
Magh Marauders, Portuguese Pirates, White Elephants and Persian Poets:

Arakan and Its Bay-of-Bengal Connectivities in the Early Modern Era¹

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Introduction

The plight of Muslims in the western Burmese state of Arakan (or Rakhine) illustrates a tendency in nationalist historical consciousness to deny those aspects of the past, which would otherwise unsettle dominant national narratives. Since Burmese independence from British colonialism in 1948, many Muslims have been denied Burmese citizenship under the rationale that they are “illegal immigrants” who entered the country from Bengal as compradors of the exploitative colonial regime of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Having suffered several waves of state-sponsored oppression and violence in the latter part of the twentieth century, large numbers of people have fled Arakan for refugee camps in neighboring countries. The specific cause of refugees often identified as Rohingya has received some media attention in recent times, although a chronic refugee problem has been ongoing for many decades.² At the same time, the Rohingya people and other Muslim Arakanese have had little support from the nativist Rakhiaing nationalist movement, which has vigorously opposed both Burmese imperialism and what it sees as the foreign influence of Islamicization.³ Despite such narratives of Arakanese purity, abundant evidence points to over one thousand years of settlement in Arakan by Muslims, who came from various places across the seas and around the Bay in several distinct waves of immigration prior to the colonial era.

One of the major aims of this paper is to chart the many ways in which this post-colonial nationalist view of the Arakanese past fails to account for the diverse, cosmopolitan and indeed multicultural nature of Arakan in the early modern period. In taking a view

from the sea, as opposed to one limited by territorial boundaries, this paper aims to show that during its ascendancy as a maritime power of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, the Kingdom of Arakan participated in and was shaped by a cultural continuum of a heterogeneous littoral society that extended in an arc around the Bay of Bengal. This is not to discount the importance of autochthonous traditions, or influences emanating from further inland and outside of this Bay of Bengal zone of cultural interaction. Indeed, to a large extent we might recognize that a distinctive era was brought to a close as the seventeenth century progressed, and the connectivities that gave life to this distinctive littoral society were terminally interrupted by territorial divisions imposed by the landed empires of the Burmese from the east and the Mughals from the west. Nonetheless, when Arakan’s early modern history is viewed in terms of its connectivities to other parts of the Bay of Bengal via the sea, the parochial excesses of tropes of Arakan’s Buddhist purity become impossible to sustain.

Earliest Arrivals of Islam

Contemporary Muslims, and the Rohingya⁴ themselves trace their ancestry in Arakan, in part, to the shipwreck of seafaring Arab and Persian traders, as early as the eighth century of the Common Era.⁵ While positive identification of many of their referents is difficult, Arab geographers of the tenth and twelfth centuries, such as Al-Masudi and Al-Idrisi respectively, mention ports in the eastern Indian Ocean like *Samandar* and *Ruhmi*, which modern scholars have identified with Chittagong and lower Burma.⁶ As Karim argues, if

Arab sailors were familiar with Chittagong and lower Burma there is no reason that they shouldn't also have called at those of Arakan proper.

Certainly, Arakanese chronicles record that during the reign of Ma-ha-toing Tsan-da-ya in the late eighth to the early ninth centuries of the Common Era, several foreign ships were wrecked on the coast of the island of *Ran-byi* (or Rambree). According to the chronicles, the Muslim survivors of these vessels were taken to Arakan proper and settled in villages.⁷ Although more positive evidence is lacking prior to the modern era, it seems likely, since the coast of Burma was well known to Arab pilots from very early times, that Arab traders were no novelty in Arakan.⁸

Regardless of the extent of these earliest arrivals, the early modern period was certainly one in which Arakan became integrated with other regions of the Bay of Bengal littoral; areas which were also increasingly falling under the influence of Islam. This integration within an increasingly Islamic sphere during the

fifteenth and sixteenth centuries saw a corresponding increase in Arakan's Muslim population at various levels of society, from the rural peasantry to the courtly elite at the capital of Mrauk-U. Michael Charney has convincingly argued that current notions of religious identity cannot be unproblematically applied to Arakan of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.⁹ In neighboring Bengal itself, the arrival of Islam was a comparatively recent occurrence, with popular conversion often the gradual result of syncretic blendings of charismatic Sufi teachings with Hindu and other indigenous beliefs and practices.¹⁰ Rather than being rigidly determined by belonging to a religious community, Charney suggests that the construction of an individual's sense of identity in Arakan during this period depended much more upon kinship ties and patron-client relationships, as well as local spirit cults.¹¹

This important caveat notwithstanding, this period saw a growing Islamic presence in Arakan via a range of

processes, such that Islam was practiced, in some form or another, at many levels of society. It became the faith not only of visiting sailors and merchants, but also segments of the artisanal and agricultural laboring classes, and by courtly elites. Indeed, despite state patronage of Buddhism and the central importance of the Mahamuni image at Mrauk-U, the trappings and political symbolism of the Dar-al-Islam were invoked by no less than the rulers of Arakan themselves.

Indo-Islamic Cultural Influences on Arakan

The rise of Arakan as a maritime power in the Bay of Bengal might be said to



Right: A political and topographical map of Arakan and the Bay of Bengal

originate with the troubled though ultimately redemptive career of the early-fifteenth-century King Naramaikla.¹² This king, according to Arakanese chronicles, ruled central Arakan briefly from the capital of Laun-kret beginning in 1404, before fleeing to Bengal in the face of invading armies of Mons and Burmans from beyond the Yoma Mountains. While some scholars have expressed doubts as to the reliability of these Arakanese chronicles as historical sources,¹³ they do tell us that Naramaikla took refuge in the Islamic Sultanate of Bengal for a quarter of a century between 1406 and 1430. There he served a succession of Sultans in their struggles to remain autonomous from rival lords and ultimately Northern India's imperial center at Delhi.¹⁴

The Arakanese king is said to have trained the Sultan's men in capturing and training wild elephants, as well as offering sage advice on how to expedite the clearing of a bamboo forest that stood in the path of the Sultan's army. Naramaikla advised the Sultan to have coins scattered among the canes so that the common people would of their own volition cut down the forest in order to collect the wealth.¹⁵ Having thus earned the gratitude of Jalal-ud-din, the Sultan of Bengal, Naramaikla is said to have returned to Arakan with the support of 'Muslim' or *Rohinga* troops,¹⁶ and, after an initially abortive mission marred by treachery committed as the force approached Arakan from Chittagong, to have finally recovered his kingdom on the second attempt. This new era of sovereignty was gained then, it is said, at the price of owing vassalage to Bengal. While Arakan had a long history of absorbing Hindu and Buddhist influences from across the Bay, Naramaikla's sojourn in Banga would appear to have inaugurated a more intensive phase of interaction with the Bay's Islamic culture.

Historians have reached little agreement as to the nature of Arakanese sovereignty during this period of the early to middle fifteenth century. While nineteenth and twentieth-century colonialist scholarship by the likes of A.P. Phayre and G.E. Harvey tended to base their narratives relatively uncritically on selected narratives from the Arakanese chronicle tradition, more recent work on Arakan has questioned the validity of much of this received wisdom.¹⁷ Leider, for example, dismisses the various sources, which claim Naramaikla and his heirs were tributary to the Bengal Sultanate or that Islamic influence on the Arakanese court was par-

ticularly significant. He views the chronicles upon which so many histories of this period have been based as unreliable, since they are legendary in tone, tend to contradict one another, and were recorded well after the era to which they refer.¹⁸ However, the important question remains: What might have motivated Arakanese chroniclers to claim that their kings had been subordinate to their Bengali neighbors were this not based on some truth?

