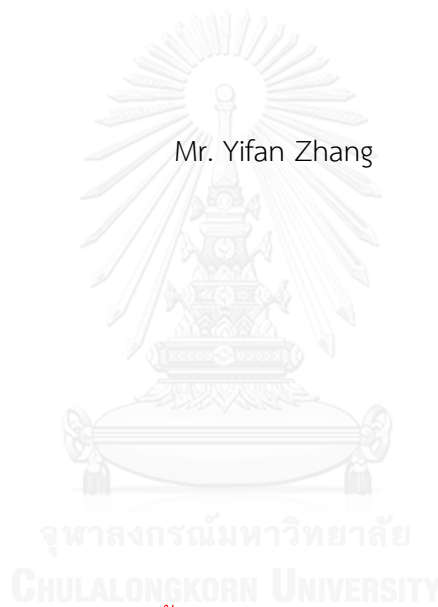


BUDDHIST NATIONALISTIC MOVEMENTS IN MYANMAR: A CASE STUDY
ON THE 969

Mr. Yifan Zhang



บทคัดย่อและแฟ้มข้อมูลฉบับเต็มของวิทยานิพนธ์ตั้งแต่ปีการศึกษา 2554 ที่ให้บริการในคลังปัญญาจุฬาฯ (CUIR)
เป็นแฟ้มข้อมูลของนิสิตเจ้าของวิทยานิพนธ์ ที่ส่งผ่านทางบัณฑิตวิทยาลัย

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วิทยานิพนธ์นี้เป็นส่วนหนึ่งของการศึกษาตามหลักสูตรปริญญาศิลปศาสตรมหาบัณฑิต

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ความเคลื่อนไหวทางศาสนาในประเทศพม่าหลัง พ.ศ. 2553 มีความเปลี่ยนแปลงปรากฏขึ้นมากมายเมื่อเปรียบเทียบกับความเคลื่อนไหวก่อนหน้านี้ การปฏิรูปทำให้บรรยากาศของประเทศพม่ามีชีวิตชีวามากขึ้น ในขณะที่บรรยากาศทางสังคมที่เข้มงวดรัดกุมได้คลี่คลายขึ้นจากระบบการปกครอง ไม่ว่าจะเกิดขึ้นจากแรงกดดันจากภายนอกหรือจากการตัดสินใจภายใน พม่าได้กลายเป็น “ที่ชื่นชอบ” ของประชาคมนานาชาติในช่วงพริบตา การปกครองในขณะนั้นได้ให้เสรีภาพในการแสดงความคิดเห็น การตีพิมพ์ข้อมูลข่าวสารเพื่อเผยแพร่ การประท้วง และเสรีภาพอีกหลายรูปแบบที่ไม่เคยมีมาก่อน ในขณะที่ชาตินิยมทางพุทธศาสนาซึ่งมีอยู่แล้วถูกเร่งด้วยคลื่นของความรู้สึกจากสังคมพลเมือง เช่น ความต้องการอย่างแรงกล้าในการแสดงความคิดเห็น การเขียนข่าว การตีพิมพ์ข้อมูลข่าวสาร และเข้าร่วมการประท้วง กล่าวโดยสรุปคือความรู้สึกเกี่ยวกับชาตินิยมทางพุทธศาสนามีเพิ่มมากขึ้นหลังการปฏิรูปการปกครองใน พ.ศ. 2553 แต่อย่างไรก็ตาม ความเคลื่อนไหวเช่นนี้ได้ฝังรากลึกในวัฒนธรรมทางการเมืองของพม่าและค่อยๆพัฒนาขึ้นหลังการปฏิรูปการปกครอง พ.ศ. 2553 วิทยานิพนธ์ฉบับนี้จะศึกษาพัฒนาการของชาตินิยมทางพุทธศาสนา ได้แก่ ความเคลื่อนไหว 969 และบทบาทของ อุ วิราทู (U Wirathu) ถึงแม้ว่าปรากฏการณ์ทั้งสองครั้งนี้ดูเหมือนจะไม่มี ความเกี่ยวข้องกัน แต่ในความเป็นจริงแล้วเหตุการณ์ที่กล่าวมานั้นเป็นเหมือนเกลียวนี้ของความเคลื่อนไหวทางด้านศาสนาไปพม่าในปัจจุบันนี้มุ่งจะใช้ชาตินิยมทางพุทธศาสนาเพื่อปรับสถานะของสถาบันสงฆ์ให้รุนแรง ซึ่งปรากฏการณ์นี้ไม่ได้มีอยู่ในความขัดแย้งทางศาสนาหรือสังคมเท่านั้น แต่ยังอยู่ในความขัดแย้งทางการเมืองหลังการปฏิรูปอีกด้วย

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The religious movement in Myanmar after 2010 has many visible changes when compared with pre-2010 time in Myanmar. The reform brought fresh air to the backwater like Myanmar, while the restricted and tightened social atmospheres have been smoothed by the regime no matter it was caused by the external pressures or from the decisions within., Myanmar suddenly became the 'darling' of the international society. The freedom of speech, the freedom of publication and the freedom of demonstration and many other freedoms which cannot be imagined before were granted by the regime at that time. Meanwhile those existing Buddhist nationalism was quickened by the waves of emotions from the civilian society such as the tremendous passions to give different speeches, to write the news and publications, to join the demonstrations. In a word we can notice the Buddhist nationalistic sentiments kept increasing in Myanmar after the 2010 reform. Nevertheless, this movement has deep roots in Myanmar political culture and gradually developed after the 2010 reform. This thesis will study the development of Buddhist nationalism, the 969 Movement and the role of U Wirathu. Those phenomena and factors seems irrelevant with each other but in reality as mentioned above are rather like a twisted knot. The current religious movement in Myanmar intend to use nationalistic Buddhism to repositioning activist Sangha. This phenomenon is not limited to religious conflicts and social conflicts, but also political conflicts after the reform.

Field of Study: Southeast Asian Studies Student's Signature

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Research Rationale

Buddhism and politics have been related since the monarchic period in Myanmar. The Lord Buddha himself never encouraged any Buddhist monks to be engaged in secular issues. As time went by, Buddhism and Buddhist Sangha instead had many interactions with the secular world. It could be traced back to King Asoka's Maurya Empire and the later Pala Kingdom in the Indian sub-continent, and also as nearer as King Mindon and Thibaw's regimes. Even the great Myanmar city Mandalay was said to have connections between King Mindon and the Lord Buddha by the legend.

During the British colonial period, Buddhism had been used as a means to counter the colonial power. After the disappearance of the monarchy of Myanmar, the Buddhist Sangha was expected by Myanmar people to lead the weakened nationalistic feeling. The Myanmar Sangha communities bravely took the responsibilities while the nation was in many dangers from outside and within. Nationalistic monks like U Ottama and U Wisara, participated in the dozens of secular activities, and they did raise the awareness of nationalistic feelings of Shan and

Myanmar, which inspired General Aung San and Myanmar people to have more courage to fight against the British colonialists.

The civilian government of Myanmar led by U Nu also made use of Buddhism for political purposes. When U Nu was in power after the independence of Myanmar, he was known as a dedicated Buddhist and made many political decisions related to Buddhism. A big pagoda complex called Kaba Aye Pagoda (literally means the World Peace Pagoda) was built by U Nu in 1952 before the opening of the Sixth Great Buddhist Council. It is well known that the Fifth Buddhist Council was organized by King Mindon in 1871, U Nu's actions were often interpreted as a copy of King Mindon's Fifth Buddhist Council. However, during his Sixth Buddhist Council, many Theravada Buddhist monks from seven countries gathered in Myanmar and many affiliated Buddhist organizations were founded during the Sixth Buddhist Council.

The military regime utilized Buddhism and also met with resistance from the Myanmar Sangha community. During General Ne Win's period in the 1980s, a Lord Buddha's relic was donated to Myanmar by the King of Nepal, a pagoda named Maha Wizaya Pagoda was constructed adjacent to the worldly renowned Shwedagon Pagoda on Dhahitammarakhita Hill. The umbrella of Maha Wizaya Paoda was given by General Ne Win himself to show his legitimacy as a leader to control the whole Myanmar in terms of the state supporting the progress of Sasana. The 8888 Uprising in 1988 and the Saffron Revolution in 2007 had many monks involved in. The monks

even led the Saffron Revolution, which attracted a lot of international attentions. U Gambira, a Buddhist monk who was leading the activities against the military regime in 2007 was arrested by the regime and then released by Myanmar government in 2012 after the reform in 2010.

In 2010, Myanmar had the open policy and reform. This once isolated country could be seen and observed clearly by the people from the outside world. While approaching the right tracks like the other countries in the world, Myanmar encountered big changes politically and ideologically. Because of the rapid change after the reform, some monks were worried that they might lose their once privileged status in the changing environment. They want to re-position themselves in the new environment. While the country is encountering big change, these monks also do not want to miss the train of the reform.

1.2 Review of Literature

Some valid resources of literature could be found on this subject. They are mainly about Buddhist nationalism related to ethnic conflicts and the studies of Buddhist nationalism in the old times Myanmar and the other Buddhist countries such as Sri Lanka and Thailand. Nevertheless, sporadic news and reports showed the opinions on Myanmar related issues from different news agents and current affair analyst around the world. Until now, not a complete research about the Buddhist nationalism and the 969 Movement were done.

A famous Indian biography writer Madhukar Piplayan has published a biography of the legendary Indian King--King Asoka called "*Asoka The Great*" in 2011. In his book he detailed King Asoka's contribution to Buddhism. During his reign Buddhism was spread all over India and also the other regions out of Indian sub-continent such as Myanmar and many other places. However, shortly after King Asoka passed away Buddhism lost its privilege and Hinduism quickly recovered and attained the prominent position again. No matter what happened in India itself, Buddhism was preserved and developed in Myanmar.

A book named "*A World Without Muslim*" was written by E. Fuller was published by Backbay Books in 2011. In this book he has argued that when Islam entered India it did not destroy the Indian civilization like it destroyed the pre-Islamic Persian civilization. But the endless invasions of Muslims from Central Asia and Afghanistan gradually weakened the existence of Buddhism in India. When the Mughals controlled most parts of India Buddhism totally disappeared in India. Different waves of the migration of those Buddhist scholars took place from time to time, they escaped from India to safer destinations including Myanmar.

A third book was published by the Press of the University of Hawaii titled "*Contesting Buddhist Narratives: Democratization, Nationalism, and Communal Violence in Myanmar*" was written by Matthew J. Walton and Susan Hayward from the Cambridge University. This research project focused on the connections between the merging of Buddhist nationalism and the rising quantities of communal violence

in Myanmar in recent years. This work is so far a very completed research work on this issue. In this research work, Matthew has argued that many Buddhists in Myanmar are trying to compete with the influences which the 2010 Reform might bring. The small aspects like Buddhist nationalist activities in Myanmar could reflect the huge icebergs behind the scene.

Similarly, Nel De Votta also cooperated with the East-West Center of the University of Hawaii and thus published a research work named "*Sinhalese Buddhist Nationalist Ideology: Implications for Politics and Conflict Resolution in Sri Lanka*". As we know the case of Buddhist nationalistic movements in Sri Lanka have ideological connections with Myanmar. In this work Nel De Votta discussed that there will not be any positive changes, and the religious and ethnic conflicts will not be solved unless Sinhalese Buddhists compromise. This is possibly the same resolution for Myanmar. Without the compromise from the Buddhist majorities, the current problems will be hard to solve.

A hundreds of pages annual report about the Rakhine-Rohinya conflicts was written and published by a left-wing Rakhine civil organization called Arakan Human Rights and Development Organization (AHRDO). The author of the report stated that he believes in the right of free speech, freedom of religion, from of religion and religious freedom. He argued that if a person is under attack or near certain amount of risks of injury or death, that person has the right to defend himself/herself, and the loved ones or the other innocents that may need protection.

Through literature review process, the literary works with different thoughts and ideologies have been viewed in case to give a more complete vision in this thesis.

1.3 Research questions and objectives

1.3.1 The role of Sangha in Myanmar politics after the 2010 Reform in Myanmar.

1.3.2 Change and development of Buddhist nationalism and the affiliated Buddhist nationalistic movements after the 2010 reform.

1.3.3 The Politic behind the new version of the Buddhist nationalistic movements.

1.4 Research methodologies

1.4.1 Literature study (the literature study includes the Buddhist texts themselves and commentary on the principles of Buddhism, and also on the concept of Buddhist Nationalism, in both the Western literature as well as Burmese literature).

1.4.2 The interview with the leading Buddhist monks, including Buddhist nationalistic monks and non-Buddhist nationalistic monk, such as Satigu Sayadaw, Ashin U Wirathu and so on and so forth to collect the first hand evidences for this thesis.

1.4.3 Comparative study (find out the similarities and differences in terms of the cultural and political backgrounds, various forces behind the scenes, the involvement of global and regional big powers in Myanmar).

1.5 Usefulness of the research

1.5.1 Increase more understanding on the major social and political changes after the 2010 Reform in Myanmar.

1.5.2 In terms of Myanmar/Burma studies, this thesis will help us to understand the problems of dehumanization and human trafficking in Myanmar in depth.

1.5.3 This thesis will also bring benefits for scholars who are interested in Myanmar Buddhism after the Reform in 2010.



Chapter 2

Conflicts between Burmese and Indian Muslim migrants before the 2010 Reform.

Conflict is universal. Where there is living species, there are conflicts. Conflicts against each other could be found in the communities of solitary animals like tigers and leopards, social animals like elephants and lions, even different plants in the Amazon rain forest could compete with each other to gain more spaces and sunshine for living. Human society is a much more complicated combination of every kind of conflict, ethnical conflicts, political conflicts, religious conflicts and cultural conflicts are visible in almost every collective group, community and society. Thus, it is a hard job to give an absolute definition of conflict. In terms of the ideas from the academia, different scholars chose to give different ideas. According to Berghof Glossary, a Germany based peace support organization, as a clash between antithetical ideas or interest--within a person or involving two or more persons, groups or states pursuing incompatible goals.

The Iceberg Theory is a valid example of the relationship between conflict and violence. In Myanmar, the conflicts of Buddhist and Muslim can be traced back to pre-colonial period, where it developed while British were ruling Myanmar as a colony, and intensified after the independence of Myanmar. During the whole process, the tips of the iceberg were apparent, and growing in size, but hid the

magnitude of the problem, until recently years, when the conflicts between Buddhists and Muslim led to direct violence in many places around the country.

To make more completed dimensions on this troublesome issue both for the people of Myanmar and the international communities, we can set about detailed analysis on the historical, religious, ethnical and political conflicts respectively.

2.1 Economic Conflict.

Economic interests are usually considered as one of the most important reason for many conflicts. In the case of Myanmar, this concept also counts as the uneven distribution of resources by the British rulers who buried the bitter fruit beforehand.

Traditionally, Myanmar economy is largely based on Agriculture. The country is divided into three geographical bodies, the Ayeyarwady Delta and Salween Delta having the most fertilized soil in Myanmar, with an endless flat landscape and concentrated population making it possible for rice cultivation, therefore these two regions have been recognized as the 'rice bowl' of the whole Myanmar. And finally, the hills in Shan plateau and the upper part of the Ayeyarwady River have small sum of rice cultivation. But those areas also have some other commercial crops such as the sandalwood, different types of fruit and grain. Moreover, in the high mountain area in Chin State, north Kachin State and West Sagaing Province, the local tribes such as the Chin people, Lisu people, the Naga, and the Khamti always sustain their own lives by slash-and-burn cultivation. In the old times, different groups of people

in different regions were living in harmony despite the varieties of economic systems. The King of Myanmar—King Bayinaung, even once claimed the ‘King of the ten directions’, never forced the minorities to change their traditional lifestyles and harm their economic interests.

Myanmar is next to the east end of British Indian colony. Confrontations took place from time to time along the border. At that in the beginning of the 19th century, the Burmese Empire had just reached its peak of power politically. The territory of the Empire has extended as far east as Assam and Manipure, Ambitious Burmese Kings were eager to seize more territories to the east, but clearly that the King of Burmese Empire did not notice the new tide of the whole world. King Bagyidaw even ordered his generals to seize Bengal from the British in 1823. In 1824, the First Anglo-Burmese War broke out, followed by the Second Anglo-Burmese War in 1852 and the Third Anglo-Burmese War in 1885 when King Pagan Min and King Thibaw were in power respectively. The last King of the Burmese Empire--King Thibaw, tried to reform the country to increase the bargaining power with the British. He even tried to bring the French power in as the French power already existed in French Indochina. Unfortunately both of his attempts failed and the British were afraid of the French set foot in Myanmar so the British even sped up the colonizing process of Myanmar. Three Anglo-Burmese Wars brought Myanmar from the flourishing age to the low-ebb. By the end of the Third Anglo-Burmese War, the whole Myanmar fell into the hands of the British.

