Cheesman puts it, "question the premises on which the taxonomy is based, and argue for a new formula for political membership." The "problem is not the taxonomy itself, but the exclusion of Rohingya from it" (2015:142).

[xxxiii] Li, YC et al. "Ancient inland human dispersals from Myanmar into interior East Asia since the Late Pleistocene", Scientific Reports volume 5, Article number: 9473 (2015)

[xxxiv] Gazi, N et al. "Genetic Structure of Tibeto-Burman Populations of Bangladesh: Evaluating the Gene Flow along the Sides of Bay-of-Bengal." *PLoS ONE* 8(10), 2013; Gutman 1976.

[xxxv] Gutman 1976.

[xxxvi] In Arakan, as kings claimed lineages harkening to roots in distant lands transposed to Arakanese soil and a mythic past, even the city-state of Vaishali, or Weithali in its modern corrupted form, mirrored the

more ancient and consequential city of Vaishali in Bihar, India, one of the sixteen Mahajanapada of the last millennium BCE. See Singer, Noel. *Vaishali and the Indianization of Arakan*. Delhi: APH Publishing, 2008.

[xxxvii] Gazi 2013.

[xxxviii] Michael Charney made this tentative proposal (1999)

[xxxix] Summerer, Monika et al. "Large-scale mitochondrial DNA analysis in Southeast Asia reveals evolutionary effects of cultural isolation in the multi-ethnic population of Myanmar," *BMC Evolutionary Biology*, 14.17, 2014; Li, Yu-Chun, et al. "Ancient inland human dispersals from Myanmar into interior East Asia since the Late Pleistocene." *Scientific reports* 5 (2015):

[xl] ibid.

[xli] Summerer 2014.

[xlii] Davis, Heidi. "Consonant Correspondences of Burmese, Rakhine and Marma with Initial Implications for Historical Relationships," MA Thesis, University of North Dakota, 2014.

[xliii] Griffiths, Arlo. "Three More Sanskrit Inscriptions of Arakan: New Perspectives on Its Name, Dynastic History, and Buddhist Culture in the First Millennium." *Journal of Burma Studies* 19.2 (2015): 281-340.

[xliv] d'Hubert 2018:30.

[xlv] Charney 1999:152-72

[xlvi] d'Hubert 2018:45-6; see also d'Hubert, Thibaut. "The Lord of the Elephant: Interpreting the Islamicate epigraphic, numismatic, and literary material from the Mrauk U period of Arakan (ca. 1430-1784)," *Journal of Burma Studies* 19, 2 (2015): 341-370.

[xlvii] d'Hubert 2018:64-5.

[xlviii] d'Hubert 2018:68.

[xlix] Charney 1998, 1999; Van Galen, Stephan. "Arakan at the Turn of the First Millennium of the Arakanese Era," in in Jos Gommans and Jacques Leider, eds *The Maritime Frontier of Burma Exploring Political, Cultural and Commercial Interaction in the Indian Ocean World, 1200-1800*, Amsterdam: KITLV Press, Leiden, 2002.

[l] d'Hubert 2018:123.

[li] d'Hubert 2018:102.

[lii] d'Hubert 2018:100.

[liii] d'Hubert, Thibaut and Jacques Leider. "Traders and Poets at the Mrauk U Court: Commerce and Cultural links in Seventeenth-Century Arakan," in Rila Mukherjee, ed. *Pelagic Passageways: the Northern Bay of Bengal Before Colonialism*. Delhi: Primus Books, 2011:93.

[liv] Charney 1999:207.

[lv] Charney 1999:228-33.

[lvi] Charney 1999: 219. This was a marked change from previous eras when affiliations that may have appeared religious often were merely associated with patron-client relationships (ibid:216).

[lvii] Charney 1999:224.

[lviii] Charney 1999:244.

[lix] Leider, Jacques."Relics, Statues, and Predictions: Interpreting an Apocryphal Sermon of Lord Buddha in Arakan," *Asian Ethnology*, Volume 68.2, 333-364, 2009.

[lx] Leider 2009:341.

[lxi] Choudhury, Rishad. "An eventful politics of difference and its afterlife: Chittagong frontier, Bengal, c. 1657–1757." *The Indian Economic & Social History Review* 52.3 (2015): 271.

[lxiv] d'Hubert 2018:10.

[lxv] d'Hubert 2018:158-59.

[lxvi] Choudhury 2015:287.