Other evidence, though generally supportive of the chronicles in this regard, has also produced skepticism and debate. From the time of Naramaikla's successor, Min Khari, until 1622, Arakanese kings often adopted Islamic titles, in addition to ones derived locally and from Buddhist conceptions of kingship. For instance, Min-Khari was also known as Ali Khan, while several of the more powerful Arakanese monarchs, Razagri and Thirithudhamma took the title, Salim Shah, to name a couple of examples.¹⁹ Similarly, Arakanese coinage, until the year 1634, sported Persian inscriptions attesting to the use of these titles, in addition to being stamped with the *kalima* (or the Muslim declaration of faith).²⁰ Subrahmanyam has suggested that the adoption of Islamic titles by Arakanese rulers was their way of claiming sovereignty over eastern Bengal during the decline of the Sultanate of Gaur and before the Mughal Empire had consolidated its claim on the entire region.²¹

Leider raises many worthwhile objections against the undiscerning use of admittedly thin evidence to construct a picture of the Arakanese court as one steeped in Islamic culture and values, arguing instead for the central importance of Buddhism in courtly culture. Yet, it remains difficult to refute early sixteenth-century sources such as the observation made in passing by the visiting Portuguese apothecary Tome Pires in the early 1500s, who noted that the king of Arakan was "very warlike," "always at war," and, importantly, was "tributary to the said king of Bengal."²² It is almost certainly not the case that these Arakanese kings became Muslims in any religious sense. For a host of cultural and political reasons they adopted Islamic titles and embossed their coinage with the Islamic declaration of faith. For these reasons it seems prudent to consider Islamic influence at the court of Mrauk-U as having a greater role than Leider is willing to accept.

Many historians, following Phayre and Harvey, have inferred that Naramaikla's return to Arakan with the

support of a 'Muslim' army from Bengal would very likely have resulted in an influx of Muslims into the general population of Arakan. More recently, Abdul Karim cites an eighteenth-century genealogy from Bengal, the *Shariatnamah* which adds weight to this inference.

...in Bengala (East Bengal) in the kingdom of Gaur, there was a Wazir named Hamid-ud-din. His son Burhan-ud-din left the country with his followers and soldiers and settled in Roshang [Arakan]. In those days there was no cavalry in Arakan. Considering that Burhan-ud-din was an efficient soldier, the king appointed him Lashkar Wazir or head of the army or defense or war minister.²³

Indeed, if we accept the narrative in the Arakanese chronicles regarding the treachery of the first army sent with Naramaikla, we have the presence of not one but two armies for which we must account. As Karim argues, it is rather unlikely that the first army would have returned to Bengal en masse, having failed to carry out the Sultan's orders. Furthermore, these armies would have been accompanied into Arakan by large numbers of "... auxiliary forces, like carriers, tent bearers, cooks and butlers, washer-men etc."²⁴ The Santikhan or Sindhi Khan Mosque in Mrauk-U (recently destroyed) is thought by some to have been built by Naramaikla's Muslim followers upon his triumphant return to Arakan.²⁵ Proponents of this view cite stylistic similarities with roughly contemporaneous Mosque architecture in east Bengal. This too has been disputed by Leider who, following nineteenth-century archaeologist Forchhammer, argues that the Santikhan mosque bore greater stylistic affinity with sixteenth-century Buddhist architecture such as the Dukkanthein and Chitethaung pagodas.²⁶

Buddermokan

Meanwhile, on the promontory known to the British as 'the Point,' near the city of Akyab on the island of Sittwe, at the entrance to the Kaladan River and what was effectively the gateway to the Kingdom of Arakan from the Bay of Bengal, stands a shrine to a Sufi saint closely associated with the ocean. This shrine is not only evidence of a pre-colonial presence of Islam, but constitutes an apt symbol of the plurality that characterized that cosmopolitan pre-modern society. Known locally as the *Buddermokan* (from *Badr Makan* or 'house of Badr') this structure of rock and brick over-

looking the mouth of the river commemorates Pir Badr al-Din Auliya, a Sufi saint originally from Meerut in northern India who is said to have journeyed across the Bay of Bengal and preached Islam at Chittagong, perhaps around the middle of the fifteenth century, though some versions place him centuries earlier.²⁷ This saint is "reputed primarily to be the patron of seafarers and boatmen and fisher-folk."²⁸ Although, the existing structures on Sittwe are believed to date from the 1770s, it is likely that the site itself has been venerated since considerably earlier times. In local traditions collected in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century by British administrator Richard Temple, Pir Badr was believed to have spent a lengthy period at the site in hermitage and meditation.²⁹

According to some accounts, Pir Badr was closely identified with the earlier tradition of Kwadja Khizr, a heroic figure of pre-Islamic Arabic legends associated with the well of immortality, who, in India at least, came to be identified with seas and rivers, having "powers to rule the waters and control the storms."³⁰ People of various faiths including Muslims, Hindus and Buddhists as well as Chinese are said to have propitiated Badr at shrines situated all along the eastern Bay of Bengal littoral at locations such as "at the mouths of rivers, on boulders or crags," in places including Sandoway (or Sundwip), Chittagong, Akyab, Cheduba, and Mergui.³¹ In the early twentieth century, Temple summed up Badr's broad appeal in the following way. "To the Buddhists he is a *nat*; to the Hindus he is a *deva* or inferior god; to the Muhammadans a saint; to the Chinese a spirit."³² The following version of a popular legend was related to Temple by Colonel Parrot, the British Commissioner of Arakan in 1893.

The legend states, that, on one occasion, two Hindus, by the name of Manich (?Manik) and Chand were returning by sea from Bassein to Chittagong, and put into Akyab to take in water. They anchored off the rock known as Buddermakam, and proceeded to a small tank near the sacred rocks. There they met the *fakir*, and were asked by him to hollow out the cave, which was to form his future habitation. They pleaded poverty and the losses they had sustained in their trading adventure.

The *fakir* said, 'never mind, do as I bid you. If you are poor and without merchandise, load the soil from this sacred spot, and before your journey's end, you will be rewarded.' The brothers did as they were bid. The cave was constructed, a well dug and they proceed on their journey to Chitta-

gong. The *fakir*'s words came true. On proceeding to unload their goods, they found in their place nothing but gold and the most valuable of gems.³³

In another version, the brothers were carrying a load of turmeric and the Pir appeared to one of them in a vision. Having built the shrine the brothers discovered that their cargo had turned into gold.³⁴

The existence of such a complex cult illuminates the fluid nature of boundaries between religious identities, and reminds us of Michael Charney's notion that pre-modern Arakanese identities stemmed not from rigid notions of religious community, but from connections with local spirits, along with a range of other factors. At the same time, the cult of Pir Badr seems to have resonated with peoples all along the Arakanese littoral and beyond, creating common ties that could have been reinforced by contact with fellow devotees who used the sea and movement upon it as part of their livelihoods. Then too, this popular saint clearly played an important role in bringing Islamic ideas and practices to the eastern shores of the Bay of Bengal. While we cannot know the extent to which such ideas and practices informed the worship of the common people who lived along the Arakanese coastline, we might assume, at least, that in sharing in this veneration of "the saint of the sea," Buddhists, Hindus and Muslims alike appreciated that the potential benefits outweighed the risks of interacting with the sea in order to participate in the world beyond.

Islamic Influence on the Court of Mrauk-U

While it is perhaps impossible to know how deeply Islamic culture and religion permeated the Arakanese worldview via contact with seafaring traders and Sufi cults like that of Pir Badr, it is fairly clear that elite Arakanese society adopted many of the symbols, if not the substance, of the Islamic culture of their neighbours in the Bay of Bengal. Certainly, we know that during the seventeenth century high offices in Arakan were occupied by individuals of Bengali descent, most of whom, judging from their names, were Muslims. Ashraf Khan served King Thirithudhamma (r. 1622-1638) as Lashkar Wazir, or Minister of Defense. The immense power wielded over the Arakanese government by Ashraf Khan as the head of the military is attested to in some of the court poetry he sponsored. We

might dismiss such references as self-serving hyperbole, but they are corroborated by correspondence in which some very frustrated Dutch traders complain that their designs were often thwarted by this powerful minister.³⁵ Later, Bara Thakur (of Siddiq lineage, descended from Abu Bakr the first Caliph, and therefore not Hindu, as the name Thakur would otherwise indicate) also occupied that post under King Narapatigyi (r. 1638-1645). Bara Thakur's son, Magan Thakur served the same ruler as Wazir-e-Azam, or Prime Minister, a position that was subsequently occupied by other Muslim individuals such as Sayid Musa and Nabaraj Majlis.³⁶

Our main sources of information on this subject are two poets, Qazi Daulat and Sayyid Alaol, who were patronized by the court of Mrauk-U and composed poetry in both Urdu (or Hindustani) and Bengali, as well as Persian, while drawing freely on both Arabic and Sanskrit. Alaol, the son of a highly ranked Mughal cavalry officer from Fatchpur in eastern Bengal, was travelling by river in Bengal with his father when they were attacked by Portuguese and Magh (Arakanese) slavers. His father was killed in the ensuing battle, and Alaol was captured and eventually sold to the king of Arakan, where he was assigned to work in the king's stables. His quick wit was evident and his literary talents were soon discovered by Ashraf Khan who elevated him in status and commissioned him to write various works of poetry.³⁷

Both Daulat and Alaol are considered to have "played a crucial role in the cultivation of Bengali literature, giving rise to what may even be called a seventeenth-century Bengal renaissance."³⁸ So, for whom were these poets writing in the Bengali language? The answer to this question indicates that at this time Arakan participated as part of a broader literary and cultural continuum stretching along the Bay of Bengal. As Bhattacharya speculates, this cultivation of Bengali literature on the part of the Arakanese court would have had the purpose of consolidating Arakanese claims over the recently acquired prize of Chittagong, a flourishing port city in the extreme southeast of Bengal.³⁹ At the same time, it is clear from Alaol's own writing, in a tribute penned for his patron Magan Thakur, that there was a local audience at Mrauk-U for his work.