After the fall of Burmese Empire and the exile of King Thibaw, the British included Myanmar under the administration of the British India. The Burmese Empire suddenly became a province of India, not even succeeding to create its own colony. In the National Museum of Bangladesh, the author saw an old British Indian note with Burmese language together with many other Indian languages. We can see after the colonization of Myanmar, even the currency was under the country of the British Indian government.

After the Independence War of America in 1775, the importance of Indian colony became extraordinarily important for the interest of the British Empire. The British Raj in India supported the British Empire financially. The natural resources from the Indian sub-continent subsidized the industrialization and the development of infrastructures across the British Isles. The human resources from the British India also helped the British Empire to have more control over many other colonies, such as Fiji, South Africa, Uganda and so on. But therein a problem existed. As early as the ancient Greek period, the envoy from Alexandria the Great noted that even at that time India was populated by people. During the British colonial period, India had many other spare resources, but in the case of rice India could not make it with surplus amount of rice, so that the occupation of Myanmar made it possible for the British India to produce plenty of enough rice to supply the whole British Empire.

At the beginning of the British rule in Myanmar, Myanmar's core was in the Upper part region around the former royal capital of Mandalay. At that time the

fertilized land near the two big river deltas were still in their primitive shapes. When the British came they have found Myanmar was short in human resource for rice cultivation. Therefore they made the decision to bring the labour from populated India to the scarcely populated regions of Lower Myanmar and Arakan. Even just after the First Anglo-Burmese War, when Arakan and Tenasserim (nowadays Tanintharyi Region) were ceded from the Burmese Empire to the British Empire, many Indian labours from Bengal, Tamil Nadu and various places in India were sent or by themselves to the Lower Myanmar, and also many peasants in the Upper Myanmar were sent to the Lower Myanmar to be the rice cultivation labours. This was especially the case of Arakan since it is interconnected with Bengal, resulting in many Bengali from the Eastern Part of Bengal simply crossed the shallow Naf River to go to Arakan for economic purposes. We should recognize that many people from the Indian sub-continent had settled down in Arakan before the colonization of Arakan by the British already, but we do not know the exact data at that time.

After the Second Anglo-Burmese War when the whole coastal part of Myanmar was given to the British, more Indian people were sent by the British or even made decisions by themselves to go to Myanmar for more fortune. Before the dawn of the third Anglo-Burmese War broke out, Yangon, Moulmein and Sittwe were already concentrated by Indian Hindus and Muslims. Myanmar natives instead became the minorities in these major cities. After the third Anglo-Burmese War, more and more Indians no matter Hindus and Muslims, spread all over big cities in Myanmar. In spite

of their various origins in India and different religious backgrounds and castes, the Burmese generally call them Indians Kalas.

Moshe Yegar from Hebrew University indicated that Muslims from India were appointed by Burmese Kings for important administrative positions. And early Indian Muslim immigrants also played roles in guarding the Kings and defending the Kingdom. Throughout the centuries, a few Indian Muslims immigrants immigrated to Myanmar before the colonialization of Myanmar by the British, and these Indian Muslims have been quickly absorbed into local population. The cultures which brought either by Indian Hindus or Indian Muslims have been assimilated into Myanmar Buddhist population and its affiliated cultures by the Burmanization process through decades. Larger scale Indian Muslim migration pouring into Myanmar was done and encouraged by the British colonialists step by step. The Indian immigration waves firstly reached Arakan and Tanaserrim areas right after the first Anglo-Burmese War (1824-1826), the second and third Anglo-Burmese Wars as following sequences, with the Lower Burma and the Upper Burma one after another became the British territories. The number of Indian immigrants had been increased tremendously. After Myanmar officially became a part of the British India, the immigrants from India to Myanmar became inter-provincial immigrants. The British had been planning to use the fertilized land at Ayeyarwady Delta in Myanmar for rice cultivation, like what the British turn Ceylon its tea plantation and Malaya its palm oil storage. With this idea to develop Myanmar, the British imported cheap labor from

the Indian sub-continent to work in the paddy field since Myanmar itself was small in population while its western neighbour had far enough labour power. Educated Indians were also recruited by the British as teachers and civil servants and also loan sharks (Chettyars). Gradually the population of Indian migrant Muslim population surpassed local Muslim population. As set down in Myanmar they established their thorough networks by building mosques, constructing religious institutions and starting their own radios and newspaper. They maintained their own identities in a Buddhist environment. As aliens, when the World Financial Crisis struck Myanmar in 1930s, Indians as well as Indian Muslims became targets of the nationalists, the nationalists claimed that the Indians grabbed the jobs and opportunities from the Burmese and Indian loan sharks (Chettyars) caused bankruptcy of Myanmar's rural economy.

Different from the natural immigration process in the ancient time, the British created the modern immigration from Indian to Myanmar and many other different places. Indian labor had already been found useful in various British colonies, where they were employed by the British in many public sectors such as roads, buildings, harbours, offices and so on. Prakash C. Jain from Center for West Asian Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University stated in actually recorded data, big sums of Indian emigration overseas have never happened in India before the establishment of British

India Empire¹. In addition, well-known American Sociologist and demographer Kingsley Davis, has argued that “pressures to emigrate has always been great enough to provide a stream of emigrants much larger than the actual given opportunities”. Bertie Reginald Pearn, the author of ‘*A History of Rangoon*’ Mentioned that in 1838 there were only 19 Indian in Yangon, before the colonial era, the Indian population in Ayeyarwady Delta were seasonal merchants².

When Myanmar was finally fully colonized by British East India Company, the Upper Myanmar started to received immigration waves from India as well as what happened in the Lower Myanmar before. Administrated under British India, travel to Myanmar became a domestic trip. More and more Indians moved to the cities as far as Taunggyi, Myitkyina and Muse. More under cultivated land began to be commercialized by the hands of Indian labors. The social-economic structures of Myanmar thus have been changed dramatically. The native Myanmar population were transformed to lower classes of farmers from the ruling class. Indian migrants were promoted by the British Raj to be Chettyars and taskmasters of the Myanmar farmer according to the racial stereotyping ideas of the British. Moreover, business opportunities were also handed to Indians by the British in British Burma. In contrast, Burmese people or the other nationalities in Myanmar could not be employed in the bureaucratic class. The senses of belongings in terms of land and power of Myanmar

¹ P.C Jain, "Emigration and Settlements of Indians Abroad," *Sociological Bulletin* 38, no. 1 (1989).

² Bertie Reginald Pearn, *A History of Yangon*(New Jersey: Gregg Press, 1971).

people had been suppressed on purpose by the British. The real British population were only found in the main city such as Yangon. The whole Myanmar was basically ruled by the Indians.

The former Royal capital of Mandalay was abandoned as an administrative center. The British moved the capital of Myanmar property to Yangon, claiming that Yangon is at the center point of British's Asian trade-line. At that time Yangon was considered as a foreign city on Burmese soil. The importance of Yangon as an international harbour has been identified by Chiang Kai-shek, the Nationalistic leader of China, during the Second World War period, when the Japanese force occupied Myanmar and was about to invade China's Yunnan Province from Myanmar. The importance of Yangon for Myanmar is equal to Guangzhou for China when he was talking with American General Joseph Stilwell in 1942³. The British developed Yangon as an economic center and the new capital, at the same hand, left the Myanmar people and Mandalay alone since at that time Mandalay based cultures were viewed as the identities and unities for Myanmar people. By 1872, the population of Yangon reached 98,475 with the influx of Indian workers. Noriyuki Osada from Japan External Trade Organization stated that from 1872 to 1901 the Indian emigrants accounted for 78 percent of the total population growth of Yangon.

³ 蒋中正, "对史迪威参谋长有关指挥我军作战要领及对缅作战之指示," 中华民国三十一年三月十日接见史迪威参谋长谈话 (1942).

Chiang Kai Shek, "Some Comments on Chief of Staff Stilwell's command on the ROC national army at the battlefield in Burma", the talk with Chief of Staff Stilwell, 31 years of the ROC(1942).

By 1891, different Indian groups from eastern part of India such as Telugus, Tamils, Hindustanis and Chittagongnian Bengali made more than half of the total amount of the population in Yangon. It is remembered by the people who have paid a visit to the city of Yangon that at that the city is rather more Indian than Myanmar in terms of direct feelings⁴. Hugh Tinker from the University of London also mentioned that even in 1941, not far from the Independence of Myanmar, the number of Indian population was still reached 1,017,825, even though many of them lived in Myanmar temporarily. The semi-permanent Indian population still made half of the number which mentioned above.

If the three Anglo-Burmese Wars presented the power of European imperialism, then introduction and the existence of Indian Chettyars and rice merchants in Myanmar increased peoples' attention to the important roles played by non-European Indians in the economic transformation of the colonized Myanmar. It is well known that they controlled the main aspects of Myanmar's economy during the colonial period. Noriyuki Osada also noted that when Myanmar became a British colony, the number of the British rulers were hardly to be seen around Myanmar except some certain places in Yangon. Instead, Indians who were brought or encouraged by the British to come to Myanmar were much more visible than the British rulers. In the eyes of Myanmar people, the Indians gradually became the

⁴ Noriyuki Osada, "Housing the Rangoon Poor: Indians, Burmese, and Town Planning in Colonial Burma," in *IDE*(Yangon2016).

symbol of colonialism. Hugh Tinker has mentioned Myanmar was rather occupied by Indians. When Indians came, more fertilized land around Myanmar was cultivated. The total economy of Myanmar became more prosperous, but Myanmar peasants still remained the social status as peasants, the Indian Cheetyars and rice traders as the middling agents of the rice trading, connected Myanmar peasants with the European rice milling tycoons, and also making themselves bigger and bigger. Through the British supports and the collective works made them controlled the economy of Myanmar.

The Indians enjoyed the special positions in Myanmar for a long period before the outbreak of the Second World War. Even today Myanmar People on one hand considered India as the place where Buddhism came from and the Lord Buddha spent his lifetime - a religious holy destination, but when Indian Chettyars and rice traders have been mentioned, they felt resented about the Indians. When Myanmar was about to gain Independence, the British lost the ability to backup Indians in Myanmar any longer. General Aung San had mentioned that the economic activities of the Indians since then will be strictly controlled by Myanmar government, leading to the backflow of Indian population to the Indian sub-continent. Thousands of Indians including Indian/Bengali Muslims moved back to the Indian sub-continent. When the author was in a meditation camp in Yangon, the author met many Indian

meditation practitioners whose parents and ancestors once lived in Myanmar. It was nostalgic feelings that brought them back to Yangon to meditate and travel around⁵.

Michael W. Charney from the SOAS (School of Oriental and African Studies), London University stated that the coming of the British rule not only changed the traditional shape of Myanmar social ecology, more importantly the economic structures had been changed, especially the rural⁶. Those three Anglo-Burmese Wars led to the rapid increase of the rice cultivation in Myanmar. At first it occurred in the Lower Myanmar after the 1850s, the British attempted to make Myanmar the rice exporting base of the whole British Empire. The stimulation for the economy were also changed, from the 1860s to 1920s when the rice cultivation increased by 600 per cent specifically at the rich deltas of the two rivers. Under the rice exporting oriented policy, the economic output of the Lower Myanmar and the Upper Myanmar had been changed irreversibly. The Upper Myanmar lost its traditional advantages on tax payments and economy, the growing cultivation of the primitive paddies in the South attracted both migrants and the domestic immigration waves from the North. The role of Indian Chettyars came to the history of Myanmar at this time. The Chettyars were actually a cast in Madras (today's Chennai) at that time. They were normally were regarded as money-lenders in Madras region. During the British Raj in India, many Chettyars travelled to many other British colonies to expand

⁵ Many Indian meditation practitioners whose parents and ancestors once lived in Myanmar, ed. Yifan Zhang, Yangon (2012).

⁶ Michael W Chamey, *A History of Modern Burma*(London: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

their business networks such as Sri Lanka and Malaysia. However, it was in Myanmar that the Chettyars earned their bad reputation as money-lenders. Myanmar at that time was treated as the 'Rice Bowl' of the British Empire, giving Chettyars opportunities to root their money-lending in Myanmar's soil through their channels in their Indian hometowns. Chettyars' money lending service, with its not very high interest rates drew Myanmar peasants attentions to borrow money from Indian originated Chettyars .

J. Russell Andrus, former Professor of Economics at Rangoon University argued that the western and Indian existence brought the idea of credit to Myanmar, when encountering Chettyar system at the colonial era. Indians were famous for trading with the other parts of the world since very ancient times⁷. Together with the Chinese, the Indians invented the money lending system as long ago as Vedic period. Many social classes (cast) both in North India and South India were professional money lenders. For example the Chettyar cast from South India. With the daily based progress of British Empire's world strategy, Myanmar peasants in general transferred their subsistence agriculture into commercial agriculture, so that when the British opened the huge project of the Suez Canal Myanmar started to be integrated into the world economy. The dumping export of the exotic goods stimulated well-to-do Burmese as well as the poor. Even the poor peasants got used

⁷ J. Russell Andrus, "Three Economic Systems Clash in Burma," *The Review of Economic Studies* 3, no. 2 (1936).

to borrowing money from the Indian Cheetyars and many of them found out that they had difficulties to pay back the loan and the additional interest, which made the lower class Myanmar peasants at that time had more or less negative emotions towards the Indian Chettyars. When the author was in Mandalay and Sittwe, asking about the Indian people, most of the Myanmar people in both places showed their negative attitudes when being asked about Indian people during the colonial period⁸. As a visible reason that Indians in Myanmar are normally Burmanized in many aspects such the custom, the ceremonial events, the food and the language, mainly Indians remained to be Hindus and Muslims, through Burmanization process many of them are behaving almost the same as Myanmar population except their complexions.

As an example, Satya Narayan Goenka, an Myanmar Indian, was actually learnt this Buddhist meditation technique from Buddhist monk Sayaghi U Ba Khin, leading the Vipassana revitalization movement all over the world, advocated the Vipassana technique's universal function despite the differences of religions and faiths of different people. From this example we can see the depth of Burmanization after the independence of Myanmar in the communities of Myanmar Indians. And this Burmanization was not only about the racial assimilation from Myanmar military government, but also a strategy from Myanmar Indians to protect themselves and their economic interests when facing Myanmar nationalism.

⁸ Local Myanmar residents in Mandalay and Sittwe, ed. Yifan Zhang, Mandalay, Sittwe (2015).

The decline of Asian Empires including even China became a target of the western economies. Myanmar encountered a big sum of trade deficit even after the First Anglo-Burmese War. As a primary commodities base, the industrialized process of Myanmar never happened at that time, left King Mindon and King Thibaw's reforms the last attempts for upgrading the industrial chains by Myanmar themselves before the independence in 1948.

Before the opening up of Myanmar in 2010, the military government made the country isolated from the rest of the world for a long time. Myanmar studies attracted attentions from scholars all over the world, especially the study on Myanmar Indians, yet the resources mainly came from the UK and India.

For a long time before the separation of Indian colony and Burmese colony. In 1937 Myanmar-Indian relation were considered as a domestic issue. Based on the data done by Desai in 1954 and Thein Muang in 1942, its noticeable that the population of Indians in Myanmar's top city-Yangon has increased from 16,000 in 1872 to 280,000 in 1941, which made 16 percent and 56 percent respectively. In contrast, the number of native Burmese also increased from 70,000 in 1872 to 160,000 in 1941, however, the ratio has dropped rapidly from 70 percent in 1872 to 32 in 1941. The free movement of Indian emigrants from India to Myanmar was contrived by the British Raj, resulting in the Indians population growth and the rise of Indian influences in many aspects in Myanmar since then. When the Japanese began to bomb Yangon in December 1941, at that time Myanmar was already a Separate

colony, Indians still played important roles in the government, commercial sectors and the priorities of trading in Myanmar. Indian languages--Hindi and Urdu were commonly spoken in Yangon, Moulmein and Mandalay⁹. In Yangon Hindi and Urdu were as good as *Lingua Franca* in the field of commerce and trading on the basis of the research done by Muang Thaw in 1966 and Mahajani in 1960. Different Indian groups settled down in different districts all over Yangon, Indian Muslims were dwelt in downtown Yangon, in charge of the businesses in central Yangon, even today beside the Sule Pagoda in Central Yangon, we can find a historical mosque which was originally built by the Indian Muslims in Yangon¹⁰.

In 1945, when Mahatma Gandhi's Non-violent and Non-cooperation Movements spread like a fire in the Indian sub-continent as well as drawing the eyes of the sympathizers all over the world, he himself was against the separation of Hindus and Muslims in India. Meanwhile, the National Congress Party of India and the Muslim League are secretly seeking for more support and power. Many supporters of Mahatma Gandhi once had the ideas of making the proposed the Union of India and the Dominion of Pakistan, and then Burma into a trine-union country. This proposal was simply from Indian side since Myanmar nationalists never considered themselves as Indians and their country a part of India. They were openly or covertly against

⁹ Khin Muang Kyi, *Indian Communities in Southeast Asia*, Second edition ed., Indian in Burma: Problems of an Alien Subculture in a Highly Integrated Society (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1993).