[lxvii] Bhattacharya, Swapna. "Myth and History of Bengali Identity in Arakan," in Jos Gommans and Jacques Leider, eds *The Maritime Frontier of Burma Exploring Political, Cultural and Commercial Interaction in the Indian Ocean World, 1200-1800*, Amsterdam: KITLV Press, Leiden, 2002: 201.

[lxviii] Leider, Jacques and Kyaw Minn Htin. "King Man Co Mvan's Exile in Bengal: Legend, History and Context". Journal of Burma Studies, 19.2: 371-405, 2015.

[lxix] Kyaw Minn Htin. "The Marma from Bangladesh: A 'de-Arakanized' Community in Chittagong Hill Tracts". *Suvannabhumi* 7, 2 (December 2015): 133.

[lxx] Leider, Jacques. "Politics of Integration and Cultures of Resistance. A Study of Burma's Conquest and Administration of Arakan," Geoffrey Wade ed, *Asian Expansions: The Historical Experiences of Polity Expansion in Asia*. London: Routledge, 184-213, 2015a.

[lxxi] Charney 2002:216.

[lxxii] Leider 2015a:201.

[lxxiii] Charney 1999:270.

[lxxiv] Charney 1999:284.

[lxxv] Leider 2008:440.

[lxxvi] Van Schendel, Willem, ed. *Francis Buchanan in Southeast Bengal (1798): His Journey to Chittagong, the Chittagong Hill Tracts, Noakhali and Comilla,* Dhaka: University Press Limited, 1992:89

[lxxvii] Charney 1999:320.

[lxxviii] Charney 1999:292.

[lxxix] Charney 1999:297

[lxxx] Charney 1999:299.

[lxxxi] Charney 1999:300,301.

[lxxxii] Gravers, Michael. "Introduction: Ethnicity against State – State against Ethnic Diversity?" in Mikael Gravers, ed. *Exploring ethnic diversity in Burma*. NIAS Studies in Asian Topics Series, 39, Copenhagen: NIAS press, 2007:14.

[lxxxiii] Gravers 2007:14.

[lxxxiv] Horowitz, Donald. *Ethnic Groups in Conflict*. Univ of California Press, 2001, 76.

[lxxxv] Horowitz 2001:82.

[lxxxvi] Prasse-Freeman 2017.

[lxxxvii] The 1921 census enumerators commented on their own significant mistakes: that the differences in "the numbers tabulated at previous census as Mahomedad-Arakanese" across the years "indicate enumeration of the Arakan-Mahomedans at previous censuses under other descriptions; in the census tables of 1901 it is impossible to identify them. Probably they have been entered as Sheikh or possibly under Other Mahomedan Tribes in all the three earlier censuses mentioned in the table" (Grantham, S.G. *Census of India*, *1921*, Vol X, Rangoon: Office of the Superintendent, Government of Burma, 1923:214). For a thorough discussion of the errors in categorization, see McAuliffe, Erin Lynn. *Caste and the quest for racial hierarchy in British Burma: An analysis of census classifications from 1872-1931*. Masters Thesis, University of Washington, 2017.

[lxxxviii] see Prasse-Freeman, Elliott. "Power, Civil Society, and an Inchoate Politics of the Daily in Burma/Myanmar," *Journal of Asian Studies* 71.2:371-397, 2012.

[lxxxix] Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined communities*. New York: Verso, 2006:166.

[xc] Wade, Francis. *Myanmar's Enemy Within: Buddhist Violence and the Making of a Muslim 'Other'*, London: Zed Books, 2017.

[xci] For other evidence of "Buddhist lu-myo," see Carstens, Charles. "Religion," in *Handbook of Contemporary Myanmar*, Routledge, 2018.

[xcii] Leach, E.R. *Political Systems of Highland Burma*, Oxford and New York: Berg, London School of Economics Monographs on Social Anthropology #44, 1959:2; for important critiques, see those assembled in Sadan and Robinne 2007b.

[xciii] Lehman 1967:119.

[xciv] Leider 2013:230.

[xcv] Sadan, Mandy. "Constructing and Contesting the Category 'Kachin' in the Colonial and post-Colonial Burmese State," in Michael Gravers, ed. *Exploring ethnic diversity in Burma*. NIAS Studies in Asian Topics Series, 39, Copenhagen: NIAS press, pp 34-76, 2007:39; see also Scott, James. *The Art of Not Being Governed*, Yale University Press: 2009.