Many Muslims live in Roshang [Arakan], they are all learned, virtuous and come out good family

[sic]. All help me and treat me well because I am an educated man. Thakur Magan, the truthful and saintly person was the minister of the Chief Queen... He treats me well and his generosity bound my neck towards him. The learned people sit in his assembly and enjoy vocal instrumental music... When they heard the story of the Padmavati they became happy.⁴⁰ The people of Roshang do not understand the language [Awadhi, a language related to Hindi from central northern India], **so if it was composed in Bengali poem, all will be happy.** So Magan Thakur ordered me to compose Padmavati and by his order I promised to compose the book.⁴¹

A further suggestion that Hindustani was spoken in Arakan, at least among the elites of Mrauk-U, can be found in the account of Friar Sebastien Manrique, the Portuguese monk of the Augustinian order who visited the court during the reign of Thirithudhamma on an extended diplomatic mission from the Portuguese enclave at Dianga. Although at their first encounter Manrique communicated with the King in Portuguese via a local interpreter or 'Ramallu,' subsequent encounters are described as taking place without any intermediary.⁴² We are informed that Manrique had some training "in the languages of Bengala and Indus-tanee" before leaving the seminary, though the extent of his proficiency is not indicated.⁴³ While Manrique does not explicitly state that he used Hindustani with the king, his editor and translator, Col. E. Luard, surmises from Manrique's use of the words *hāthi* (elephant) and *tamāsha* (spectacle, entertainment) that "a good deal of Hindustani seems to have been spoken at Arakan, at any rate, if Manrique is not interpolating."⁴⁴

While more tantalizing than conclusive, taken together these strands of evidence suggest that Arakanese society, at least in the urban capital of Mrauk-U, was multi-lingual and a participant in the larger cultural sphere of the Bay of Bengal. That the king was perhaps capable of conversing with foreigners in Hindustani, and that the "poet laureate" would translate an Awadhi epic into Bengali in order to give it a local audience, suggests both a substantial Bengali presence in Mrauk-U, and a cultural orientation directed decidedly towards the Bay. As noted above, Burmese and Arakanese nationalists and certain scholars have obdurately resisted the notion that Arakan was historically influenced by Islam or that it had a substantial Muslim presence before the colonial era. While the underlying causes and the extent of this influence and

presence are obviously open to discussion, the evidence presented thus far suggests that Islamic (and more specifically Indo-Islamic) culture was a vibrant feature of Arakanese society in the early modern era.

Scholars such as Michael Charney and Sanjay Subrahmanyam have described the appeal of Persianate and Indo-Islamic culture for Arakanese rulers during this period in terms similar to Bourdieu's concept of "cultural capital."⁴⁵ Charney views the borrowing of regnal titles as fitting into "a prevailing pattern of kingship in the Arakan littoral... whereby Arakanese kings borrowed symbols of kingship from powerful states to the northwest and the east, that is, Bengal and Burma."⁴⁶ The adoption of outward symbols of an Islamic sensibility makes perfect sense for Arakanese rulers in a period in which trade facilitated an "expansion of Islam on the shores of the Indian Ocean, and the growing presence of Muslim mercantile communities."⁴⁷ Indeed, as a littoral kingdom perched on a narrow strip of land between the imposing Yoma Mountains in the west and the Bay of Bengal to the east, participation in the culture of maritime trade was a key aspect in the rise of Arakan.

The Ebb and Flow of Buddhist Connectivities Across the Bay of Bengal

Before turning to a discussion of the rise of Arakan as an economic power in the Bay of Bengal, it is important to temper the above discussion by recognizing that despite a growing Islamic presence in Arakan during the early modern period, Buddhism continued to play a central role in constituting the Arakanese cultural and social order. Just as participation in an Indo-Islamic culture brought Arakan into more intimate contact with the northern reaches of the Bay of Bengal world, the maintenance of a reciprocal relationship with the Buddhist sangha in Sri Lanka also sustained connections between Arakan and a larger Buddhist world.

According to Arakanese chronicles, the Gautama Buddha himself made a supernatural flight in the company of five hundred *arhats* to the kingdom of Arakan during the reign of King Candrasuriya, who ascended the throne in 146 C.E.⁴⁸ Having spent a week preaching on Selagiri Hill, the Buddha allowed a bronze likeness of himself to be commissioned by King Candrasuriya. The resulting Mahamuni image became the

focus of pilgrimage for Buddhist devotees from surrounding countries and a source of envy for their Buddhist rulers. Indeed, the Arakanese chronicles refer to many failed forays by neighboring kingdoms to acquire the coveted image. The Arakanese themselves believed that the statue was a “vehicle of divine protection,” which protected them from foreign incursions.⁴⁹ Indeed, the final denouement of the kingdom’s gradual decline came with Burmese invasion in 1785, and the carrying off of the Mahamuni image.⁵⁰

An Arakanese source written during the Mrauk-U era, the *Sappadanapakarana*, claims that religious exchange with Sri Lanka was initiated as early as the second century of the Common Era, when Sinhalese bhikkus traversed the ocean in order to pay homage to the Mahamuni image, while other chronicles tell of Arakanese king Thuriyathiri sending a dozen monks on a mission to Ceylon.⁵¹ Certainly, stone inscriptions in Sri Lanka dated as early as 1256 indicate that the erudite Buddhist scholar and Arakanese King Alawmaphru travelled across the sea to visit Ceylon.⁵²

During the Mrauk-U era itself, connections between these two Buddhist kingdoms played an important role in the legitimation of royal rule. According to Raymond, an apparent convention in Theravada Buddhism requires that a capital city – the seat of both secular and religious authority – meet certain important criteria. Such a city must contain a major stupa containing an important relic, and should also house at least one library containing a complete set of canonical texts.⁵³ In 1439, Mon Khari (aka Ali Khan) received from Sri Lanka a complete copy of the *Tipitaka* (or Theravada Buddhist cannon), while his son and successor Basawphru also sent to Ceylon for another complete set of texts, and having received it, dispatched a religious delegation in return. In 1531, Min Bin (aka Zabauk Shah), who with the help of Portuguese engineers vastly upgraded the fortifications of Mrauk-U by greatly expanding its walls and moats, also established new stupas throughout the kingdom, supplying each new location with a copy of the *Tipitaka* based on the prototype sent from Ceylon.⁵⁴ One of Min Bin’s largest gestures in this regard was the Andaw stupa in Mrauk-U itself, in which he had installed a copy of the Buddha’s tooth relic from Kandy.⁵⁵

Colonial interference in Sri Lanka eventually affected its external relations with Arakan. The reign of Min Phalaung (1571–93), who built the Dukkanthein Pagoda

at Mrauk-U and installed in it a new set of the *Tipitaka*, was a difficult time for Sri Lankan Buddhism. Not only had the arrival of Portuguese missionaries led to the conversion of large numbers of the sangha, in particular among the fishing villages, but this period also saw the rule of several Ceylonese kings who were actively antagonistic to the Buddhist order.⁵⁶ When sympathetic Sri Lankan ruler Vimaladhamma Surya I assumed the throne in 1592 he turned to Arakan to request the assistance of leading *theravada* (or respected monk) Nandicakka in reconstituting the monkhood in his dominion. In 1593, Min Raza Gyi responded to this request by dispatching Nandicakka in a party of twenty learned monks who carried out a missionary program, conducting the proper and necessary ordination rituals with which to reestablish a Buddhist community.⁵⁷ Later, during his reign of 1638–45, in an effort to legitimize his authority in Arakan, Narapati, the usurper who poisoned Thirithudhamma, had thirty complete new sets of the *Tipitaka* imported from across the Bay.⁵⁸

In his romantic narration of Friar Manrique’s travels in the Bay of Bengal, early twentieth-century British scholar and official Maurice Collis, delights in recounting an episode in the career of the great sixteenth-century Burmese empire builder, Bayin-naung.⁵⁹ Although Collis’ handling of the tale demonstrates a particularly smug, if not altogether unsympathetic Orientalism, it is nonetheless illustrative of the kinds of triangular connectivities alive in the Bay during this period. Essentially, Collis’ story revolves around the king’s obsession with acquiring certain Buddhist symbols of legitimacy which would confirm his status as a universal ruler, or *cakravartin*, (a trope common also in Collis’ treatment of the Arakanese monarch of Manrique’s time, Thirithudhamma).