¹⁰ Khin Muang Kyi, *Indian Communities in Southeast Asia*, Second edition ed., Indian in Burma: Problems of an Alien Subculture in a Highly Integrated Society (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1993).

Indians and the British rule and resented the arrival of the British and Indians. When the flames of fire of the Second World War extended to Myanmar, the Myanmar nationalists finally got a chance to realize their nationalistic ideologies against the British as well as Indians. As early as the Dobama Asiayone Movement in 1930s quickly fermented the sentiments of Burmese nationalistic feeling. Burmese centric feelings were raised up frequently, the nation, the Burmese language reached a new height. During this period, Myanmar Indians constantly have been chosen as targets to release the nationalistic feeling. The Indian shops became targets for the angry nationalists to attack.

What is the economic conflict? In a word, economic conflict is one of the most commonly seen conflicts in human world. In any societies at any countries around the globe in spite of the various ethnic, cultural, religious backgrounds and the different colours, conomic conflicts always have directly or indirectly impact on human societies. In old Myanmar, the mainstream Buddhist groups such as Burmese, Shan, Rakhine and Mon were in charge of the main political and economic resources around whole Myanmar even through the Muslim merchants from overseas brought Myanmar the commercial connections with the rest of the world. At the dawn of the Myanmar's colonialization, Myanmar faced the pressures of great changes, Myanmar's failure on its war against the British Empire drew the attentions of the British Empire's regional and international strategic plans. The failure of the three Anglo-Burmese Wars brought the sudden change of Myanmar and a good

opportunity for the British to re-organize Myanmar from its own perspective. The gradual influx of India originated Muslims to Myanmar however caused the economic tensions in the cases of land, money, business opportunities and social status. Although Buddhist-Muslim conflicts were not serious during the imperial period of Myanmar, the potential tensions were brought up during the colonial period of Myanmar. When Muslim population was growing up rapidly especially in the big cities in Myanmar, meanwhile many social and economic privileges were given to Indians including India originated Muslims. As the time passing by, those Muslims were able to control more resources in special economic resources, many of them became the members of the rich classes in Myanmar.

The social and cultural conflicts are the other aspects in terms of the Buddhist-Muslim conflicts in Myanmar. Along with economic conflicts, those social and cultural related conflicts were also counts, in reality economic conflicts and social & cultural conflicts were interconnected with each other in Myanmar at that time. The economic conflict was caused by the different social and cultural backgrounds, and the economic conflicts worsened the conditions of social and cultural conflicts.

2.2 Social & Cultural Conflict.

Social and cultural differences also brought related conflicts to Myanmar Buddhist communities with various Indian emigrants such as Indian Muslims. Islam,

despite it never attaining the importance in Myanmar as the importance and influence it had in the Indian sub-continent. However, when the Islam turning to an international religion, Myanmar could not avoid to be out of it. Even though Buddhism is a much older religion than Islam, the well-organized Islamic religious movement gradually moved eastward, wiping out Buddhism from the Central Asia, Afghanistan and Xinjiang, left Taxila, Gandhara and various Buddhist civilizations in Xinjiang only remained in ruins and history text books.

When Indian emigrants including Hindus and Muslims arrived in Myanmar, in a common sense that Myanmar people did not distinguish between them by the differences of their religions. In General both Indian Hindu emigrants and Indian Muslims were considered as Indians only by the Myanmar population. In this aspect, we should briefly mention the relationship of Hinduism and Myanmar Theravada Buddhism, Myanmar Buddhists and Indian Hindu emigrants during the colonial and post-colonial period of Myanmar, since different religions shaped different qualities of civilizations, different religions also brought about the basic aspects of social and cultural conflicts.

Many people might argue that Buddhism is very similar to Hinduism and in reality they had rich theological and historical connections. As a matter of historical facts that, Hinduism as a religion with its deep in philosophical thoughts and mythical explanation of the universe, it has influenced Southeast Asian kingdoms greatly as well as in the Indian sub-continent. In the traditions of the mainland Southeast Asian

countries, royal families often connected themselves with an important Hindu God-- Lord Rama was always been concerned to show the images of their righteousness to rule the kingdoms. Drama, dances and literature about the stories of the Ramayana were interpreted through the lens of political needs. Known as one of the Indianized nation, during the early period as early as Pyu period, Myanmar received lots of cultural elements from the Indian sub-continent, long before the arrival of Sinhalese Theravada Buddhism from Sri Lanka, Hinduism and Mahayana Buddhism were introduced to Myanmar, defined the starting shape of Myanmar civilizations. Moreover, on the other point, in spite of Myanmar's closest location to Indian the sub-continent in mainland Southeast Asia, Hinduism did not impact Myanmar civilization as much as Angkorian, Champa and Javaness civilization, from Angkor Wat in Cambodia, Myson ruins in Vietnam and Prambanam temple complex in central Java have presented the Hindu existence in Southeast Asia. Even today Bali Island in Indonesia is still a Hindu island, many Hindu Gods are worshiped in Thailand and Cambodia.

At the first glimpse, Myanmar gave the visitors an absolute Buddhist image, even though Nat worshiping was kept as a native belief system in Myanmar. The Hindu Gods are not greatly worshiped in Myanmar as it is in Thailand. In the 11th century, Mon peoples' Ramaññadesa Kingdom and Rakhine peoples' Arakan Kingdom were the very first polities in the whole Southeast Asian region to receive Sinhalese Theravada Buddhism from Sri Lanka. And the Mon's also took the mission as the

pioneers of spreading Theravada Buddhism in Myanmar and Southeast Asia. As a process, the Burmese people and Shan people from the Upper Myanmar also accepted Sinhalese Theravada Buddhism as their main faiths. In the 16th century as Mon peoples' Pegu Kingdom was conquered by the Burmese forces from the Kingdom of Toungoo, more developed Mon Buddhist cultures were fully absorbed by the Burmese. Through wars and conquering, Buddhist cultures were concentrated in Myanmar. Myanmar Kings brought the Buddhist artisans from defeated Hanthawady Kingdom and Siam Kingdom back to their capitals when Myanmar won victories in the wars. Myanmar Kings also became the biggest patron of Bodhagaya in India--the place where the Lord Buddha attained enlightenment even during Mughal period of India. Myanmar Kings even extended their determination to protect Buddhism through assisting the Kingdom of Kotte to fight with the Portuguese because of its long lasting religious connections with Sri Lanka or the Sinhalese Kingdoms according to Burmese Chronicles. However, Sri Lanka, once exporting Sinhalese Buddhism to Myanmar, because of deep-rooted Tamil influence, Sinhalese Buddhist people in Sri Lanka also worship certain Hindu Gods such as Lord Katragama and Lord Kaman, marking Myanmar the authentic place for Theravada Buddhism.

After the British East Indian company fully colonized India through using the disunited mechanism and became the supreme power in South Asia, the ambitions of the Empire was not only concentrated in India sub-continent even though India has been titled as the most important colony of the British Empire. As a superpower

of the world, the British Empire was aiming to extend the power eastwards to Southeast Asia to compete with the French power in Indochina, and even extend its power as a predominant one in the Far-east China and Japan. The British finally colonized Myanmar through three Anglo-Burmese Wars, Myanmar was finally annexed as a part of the British India. The contemporary tensions and conflicts between Myanmar population and various Indian groups began from the colonial period in Myanmar. When Myanmar became a part of the British India, numerous Indian emigrants moved from Indian sub-continent via land and ocean. This newly added population diversified the social and cultural complicity of Myanmar.

Richard Ashmore and Lee Jussim from the the Department of Psychology in Rutgers University, the USA and David Wilde from the University of Reading, the UK argued in the book '*Social Identity, Intergroup Conflict, and Conflict Reduction*' which they were editing, that India is a worldly special case. This piece of land on the Planet Earth is composed rather on the religious similarities than the cultural similarities. Under the religious similarities India has a big variation of cultural diversities, much more than the other parts of the world. Most of the Hindu population concentrated in India and the same sub-continent also has the second largest population of Muslims¹¹ .

¹¹Thomas Hylland Eriksen, "*Ethnic Identity, National Identity, and Intergroup Conflict.*" *Social Identity, Intergroup Conflict, and Conflict Reduction.*, ed. Lee Jussim and David Wilde Richard Ashmore(London: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

During the colonial period, Indian-Myanmar social and cultural conflicts became one of the main conflicts after all. In a common atmosphere, Indian Hindu immigrants in Myanmar had less tension with Myanmar Buddhists after their immigration to Myanmar. Indian Hindu communities brought deeply embedded hierarchies from India. Different casts were in charge of different professions, this was different from what Myanmar Buddhist people believe in. In addition, when compared with Buddhism, Hinduism is more ethnical and more isolated from the outside communities. The Hindu identities given from their Hindu lineage as Indian, non-Hindus were never considered as able to be members of the Hindu communities. Keenly Indian Hindus started to construct Hindu temples upon arrival in Myanmar according to where their hometowns are in India. Many different styles of Indian temples could be found even today in Myanmar's big cities such as Yangon and Mandalay. The Hindus had a tradition to sacrifice plenty of buffaloes for Goddess Kali--the angry incarnation of the consort of the Lord Shiva is also practiced by some of the Hindus in Myanmar, which caused the doubt that Hindu is not a humanitarian religion when thinking with the Buddhism. Even today, the buffalo sacrificing ceremonies in India and Nepal attracted lots of doubts of Hinduism as a Dhammic religion. So people with different religious backgrounds at the era of limited communicative channels had easier chances to have more misunderstandings.

Furthermore, different genetic background also means different outfits of the facial and physical features. Indians are normally have Aryan, Dravidian or Aryan-

Dravidian mixed backgrounds. Mongoloid races were very rare in India before the whole Assamese Basin and surrounding hills were ceded to India from Burmese Empire by the British. In India itself, mainland Indian emigrants had numerous problems with Mongoloid races such as Nagas and Mizos in the Northeastern regions even until today. As Myanmar culture has more differences in this perspective, we could imagine the minimum amount of tensions between Indian emigrants and Myanmar Buddhist population at that time.

In a deeper cultural sense, the language is another cultural element which needs further discussion. Myanmar has been defined as a part of the Greater India. The scripts which most of Myanmar people are using daily are based on Mon scripts, and Mon people borrowed the Brahmi scripts from the Gupta period. Many of Myanmar languages' vocabularies have been borrowed from ancient Indian languages of Pali and Sanskrit. In contrast, linguistically in Myanmar we could not find any Indo languages except Rohingya language in Rakhine State. Main languages in Myanmar have different definition which was based on the investigations of modern linguistic scientists. Burmese language belongs to Tibetan-Burman language groups. Mon language belongs to Mon-Khmer language group, while Shan languages are Tai-Kadai languages. Generally, the various languages in Myanmar have little similarities with the Indian language counterparts. When the Indian population was relocated from their hometowns to new environments in Myanmar, they naturally kept their own languages. When Yangon was fully filled with Indians, some Indian languages such as

Hindi and Urdu once attained the status as *lingua franca* for trading and commerce communications among the Indian population.

Beside Indian Hindus, the Muslim population from India also had an increasing rate of population at that time in Myanmar. Since Hinduism and the Indian cultures which based on Hinduism were rooted in Indian societies for thousands of years, Islam for India was also a new thing. From the First day of Islam's entering of India in the 7th century until today, the Muslim population in India kept growing up. India itself was governed by the Hindus, the Buddhists and the Muslims respectively in different dynasties and principalities.

In a sense, no matter how the differences between Buddhist cultures & Hindu cultures and Buddhist cultures & Islamic cultures are not comparable, Oriental philosophic based Hinduism and Buddhism have more similarities than monotheist Islam from the ancient Israel. Throughout the early history of the most part of the Indian sub-continent, Hinduism taught people who lived in the sub-continent to fully believe in the laws of Karma and Samsara. Built on the similar social cultural environment, Buddhism also absorbed the traditional teachings of Karma and Samsara. Even then during the Lord Buddha's lifetime he was determined to slightly reform the hierarchical structure and the merciful feelings towards the so called 'untouchable' cast caused the conservative Hindu forces' attack in retaliation caused Buddhism only enjoyed a temporary success before going to a decline. Still

Hinduism-related cultures in Indian sub-continent and Buddhism-related cultures in Southeast Asia shared lots of similar living disciplines.

In sixth century, Islam rose up together with the expansions of Arabian Empire to the eastern coast of today's North African region, and Baluchistan of the Indian sub-continent at the direction, based on the teachings of the Holy Quran, this Caliphate Empire islamicized the cultures within its territories. Ancient Egyptian cultures and Persian Zoroastrianism based cultures were replaced by Islam with the military pressures from the Arabian Peninsula. The extension of Islam also spread out of the Arabian Empire's territory, as the Empire located at the crossroads of three continents-Asia, Africa and Europe, the monopoly rights of the goods exchanging between the Far-east and Europe were dominated by the Arabian Empire. Islamic faith was further spread by the military hard power of the Empire and the soft power of the Arabian traders. In such conditions, Islam was introduced to former Hindu and Buddhist cultural circles. The Indian sub-continent accepted both under its military pressure in the north and the networks of the Arabian traders in the south. By the further development, Islam grew even stronger and in the 12th century, the Turkic Muslim invasion from the Central Asia caused a great sensation for Hinduism and pushed the main Buddhist influence out from India. The decline of Buddhism and the rise up of Islam at that time were a part of history for Indian people. But as the spreading of Buddhism in Myanmar and the other places in Southeast Asia, this

historical memory was also taken with the Buddhist holistic texts to the minds of the Buddhist population in nowadays Southeast Asia.

The Holy Quran, the only classic of Islam pointed out the oneness of the God is the most important teaching of Islam. In this fundamental interpretation, the behaviors of paying respect to the Lord Buddha was often translated as a type of idol worshiping in the eyes of Muslim population in Buddhist countries such as Myanmar. According to Islamic Sharia law, eligible Muslim men are allowed to marry up to four wives, even if this phenomenon could be found not only in Muslim communities in the old times but also existed in many other communities, but in the modern era it do became very rare around the world. The Muslim communities around the world are very strict on the food issue. Halal foods were industrialized to suit the needs of Muslims around the world, instead Theravada Buddhist population have much more flexible on food. Moreover, based on religious teachings, Muslim women generally wear veils to cover their hair or even use burqa to fully cover themselves such as in Afghanistan. 5 times of daily Salat (daily prayers) duties urged the Mosques to use minaret to call Muslim people to pray together in Mosques, normally by using loud recordings of the holy Quran chanting. Through the author's observation in Myanmar, as a counter movement, Buddhist monasteries in Myanmar use the similar strategies, in the morning and in the afternoon, many monasteries in Myanmar also use loudspeakers to balance the influences of the loudspeakers in the Mosques. Many different cultural practices led to the difficulties for Muslim

population and Buddhist population in Myanmar to get along well with each other. In addition, the coming of Indian Muslim population plus already existed native Muslims, made the Muslim population in Myanmar have increased quickly. The situations made by the British colonialists sowed the seeds of the conflicts and tensions between the Muslim and Buddhist population in different regions around Myanmar.

As a twice told story, Myanmar's renowned Buddhist nationalistic organization--the 969 Movement condemned that Buddhist women who got married with Muslim men were forcefully been converted to Islam by their husband's families, and the wives were beaten by their husbands. No matter it is true or not, it does represent the deep misunderstanding on social and cultural values between the Buddhists and Muslims. Both of them propagate the ideas of peace and mindfulness, tolerant and universal loves from the teachings of their religions and created equally splendid civilizations. However, when it turns to vivo spheres and benefits, the social cultural differences became excuses for tensions and conflicts, ignoring the real teaching which the religions' prophet messaged to the believers.

Social and cultural conflicts came from the different social and cultural backgrounds within a society. A country of immigrants such as the USA, Australia, Canada have multi social and cultural societies, no matter how prosperous and harmonious they are as we can see today, those countries also experience a long term of conflicts before different groups actually can get along with each other in

certain senses, even today they still face some social and cultural related issues and seek for better resolutions. Inversely, Myanmar has long been a nation with multi layered societies and cultures, more than 130 nationalities with different social and cultural traditions and customs, throughout the history Buddhist majorities such as Burmese, Shan, Arakanese and Shan live along the deltas and valleys of the big rivers, many other hill dwellers for example Kachin, Chin, Karen and Kayah instead live in the hills and mountains around the river valleys and river deltas. Despite the differences of the living environments, the Buddhist majorities and the hill dwellers lived side by side for many centuries, the social customs and cultural traditions of each other were learnt and absorbed by each other.