[xcvi] Sadan 2007:42

[xcvii] Sadan 2007:35.

[xcviii] Sadan 2007:54.

[xcix] Leider 2013:229-230. Leider elsewhere contradicts this claim, instead asserting – also without evidence – that this putative absorption took place a number of decades later: "Bengali Muslim immigrants from Chittagong who settled in the north of Arakan ... assimilated, *after independence*, the precolonial Muslim community in northern Arakan" (Leider 2015a:204, emphasis added).

[c] while the fact of dialectal variation alone does not *prove* that there a sociologically meaningful ethnic distinction exists (Robinne and Sadan, 2007a:304), it is held up by Rohingya themselves as a way of marking difference, as a way of generating, constituting, and defending ethnic identity.

[ci] Grantham 1923:22.

[cii] Grantham 1923:213.

[ciii] Leider 2018

[civ] de Mersan, Alexandra. "Ritual and the Other in Rakhine Spirit Cults," in Su-Ann Oh, ed. *Myanmar's Mountain and Maritime Borderscapes*. Singapore: ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute, 2016.

[cv] Chowdhury, Arani et al. "Power structures, class divisions and entertainment in Rohingya society," *BBC Media Action*, August 2018, p24.

[cvi] Haque, Mahbubul. "Bali Khela". In Sirajul Islam and Ahmed Jamal, A. *Banglapedia: National Encyclopedia of Banglades,* Asiatic Society of Bangladesh, 2012.

[cvii] Wade 2017:ch 10

[cviii] We enthusiastically support Leider in these endeavors and have also written against such simplistic and obfuscating discourses. On considering the Rakhine plight and perspective, see Prasse-Freeman, Elliott. "A Senseless Census in Burma," *Foreign Policy*, 21 December 2013b; on not reducing Rakhine to racists, see Prasse-Freeman, Elliott. "Fostering an Objectionable Burma Discourse," *Journal of Burma Studies*, 18.1, June 2014:118, fn 49.

[cix] Leider 2013:232.

[cx] Leider, Jacques. "Transmutations of the Rohingya Movement in the Post-2012 Rakhine State Crisis" in Ooi Keat Gin and Volker Grabowsky, ed. *Ethnic and Religious Identities and Integration in Southeast Asia*, Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 2017:199-200.

[cxi] Leider 2017:205.

[cxii] Leider 2017:200.

[cxiii] Leider 2017:201.

[cxiv] Leider, Jacques. "Conflict and Mass Violence in Arakan (Rakhine State): The 1942 Events and Political Identity Formation," in South, Ashley and Marie Lall, *Citizenship in Myanmar: Ways of Being in and from Burma*, Singapore: ISEAS, 2018:206. Years earlier scholar Aye Chan made (also without providing evidence) a similar claim: "the majority of the ethnic group, being illiterate agriculturalists in the rural areas, still prefers their identity as Bengali Muslims" (Aye Chan. "The Development of a Muslim Enclave in Arakan (Rakhine) State of Burma (Myanmar)." *SOAS Bulletin of Burma Research* 3.2: 396-420, 2005:415).

[cxv] Leider, Jacques. "Competing Identities and the Hybridized History of the Rohingyas," in *Metamorphosis*: *Studies in Social and Political Change in Myanmar.* Renaud Egreteau and Francois Robinne, eds. Singapore: NUS Press, 2016:160-61.

[cxvi] At one point Leider argues there is "a lack of detailed sources to explore the inner life of the Rohingya organisations to give us a deeper understanding of political and ethnic dynamics" (Leider 2015:37-38).

[cxvii] As quoted earlier, Leider 2013:229-230.

[cxviii] The point of highlighting Leider's various assertions about Rohingya is to use them, following Shae Frydenlund, for theorizing the Rohingya issue. ["On the uses of (neo)liberalism in Myanmar and the promise of radical feminism," *Oxford Tea Circle*, 25 October 2017].

[cxix] Robinne and Sadan, 2007a.

[cxx] Prasse-Freeman, Elliott. "Scapegoating in Burma," *Anthropology Today* 29.4, August 2013a.

[cxxi] ibid.

[cxxii] Houtman, Gustaaf. *Mental Culture in Burmese Crisis Politics*, ILCAA Study of Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa Monograph Series No. 33, 1999: chapter 5.

[cxxiii] Girard, René. *The Scapegoat*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986.