Having already acquired four white Siamese elephants in his invasion of Ayudhya in 1563, Bayin-naung now turned his attention across the Bay to the Buddhist kingdom of Colombo. Bayin-naung’s astrologers had foretold that he was to marry a Ceylonese princess and cement an alliance with this prestigious Buddhist realm. Fearful of incurring the displeasure of the Burmese emperor, the king of Colombo dared not admit that he had no daughter, and instead sent to a suitable lady of his court in the guise of a princess. To smooth over any suspicions he included as part of her dowry the highly coveted tooth relic of the Buddha.

As Collis explains, Bayin-naung believed this relic had been captured by the Portuguese and taken to Goa and destroyed. Despite his attempts to purchase the relic, and the Viceroy's eagerness to come to terms, (a small fortune having been offered), the Archbishop at Goa interceded, forbidding the sale of idols within his jurisdiction and personally presiding over the very public and ceremonial destruction of the tooth. The King of Colombo however, assured the Burmese envoys that at the moment of its destruction a spirit had replaced the relic with a porcelain copy, magically transporting the genuine relic back to Ceylon and entrusting it to his care. High among Collis' objectives in relating this exotic narrative was to demonstrate the gullibility of the superstitious 'native' in contradistinction to the rationality of the colonial state of which he was a part. Yet he also captures a vivid sense of the shared conceptions of Buddhist kingship and the sometimes tangled web of interactions that characterized and connected the Bay during this period.

By the late seventeenth century, the monarchy at Mrauk-U was severely weakened due to a "decline in commerce, de-urbanization and the diffusion of power throughout the Arakan littoral."⁶⁰ This complex of factors in turn had led to a serious decline in state patronage of Buddhism in Arakan. When an envoy from Sri Lanka appeared at Mrauk-U requesting a contingent of monks in 1693 it was turned away empty-handed.⁶¹ Although a second request three years later was successful, the political chaos that characterized the domestic scene in Arakan for most of the eighteenth century meant that formal religious connections with Sri Lanka were hereafter rarely as significant. Rather than viewing this decline in connectivity as a peculiarity of Buddhist political relationships, Charney understands these developments more broadly in terms of Arakan's increasing isolation from other zones of the Bay, including those that were part of the Dar-al-Islam. An "aggressively mercantilist" trade outlook combined with a willingness to collaborate with faithless Portuguese slavers meant that by the middle decades of the seventeenth century the extent of Arakanese influence in the Bay of Bengal had begun to sharply contract.

Arakan and Maritime Trade

Trade was an important factor in the rise and subsequent decline of Arakan across the sixteenth and sev-

enteenth centuries. At the beginning of this period, Mrauk-U (along with Arakan more generally) does not appear to have been a major trading destination in the networks of the Indian Ocean or even within the Bay of Bengal. This situation appears to have changed considerably over the course of the first half of the seventeenth century as Arakan exerted greater influence over what effectively became its territorial waters. Indeed, control of the more active port cities of Chittagong to the north (which was acquired in a gradual series of maneuvers during the mid-to-late-sixteenth century) and Pegu (which was held briefly at the end of sixteenth century) were key motivating factors in Arakan's sixteenth-century territorial expansion.

Tome Pires, the Portuguese apothecary who was based at Malacca, is perhaps the earliest European source of information on Arakanese trade. He commented in the early sixteenth century that Arakan had a "good port on the sea, where the Peguans, the Bengalees and the Klings trade, but not much business."⁶² Pires seems somewhat muddled on several points of geography, placing the riverine Arakanese capital of the interior on the coast, and nominating Ava (of Burma proper) as Arakan's chief city and the entrepot from which the region's rich supply of rubies were sourced. Mrauk-U, in fact sits some ten miles inland between the rivers Kaladan and LemRo, although it is true that scholars remain unclear as to the precise location of the city's port. Ava was of course not part of Arakan but the capital of upper Burma. In addition to rubies and musk, Pires identifies silver, several kinds of cotton cloth, and elephants as the main products for which merchants sent to Arakan.

A large component of Arakan's commercial activity then, consisted in participation in a transit-trade of Indian cloth from Bengal and the Deccan, and rubies sourced from central Burma. We know from Dutch sources later during the seventeenth century (though this would also hold for earlier periods as well), that Arakan profited from political turmoil in Burma such that whenever Ava lost access to its ports in the south, the only outlet for its rubies was across the Yoma mountains via Arakan.⁶³ Elsewhere in his account, Pires mentions that Arakanese traders were among those who paid a six percent levy to trade at Malacca, as opposed to those who settled, married locally and thus paid a discounted tax of three percent.⁶⁴ But although Arakanese merchants were involved in this transit-

trade linking the Coromandel Coast to ports further east in Southeast Asia, it would appear that they were not particularly important players, especially in comparison to the Persian and *Keling* (or Orissan, from Kalinga) traders who dominated these routes.⁶⁵ Similarly, volumes of trade between Arakan and the Sultanate of Golconda at Masulipatnam on the Coromandel Coast, while not insignificant, were greatly eclipsed by those of Aceh, Malacca and even Pegu.⁶⁶

Elephants in the Bay of Bengal Trade

All of these Southeast Asian trading polities competed with one another in supplying the Indian demand for elephants. The importance of elephants as symbols of status and power, and as a valuable trade commodity providing useful motive power, appears to have transcended regional and religious differences and was a common feature of lands bordering the Bay of Bengal of the early modern period. Mughal India's seemingly insatiable demand for elephants was one of the strands connecting the subcontinent with Southeast Asia, where elephants also figured heavily in Hindu and Buddhist cosmogonies and notions of imperial grandeur. In the pre-industrial era, even after the sixteenth century when heavy artillery had rendered their military value largely obsolete, elephants remained extremely useful working animals under a variety of environmental conditions.

We have seen how the ability of the Arakanese king to capture and tame wild elephants was considered of great import by the Arakanese chroniclers, if not by the Sultan of Bengal himself. Later, as Arakanese power burgeoned at the turn of the sixteenth century, King Raza-giri was particularly delighted to seize, among other spoils of victory in the successful siege of Pegu, a white elephant from Siam.⁶⁷ Possession of such a rare animal was considered one of the necessary attributes of the *cakravartin*, or universal ruler.⁶⁸

In the seventeenth century, trade in elephants from many parts of Southeast Asia across the Bay of Bengal appears to have been particularly brisk. Between 1640 and 1663, elephants were the principal export from Aceh, averaging thirty per year.⁶⁹ In 1651 alone, over one hundred animals were exported from Tenasserim.⁷⁰ In 1627, a ship belonging to the King of Arakan arrived at Pulicat on the Coromandel Coast of India with thirteen elephants, (eight on the king's ac-

count, three on that of the *kotwal*—or civil administrator—of Arakan, and two under the expenses of the governor of Pulicat).⁷¹