In the old days, through geographical conveniences, some Indians especially the merchants from south India had commercial activities along the sea shores of Myanmar meanwhile some Bengali immigrants also participated in the agricultural and economic activities. However, the newly merged big sum of Indians including Indian Muslims' appearances changed the images in the old times. After Yangon was made as the economic center of the whole Myanmar, Indian population even surpassed the Myanmar population step by step, the similar situations occurred in Sittwe, Moulmein and many other main cities as well. The population and economic imbalance between Myanmar and those Indian immigrants strengthened the ideas of social and cultural differences, which further stimulated the political conflicts.

2.3 Political Conflict.

According to the chronology which is listed in the book '*The Burmanization of Myanmar's Muslim*' by a renowned French socio-anthropologist Jean Berlie, at the 15th century, the Islamic faith gradually broadened its way to Myanmar. But the activities which made by Muslim merchants from Arabia and Persia can be traced back to the early 8th century in Arakan. Arakan had become the bridgehead for the diffusion of Islam in Southeast Asia¹². In his book the Kingdom of Arakan was also identified as a Buddhist-Muslim Kingdom. 'It is in the compound of ancient Marauk-U, once the capital city of Arakanese Kingdom, that a ruin of Santikan Mosque from Arakanese period was found, the King of Marauk-U practiced mild religious policies towards the early Muslim settlers who were serving in the Arakanese royal court', the Burmese Kingdom of Ava invaded Arakan, facing powerful Burmese troops, Arakanese King Naramithla fled to Gaur, the capital of Bengali Sultanate. After many years in Bengal the King returned to Arakan and moved the capital to Marauk-U. He established the court which combined both Buddhists and Muslims. King Naramithla, himself, also wanted to use both Islamic wisdom from Arabian and Indian to the west and Buddhist wisdom from the east. The Muslim not only served in Arakanese court, it is found that Kaman people served in the royal places of Myanmar both before and after the annexation of Arakan by Myanmar. And when facing Burmese attack from the east, the King of Arakanese sent Muslim soldiers to fight for him with

¹² J. A. Berlie, *Burmanization of Myanmar's Muslims*. (Bangkok: White Lotus Press, 2008).

the Burmese. The Buddhist population in Arakan never felt pressure from the Muslim population before the colonial period.

In 1785 A.D., the Kingdom of Arakan had been finally defeated by the Burmese counterpart through centuries therefore was annexed by the Empire of Burma. And Mahamuni Buddha image, the icon of Arakanese Nationalism, has been relocated from Marauk-U to Mandalay. By the beginning of the 18th century, the Burmese Empire of Konbaung reached its peak in territorial expansion. Many battles were fought against Assam and Manipure, Maha Bandula, the great general helped the Burmese Kingdom gained territories at Assam and Manipure. However, the victory in Brahmaputra Basin was not satisfy the King's desire to show his power. It was discussed by Akkanut Wantanasombut in one of his term papers, a former MA student at Southeast Asia studies program, Chulalongkorn University that it was the defeat of Arakan which resulted in the long run of Anglo-Burmese War. Many Arakanese fled to Chittagong hill region, based on the territory of the British, resisted to fight with the Burmese. The Burmese sometimes followed these people who were escaping to the British territory of Bengal, but the British did not pay that much attention¹³. After Arakan was conquered and finally under the rule of Burmese Empire, many Arakanese Rakhine fled to British territory of Bengal. Nga Than De and Chin Byan were two famous figures in fighting with the Burmese power in Arakan

¹³ Akkanut Wantanasombut, *"The Rohingya from Burmese Perspective,"* (Southeast Asia Studies, Chulalongkorn University, 2012).

during this period. Whatever they attempted to do at the sensitive border of the British Bengal and Burmese Arakan tested Anglo-Burmese relationships again and again.

The British Raj in Calcutta (Kolkata) tried to solve this dispute with Myanmar by sending Captain Canning to Myanmar to negotiate with the representative of the Burmese King, the failure of the negotiation even made the British trying to communicate with the King himself. Moreover, the imperialistic Myanmar ignored the positive attempts of British, on the contrary continued its expansions in Manipure and Tai Ahom Kingdoms in Assam. In 1821 the Burmese occupied Assam which led to the existence of more adjacent borders between the British India and the Burmese Empire. The King Bagyidaw even commanded General Maha Bandula to give threat the British Raj in Calcutta (Kolkata) to surrender Chittagong, Dacca (Dakha) and some other places along the border, otherwise General Maha Bandula would invade British territories. From then on the British declared war on Burma(August 1822- March 1824) which on the basis of '*General System of Defensive Arrangement for the Frontier*' established by the government of Sir Fort William in Calcutta with the help of local Kings and Chiefs in Asaam and Manipure, the Burmese gathered troops along the frontiers in Assam, Arakan and Manipure time to time. The Burmese captured several British lands in the Bay of Bengal and along the Bhrmaputra River such as Shahpuri Island, Cahar and Jaintia Kingdoms. Forrest McGill, the Chief Curator at Asian Art Museum, San Francisco argued in '*The Center Cannot Hold: Mandalay and its*

Failure-Part 1(3/13/2009), The Emerald Cities: Arts of Siam and Burma, 1775-1950', an online course at iTunes U, that Burmese Kings were overwhelmed with their victory beyond the neighboring states, even the isolated Himalayan state of Bhutan was under attacked by Burmese forces. They were blind to the ongoing world trends, an overestimation of their abilities resulting in the final failures¹⁴.

On 5th March 1824, the British officially declared war on Burma, wars broke out in Assam, Manipure and Arakan, under the fierce attacks with British gunboats, the Burmese lost the war, following King Bagyidaw to end the hostilities by signing the Treaty of Yandabo on 24th March 1826. This package of treaties proclaimed that Assam, Arakan, Manipure, and Tenasserim were appendix to the British Empire. The British's victory over Burmese Empire gradually broke the nationalistic dignities of the Burmese nation in Anglo-Burmese Wars and the occupations and colonialization which followed by the wars.

As following consequences, the British East India Company extended its power to the eastern coast of the Bay of Bengal. The once restricted international border between Bengal and Arakan disappeared. Bengal, known as an over-populated region since very ancient time, became a main cause of Muslim migration waves to Arakan. Fertilized land and scarcely populated land attracted the Muslim migrants to search for fortunes. A Myanmar *Gazetteer* also mentioned that the Muslim immigration from

¹⁴ Forrest McGill, "The Center Cannot Hold: Mandalay and Its Failure-Part 1(3/13/2009), the Emerald Cities: Arts of Siam and Burma, 1775-1950.,"(San Francisco: iTunes U, 2014).

India played a major role in the indirect colonization of Arakan by the British. A population census which was conducted by the British reported 58,255 Muslims in whole Arakan, By 1921, 218,046 Muslims were already registered in Arakan, 186,000 of them lived in the capital Akyab (nowadays Sittwe) (Burma Census 1921: 58). Thousands of Muslims from India came and cultivated the rice field in Arakan, won the title 'the rice bowl of Asia' for Burma ahead of the time.

After the loss of the first Anglo-Burmese war, the Empire of Burma lost its aggression against the British. In 1852 the second Anglo-Burmese War broke out, resulting in the lose of Pegu province. Burma Empire lost the last tip of coastal line at Ayeyarwady Delta. Burma Empire therefore became a land-locked nation. Ayeyarwady Delta, once treated as flood and deserted area, transformed by the British to endless rice fields, due to the shortage of labor, large numbers of Indian Muslim together with non-Indian population were brought or voluntarily came to Lower Burma to search for job opportunities. However, the Upper Burma remained an independent Empire until the third Anglo-Burmese War broke out in 1885, King Mindon (1853-1878), J.A. Beerlie suspected that even at the court of King Mindon, there were local Muslim organizations and King Mindon himself had many Muslim advisors. For example Haj U Bein, the mayor of Amarapura, the wise man who built the well-known 1.2 kilometers long teak bridge in Amarapura, he tried to modernized the country with the help of the French to resist the British expansion. He moved the capital to Mandalay and fortified the city. His son, King Thibaw (1878-1885), the last

King of imperial Burma, when confronting British power, lost control of the Upper Burma, led to his capture by the British in Mandalay Royal Palace and sent to Rattana-giri, India for a lifelong exile. From grand Golden Palace in Mandalay, where they were treated like deities to the remote Indian town of Rattana-giri. After the third Anglo-Burmese War, the total annexation of Burma took place in 1886. Burma became a province of British India. The British even refused to make Burma a separate colony until 1937. This action totally ruined the national dignities of the Burmese. Yet the situations and environments changed dramatically, as Historian Thant Myint-U writes in his book “The River of Lost Footsteps-Histories of Burma”:

“At the beginning of the 20th century, Indians were arriving in Burma at the rate of no less than a quarter million per year. The number rose steadily until the peak year of 1927, immigration reached 480,000 people, with Rangoon exceeding New York City as the greatest immigration port in the world. This was out of a total population of only 13 million; it was equivalent to the United Kingdom today taking 2 million people a year.”¹⁵

On that occasion, the main cities in Burma, such as Rangoon (Yangon), Akyab (Sittwe), Bassein (Patheingyi), Moulmein (Moulmein), Indian originated population which including Muslims with Indian origins became the majority of urbanites, mostly the civil servant classes and merchants. Thant Myint-U further indicated that the Burmese

¹⁵ Thant Myint-U, *The River of Lost Foot Steps-the City of Monkey Egg*(New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2011).

under the British rule can do nothing rather than feeling helpless, with attitudes of mixed feelings-- “racism that combined feelings of superiority and fear”.

During the Second World War period, Japanese overwhelmed its British counterpart in Burma by Japan's booming power in the region. The Burmese, under the British rule for decades, were eager to use Japanese power to finish British role in Burma. Under the big impacts from the Japanese, the British retreated. A power vacuum was left in Burma, it caused Buddhist-Muslim clashes in many places including Rakhine (Arakan) and various places around Burma. When the British existence was under the threat of Japanese military pressure, Indian forces especially the Panjabis were sent to the frontier to fight with the Japanese-Burmese joint forces. The British also left weapons for the Muslim in Rakhine (Arakan) dreamed of slowing down the pace of the Japanese, trying to have a buffer zone created and in collaborated with the Muslim in Rakhine. While Burmese cooperated with the Japanese, the Muslim in Rakhine supported the Allies. Many of the problems which we still could see today among the Burmese and the other minority groups came from these divergences rooted during the colonial and the Second World War period. During the colonial period, the British treated Burmese and the other nationalities differently. The Ayeyarwady plain which densely dwelt by the Burmese called the Burma proper and the surrounding area where the minorities live in have been categorized as special administrative regions. The British policy of separate electorates for different ethnicities worsened the situation, the building process of

the perception of affiliation was interrupted by the British and the existing situation perplexed Myanmar even until now. As we can see, the problems still continues.

Moreover, during the period of the 2nd World War, Burmese nationalists got favors from Japanese invaders since the Japanese were coming to kick the British out from Myanmar. On the contrary, fearing that Burmese will dominant the whole Myanmar and the rising of strong ethnical feeling for independence, many of the minorities ran to the British and the Allies which including the Rohingya. Different attitudes during the war period also led to the distrust among different ethnic groups, many Rohingyas regained their loyalties to the British in 1942-1945, but the Burmese national hero General Aung San was educated and supported by the Japanese to fight against the British.

While the country struggled for independence under the power games amongst the big powers, in February 1947, the second Panglong Conference was held in Shan region. Rohingya Muslims in Rakhine had not been invited by General Aung San to attend the conference. A Rohingya Muslim leader called U Hla Tun Pru, inspired by the independence movements in India, demanded to create a 'Arakanistan' for Rohingya Muslims at a meeting in Yangon. On 19 July, 1947, the Muslim minister in General Aung San's Cabinet called U Razak was assassinated together with General Aung San, it is said that the British backed the assassination incident of General Aung San's cabinet, a coup took place before the dawn of independence. On January 4, 1948 Myanmar became an independent country, by that time the Rohingya Muslim

population was in control of the northern Rakhine, which borders East Pakistan (Now Bangladesh), and Rakhine Buddhist instead in charge of the southern part of Rakhine. Right after the declaration of independence, a rebellion raised by a Muslim group called 'Mujahidin' came to the forefront. They armed themselves with the weapons which were left by the British before they retreated from Myanmar. 'Mujahidin' literally means the warriors of the holy Jihad, the Mujahidin movement aimed to make northern Arakan part of East Pakistan. However, their intentions were never realized. The militant government of the Myanmar intervened in northern Rakhine, the Mujahidins seek help from Jinnah, the founder of modern Pakistan, but Jinnah didn't intervene openly.

From 1948 to 1954, the Mujahidins controlled the Buthidaung-Maungdaw areas with terrorist manners. The most reverend Buddhist monks in the region were kidnapped by the Mujahidins. The Mujahids once controlled most of the borderlines along the Naf River between Myanmar at East Pakistan until 1954, causing the launching of Operation Monsoon by the Myanmar military to recapture the border land back to the control of the central government of Myanmar. Hugh Tinker said in his book *'The Union of Burma: A Study of The First Years of Independence'* that:

“The Mujahids, bands of Muslim adventurers in the north of Arakan, whose terrorist activities were already beyond government control, activities ostensibly devoted to the creation of a separate Muslim State”¹⁶.

After the failure of Mujahidin’s operations, many Rohingyas fled to East Pakistan. Even though this very first rebellion was not successful, the seeds of distrust and hatred between Rohingya Muslims and Rakhine Buddhist (and Burmese Buddhist) were implanted. From 1956 to 1998, many Rohingya related active organizations were set up including Arakan Liberation Organization (1956-1962), which linked with the Islamic groups in Pakistan. The Rohingya Independence Force (RIF) - renamed to Rohingya Patriotic Front (RPF) (1963 to 1980), was promoted with the supports from Saudi Arabia and Malaysia externally; Rohingya Solidarity Organization (RSO) was set up in 1982 and was incorporated with Rohingya Patriotic Front (RPF) on 22 August 1987. The new organization was named Arakan Rohingya Islamic Front, and received continuous aid from Jamaat Islami, a Bangladeshi based organization. In late 1980s, the Yangon regime started massive military expansion and made these Rohingya related groups isolated and not affective, aimed to exterminate the Rohingya groups. In the 1990s, these still active groups like Arakan Rohingya Islamic Front (ARIF) and the Rohingya Solidarity Organization (RSO) were receiving support from Muslim countries but failed to take any military operations against Myanmar government

¹⁶ Hugh Tinker, *The Union of Burma: A Study of the First Year of Independence*, 4th edition ed.(London: Oxford University Press, 1967).

and Rakhine Buddhists. In 1998, Nurul Islam founded Arakan Rohingya National Organization (ARNO) on the bases of Rohingya Solidarity Organization (RSO) and Arakan Rohingya Islamic Front (ARIF), and received funds from Bangladesh and Saudi Arabia. In summary, the conflicts between Rohingya Muslims and Rakhine Buddhists are rarely religious since in the history the Kingdom of Arakan successfully harmonized Muslim and Buddhist population within its territory. Thousands of Rohingya Muslims left Rakhine for good because of the worsening political situation. Politicians including Myanmar governmental officials and Muslim activists caused the conflicts without considering about the well-being of the people in the region. International backups from Muslim countries such as Saudi Arabia, Bangladesh and Malaysia deteriorated the already tensely stimulated conflicts in Rakhine.

The political conflicts between the Myanmar Buddhists which included Burmese, Rakhine and the Muslim population in Rakhine State and the other places in Myanmar were seldom mentioned by the academia and the news agencies. As a matter of fact when was in the periods of the three Anglo-Burmese Wars, while the Empire of Burma was defeated by the British Empire little by little, those once Myanmar territories were gradually ceded to the British, until the whole Myanmar became a part of the British Empire. When Rakhine people concentrated Arakan was ceded to the British Empire shortly after the Burmese Empire conquered Arakan Kingdom in. Being the neighbor of the source of British Empire's labor resource center-Bengal, scarcely populated Arakan gradually became an immigration

destination for the Bengali to the west of the Naf River. The British understood the fertilization of the river basins in Myanmar, attempting to make Arakan a rice bowl for the British regime in the British India started to bring and encourage Bengali people to cross the river and resettle down at different places in Arakan as they subjectively believe that Bengali are more frugal.

Despite many Bengal originated population had already moved to Arakan from Bengal before the arrival of the British in the region, a big number of immigrants rushed into Arakan from Bengal, changed the original population proportion in Arakan. Aye Chan from Kanda University of International Studies has mentioned that R.B.Smart-the once deputy assistant commissioner of Akyab has noted that a 'flood' of immigrants arrived at various places in Arakan in 1879. Along the Naf River between the townships of Maungdaw and Buthidaung were filled with the Bengali immigrants from the Chittagong region of Bengal, as far as Mrauk-U and Kyauktaw in central Arakan the Bengali immigrants were also increasing¹⁷. Many of the Bengali immigrants were seasonal workers. Later on many of them chose to stay in Arakan instead. When the Lower part of Myanmar and the rest part of Myanmar were handed to the British power, many Indians arrived in the places throughout Myanmar with the domestic traveling opportunities after the whole Myanmar was in the pocket of the British India. The Indians who arrived Myanmar at that time contained

¹⁷ Aye Chan, "The Development of a Muslim Enclave in Arakan State of Burma," *SOAS Bulletin of Burma Research* 3, no. 2 (2012).

many Muslims. The British brought them to Myanmar as well as upgraded them to the second class citizens, by providing more privileges to the Indian population. The Indians were usually at the same front with their British rulers. When anti-British movements happened in Myanmar, Indian soldiers and policemen were often sent by the British to suppress the rising nationalistic feelings of the Myanmar people.