Slaves and Rice

The King's vessel also carried what by this time had become Arakan's two most important export commodities (neither of which appeared in the inventory prepared by Tome Pires in the early sixteenth century); rice and slaves. By the seventeenth century these exports had become core components of the Arakanese economy, integrating it into the larger economy of the Bay of Bengal world in both positive and negative ways. Arakan's climate and geography, with abundant and reliable rainfall and broad alluvial plains, made it ideal for rice production.⁷² Surplus production of rice was exported across the bay to ports in both Bengal and the Coromandel Coast, as well as to Dutch settlements to the east.⁷³ A deficit of agricultural labor, on the other hand, and the need to produce further export commodities (beyond rice and elephants) in order to extract more wealth from the expanding commercial sphere of the Bay of Bengal/Indian Ocean, saw Arakan adopt slave raiding as a central component of its seventeenth-century economy. This combination of factors culminated in the formation of a unique type of polity, which Eaton describes as "a hybrid entity occupying a position somewhere between a truly 'agrarian state'... and a heavily commercialized 'trading sultanate.'"⁷⁴

Key to Arakan's success in this transformation was what ultimately proved to be a Faustian pact: collaboration with Portuguese freebooters. Throughout the later sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, Arakan launched a massive naval force of thousands of vessels of various designs, but consisting mostly (approximately 70-80%) of fast-moving, shallow-draft oar-propelled boats.⁷⁵ Writing in 1660s, Jean-Baptiste Tavernier observed,

It is a most surprising thing to see with what speed these galleys are propelled by oars. There are some so long that they have up to fifty oars on each side, but there are not more than two men to each oar. You see some which are much decorated, where the gold and azure have not been spared.⁷⁶

Though generally slave-powered, these vessels were also capable of running under wind power, and were

crewed by both Arakanese sailors and Portuguese mercenaries.⁷⁷ Described in European sources variously as *jalia*, *jelyasse*, *gelia*, *galeasse* and *gallivant*,⁷⁸ these boats were capable of carrying hundreds of people including their crews, being generally between sixty to eighty feet in length, and were often mounted with up to six swivel guns.⁷⁹ They were perfectly adapted for operation in riverine and coastal conditions. Because of their identically shaped prow and stern they could be rowed forward or backward with equal facility, and thus could be made to reverse direction instantly. Their *feringhee* and *magh* crews utilized this maneuverability to stealthily prowl the watery mazes of the Bay of Bengal littoral, mounting surprise attacks on coastal and riparian settlements from eastern Bengal to Orissa and as far inland as Dacca, seizing portable wealth and carrying off the inhabitants to be kept or sold as slaves.

At the height of this trade, between the 1620s and 1640s, the Dutch often exported over one thousand slaves per year from the Arakanese ports of Chittagong and Dianga, while it was said that the King of Arakan himself could claim as many as ten thousand in a slaving season.⁸⁰ The fierce and cruel reputation of these slaving fleets is captured in the writings of a Mughal chronicle of the 1660s.

Arracan pirates, both Magh and Feringi, used constantly to [come] by the water-route and plunder Bengal. They carried off the Hindus and Muslims, male and female, great and small, few and many, that they could seize, pierced the palms of their hands, passed thin cane through the holes, and threw them one above another under the deck of their ships. In the same manner as grain is flung to fowl, every morn and evening they threw down from above uncooked rice to the captives as food. On their return to their homes, they employed the few hard-lived captives that survived [this treatment], with great disgrace in tillage and other hard tasks, according to their power. Others were sold to the Dutch, the English, and French merchants at the ports of the Deccan.⁸¹

So intense was this predation that, according to our author, by the mid-seventeenth century, “not a householder was left on both sides of the rivers on their track from Dacca to Chatgaon [Chittagong].”⁸²

Indeed, relations between the slave trade’s two largest players, the Kingdom of Arakan and the VOC, became tense during the middle seventeenth century as

supplies of this commodity became increasingly scarce. Although a figure of one thousand and forty-six slaves is recorded as being sent to Batavia from Arakan in 1647, by this time the average yearly output was far lower. In the ensuing fifteen years these totals rarely exceeded three hundred per year.⁸³ Exacerbating the situation from the Dutch perspective, were *farmans* (or declarations) issued by the King of Arakan insisting that no skilled workers or artisans should be sold to foreigners, and that no slaves already settled in Arakan should be allowed to leave the kingdom.⁸⁴ The traditional practice of raiding the Bengali coast in order to procure agricultural labor and expand the kingdom’s artisanal capacities, came into increasing conflict in the seventeenth century with the competing attraction to profit from the growing Dutch demand for slaves.

At the height of its powers in the early seventeenth century, Arakan was a far more important trade destination than it had been during the time of Tome Pires. Some indication of the range of countries with which Arakan had trade contacts in the seventeenth century can be gleaned from Friar Manrique’s description of the duty-free market that was held in celebration of the coronation of Thirithudhamma in 1624. He writes:

They came in numerous vessels loaded with every sort of merchandise, and hailed not merely from the neighbouring countries, such as Bengala, Pegu, and Martaban, but also from the empire of Siam, known as Sornau, and the kingdoms of Champa and Camboja. Ships had also come from various parts of India, as from the kingdoms of Musalipatam, Negapatam, and the Maldiv islands, attracted to this duty-free market. Nor had ships failed to come from the rich islands of Sumatra, such as the Greater and Lesser Java, Achem Macassar, and Bima.⁸⁵

While Mrauk-U appears to have become something of a regional entrepot at this time, more important in Arakan’s emergence as a powerful entity in the early seventeenth century, were the profits and increased agricultural productivity generated by the slave trade. However, as the supply of slaves dwindled in the middle of the century, Arakan found itself increasingly isolated from other parts of the Bay. The duplicity of several of their Portuguese mercenaries in this period created serious problems for Arakanese rulers, which will be discussed below. Meanwhile, constant depredation upon Bengal had profoundly alienated Arakan from the expanding Mughal Empire, which, though

lacking the requisite naval resources to properly defend its eastern borders was inexorably extending its reach towards the vital port city of Chittagong. Although the Arakanese sought military alliances with their Dutch trading partners against their Burmese and Mughal neighbors, the Dutch were scarcely interested in becoming embroiled in such conflicts at the expense of their broader trade interests.⁸⁶ Indeed, the Dutch had to be careful to avoid Mughal displeasure; during the 1650s they were repeatedly threatened with expulsion from their factories in India, were they to persist in purchasing Bengali slaves from Arakan.⁸⁷ Although they employed various strategies to circumvent the Mughal ban, by the latter part of the 1660s Dutch purchasing of slaves from the Bay of Bengal had all but ceased. On the eve of the Mughal invasion of Chittagong, the Dutch secretly decamped from their settlements at Mrauk-U in order to avoid sacrificing their relationship with Delhi. The loss of this valuable trading partner had effects in other sectors of the Arakanese economy, and coupled with the loss of Chittagong soon afterward, was a blow from which Arakan never recovered.⁸⁸

Then too, Arakan's aggressively mercantilist policies in this century brought it into conflict with other port cities on the Bay. As part of this mercantilist approach, which also involved restrictive state monopolies on many products, Arakan began vigorously patrolling its waters with its powerful fleet in order to divert trade from neighbouring ports to Mrauk-U. In the 1630s, Dutch sources indicate that relations broke down between Arakan and both Aceh and Masulipatnam when a party of Acehnese traders were held hostage in the city of Mrauk-U, while the Sultanate of Golconda also harbored "grievances" against Arakan.⁸⁹ In 1642, these hostilities worsened when Arakanese *jalias* captured the trading vessel of Ismail Beg, a merchant of Masulipatnam, and forced it to trade at Mrauk-U instead of Pegu.⁹⁰ In the same year, the Arakanese slave-raiding armada captured an Armenian ship belonging to a Balasore-based merchant off the coast of Orissa in the vicinity of the Jaganath temple ("pagoda Jaggernado"), as it returned from trading in Aceh. The crew, which included several Portuguese and an English pilot, were taken to Arakan where they were put to work clearing forest or in the service of the court at Mrauk-U.⁹¹ During the mid-seventeenth century it would appear that

no one in the Bay of Bengal was safe from the Magh marauders and their Portuguese pirates.