While witnessing the independence of the neighboring India, Pakistan and Myanmar in 1948, and probably inspired by the separation of Hindu's India and Muslim's Pakistan. The Rohingya nationalists and separatists also planned to make a separate nation called 'Arakanistan' in the Muslim concentrated area in Arakan region. The Rohingya separatists collected the arms left by the British during the Second World War period, it later became the 'Mujahidin Insurgency' which lasted from from the end of the 40s to the beginning of the 70s in the 20th century. The 'Mujahidin Insurgency' was the past of the Myanmar's national history, however, it still has great influence on the situations today, in special the current formation of stronger Rohingya nationalism in Rakhine State and the overseas Rohingya communities in the Middle-east and the western countries.

After the independence of Myanmar, U Nu and General Ne Win one after another became the leader of the nation. However, U Nu's policies and General Ne Win's policies towards Rohingya Muslims were very different from each other. During the reign of U Nu Myanmar just attained independence and many places were still in conflict. A general ceasefire agreement need to be applied urgently to stabalize the

whole country. When U Nu was the leader of Myanmar, he made Buddhism the state religion of Myanmar as well as applied soft policies on Rohingya people. It seemed that he had intention to recognize the term of Rohingya instead of Araknaese Muslim. He promised the Rohingya that he would pay more attention to the conflicts in Arakan, leading to about 500 guerrillas agreeing to sign a ceasefire agreement in north Arakan.

During this period, the term 'Rohingya' became more popular than just Arakan Muslims or the Muslims in Arakan, and the identification of Rohingya was on the way to be recognized by the central government of Myanmar. Rohingya language broadcasts could be heard publicly in Yangon. The Rohingya population in Myanmar enjoyed a short term liberation when U Nu was in power in the 1950s. In 1962, the Myanmar military junta of General Ne Win took the power from U Nu's civilian government. U Nu's loose policies towards Rohingya people were replaced by General Ne Win's strict caretaker policies, according to the situation of the 'Mujahidin Rebellion' in Rakhine. Further on when the Citizenship Act of Burma was promulgated by General Ne Win, Rohingya people lost their identities which were approved by the Constitution of Myanmar in 1983. Since then Rohingya people began to suffer from many discrimination and inequalities in Myanmar. The other Muslim groups in Myanmar also encountered the hard-line policies raised by General Ne Win at that time. In recent years several Buddhist-Muslim clashes such as 1997 (Mandalay's Anti-Muslim Riots), 2001 (Sittwe and Taungoo's anti-Muslim Riots) to

recently conflicts in 2012 (Statewide Anti-Muslim Riots in Rakhine State) and 2014 (Mandalay Riots against Muslim) took place at different locations of Myanmar, the conflicts between Muslims and Buddhists became wider and deeper, which is challenging the political wisdom of Myanmar politicians.

After 2010, Myanmar was finally opened to the world and facing unprecedented change of the whole nation after the independence in 1948. Many aspects of the society meanwhile were in the trail of reforming, the politics, the economy and the way of life. Buddhism and the Buddhist Sangha of Myanmar also were under the direct influence of the big change. However, the change to Buddhist affairs in Myanmar was rather from Sangha to people instead of government to people. As a renowned Buddhist nation, Myanmar Sangha always had different levels of great influence upon people, the era after the change of the country in 2010 is also not an exception.

Myanmar politics has long been famous because of its complicity. Recent Aung San Suu Kyi's mountainous victory of winning 90 percent of the votes national-widely showed that Myanmar people want change desperately and absolutely are fed up with existing situations in their own country. In spite of Myanmar military juntas and their government facing tremendous international pressures, the military government allowed a general national election in 1990, and Aung San Suu Kyi's NLD (the National League of Democracy) won absolute advantage. Fearing lose of their power,

the military government nullified the result of the election and announced the NLD is an illegal organization, Aung San Suu Kyi's home-arrest continued.

In 2010 the military authorities in Myanmar showed its intention to change. Many political prisoners including Aung San Suu Kyi were released. International communities especially the USA and many other western countries praised the progressive actions which made by Myanmar military government. In reality, the Myanmar government made this step as they understood after the 'Saffron Revolution' in 2007 they totally lost popular support around the country. Worsened economic situation caused by numerous sanctions from the outside world and corrupted government officials made the only way to retain their power is to openly show their decisions for a big reform. The USA's president Barack Obama and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's ice-breaking to Myanmar in November 2012 showed the America's recognition of Myanmar's progress no matter big or small. Myanmar's important geo-political location between two Asian giants-China and India had been noticed by the USA's think tanks. A well-known American Burmese historian, the grandson of former UN's general secretary U Thant--Thant Myint-U, in his book '*Where China meets India: Burma and the new crossroads*' he detailed the strategic importance of Myanmar which was based on his direct traveling experiences in China and India¹⁸. China's 'Bangladesh–China–India–Myanmar Forum for Regional

¹⁸ Thant Myint-U, *Where China Meets India: Burma and the Crossroads of Asia*. (London: Macmillan, 2011).

Cooperation' (the BCIM forum for Regional Cooperation) showed China's great interest in developing the economic corridor between India and China. India's establishment of Look East Policy to put more concentrations on its East Asian and Southeast Asian neighbors to compete with China's influence including China's big influence in Myanmar presented the key role of Myanmar in the everlasting changing situations in the world.

As a matter of fact, as Myanmar attained approval here and there, the author believes the political power game in Myanmar is much more complicated. Incomplete reform showed Myanmar's military government's hesitation on total transformation of the country. 25 percent of parliamentary seats are reserved for the members from the military background somehow ensured Myanmar military's big influences in the parliament and less chances for Aung San Suu Kyi's NLD party to win parliamentary election. Myanmar's current Constitution clearly stated that whoever has a foreign partner could not be possible to be elected as a president. This regulation looks like a incantation of the Golden Hoop especially designed for Aung San Suu Kyi as her dead husband and her two sons are British passport holders. It is also said the USDP party has tight connections with Myanmar military. Myanmar military and its accessory agencies showed their actions on a reformation no matter it had done it for the sake of themselves or the well-being of Myanmar people, this reformation is still a halfway version.

Being neighbours of China, India, Thailand, Laos and Bangladesh, Myanmar has countless entanglements with its neighbouring countries. Myanmar's politics has been sharply influenced by India and China, especially China. Even the retreat of Kuomintang forces with American back-ups and the communist activities which led by Chinese communist supported Myanmar communists along the Sino-Myanmar border caused once potential crisis for the national security. During the period of so called 'Burmese Way to Socialism', at that time Myanmar was isolated by the rest of the world and listed together with North Korea as two of the most mysterious destinations, poor economic policies made Myanmar one of the poorest nations around the world in the 70s from 60s' which were promising times. At that time Myanmar's neutral policy also allowed it to become either a member of the Capitalist camp or Socialist camp. Communist China still showed its great interest to having exceptional links with Myanmar's military juntas.

Myanmar is a county which has both a splendid ancient civilization and a tragic past during the modern era. If Pagan is the symbol of Myanmar's unique civilization then the construction of the grand new capital of capital Naypyidaw with the help of the North Koreans represents the iron and blood image of Myanmar military and uncertainty of the country. During the latter period of Konbaung dynasty, the capital city of the Burmese Empire has constantly changed. After the capital moved to Amarapura from Inwa, during the reign of King Mindon, the capital city again moved to Mandalay. After the end of the third Anglo-Burmese War, King Thibaw was sent to

exile to India with his Queens, the glory of Mandalay collapsed, British established Rangoon in Lower Burma and became the center of British Burma. However, after the independence of Myanmar in 1948, the capital city remained at Rangoon (Yangon). In 1989 the Military juntas changed the name of the country from Burma to Myanmar in terms to create a national identity as Burma is only the name of the majority group in the country. This identity based on multi-racial consideration rather than the democratisation of the country, even though the name of the country has been changed, but the tensions in the country seldom been solved by the military juntas.

The military government argued that it was necessary to erase the trails of the colonial past. In its law of Adaption of Expression the English names of the towns and cities have been widely modified, Rangoon became Yangon, Moulmein became Mawlamyine, Bassein became Patheingyi. On November 2005, the governmental staff and properties suddenly transported to a mysterious location between Yangon and Mandalay, this place named Naypyidaw (literally means the seat of kings) later was announced and known as the new capital of Myanmar. In the book "*Naypyidaw-The New Capital of Burma*" by Dulyapak Preecharushh from Thammasat University-- the author of the book deemed that there were many motivations for them to make big decisions to change the capital. He mentioned that the main reason is that the Myanmar government at that time considered about politico-military security, the economic development of inland region and the intention to establish a cultural

unity¹⁹. Many other scholars from the western world and China claimed that the intention to move its capital from Yangon to Naypyidaw as Yangon's geographical location is difficult for Myanmar military government to avoid foreign attack and also far from insurgent area makes Myanmar military government find it harder to deal with the minority insurgents in the north. Many people also guessed that it was the senior generals' strong belief in superstitions. The reasons were the same as how Burmese Kings constantly changed the capital of the Kingdom according to the telling of some warlocks. If this was true, we could find the senior generals of Myanmar partly comparing themselves with the kings in the ancient time. In Naypyidaw, the monuments of three great warrior kings were put up recently, and King Bayinnaung's statue is right in the middle. In the old time King Bayinnaung was known as 'the conqueror of ten directions', instead of respecting '*Panglong Agreement*' as a foundation to solve the tensions with the armed ethnical forces and regard General Aung San as an icon for national unity. If one of the most important motivations to relocate the capital is to fight more with the minorities, the decision made by those generals could be a dangerous signal.

In addition, many analysts also demonstrated that these years the military government of Myanmar encountered many fierce demonstrations in Yangon-the former capital, moving the central government departments to a nowhere also did the military a favor to witness less frequency the demonstrations which were mainly

¹⁹ Dulyapak Preecharushh, *Naypyidaw-the New Capital of Burma*(Bngkok: White Lotus, 2009).

aimed against them. Moving the capital costs a huge amount of money. No one knows where were the origin sources of the fund, without any signs and notifications to Myanmar people and international communities, official staffs were forced to leave for Naypyidaw. This action undoubtedly showed Myanmar military's fear of losing power and unwillingness towards a people's democracy.

Most of the world put sanctions on Myanmar because of its total dictatorship and the government of the USA listed Myanmar as one of the 6 Outposts of Tyranny by the States' House. The connections with China, Thailand and Singapore never stopped. Singapore has become the financing service center for the Myanmar military government, no matter how isolated Myanmar was, the flights from Singapore to Yangon never stopped. The Buddha Tooth Relic Temple and Museum in Singapore hosted a Lord Buddha's tooth relic, and it is said the relic was donated to Singapore by Myanmar military juntas. Sharing Myanmar's longest border, China began to participate in different projects in Myanmar since very early times. Many big projects were authorized by Myanmar military government for Chinese companies to take charge of. The eastern neighbour played an important role in Myanmar.

However, when in September 2009 Myanmar's President Thein Sein suspended the Myitsone Dam project, many Myanmar people welcomed and greeted the decision of the President. This action was read as a sign that Myanmar is reconsidering it's close ties with China. A new round of international power game gave space for Myanmar to bargain with China, except China now Myanmar have the

USA, India, Japan and many other countries to play together with this twisted international power game. And in terms of Thailand, while hosting many Karen, Kayah and other refugees along the border, Thailand always been the first country to deal with the time to time refugee waves along the Thai-Myanmar border since many places along the border are only jungles and many fleeing people have their clansman at Thai side. Due to geographical conveniences Thai big enterprises like Italian-Thai Development PLC already quickly occupied the good business opportunities in Dawei and along Salween River Basin. Documentarian Tom Fawthrop displayed this company purchased many places along with some Chinese and Australian companies to construct gigantic dams along the mighty Salween River. The Myanmar government signed agreements with these big companies, in spite of the negative effects they will bring for the natures and the people who live along the river basin. Documentarian Saowanee Sangkara made a documentary called “Dawei’s Pride”. In the documentary the people in Dawei, Tanintharyi Division were badly affected by the Dawei Port projects of Thailand, the local farmers and fishermen lost their land got no compensations.

While Myanmar became a ‘darling’ for all kinds of international investment, how to make better use of these investments and also protect the basic rights of people especially the minority people has to be considered. This will be a big challenge for Myanmar’s power transition and the opening up of the country. Free flowing the nature of capital according to Karl Marx’s “*Das Kapital*”, a country like

Myanmar is eager for diverse investment from all around the world. Even the minority armed groups controlled regions like Kokang, Wa states and Mongla, illegal businesses like casino industries, prostitution and drug cultivation once amazed the whole world. The drug production from these places made Myanmar the second biggest drug producer right after Afghanistan. In a Rohingya refugee camp near Sittwe, a Kaman man U Kyan Chae and his family has claimed that around two years before the Rakhine - Rohingya clashes in 2012 there were Chinese businessmen who came with the local officials to investigate a piece of land near the Rohingya village, and two years after they came, it is reported that the government hired mob led the violence in Sittwe, as they mentioned the places where Rohingya people and some Kaman people lived in were quite close to big ports which funded by foreign and governmental investment such as Sittwe and Kyaukpyu. If the pre-statement that while receiving investment to satisfy their own interest the Myanmar government sacrificed the basic rights of some people was true, then it reflected the low quality governance of Myanmar government at that time²⁰.

At this transitional point of Myanmar, the military showed a slight intention for a more democratic approach, and Aung San Suu Kyi was released from her long term home-arrest. The Rohingya issue in Myanmar became more distinct. This group claimed that the Myanmar government denied them citizenship and named them 'the illegal Bengali immigrants'. U Ba Sein, a Rohingya community leader in a refugee

²⁰ U Kyan Chae, ed. Yifan Zhang, Sittwe (2015).

camp near Sittwe, said that because of language and cultural similarities, after the defeat of Arakanese Kingdom by the Kingdom of Burma, Rakhine Buddhists were always regarded as Burmese by the Burmese from central Myanmar. Even though there are some significant similarities, Rakhine people still identify them as Rakhine instead of Burmese. In 2008 Rakhine division was upgraded to Rakhine state, as mentioned in "*Panglong Agreement*". The Rakhine people and Rohingya people also pursue a federal system, but the Myanmar government did not want to give the real federal power to Rakhine people and Rohingya people. And he argued that the best way to control Rakhine state tightly is to create more intensive confrontations between Rakhine people and Rohingya people. He said during the clashes even the damage was made by Rakhine people but he was sure these Rakhine or Burmese people were transported from the other places, many bamboo huts were burnt down, even his brick house was destroyed by big machines brought by the mobs.

All in all, the Rakhine people are Buddhists, and Buddhists were a majority in the country. So minority Rohingya could easily become targets for political reasons. During the early times after the independence of Myanmar, Rohingya language radios could be heard even in Yangon, Rohingya people at that time had lots of freedoms. In 2009 many white cards were given to Rohingya people but the government asked them to hand back their identity cards which they got in 1980s. In 2010 election with white cards many Rohingya people could vote and many of them even voted for the USDP party. After the election the white cards became waste paper and Rohingya

people again became people without identities. Many Rohingya people are blaming the inhuman policies on Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar. We can find out that the military regime at that time was more concerned about their own political privilege rather than protecting the basic rights of the people in Rakhine State, what they did actually worsened the situations in Rakhine State.

When the government wanted to make use of them they could enjoy some basic rights for a short time, otherwise they are worthless in government's eyes. When the British ruled Arakan they gave lots of land for Rohingya people because the British believed that generally speaking Rohingya people are better farmers and traders than Rakhine people. A group of Rohingya people in the refugee camp told the author that they believe the government had planned to upgrade the opportunities for Rakhine people but suppress the opportunities for Rohingya people even before the communal conflicts took place. It meant that for a long time in Rakhine state the Rohingya Muslims could not do any big businesses and instead Rakhine people can do big businesses in Rakhine state. In the refugee camps, the author noticed that many Rakhine people even opened jewellery shops along the main roads and Rohingya people were hired to work in the shops. It is said around the whole country there are only three Rohingya Muslim parliamentarians.

Compared with Rohingya Muslims, the other Muslim groups who live outside of Rakhine have less political hardships, because of the big economical influences the Chinese and Indian originated Muslim have. Even if the anti-Muslim sentiments were

in Mandalay, Lashio and Meiktila, those Chinese and Indian Muslims are usually well protected. Identity card issues had never become a problem for those Muslim groups.

Myanmar is a country with a majority Buddhist population. During the military dictatorship period, the juntas need to use Buddhism to legitimize their regime. After the transition of Myanmar's political system, the current regime also needs the mass support from the Buddhist majorities and during the election votes are also expected to get from Buddhist people no matter it is the USDP Party or the NLD Party. Even Aung San Suu Kyi herself is very careful on the issue of making Buddhist majorities happy. Although the Buddhist monks like U Wirathu did not make any good images of Buddhism internationally but these monks rather united many Buddhist people in Myanmar. In Rakhine state, because of the big influences of the monks like U Wirathu, small and big posters of him were pull up all around the streets of Sittwe and many other towns in the state. Already sensitive Buddhist-Muslim conflicts became even became more sensitive there, because of Myanmar government's actions against Rohingya Muslims made Rakhine peoples' approval. In the November's national election the governmental backed USDP party won the majority of votes mainly in Rakhine state. On the opposite, Myanmar's democratic icon Aung San Suu Kyi won most of the votes all over Myanmar except in Rakhine state. The Rakhine Buddhist population complained that Aung San Suu Kyi was not hard-line enough on Rohingya issue while they did not see how a huge amount of pressures Aung San Suu Kyi was facing.

Myanmar has suffered from civil war and domestic violence for a long time. The civil war of Myanmar was recognized as the longest civil war in the world. Beside the Rohingya issue in Rakhine state, many conflicts occurred from time to time. Cross-bordered Naga in the west has international connections with Naga rebellions in India, Insurgent groups in northeast India have more or less contacts with Myanmar's minority armed groups such as Wa states and the KIA (Kachin Independence Army). It was estimated among many Burmese people that the KIA, Kokang and Mongla were supported by different powers in China and different Karen, Kayah and Shan forces were backed by many Thai stakeholders. For the past few decades, General Aung San's "*Panglong Agreement*" has not been fully realized. The military juntas did not make it possible to solve the multi-layered ethnic conflicts with various ethnical armed groups along the border region. The Rohingya issue, the Buddhist nationalistic sentiments and the Buddhist-Muslim conflicts and the ethnic conflicts are mingled with each other. How to unfasten the twisted ties will be inspiring.

Political conflict was already existed in the ancient times even in the oriental world, court politics and the change of dynasties of any nations. During the pre-colonial period of Myanmar, the modern concept of nationalities were not the same as it is today, even though the kings from the Burmese Empire applied wars against the surrounding polities, the main connections were through tributary system and loosely control over these territories, the Burmese majorities and the other nationalities maintained the governance over the subordinate groups around. The

colonialists such as Portuguese, Dutch and British one after another reached the Far East, Myanmar was among one of them, finally the British Empire was able to control over Myanmar and made Myanmar its colony. The British brought the stronger concepts of nation and border to Myanmar, at the same time, they applied '*Divide and Rule*' policy as they utilized at many of their colonies. While fully colonizing the Burmese along the river basins, the British spared lots of autonomous power to the Kachin, Chin, Shan and many other nationalities, this was the start of the political differences in Myanmar.

When the Indian immigrants came to Myanmar, most of them chose to stay at main cities, living alongside with Burmese, Rakhine or Mon. The '*Divide and Rule*' policy also could be seen in these main cities, while giving me Indians higher social status and political privileges, the British rulers instead avoided to give the same treatments to the Myanmar nationalities. Under this circumstance, the Indians transformed to the second class citizens, however, the Myanmar nationalities became inferior than the Indians in many ways. As the time went by, the Indians chose to by the side of the British ruler, at the same time the Myanmar nationalities especially the Burmese and Rakhine turned to against the British existence in Myanmar.

What's next is the religious conflict, as religions such as Buddhism and Islam play important roles in Myanmar societies.

2.4 Religious Conflict.

The roots of conflicts between Muslims and Buddhists in Myanmar could be traced back to the origin place of Buddhism-India, and the places once were Buddhist in Central Asia and Southeast Asia in a bigger perspective. Buddhism, formed around 500 B.C. was strong enough to survive until today. When a much younger religion namely--Islam was founded in Arabian Peninsula in the 7th century with its spreading eastwards to central Asia, India sub-continent, as far as Malay Archipelago in Southeast Asia. Even though Buddhism suffered from its own structural problems while developing as an international religion, Hindu and Zoroastrian competitions were raised up in Persia and the Indian sub-continent to challenge the propagation of Buddhism. But the deadly-blow was the numerous pressures from Islam. With Iran falling into the embrace of Islam from Zoroastrianism, Afghanistan became an Islamic region from once Buddhist. The Indian sub-continent was on the tip of the wave, with the strong waves of Islam, Hinduism, with its deep roots in Indian society even experienced vibrations. Buddhism, unfortunately with the impact from the Islam gradually disappeared in India. With these consequences, Buddhists had the early memories of fear and worrisome feelings towards the Islamic religion. Through centuries, Theravada Buddhism was preserved in Sri Lanka and spread further to Myanmar and became a predominant religion in the region.

In the thirteenth Century, after the Seventh Sangiti were held in Polonaruwa under the patronage and support of the great King Parakramabahu I, Buddhist missions were sent eastwards to Southeast Asia, crossing the Bay of Bengal. At the land of Ramañña, Mon people were the first ethnic group in Myanmar who accepted Theravada Buddhism from Sri Lanka, and it was followed by Arakanese people in Arakan. At that time Burmese Kingdom was a land-locked Kingdom which was surrounded by Mon Kingdom of Ramañña, Arakanese Kingdom and the other territories, through Mon and Arakanese contacts and indirect connections with Sri Lanka, Theravada Buddhism therefore propagated to today's central Myanmar--the core of Burmese culture. Shan people, the main inhabitants on the northeastern plateau of Myanmar, accepted Theravada Buddhism by the influences of Mon, Burmese and Siamese people. The phenomenon of "Buddhism without borders" can be seen in the case of Shan territories. Until then, except Kachin, Chin, many Karen who live outside of Ayeyawardy and Salween plains, the majority of the population in nowadays Myanmar became a Buddhist population.

The influences of the Arabian Empire also been spread by those well-travelled intelligent and well-experienced Arabian merchants, and the faith of the Prophet had been further spread directly or indirectly to further regions including the Indian sub-continent and Myanmar. Arabian Muslim merchants and later Persian Muslim Merchants following one by one arrived at Myanmar's Arakanese coast to trade with people in today's Myanmar territory. When India was invaded by Mughal from

Afghanistan, a large amount of territory was under the direct control of Mughal Muslims. During this period India developed its own version of Islam, and its development continues to influence the eastern neighbor--Myanmar.

East Bengal had been heavily populated in the 16th century. Population pressures brought about large and small waves of immigration from east Bengal to nearby scarcely populated areas such as Arakan and Assam regions. Earlier immigrants from east Bengal became part of the origins of today's Muslim population in Arakan. When a great Arakanese city called Vesali was built up by King Mahataing Sandya, ships of people were sent from Bengali to be settled in the villages in Arakan. King Min Saw Mon, the 1st King of Mrauk-U Dynasty in Arakan, established the great city of Mrauk-U with help from the Sultan of Bengal after his 24 years staying in Bengal under the pressures of the Burmese. The retainers whom he collected when he was in Bengal were allowed to settle down around different settlements near Mrauk-U. During the 17th century, plenty of people from lower classes in Bengal were brought by the Portuguese or left Bengal because of various reasons to work as slaves in the Kingdom of Mrauk-U. Even the King himself, as a Buddhist, adapted Islamic practices both in his private life and ceremonial events. He ordered the mint to make coins with his Muslim title in Persian scripts and in many occasions he dressed similar to the Sultan of Bengal. From these points, we could find out in the history how Arakan and Bengal integrated with each other. In parallel, merchants from Persia and Arabia were playing the leading role in exchanging merchandises and

goods from both the West and the East. R.B.Smart, who wrote the “*Burma Gazetteer*” mentioned the Arakanese chronicles stated that many Islamic saints and scholars visited the land of Arakan around 788 A.D., propagated Islam and constructed mosques²¹. At the same period, Persian and Arabian merchants landed in Arakan, eagerly wanting to go to Upper Myanmar and China to get valuable goods as an overland alternative way rather than going to China via the Strait of Malacca and the East Indies. Many of them married local ladies while based in Arakan, converted and created a large Muslim population along Arakanese coast. As we know that the great Arakan Yoma lies between Arakan and Burma Proper, Arakan would be closer to Bengal than mainland Myanmar, argued by well-known historian D.G.E. Hall that only after the the Kingdom of Pagan ruled over Arakan by King Anawrahta, and the interference of the Mons and the Burmese to the east in the Arakanese politics, after these historical incidents, Arakan began to have more contacts with the Burmese than its western neighbour. The influence from the eastern direction gradually overwhelmed the western counterpart.

With the gradual Islamization in Arakan, the cultural and ethnic backgrounds of Rakhine began to be different from the other parts of Myanmar. Though there was immigration from Bengal to Arakan through centuries, but in terms of population, it was still comparably small when it turns to compare with the influx of Indian/Bengali

²¹ R. B. Smart, *Burma Gazetteer, Akyab District.*, vol. A(Rangoon: Superintendent, Government Printing, Burma., 1917).

immigrants including Muslim immigrants which pushed by the British rulers during the colonial period. Even since the Kingdom of Burma transferred to a provincial unit in British India, former Indian Ambassador of India to Myanmar Doctor Rajiv Bhatia mentioned that the size of Myanmar is almost 20 percent of India's. Reverse even today Myanmar's population of 53.26 million is also only around of 4.25 percent of India's 1.252 billion. With this figure we could find out the potential of capacities of people in Myanmar today. We could imagine the situations at the time when the British firstly colonized Myanmar. According to a British Census in 1911, 44 years after the whole of Myanmar was annexed to British India, the population density of British Burma was still low in whole British Indian territory. Whereas the density of the Gangetic plain was over 400 people per square mile, British Burma's population density was below 100 people per square mile. During the colonial period, when the British knew how fertilize the Myanmar land was, and further on the Indians including Muslim peasants and traders also regarded the British rule over Myanmar as a golden opportunities to make better livings or expanding their own businesses. From partially occupation after the first Anglo-Burmese War to whole occupation after the third Anglo-Burmese War, Indian/Bengali immigrants gradually migrated from Arakan to Lower Myanmar and finally the whole Myanmar.

Despite the low percentages of the native Muslim and the Chinese Muslim in Myanmar at that time, the main Muslim population came from India/Bengal during the British colonialist period. Their coming changed the demographic structure and

the current landscape of Myanmar. Nowadays in Myanmar, Muslim population varies, different Muslim people confront inequable policies. Zarbadee Muslims and Kaman Muslims were fully recognized by Myanmar government and most of the people, after all they were considered as native people of Myanmar and they integrated well with the mainstream society, Yunnanese Muslims (Panthay) seldom had problems for the past decades even though they migrated from Yunnan to Myanmar. While Indian originated Muslims in main cities like Yangon and Mandalay are generally get along well with the government and mainstream society. But a few did come up recently and during British Period. In the end, when turning to Rohingya Muslims in Rakhine state, it's well disseminated that they were treated entirely different, to some extent it's a true statement. In a sense, in many mainstream Buddhists' points of view, Islam is deemed as a threat to Buddhism and Buddhist cultures on account of their higher growing population and the negative image.

In Myanmar, Buddhist-Muslim tensions are rooted in the history, the ideology towards Islam can be traced back even to Indian histories. As Theravada Buddhists, like their Sri Lankan counterparts, Buddhist people in Myanmar generally think of themselves as orthodox Buddhist who sincerely carried the lineage from the Lord Buddha. The declination and disappearance of Buddhism in India--the birthplace of Buddhism in historical context when it encountered the Muslim invasion waves by Arabian conquest of Sind in 712 A.D. to Babur's establishment of Mughal Empire in 1526 A.D.. Muslim invaders were faithful to the Holy Quran, many words from this

holy book have been taken as serious guidance. “*Fighting against them so that Allah will punish them by your hands and disgrace them and give you victory over them and heal the breasts of a believing people.*” (Quran 9:14), “Then fight in the cause of Allah, and know that Allah Heareth and knoweth all things.” (Quran 2:224). These words in the Holy Quran played the key role when the Muslim armies marched to India from the northwest direction. The other religions in the sub-continent including Buddhism were treated as non-believers. Mahmud of Ghazni’s conquest of Hindustan in the first millennium led to the death of thousands of Hindus and Buddhists and destruction of Hindu and Buddhist religious monuments. It is said that Tamerlane’s capture of Delhi in 1398 A.D. and territories across Indus river had Buddhism almost wiped out of the sub-continent and a total destruction of Buddhist monuments as a consequence. At present, even though Buddhism was reintroduced to India by Sri Lanka supported Maha Bodhi Society and the help from Buddhist communities worldwide, Buddhism could not achieve the glory it once achieved in the sub-continent. In a historical circumstance, the Buddhist population has deep fear of the Islam and Muslims. Recently, the history from that period was often proposed by Buddhist nationalistic monks to ‘alert’ the Buddhist population the how ‘urgent’ it is to protect Buddhism.

With the rise of Islamic extremism in the 20th century, the Afghan Taliban, Pakistani Taliban, the Al-Qaeda, and recent frequently heard the ISIL (Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant), especially after the September 11th attacks in New York,

caused Islamophobia in the Western World. The Buddhist countries like Myanmar and Sri Lanka also were shocked by the deeds of the some Islamic extremists. In the history even the Muslim rulers like Mahmud of Ghazni didn't even try to attempt to damage the historical Buddhist monument of Bamiya Buddha. The 2001 bombing of Bamiyan Buddha statues by Afghan Taliban government caused international public condemnations. Buddhist countries like Sri Lanka and Thailand showed great disappointment and sorrow to this tragedy, even Islamic countries like Pakistan and Egypt censured the deeds of Afghan Taliban.

In Myanmar, as a result of the incidents in Afghanistan were always cited by U Wirathu, the leader of Myanmar's radical 969 Movement, to emphasize the negative images of Islam and the 'danger' of Muslims. As a philosophic religion, Buddhism has its own attitude towards the terrorism which caused by very few people. Herath M. Goonetilleke, a former officer at Sri Lanka Administrative Office (SLAS), demonstrated in his renowned book "*The Buddhist Attitude To Terrorism*" that Buddhism is a religion to provide a platform for people to practice spirituality, Buddhism encourage people to have economic well beings along with the improvement of spiritual well-beings. The secular ruler is on duty of the first task, and the Buddhist Sangha and other religious' clergy have to take responsibility for the second task, if both of the needs have been satisfied universally, no doubt the frequency of terrorism will be

sharply decreased. The source of terrorism is the inequality rather than the differences of religions²².

On June 13, 2013, the Irrawaddy--a news agency in Myanmar that is famous for its independent stance, published an article about the Buddhist monk convention. 200 senior Buddhist monks attended this conference in terms of making a marriage protection law draft to prevent Muslim men constantly converting their Buddhist wives to Islam, anyone who wants to change his/her religions must get permissions from the local officials who are in charge of this issue. In a word, this law was approved and supported by many Buddhist people. More than 1.3 million Buddhist people around Myanmar signed their names on a petition to urge the government to seriously apply a group of 4 laws which include the marriage protection law.

U Dhammapiya, one of the monks who wrote this draft, mentioned the intention of this conference is to protect Buddha Sasana (Buddhism) and Buddhist races (mainly Burmese and Rakhine). U Wirathu, further on demonstrated that he dreamed of this law for a long time. He claimed that this law will protect the freedom of Buddhist women in the future. He has complained that Muslim men in Myanmar constantly force their wives to give up their religion and make conversions to Islam, In his propagandistic booklet '*Human Rights Violations by Human Rights Activist*' which he handed to the author, he indicated that the mistreatment of Buddhist

²² Herath M. Goonetilleke, *The Buddhist Attitude to Terrorism*(Colombo: FAST publishing(Pvt)Ltd, 2010).

women after they got married with Muslim men is very common in Myanmar. In Chapter two named '*Human Rights Violations by Human Rights Activist*', page 27 and 28 of his booklet, he presented the paragraph about a Muslim man forced his Buddhist wife to behave and dress like the way he ordered. In Chapter 3- '*The Struggle and the Escape*', he described a story about a Mosque guardian called U Aye Myint was helping a man called Kyaw Win to physically mistreat his Buddhist wife.