Portuguese Pirates

Before concluding, it is worth further considering the role of these Portuguese "pirates" in the Bay of Bengal, since they were highly instrumental in the rise and fall of Arakanese fortunes. Piracy is, of course, a highly problematic term. An act that would otherwise be described as piratical might be sanctioned as 'corsairing' if this act of coercive redistribution was deemed to be consonant with a state interest within a larger context of conflict or war.⁹² Had the Portuguese of Dianga⁹³ not so ruthlessly pursued the slave trade in the interests of their own purses, and broken their alliance to side with the Arakanese at the eleventh hour,⁹⁴ a case might be that the slave raids on Bengal of the sixteenth century in fact constituted an extension of the Iberian crusade against Islam, and were therefore a form of privateering rather than piracy. Indeed, it has been argued that Portuguese mercenaries such as Filipe de Brito and Sebastien Gonzales Tibau have been unfairly dealt with in historical literature as rogues and scoundrels.⁹⁵

Filipe de Brito was so successful in leading Arakanese fleets on slaving raids of the Bengal littoral that he was promoted to captain of the royal guard at Mrauk-U before being made governor of the port of Syriam in lower Burma in 1599, a post which he immediately fortified and transformed into an independent polity in his own right. De Brito now turned to Goa, requesting Portuguese naval reinforcements from the Estado and secured an alliance with the Viceroy through marriage with his beautiful part-Javanese daughter. Had Goa been in a better position to supply the reinforcements that de Brito requested, it is quite possible that he may have succeeded in establishing a foothold for a possible Portuguese client state in lower Burma. As it happened, he was finally defeated by a reconstituted Toungoo dynasty in 1613 and publicly executed by impalement.

Sebastien Gonzales Tibau, too, briefly forged a kingdom of his own, and even attempted to invade Mrauk-U itself. The King of Arakan had responded to de Brito's treachery in 1607 by punishing those Portuguese at Dianga who might otherwise have allied themselves with Syriam. Tibau, having escaped the massacre in

which six hundred Portuguese were destroyed, made himself king of the nearby salt-producing Sandwip Island, “by exterminating the Afghan pirates who had made their nest there.”⁹⁶ Tibau antagonized Mrauk-U in various ways, accommodating a “refugee Arakanese prince,” before marrying his sister, goading him into rebellion and appropriating his treasure after his attempt failed.⁹⁷ Worse still, through trickery, he captured a sizable portion of the Arakanese navy by murdering its officers, and while the King’s forces were distracted by a conflict with Mughals forces in east Bengal, mounted an assault on the Arakanese coastline and some way up the Lemro River, destroying many buildings and vessels, even capturing the royal yacht.⁹⁸

When Tibau requested reinforcements from Goa, a force of six galleons were sent and a naval assault on Mrauk-U itself was mounted. Though well armed, in this environment the Portuguese armada was no match for the more numerous and maneuverable river boats of the Arakanese, who also enjoyed some support from Dutch vessels present in the harbor. The Portuguese armada was thus repelled, and Tibau disappears from the historical record.

Although their behavior certainly seems piratical from our point view, Socarras argues that these adventurers should be understood in terms of the social context from which they emerged. In the somewhat fluid social hierarchy of renaissance and baroque Iberia, a poor *fidalgo* or the son of a family of lesser nobility could only hope to attain prominence and success by literally making a name for himself in the carrying out of acts of daring and bravery at the peripheries of the empire. Having thus acquired honor (*honra*) he might gain the favor of his monarch and reward in the form of titles and land. According to Socarras:

...a sixteenth-century Portuguese, was deeply imbued with a culture which produced men in whom the fundamental personal motivations which directed their drive toward achieving “honra e fazenda” were inextricably blended with a deep sense of loyalty and duty to their king and to their religion... In this respect it is unhistorical to regard Brito as a mere scoundrel. He is a man in line with other men of the Peninsular sixteenth century, such as Hernan Cortes and Francisco Pizarro, and others of the period.⁹⁹

Seen in this light, though still cruelly calculating by modern standards, the monstrous reputation of these Portuguese rogues is perhaps somewhat mitigated.

Regardless of how we judge the behavior of these individuals, the Arakanese continued to rely on Portuguese mercenaries. Having crushed the settlement at Dianga in 1607, the King of Arakan soon relented and allowed the Portuguese to once more establish a colony across the river from Chittagong and collaborated with them once again in the burgeoning slave business over the coming decades. They continued to work together until the Portuguese abruptly abandoned the Arakanese during the combined approach of the Mughal land army and maritime force on Chittagong in 1666.

Nor were the Portuguese the only outsiders upon whom the Arakanese leaned for military service. When Manrique visited Mrauk-U in the 1620s, he discovered that the king’s bodyguard employed a number of Japanese Samurai who had converted to Christianity.¹⁰⁰ Peguans, Mughals and other South Asians also served in the military.¹⁰¹ As we have seen, the highest offices in the land, including that of Lashkar Wazir, were occupied at certain periods by Muslims of South Asian descent. Charney has argued that this reliance on foreign military and professional expertise, though useful in forestalling internal rebellion, likely hampered the development of an indigenous capacity for the management of the types of administrative institutions that were necessary to sustain Arakan’s rapid territorial expansion.¹⁰²

Conclusion

In the later decades of the seventeenth century, Arakan’s control over the western littoral of the Bay of Bengal continued to contract, even as political instability at the center of the kingdom steadily reduced the attractiveness of Mrauk-U in the eyes of traders from across the seas. The turn to a mercantilist strategy and an attempt to create a “territorial sea” had ultimately alienated Arakan from the types of connectivities that might otherwise have seen it continue to prosper. Increasingly, what remained of Arakan’s foreign trade was carried out overland with Burma across the Yoma mountain ranges. Throughout the early decades of the eighteenth century, the region was shaken by a series of earthquakes that seemed to be in keeping with the political chaos and conflict that had so unsettled the land.¹⁰³ In 1761, just twenty-four years before a Burmese invasion would finally bring an end to Arakanese

independence, a massive earthquake shook Arakan so hard that it raised the entire coastline by five feet.¹⁰⁴

Nonetheless, the cosmopolitan influences brought on by over a century of participation in the Bay of Bengal world would continue to permeate the Arakanese social fabric. As we have seen, Arakan's participation in this world fostered a range of connections through which not only goods but ideas were shared. Not least, it brought about large-scale immigration from neighboring Bengal, as agricultural slaves, artisans and soldiers, but also the holders of high office, made new lives in this not entirely unfamiliar littoral society. Perhaps the presence of these people seems foreign when viewed through the contemporary prism of the nation-state and the reified categories of ethnicity and religion. On the other hand, the vibrancy and cosmopolitanism of this early modern polity can offer lessons for us today in how to imagine a world in which identities might be constructed without reliance on such divisive and antagonistic categories. This cosmopolitanism is perhaps best understood when the history of Arakan is viewed, not according to traditional historiographical modes such as the nation-state or even terrestrially conceived "areas" such as South or Southeast Asia, but from the perspective of the sea.

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End Notes

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- ² For a recent example, see: Subhir Baumik, "Adrift on Cruel Waters," *Asia Times Online*, April 9, 2011. http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Southeast_Asia/MD09Ae04.htm 1 (accessed April 13, 2011).
- ³ Maung Tha Hla and Buddhist Rakhaing Cultural Association., *The Rakhaing* (N.Y.: Buddhist Rakhaing Cultural Association, 2004), 65-98.
- ⁴ The term Rohingya is a contested one. Self-identifying Rohingya activists and historians appear to use the designation as something of a catch-all referring to all Arakanese of Muslim descent. For a critical, if pedantic, historical perspective of this usage, see: Aye Chan, "The Development of a Muslim Enclave in Arakan (Rakhine) State of Burma (Myanmar)," *SOAS Bulletin of Burma Research* Vol. 3, No. 2 (2005).
- ⁵ Pia Oberoi, *Exile and Belonging: Refugees and State Policy in South Asia* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2006), 171; Abdul Karim, *The Rohingyas: A Short Account of Their History and Culture* (Chittagong, Bangladesh: Arakan Historical Society, 2000), 11-13.
- ⁶ Ibid.
- ⁷ A. P. Phayre, "On the History of Arakan," *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* Vol. 13, No. 1 (1844): 36.
- ⁸ Thomas Suarez, *Early Mapping of Southeast Asia* (Singapore: Periplus, 1999), 51.
- ⁹ Michael Charney, "Where Jambudipa and Islamdom Converged: Religious Change and the Emergence of Buddhist Communalism in Early Modern Arakan (Fifteenth to Nineteenth Centuries)," (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 1999), 114.
- ¹⁰ Asim Roy, *The Islamic Syncretistic Tradition in Bengal* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1983).
- ¹¹ Ibid.

- ¹² Maurice Collis, "Arakan's Place in the Civilization of the Bay," *Journal of the Burma Research Society* Vol. 15, No. 34-52 (1925): 40. N.B. Naramaikhlā is also occasionally given as Naramithā, or as Man Co Mwan, the latter being the name he adopted on return from exile.
- ¹³ Jacques Leider, "On Arakanese Territorial Expansion: Origins, Context, Means and Practice," in *The Maritime Frontier of Burma: Exploring Political, Cultural and Commercial Interaction in the Indian Ocean World, 1200-1800*, ed. Jos Gommans and Jacques Leider (Amsterdam and Leiden: Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie van Wetenschappen and KITLV Press, 2002), 128.
- ¹⁴ Phayre, "On the History of Arakan," 45.
- ¹⁵ Ibid.
- ¹⁶ Sanjay Subrahmanyam, "And a River Runs through It: The Mrauk-U Kingdom and Its Bay of Bengal Context," in *The Maritime Frontier of Burma: Exploring Political, Cultural and Commercial Interaction in the Indian Ocean World, 1200-1800*, ed. Jos Gommans and Jacques Leider (Amsterdam and Leiden: Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie van Wetenschappen and KITLV Press, 2002), 111.
- ¹⁷ G. E. Harvey, *History of Burma: From Earliest Times to 10 March 1824, the Beginning of English Conquest* (London: Longmans, Green, 1925).
- ¹⁸ Leider, "On Arakanese Territorial Expansion: Origins, Context, Means and Practice," 129.
- ¹⁹ Jacques Leider, "These Buddhist Kings with Muslim Names... A Discussion of Muslim Influence in the Mrauk-U Period," in *Etudes Birmanes Eu Hommage a Denise Bernot*, ed. Pierre Richard and F. Robinne (Paris: EFEO, 1998).
- ²⁰ Ibid.
- ²¹ Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *Improvising Empire: Portuguese Trade and Settlement in the Bay of Bengal, 1500-1700* (Delhi and New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 121.
- ²² Tome Pires, *The Suma Oriental of Tome Pires: An Account of the East, from the Red Sea to Japan, Written in Malacca and India in 1512-1515*, trans. Armando Cortesão (Nendeln and Liechtenstein: Kraus Reprint Limited, 1967), 94-95.
- ²³ Karim, *The Rohingyas: A Short Account of Their History and Culture*, 47.
- ²⁴ Ibid., 19, 32. For further discussion of non-elite migrations from Bengal into Arakan during this period, see below.
- ²⁵ Pamela Gutman, "Towards a History of the Architecture of Mrauk U," in *The Maritime Frontier of Burma: Exploring Political, Cultural and Commercial Interaction in the Indian Ocean World, 1200-1800*, ed. Jos Gommans and Jacques Leider (Amsterdam and Leiden: Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie van Wetenschappen and KITLV Press, 2002), 165.
- ²⁶ Leider, "These Buddhist Kings with Muslim Names... A Discussion of Muslim Influence in the Mrauk-U Period."
- ²⁷ Richard C. Temple, "Buddermokan," *Journal of the Burma Research Society* Vol. 14, No. 4 (1924). See also: M. Siddiq Khan, "Badr Maqams or the Shrines of Badr Al-Din-Auliya," *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Pakistan* Vol. 2, No. 1 (1962).
- ²⁸ Khan, "Badr Maqams or the Shrines of Badr Al-Din-Auliya," 31.
- ²⁹ Temple, "Buddermokan," 5-11.
- ³⁰ Khan, "Badr Maqams or the Shrines of Badr Al-Din-Auliya," 42.
- ³¹ Ibid., 31.
- ³² Temple, "Buddermokan," 9.
- ³³ Ibid., 5.
- ³⁴ Ibid.
- ³⁵ Sanjay Subrahmanyam, "Slaves and Tyrants: Dutch Tribulations in Seventeenth-Century Mrauk-U," *Journal of Early Modern History* Vol. 1, No. 3 (1997).
- ³⁶ Karim, *The Rohingyas: A Short Account of Their History and Culture*, 50-53.
- ³⁷ Ibid., 83-85; Sanjay Subrahmanyam, "'Persianization' and 'Mercantilism': Two Themes in Bay of Bengal History, 1400-1700," in *Commerce and Culture in the Bay of Bengal, 1500-1800*, ed. Om Prakash and Denys Lombard (Delhi: Manohar, 1999), 78.
- ³⁸ Swapna Bhattacharya, "Myth and History in Bengal Identity in Arakan," in *The Maritime Frontier of Burma: Exploring Political, Cultural and Commercial Interaction in the Indian Ocean World, 1200-1800*, ed. Jos Gommans and Jacques Leider (Amsterdam and Leiden: Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie van Wetenschappen and KITLV Press, 2002).
- ³⁹ Ibid., 211.
- ⁴⁰ This poem was an adaptation of the Awadhi *Padmavat*, by Malik Muhammad Jayasi, recounting the siege of Chitor by Delhi Sultan, Alauddin Khilji in 1303 CE. In the *Padmavat*, the Sultan desires the wife of the King of Chitor, a beautiful Sri Lankan princess. For a discussion of the important place of Sri Lanka, and indeed Sri Lankan princesses in the Arakanese Bay of Bengal worldview, see below. For further summary of Alaol's *Padmavat*, see: Sukumar Sen, *History of Bengali Literature* (New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 1992), 141-42.
- ⁴¹ Karim, *The Rohingyas: A Short Account of Their History and Culture*, 56-57. (emphasis added)
- ⁴² Sebastião Manrique, Charles Eckford Luard, and Henry Hosten, *Travels of Fray Sebastien Manrique, 1629-1643: A Translation of the Itinerario De Las Misiones Orientales*, 2 vols., Works Issued by the Hakluyt Society 2nd Ser., No. 59, 61 (Oxford: Printed for the Hakluyt society, 1927), 144.
- ⁴³ Ibid., 81.
- ⁴⁴ Ibid., 199. In Maurice Collis' romantic twentieth-century narration of Manrique's travels it is assumed that this was no interpolation. "He spoke in Hindustani, and Thiri-thu-dhamma replied in the same language with a smile..." See: Maurice Collis, *The Land of the Great Image, Being Experiences of Friar Manrique in Arakan*, A New Directions Paperbook, (New York: New Directions, 1959), 150.
- ⁴⁵ Pierre Bourdieu, *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture*, trans. Richard Nice (London and Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1977). Charney, "Where Jambudipa and Islamdom Converged: Religious Change and the Emergence of Buddhist Communalism in Early Modern Arakan (Fifteenth to Nineteenth Centuries)," Subrahmanyam, "'Persianization' and 'Mercantilism': Two Themes in Bay of Bengal History, 1400-1700."
- ⁴⁶ Charney, "Where Jambudipa and Islamdom Converged: Religious Change and the Emergence of Buddhist Communalism in Early Modern Arakan (Fifteenth to Nineteenth Centuries)," 74.
- ⁴⁷ Subrahmanyam, "'Persianization' and 'Mercantilism': Two Themes in Bay of Bengal History, 1400-1700," 55.
- ⁴⁸ Catherine Raymond, "Religious and Scholarly Exchanges between the Sinhalese Sangha and the Arakanese and Burmese Theravadin Communities: Historical Documentation and Physical Evidence," in *Commerce and Culture in the Bay of Bengal 1500-1800*, ed. Om Prakash and Denys Lombard (New Delhi: Manohar, 1999), 91.
- ⁴⁹ Ibid., 92.
- ⁵⁰ Richard M. Eaton, "Locating Arakan in Time, Space, and Historical Scholarship," in *The Maritime Frontier of Burma: Exploring Political, Cultural and Commercial Interaction in the Indian Ocean World, 1200-1800*, ed. Jos Gommans and Jacques Leider (Amsterdam and Leiden: Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie van Wetenschappen and KITLV Press, 2002), 230.
- ⁵¹ Raymond, "Religious and Scholarly Exchanges between the Sinhalese Sangha and the Arakanese and Burmese Theravadin Communities: Historical Documentation and Physical Evidence," 93.
- ⁵² Ibid.
- ⁵³ Ibid., 94.