In December, 2014, the drafts of the Marriage Protection Laws were sent to the Myanmar Parliament. Myanmar's President-U Thein Sein signed the Monogamy to approve and legalize these documents in this spring. On October 4th, 2015, thousands of Buddhist monks and the supporters of the Marriage Protection Laws gathered together in a stadium in Yangon to celebrate the launch of the laws before the upcoming election campaign between the NLD (National League of Democracy) and the USDP (Union Solidarity and Development Party) on 8th, November 2015. No doubt this action is to put more pressure on the political parties and the government to concern more about Buddhism and related issues. The secretary General of the United Nations Ban Ki-Moon pointed out that he is worried about Myanmar's domestic harmony. In his speech he showed his concerns that some religious extremists might use the opportunities before the elections to give some hate speeches. He indicated that many provocative acts together with hate speeches were reported to be spreading around. As many reverend Islamic and Buddhist

scholars around the world pointed out that the extremist people in Myanmar are creating moral panic. Ever there is a tale widely disseminated even amongst Buddhist in Inva, Mandalay, told by a respectful Buddhist nun--Daw Ponnya Waddi at her Baw Di Kyaung Nunnery. Once was a Muslim in Inva married to a Buddhist lady. He loved her so much, despite the tremendous pressures from his parents, he converted into his wife's religion-Buddhism, and built a pagoda to honour the Lord Buddha's teaching in the compound of Ava ancient city²³.

In 2014, Yanghee Lee, the UN top human rights official, showed her sympathy to Rohingya Muslims after the 2012 Buddhist-Muslim violence in Rakhine state. U Wirathu, the leader of the Myanmar's radical Buddhist organization-the 969 Movement, proclaimed that Yanghee is just a 'whore' and has no rights to intervene in Myanmar's domestic affairs. According to the USA's 'International Religious Freedom Report' in 2007, Myanmar was rated pretty low in terms of religious tolerance. Doctor Nehginpao Kipgen, the editor and General Secretary of USA based Kuki International Forum, argued that religious tolerance is the key to Myanmar's real democracy. As a multi-religious state, religion has become a source of divisions in Myanmar society. In the old times, the Burmese Kings were the strong patrons of Buddhism. Buddhism at that time played an absolute predominant role in every aspect of Myanmar, Islam and Christianity were rare in population and influence.

²³ Daw Ponnya Waddi, ed. Yifan Zhang, Ava (2015).

Encounter the modern era, the diagram of religions gradually changed. The free flow of religions during the British colonial period stimulated the growth of Muslims and Christians. Even though Burmese did not convert much to Islam and Christianity, many ethnic minorities as a whole became Christians and Indian/Bengali Muslims were also growing fast in population due to migration influx. After the British rule, Myanmar military juntas were also in favour of Buddhism. Buddhism became a major legitimate power to maintain their control over the country. Many Buddhist projects were funded by military juntas such as reconstruction of Pagan (1988-2003), the hoisting of Hti at Shwedagon Pagoda, the construction of Grand Buddha Image (the Mindhamma) and the possession of White Elephant to publicize their images as the patrons of Buddhism.

In 2007, the whole world put its concentration on Myanmar's '*Saffron Revolution*'. More than 45 years of military control enraged Buddhist monks. Finally they lead revolutionary demonstration in Yangon and Mandalay. Regarded as holy beings, people expected this monk's revolution to give more pressures to military juntas. In contrast, this 3 months' revolution to call for the end of military government was cruelly put down by military government's order. 2 monks were killed and another 150 monks were arrested in the demonstration process. Many Buddhist temples in Yangon have been checked upside down, more than 1000 Buddhist monks and novices were put into jail. This incident aroused the international communities' increasing concerns on Myanmar. The military juntas lost

their pro-Buddhism image and left the anger among people. The Christianity, as a new religion in Myanmar, has been chosen as new identities by Kachin, Chin, and many Karen people. When facing Burmese chauvinism, it was Christianity and Christian identity which made these groups differ themselves from the Burmese Buddhist. And Christianity thus transformed to a source of nationalism for these ethnic groups. When the situation between Myanmar government and these ethnic Christianity believers worsening, Christian identities were always carried out to put emphasis on, making the ethnic nationalism more significant and the feelings think that Christian Kachin, Chin and Karen are different from Buddhist Burmese could even be stronger. So far, many ethnic minorities' missionaries are commonly seen in Kachin, Chin and Karen states, even though some American and South Korean missionaries are still active. But the Christian people from Kachin, Chin and Karen states are deeply accepted that to be Christians is their special identity. Earlier western missionaries in Myanmar predicted that compared with mainstream Buddhist population, hill tribal people who live at the rim of the Ayeyarwady and Salween Basins could be easier to convert to Christianity. Until now, the hill tribal communities in Myanmar and north-eastern part of India are still the targets of Christian mission plans. In a short conclusion, the spread of Christianity mainly occurred in the pre-colonial and post-colonial periods. Many Christianity believers were not traditional Christians, Both classified as monotheism, Christianity is a more inclusive religion when compared with Islam. The new and more positive image of

Christianity in Myanmar did not make Christianity and Christian communities have twisted scabrous situations with the mainstream.

Zakir Naik, an influential Islamic scholar and preacher in India, found the 'comparative religion' Peace Channel. In his television program, he often talked about the similarities of different religions. He even gave talks about the similarities between Islam and Buddhism. He emphasized that the Lord Buddha's teaching about the *Noble Eightfold Path* also exists in the teaching of the *Holy Quran*. He further argued even Buddhism itself is not a monotheism. The Lord Buddha never denied the existence of one mighty God. His talks set off wide discussions among India and Islamic world. Many Muslims approved of what he said is full of meanings. Instead many of Buddhists in India and Myanmar criticized that what he said is subjective. He has been labelled as a controversial Islamic scholar. However, some of his talks had great impact on his audience since it has been recorded that more than 100 million people have viewed his Peace TV channel. The size of his audience could possibly demonstrate how eagerly even Muslim people need the peace.

In Myanmar, even though the constitution guaranteed religious freedom, the anti-Muslim sentiment keeps growing. Beside parallel minor conflicts between the other Muslim groups and Buddhist majorities in the main cities of Yangon and Mandalay, Rohingya issues in Rakhine state have been attracted international concerns especially the worldwide Muslims' concerns for many years. The mistreatment of Rohingya people transformed to a world-known case. As a leading

Muslim country, Turkey's prime minister Tayyip Erdogan personally visited Rohingya settlements and refugee camps in Rakhine state, Myanmar, asked about the stories of Rohingya Muslims. Furthermore homeless Rohingyas' attempt to reach the shores of the other countries and got many of neighbouring countries involved. The neighboring countries of Myanmar like Thailand and Malaysia hosted a big number of Rohingya refugees. The Rohingya Muslims reached as far as Australia with ships floating in the ocean, making Australian government put them into the detention centers in Darwin. Unlike Rakhine Buddhists in Rakhine state, for the past decades, Rohingya Muslims migrated to many western countries like the USA, Canada, the UK and Australia. And the gulf countries like Saudi Arabia also accept many Rohingya Muslims. While they spread out around the whole world, they built the networks of overseas Rohingya Muslims. International organizations and news agencies paid great sympathy to Rohingya Muslims. Rohingya Muslims themselves established influential websites such as *rohingya.org* and *www.brca.org.au*, in the perspective of Rakhine Buddhists, admitting that Rakhine Buddhists are majority groups in Rakhine state and Rohingya Muslims are minorities., supposing in a wider scale around the world, Rakhine Buddhists are absolutely minorities. They have much less international influence and support even though they have been marginalized in Myanmar and suffering from current conditions. The whole issue in Rakhine state and in the whole of Myanmar are absolutely complicated, people cannot simply find out what is true and what is false.

On 11 May 2015, Aung San Suu Kyi, the opposition leader told the news agencies that people should not exaggerate the case of Rohingya Muslim persecutions. The author interviewed a Bangkok based active Rohingya human rights activist--Bo Min Aung. His father is the well-known lawyer called U Kyaw Hla Aung. For the past few decades this lawyer experienced many dramatic changes and at the present he has to stay in the refugee camp, there is no chance for him to travel freely. Bo Min Aung somehow is lucky to be outside of the refugee camp. In the conversation with him he showed his sympathies to Rakhine Buddhists, he told me he admit that Rohingya Muslims are suffering, while we could not forget the suffer of Rakhine Buddhists as well.

A vicious circle of hatred behavior was created internationally as a matter of fact at the moment. In May 2013 hundreds of radical Indonesian Muslims demonstrated in front of the Myanmar embassy in Jakarta, calling a Jihad (the holy war) against Myanmar government. Recently another similar demonstration took place in Pakistan as well. Ordinary Pakistani people paraded in the streets and burned Burmese national flags in Karachi to show their angers at the treatment of Muslim brothers and sisters in Myanmar. When a journalist from Australia interviewed U Wirathu on May 29th, he claimed that non-Muslim countries including Buddhist majority countries and Christian majority countries ought not to receive the migration waves of Rohingya Muslims, Muslims countries like Malaysia, Indonesia and Brunei should take most of them .

Sitagu Sayadaw, a peace spreader and one of the most influential monks in Myanmar, he is very different from U Wirathu. On the UN Day of Vesaka in 2011, he gave on speech at the UN Delhi. In his talk he pointed out that materialistically our world has been highly developed in terms of industry, technology and machinery, however, the minds and spirituality are far from development. Modern people usually behave without enough loving-kindness, compassion and sympathies. This is possibly the source of current Buddhist-Muslim conflicts in Myanmar and various conflicts and wars around the world²⁴. On December 29th, 2012, he was invited by the Iranian government to attend a Peace Dialogue between Muslims and Buddhists in Tehran. In this dialogue, he clearly explained the approach to have a resolution on current crisis in Myanmar is to use ‘forbearance, forgiveness, selflessness and compassion for the establishment of peace and harmony’.

Religions teach peace, a sincere Jihad in Quran context is the way to achieve higher level of spiritual evolution. And obviously the right action and right speech are the essential teachings of Buddhism. Even mentioned by controversial U Wirathu, the aims of 969 are: 1. It does not accept and encourage killing and it detests killing other people; 2. It does not accept and encourage violence, it detests violence; 3. Neither bullying other people and encouraging bullying other people, it detests bullying other people.

²⁴ Ashin Nanissara, *Peace, Harmony, and Coexistence*(Yangon: Sitagu International Buddhist missionary association, 2011).

All in all, the religious conflicts in Myanmar between the Buddhist majorities and the Muslim minorities especially the Rohingya in Rakhine State are rather more mental than physical. Many of the Kaman families were affected by the conflicts between Rakhine Buddhists and Rohingya Muslim indicated that many in the Buddhist population in Myanmar did not actually distinguish different Muslim groups as Islam has been widely accepted at different regions of Myanmar. These Buddhists concerned more about the religious differences when compared with the aspect of ethnic varieties.

Religion is probably one of the key words in old and contemporary Myanmar. Currently, both Buddhism and Islam play important roles in Myanmar society. Myanmar was often recognized as a Buddhist nation with splendid Buddhist civilization, Buddhism deeply rooted in Myanmar cultures and could not separate from them. Buddhism has great impacts on Myanmar national identities, arts, the way of thinking, and also the politics, social norms. Islam, followed by the native and Indian Muslims, has lots of differences with Buddhism on its teachings and guidance. The religious difference is usually interconnected with economic, social & cultural conflict, political and ethnical conflict. Ethnical and cultural differences normally indicate the differences on religions, the dissimilarities on religions on the hand bring economic and political conflicts.

In a word, religious conflict can be interpreted as the multiple layered mixtures of the tensions on economy, politics, ethnical identities and social norms.

2.5 Ethnical Conflict.

Myanmar, known as an Asian country with multiracial societies, there are 135 ethnic groups officially recognized by Myanmar government, ignoring the existence of Burmese Chinese, Burmese Indian, Burmese Chinese Muslim (Panthay people), Burmese Gurkha, Anglo-Burmese and Rohingya Muslims. The main population of the ethnic groups are mainly ethnic groups for instance Burmese, Shan, Karen, Mon and so on, each of these groups can be further divided into more sub-branches. The Burmese, Shan, Mon and Rakhine habitants along the flat basins and plains, instead numerous hill tribes dwell in the mountains and jungles like Kachin, Chin, Karen, Lahu, Lisu. Muslim ethnics otherwise live by the side of the main ethnic groups in the main cities and towns, and Rohingya and Kaman Muslims stay in Rakhine state and Chin state near the borders to Bangladesh and India. These different ethnic groups speak various languages which belongs to different language families, including Sino-Tibetan, Tai-Kadai, and Austroasiatic language families. Diverse ethnic groups and cultures endowed Myanmar its splendid beauties but also caused plenty of contradictory problems for decades in this country.

Around the 13th century A.D., many regional powers in Southeast Asia reached the level to establish Kingdoms and Monarchies. Javier Fernandez-Vina, a history graduate from Miami based Florida International University made a map based on

the political environment at that time. According to him, most of the land in mainland Southeast Asia was divided by different well-known Kingdoms and Empires such as Angkorian Empire, Sukhothai Kingdom, the Kingdom of Hanthawaddy, and Ava Kingdom. In reality, the idea of boundaries in Southeast Asia is an imported concept. Even though the Chinese Empire, as a super power in Asia in the old times, the borders amongst Chinese Empire and the neighbouring countries are usually unclear. Based on the cosmological and theological influences of early Brahmanism and later Buddhism especially Theravada Buddhism, no matter these kings in ancient Southeast Kingdoms and Empires intended to be Devarajas (Devaraja: a Hindu concept of god-King) or Dhammarajas (Dhammaraja: righteous King according to Buddhist Dhamma), the Kings were always the centers of the power. In the remained Grand Palace in Bangkok which belonged to later Chakri House, the throne of the King was designed symbolically to represent the center of Buddhist cosmically-the Mount Meru. Similarly even through the original version of the Royal Palace in Mandalay already gone with the smoke of war under the heavy bombing of the Japanese during the World War II, we can imagine through the records done by Michael Symes that how grand Amarapura (the capital of the Empire of Burma before the establishment of Mandalay in 1857 A.D.) was. Michael Symes, a diplomat who was sent by the Governor-General of India in 1795 at the Court of Ava, in the Volume 1 of his book '*A Narrative of the Late Military and Political Operation in the Burmese Empire*', beside a photograph which was drawn by an Indian painter he described the

gorgeous illustration of an audience hall with multiple roofs and nine layered tower in the Royal Palace in Amarapura. The audience hall in the photograph by itself demonstrated the Buddhist cosmological mount Meru, the King's throne was right under the ninth layer of the tower illustrates the center of the power²⁵.

After King Mindon moved the capital to Mandalay--the city of gems, many big scale development projects which related to the construction of the palace were done. The nine layered tower in the new capital was even grander than that in Amarapura. However, no matter how fabulous the power centers were, the edge zones of the powers had different situations. In the case of Myanmar the Plain of Ayeyarwady River was and is the center of the power and the place of residence of the majority Burmese, along the mountain of the Himalaya, the Arakan ranges and the Hengduan Mountains at the edge of the plain, the minority people reside. After Burmese arrived the plain from the Tibetan Plateau thousands of years ago, the Shan immigrated to Shan Plateau from Southwestern China, hill dwellers like Kachin, Chin, Karen, Kayah, Lisu and Lahu, these Tibeto-Burman speakers slowly migrated to today's territory of Myanmar from the Tibetan Plateau through the valleys and mountains. When they arrived they got no chance to live on the flat land since these lands have been occupied mainly by Burmese, Arakanese, Mon and Shan, instead they chose mountains as shelters. Internally they were ruled by tribal chiefs, when

²⁵ Michael Symes, *A Narrative of the Late Military and Political Operation in the Burmese in the Nurmese Empire*, vol. Volume 1(London1795).

the external powers such as Shan Sabwas, Burmese Empire or Siamese Kingdom were strong, they usually competed with others to grab these lands. The chiefs of these tribes normally chose a more powerful and promising power, then allied or made tributes to it. The Burmese or Siamese Kings ruled these areas loosely with time to time cooperation with tribal chiefs. Even though the Great Burmese King Bayinnaung- “King of the Ten Directions”, conquered Siam, Manipure and Chinese Shan State, under his reign even Ceylonese Kingdom of Kotte became a protectorate of his Empire, but the rule over the hill tribes inside of his Empire was still loose. The tribal chiefs admired his power thus remained loyal to him, the cooperation of King Bayinnaung based on mutual trust as well. The power of the Burmese extended from Toungoo Dynasty to Konbaung Dynasty. In 1767 the Siamese capital of Ayutthaya had been sacked for the second time by the Burmese soldiers. The Burmese once again reached the peak of the power, the victories of Burmese-Siamese War and Burmese-Arakanese War led to the hill tribes and even Shan’s loyalty to the Burmese superiority, despite the Shan’s similarities with the Siamese. An old Chinese saying says: “Things will develop in the opposite direction when they become extreme”, while the Burmese were still expanding to the west at Assam and Bengal, the new world power intervened, broke the natural changing process of the region. The Empire of Burma was defeated by the British Empire after three Anglo-Burmese Wars. When Siamese felt released from the wars, the regional order has been transformed totally. Interestingly, according to London University based Susan

Conway's public lecture at Siam Society in October, 2015, in recent years Thai Royal family members are widely respected by Shan population in Myanmar. After the collapse of Burmese monarchies and abolish of Shan Sabwas now many Shan choose the Thai Royal family member to pay respect instead which inherited as a tradition to pay respect to royalties. It is also widely discussed that many Shan people also use the Thai Royal family members' images as a signal to fight against Burmese Chauvinism.