- ⁵⁴ Collis, "Arakan's Place in the Civilization of the Bay," 41.
- ⁵⁵ Raymond, "Religious and Scholarly Exchanges between the Sinhalese Sangha and the Arakanese and Burmese Theravadin Communities: Historical Documentation and Physical Evidence," 95.
- ⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 96.
- ⁵⁷ *Ibid.*
- ⁵⁸ Gutman, "Towards a History of the Architecture of Mrauk U," 182.
- ⁵⁹ Collis, *The Land of the Great Image, Being Experiences of Friar Manrique in Arakan*, 184-211.
- ⁶⁰ Charney, "Where Jambudipa and Islamdom Converged: Religious Change and the Emergence of Buddhist Communalism in Early Modern Arakan (Fifteenth to Nineteenth Centuries)," 215.
- ⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 212.
- ⁶² Pires, *The Suma Oriental of Tome Pires: An Account of the East, from the Red Sea to Japan, Written in Malacca and India in 1512-1515*, 94-94.
- ⁶³ Wil O. Dijk, *Seventeenth-Century Burma and the Dutch East India Company, 1634-1680* (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 2006), 17.
- ⁶⁴ Pires, *The Suma Oriental of Tome Pires: An Account of the East, from the Red Sea to Japan, Written in Malacca and India in 1512-1515*, 272-73.
- ⁶⁵ Stephan van Galen, "Arakan and Bengal: The Rise and Decline of the Mrauk U Kingdom (Burma) from the Fifteenth to the Seventeenth Century A.D." (PhD diss., Leiden University, 2008). Subrahmanyam, *Improvising Empire: Portuguese Trade and Settlement in the Bay of Bengal, 1500-1700*, 120.
- ⁶⁶ Sinnappah Arasaratnam, "The Coromandel-Southeast Asia Trade 1650-174," *Journal of Asian History* Vol. 18, No. 2 (1984): 122; Sanjay Subrahmanyam, "Persians, Pilgrims and Portuguese: The Travails of Masulipatnam Shipping in the Indian Ocean, 1590-1665," *Modern Asian Studies* Vol. 22, No. 3 (1988): 507.
- ⁶⁷ Michael Charney, "The 1598-99 Siege of Pegu and the Expansion of Arakanese Imperial Power in Lower Burma," *Journal of Asian History* Vol. 28, No. 1 (1994): 53.
- ⁶⁸ Maurice Collis, *The Land of the Great Image: Being Experiences of Friar Manrique in Arakan* (New York: A.A. Knopf, 1943), 154.
- ⁶⁹ Anthony Reid, "Humans and Forests in Pre-Colonial Southeast Asia," *Environment and History* Vol. 1, No. 1 (1995): 105-07.
- ⁷⁰ *Ibid.*
- ⁷¹ Om Prakash, "Coastal Burma and the Trading World of the Bay of Bengal, 1500-1680," in *The Maritime Frontier of Burma: Exploring Political, Cultural and Commercial Interaction in the Indian Ocean World, 1200-1800*, ed. Jos Gommans and Jacque Leider (Amsterdam and Leiden: Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie van Wetenschappen and KITLV Press, 2002), 101.
- ⁷² Charney, "Where Jambudipa and Islamdom Converged: Religious Change and the Emergence of Buddhist Communalism in Early Modern Arakan (Fifteenth to Nineteenth Centuries)," 33-35. See also: Collis, *The Land of the Great Image, Being Experiences of Friar Manrique in Arakan*, 218-19.
- ⁷³ D.G.E. Hall, "Studies in Dutch Relations with Arakan," *Journal of the Burma Research Society* Vol. 26, No. 1 (1936): 2,4. Hall quotes the English factor at Masulipatnam who in the late sixteenth century, in his *Relations of the Kingdom of Golconda*, wrote, "To Arracan they send store of tobacco, some iron, and a few sorts of painted clothes, and return from thence some gold and gumme lack, but most part rice..." The Dutch relied heavily on Arakanese rice imports, especially during their blockade of the Portuguese fortress at Malacca in 1633, and other "sundry minor struggles in the Spice Islands."
- ⁷⁴ Eaton, "Locating Arakan in Time, Space, and Historical Scholarship," 225.
- ⁷⁵ Leider, "On Arakanese Territorial Expansion: Origins, Context, Means and Practice," 139.
- ⁷⁶ Jean-Baptiste Tavernier and V. Ball, *Travels in India*, 2d ed., 2 vols. (New Delhi: Oriental Books Reprint Corp., 1977), 129.
- ⁷⁷ Michael Charney, "Shallow-Draft Boats, Guns, and the Aye-Ra-Wa-Ti," *Oriens Extremus* 40, no. 1 (1997).
- ⁷⁸ Leider, "On Arakanese Territorial Expansion: Origins, Context, Means and Practice," 139.
- ⁷⁹ Mughal navy Atul Chandra Roy, *A History of Mughal Navy and Naval Warfares* (Calcutta: World Press, 1972), 123.
- ⁸⁰ S. Arasaratnam, "Slave Trade in the Indian Ocean in the Seventeenth Century," in *Mariners, Merchants and Oceans: Studies in Maritime History*, ed. K.S. Mathew (Delhi: Manohar, 1995). See also: Subrahmanyam, "Slaves and Tyrants: Dutch Tribulations in Seventeenth-Century Mrauk-U," 226.
- ⁸¹ Feringi Pirates of Chatgaon JASB Jadnuath Sarkar, "The Feringi Pirates of Chatgaon, 1665 A.D.," *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* 3(1907): 422-23.
- ⁸² *Ibid.*
- ⁸³ Arasaratnam, "Slave Trade in the Indian Ocean in the Seventeenth Century," 203.
- ⁸⁴ Subrahmanyam, "Slaves and Tyrants: Dutch Tribulations in Seventeenth-Century Mrauk-U," 225-36.
- ⁸⁵ Manrique, Luard, and Hosten, *Travels of Fray Sebastien Manrique, 1629-1643: A Translation of the Itinerario De Las Misiones Orientales*, 379.
- ⁸⁶ Hall, "Studies in Dutch Relations with Arakan," 2.
- ⁸⁷ Arasaratnam, "Slave Trade in the Indian Ocean in the Seventeenth Century," 202.
- ⁸⁸ Michael W. Charney, "Crisis and Reformation in a Maritime Kingdom of Southeast Asia: Forces of Instability and Political Disintegration in Western Burma (Arakan), 1603-1701," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 41, no. 2 (1998): 206.
- ⁸⁹ Subrahmanyam, "Slaves and Tyrants: Dutch Tribulations in Seventeenth-Century Mrauk-U," 222.
- ⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 226.
- ⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 227-28.
- ⁹² Emily Sohmer Tai, "Marking Water: Piracy and Property in the Premodern West," in *Seascapes: Maritime Histories, Littoral Cultures, and Transoceanic Exchanges*, ed. Renate Bridenthal and Kären Wigen Jerry H. Bentley (Honolulu: Hawai'i University Press, 2007), 206.
- ⁹³ Dianga was a Portuguese settlement across the river from Chittagong in what is today southeastern Bangladesh.
- ⁹⁴ Roy, *A History of Mughal Navy and Naval Warfares*, 128. The Portuguese traitors who left Chittagong in 1665 were immediately in the Mughal navy at double their pay-rate under the Arakanese.
- ⁹⁵ Cayetano J. Socarras, "The Portuguese in Lower Burma: Filipe De Brito De Nicote," *Luso-Brazilian Review* Vol. 3, No. 2 (1966).
- ⁹⁶ D. G. E. Hall, *A History of South-East Asia*, 4th ed. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1981).
- ⁹⁷ Maurice Collis and San Shwe Bu, "Dom Martin 1606-1643, the First Burmese to Visit Europe," *Journal of the Burma Research Society* Vol. 21, No. 1 (1926).

⁹⁸ Frederick C. Danvers, *The Portuguese in India: Being a History of the Rise and Decline of their Eastern Empire* (London: W.H. Allen and Co., 1894), 2:147.

⁹⁹ Socarras, "The Portuguese in Lower Burma: Filipe De Brito De Nicote," 5-6.

¹⁰⁰ Manrique, Luard, and Hosten, *Travels of Fray Sebastien Manrique, 1629-1643 : A Translation of the Itinerario De Las Misiones Orientales*, 133.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 390.

¹⁰² Charney, "The 1598-99 Siege of Pegu and the Expansion of Arakanese Imperial Power in Lower Burma," 47.

¹⁰³ Thant Myint-U, "River of Lost Footsteps: Histories of Burma," (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2006), 84.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*.