When Myanmar became a part of British Empire, the territories which had close connections with Burmese court also were incorporated into the British Empire no matter how the British actually applied 'Divide and Rule' policy inside Myanmar. With the King- the symbol of unity and cooperation amongst different ethnic groups disappeared from the Myanmar history. Plus the British divided Burma proper and the ethnic minority to govern separately and differently. Burma proper was ruled directly by the British, in contrast the British authorized the chiefs and Sabwas to rule their territories while remembering the British Raj. These actions caused centrifugal tendencies of the minority groups which later on became the main problem on nation building in Myanmar.

In 1937, British Burma was separated from British India, however, the 'Divide and Rule' never changed. During World War II, the Burmese allied with the Japanese because of their anti-British sentiments. The Karen, Kachin and Rohingya and some other ethnic groups allied with the British on account of the benefits from the British

during the colonial period. This further split the low level of mutual trust among Burmese and the other ethnic minorities. Before the official independence of Myanmar in 1948, the '*Panglong Agreement*' was signed at the Panglong Conference, Shan States, General Aung San and Shan, Chin, Kachin leader were gathered together to discuss the future of the country after independent from the British. The Rohingya leader wasn't invited to attend the Conference. Even if the Agreement was promising, with the mysterious assassination of General Aung San by his rival U Saw on July 1947, insurgents and instabilities came to the surface. In 1949 Karen soldiers raised a big rebellion against the central government of newly independent Myanmar, Karen force's arrival at Yangon pushed the turbulence to new peaks, the turmoils continued. By 1962 General Ne Win took the power from U Nu's government. Until today, sporadic wars break out now and then at the boundary area, from the rising of Karen to the emerging of the Wa.

Additionally, religions, as an essential part of the ethnical identification, also have been changed. Traditionally Burmese, Mon, Arakanese, Shan and some Karens were Buddhists, Kachin, Chin, Naga and many Karens were Shamanists, and Rohingya, Kaman were Muslims. Today Burmese, Mon, Arakanese, Shan and some Karens are still Buddhist, Rohingya and Kaman are still Muslims, however, most of Kachin and Chin became Catholics. As former Shamanists, when exposed to Catholic missionaries from the western countries, they were usually easier to convert to Christianity. In Chin history, Portuguese Catholic Jesuit missionaries arrived as early as in 16th

century. De Brito, a Portuguese explorer, even seized Thanlyin township outside of Yangon with the help of Arakanese King and Portuguese Viceroy of Goa, like the Portuguese did on the Buddhist Island of Ceylon, “pressing the mass conversion of Buddhists to Christianity”. In 1807 Anglican missionaries named Marden and Charter were sent by the London Missionary Society from British India. The British missionaries learned the Burmese language and translated Old and New Testaments from English to Burmese. In 1813, British’s London Missionary Society’s mission was handed over to the American Baptist mission. Compared with their Chin counterpart, Kachin people accepted Christianity later. The Baptist missionaries from the US arrived in Myanmar and converted the first Kachin as early as 1837. Adoniram Judson started the first mission in Kachin, followed by him, many Baptist pioneers took missions to the Kachin, Chin and Karen regions. These American missionaries hoped the decay of Buddhism in Myanmar, even though the monarchical system disappeared in 1885, centuries identification as Buddhists has been carried on. The Buddhist population in Myanmar believe ‘Buddha Bata Myanmar Lu-myo’, to be a Myanmar is to be a Buddhist. Catholic missions led by those American missionaries never became successful among the Buddhist population in Myanmar. Oppositely, the Chin, Kachin and Karen became predominantly Christians as an output of Adoniram Judson and the other American Baptist missionaries. Through those processes, Christian identities were gradually set up by the Chin, Kachin and Karen as a core to differentiate themselves from the majority Buddhist population especially

Burmese Buddhists. When the Monarchical system of Myanmar disappeared in the long process of history, the country lost the tower of strength, the minorities' loyalties to central court fluctuated. Additionally, the British applied different approaches to majority Burmese and the other minorities, which fostered the development of minorities' own nationalism instead of a consistent national level of nationalistic sentiment.

World War II was also a catalyst for the problems. Different big powers' power games further split the already thin trust among Burmese and some other minorities. It later even evolved to a point that the existence of difficulties to build a newly-independent federal nation in Asia. There were two national icons when Myanmar nationalism was considered as a whole. The 1st national hero was U Ottama, a reverend Theravadin Buddhist monk, he studied in Calcutta (Kolkata) in the British India. With an open mind he further travelled around many countries as far as France and Japan, and even taught Pali and Sanskrit in Japan. When Myanmar was still a part of British India, he already started his political activities. He constantly gave speeches against British colonial rule in Myanmar, he was put in jail by the British, it is said that the time he stayed in the prison was longer than outside, he died after a few days hunger strike without any responses from the British authorities. The second national hero was General Aung San, he and the leaders from the other minorities finally had the '*Panglong Agreement*' done at the level of some mutual agreement among them, however, all of the hopes and expectations were disillusioned with the

cracks in downtown Yangon with the assassination of General Aung San and his cabinet ministers. The British were suspected as the real wire-puller behind the curtain. If this hypothesis was true, that the decades of struggling of modern Myanmar in the case of nation building was highly interfered by imperialistic power when they retreated from Myanmar, when colonialism was not popular any longer around the world and the power of the British gradually declined. These national heroes did great jobs on arousing nation-wide togetherness when encountered the issue of independence and freedom, but good times did not last long. The British were good at implanting problems in their colonies. The Palestine-Israel conflicts, the India-Pakistan split, the ethnic conflicts in Myanmar, many of them caused by the British according to their own interests at that time.

Similarly, mainland China, when transformed to a Communist regime in 1949, communist camp expanded tremendously after the communists took over mainland China, Kuomintang's 93rd Division from southwestern China withdrew to the Golden Triangle region by General Li Mi, with supports from the USA and Kuomintang's island of Taiwan. They attempted to regain Yunnan from the communists in the mainland. Opium cultivation was started by some Kuomintang forces at the Golden Triangle to subsidize themselves to fight with the communists. General Li Mi, even though he did not make it a success to regain the whole Yunnan at last, instead he defeated Burmese nationalist forces many times. From 1949 to 1953, with international concern and pressure from the USA, General Li Mi and most of his troops were

allowed to be resettled in Taiwan. They left many other soldiers and arms in the Golden Triangle area across the borderlands of Myanmar, Thailand and Laos. The 'Opium King' and famous warlord in Myanmar--Khun Sa, is said to be trained with the Kuomintang forces before. Following on, additionally, Chairman Mao Zedong, the leader of communist China was keen to export revolution during the Great Cultural Revolution period in mainland China, at that time Burmese Communist Party lost its base in central Myanmar, active only along Sino - Burmese border. The Burmese Communist Party then was on the supporting list of Chinese Communist Party together with Malayan Communist Party and Philippino Communist Party. Weapons and advises were directly or indirectly provided by Chinese communist comrades. Thousands of enthusiastic communist youths rushed into northern Myanmar, helping Burmese Communist Party to fight with Burmese National Army. With the partial victory of the Burmese Army, the communist forces were further separated into parts of today's Wa States, Kokang and Mong La forces, so on and so forth. Lo Hsing Han, another renowned warlord and drug trafficker was originally supported by the Myanmar central government to suppress remaining communist party members in the 1960s. All of these consequences made the situations more complicated and sensitive. China, as an important neighbour of Myanmar, also had responsibilities on the unstable past of Myanmar. The Burmese Civil War was the longest lasting civil war on record around the whole world. Ethnic minorities claimed that Burmese chauvinism is the cause of the problems. The ethnic minorities complained that in

Burmese chauvinism framework, the Burmese couldn't forget their role of master over minorities and were often even displeased about the rising fortunes of the other groups. Obviously, General Ne Win and General Than Shwe's coups and decades of suppression on civil rights and democracy gave Burmese military government a pretty bad reputation. Their harsh policies created more problems for the nation.

Thongchai Winichakul from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, the author of *'Siam Mapped-A History of the Geo-Body of a Nation'*, argued that nowadays people all over the world have inner conflicts that how to identify themselves as parts of the particular nations to against the others. Further on he pointed out that modern civilization is based on the great extension of the identities and differences among different people in this planet, for example identities, interests, and the differences with the others²⁶. Anthony D. Smith, a historical sociologist at London School of Economics also argued that 'togetherness' and 'separateness' are important parts of national consciousness. And this consciousness is normally based on common historical experience and many other shared features. The United States of America, an immigrant country, built a strong nationalistic sense based upon the common values on born equality and democracy. A modern country of the USA thus born with these values, uniting the people from different societies and parts. In reality, the case in Myanmar was different from the general ideas of the definition of a nation

²⁶ Thongchai Winichakul, *Siam Mapped-a History of the Geo-Body of a Nation*(Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1994).

and the natural process of nation building. While the British suddenly took over the whole country, the uprising natural process of Myanmar's national which did by powerful Konbaung were interrupted forceful by the external powers. Pitifully, once weaker neighbour Siam, never experienced the total colonization, was rather much more successful in national building after the reform by King Chulalongkorn. The landscapes of Southeast Asia changed dramatically within a short period.

After the Karen uprising against the Myanmar government in 1949, Karen armed groups including Karen National Union (KNU) and Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) were once powerful insurgents among all of the armed groups. Valiant Karen soldiers once reached the outskirts of Yangon-the heart of Myanmar government at that time, followed by Chin, Kachin and Shan groups. Derived from the allied nations' supported Kachin No. 101 storm troops. Meanwhile gained more power from China while Sino - Burmese relationship were at low ebb during the 1960s. The Kachin Independence Army (KIA) is one of the most armed group in Myanmar, raised battles with the Myanmar national army now and then. United Wa States Army, as an uprising star, extended its military power and territory after the collapse of the Communist Party of Burma (CPB) and the conflicts against Khun Sa, sharing a long border with China, cross-border trade is quite prosperous. Nowadays, United Wa States Army was regarded as the most powerful armed group by Myanmar national army (Tatmadaw). Moving our eyes from Sino - Burmese border to Burmese - Bangladeshi border, in terms of Muslim armed forces and insurgents in Myanmar, the

Mujahidin insurgents from 1940s to 1970s was the earliest insurgency, and recent connection with Islamic extreme organizations such as the Pakistani Taliban, the Al-Qaeda, and the Islamic State (ISIL). Early Mujahidin insurgents took place in 1947, even before the declaration of independence of Myanmar, was actually the earliest ethnic minority uprising in Myanmar, early breaking and long lasting Mujahidin insurgents broke already thin mutual trust between Rohingya Muslim and Myanmar government. Complicated, disordered situations and foreign interference from some Muslim countries and the Islamic extreme organizations activated the mobility of Rohingya Muslims' minds against Buddhist Rakhine and Myanmar government. Moreover, the internationally concerned citizen issue for Rohingya Muslims, and the mistreatment of Rohingya Muslims which was carried out by the Myanmar government due to its political concerns, outwardly speaking, seemingly controlled the orders of Rakhine state. In depth, current situations are highly likely to cause more problems in the future.

Through many years of the Burmanization process in Myanmar which was inspired by Mao Zedong (Chinese Communist Leader)'s 'the unity of the opposites' ideology when after 1956 China became a big friend and supporting force of Myanmar. Myanmar then had its own version of Tuanjie (unity in Chinese), Burmese culture was set as a standard to Burmanize the other minorities. Many scholars argue that the sprout of Burmanization ideology could even be traced back to the Dobama Movement in the 1930s even if it was an anti-British movement rather than anti-

Muslim movement. Many scholars argued that this movement was not only an anti-British colonialism movement but also the start of Burmese-centralism. Under the framework, the Burmanization of the country was carried out by the military government. Due to this policy might help them to maintain their power more tightly. Nationalistic military tycoons were holding a grudge that Chinese and Indian immigrants had great influence on Myanmar economy. A xenophobic atmosphere among high-level generals became a main factor for them to apply this policy especially to non-Burmese and non-Buddhist groups substantially the offspring of Chinese, Indian immigrants, and Muslim population around the country.

After the independence, the Myanmar people still remember that once the King's royal emblem-the Burmese peacock became part of the British Burma flag. Catholic missionary school took the places of Buddhist monasteries and became the center of learning. Chinese and Indians were even working as labourers and cleaners instead of Burmese across the country. The Myanmar people had very little to do. The Generals must felt an urgent need to restore the sense of ownership after they got power. Under these circumstances, Indians especially Indian Muslim group did not want to have more problems after they already experienced the turbulence in 1930s and after the independence of Myanmar in 1948. They gradually reduced their close connections with India and Pakistan to avoid Myanmar government's vigilance. They also adopted the Burmese naming system and the way Burmese dressed themselves. There existed an argument that Myanmar was a failure on nation

building and centralization. But in reality, its undeniable Myanmar was falling behind when compared with neighbouring countries for example Thailand and Vietnam. We can see the slow change and the progress of the country in good ways. The centralization and stabilization are good for the development of Myanmar and reduce sufferings of Myanmar people. However, this centralization and stabilization ideas are different from governmental - centric approaches. The processes of this centralization and stabilization must be based on democratization and the will of Myanmar people. The government of Myanmar and the persons in charge of policy making must be careful and take balanced steps when dealing with this super sensitive issue. The widely disagreement reacted by the ethnic minorities and international communities, and a mass confusion probably also brought by them with the transformation of country's name from Burma to Myanmar and the designs of national flag was changed on October 2010. In other words, as Mark Farmaner addressed: "Burma is still not a normal country." But it is on the way to become a normalized country.

When talking about ethnical conflicts in terms of Buddhist-Muslim conflicts and where did the Buddhist nationalistic sentiments mainly went, we could not avoid talking about Rohingya Muslims or Arakan Muslim groups in details. Since there is a separate chapter for the Rohingyas, more details about Rohingyas will be demonstrated in a following chapter.

Kaman Muslims need to be mentioned even though they are small in number. Compared with Rohingya Muslims Kaman Muslims have been fully recognized as citizens of Myanmar by the Myanmar government. It's estimated that the total population of Kaman Muslim is approximately 50000 in 2014. Most of them claimed that they are the descendent of Persian merchants and were employed by Arakanese Kings as archers in the old times. In reality they derived from a Mughal prince and his followers who escaped to Arakanese Kingdom in mid-17th century. The prince came to Arakan to avoid problems which were caused by his unsuccessful accession to the throne. He betrayed the King of Arakan even though the King generously guaranteed him asylum and even tried to take the position of the King instead. The King thwarted his conspiracy and executed him and his followers, only left their children to be obedient servants in the palace. Having lived closely with Rakhine people and inter-marriage with the Rakhine groups, when compared with Rohingya Muslims and Indian Muslims, they are more close to Rakhine and Burmese physically and in complexion. Further on they practice a milder version of Islam, which made them peacefully and smoothly integrated with Rakhine and Burmese Buddhists. As Muslim brothers of Rohingya Muslims, with a much smaller population, some radical Rohingya Muslim considered that every Muslim in Rakhine state should be Rohingyas. Trying to assimilate or erase the identities of Kaman Muslims, on all accounts the Kaman Muslims have been holding a separate ethnical identification for centuries. Living by the side of Rohingya Muslims

for cultivating rice paddies and fishing, in some occasions Kaman Muslim members incidentally have been attacked by the others in Rakhine Buddhist - Rohingya Muslim clashes and then were sent to refugee camps along with Rohingya Muslims by Myanmar government.

While doing the field research in a Rohingya refugee camp near Sittwe city in September, 2015, the author interviewed a Kaman family at their sheltering hut, the host called U Kyan Chae mentioned after the 2012 clashes they lost everything and unwillingly moved to that refugee camp, unexpectedly loss of identification documents in that incident made them homeless and stateless with those Rohingya refugees, until now they still did not regret their identifications from the government, the whole family and the other Kamans in the refugee camps felt very strong sense of helplessness and have been persecuted on groundless charges²⁷.

In history, as early as the 1950s, many ceasefire agreements were made between the military regime and ethnic armed groups. This long running civil war made it very hard for the country to restore its economy. Economic sanctions from the USA and the other western countries worsened the already bad economic situations in Myanmar. Recently, on October 15th 2015, a genuine National Ceasefire Agreement among Myanmar central government and 8 ethnic minority armed groups in Naypyidaw, even though only 8 of the 15 invited groups attended the ceasefire conference and signed the agreement, this event had a significant impact of

²⁷ U Kyan Chae in Sittwe, interview by Yifan Zhang, September 6th, 2015, Mandalay, Sittwe.

Myanmar's future peace resolution process. As the former Myanmar president Thein Sein said: "The road to future peace in Myanmar is now open." It is believed more efforts will be made to make further progress of Myanmar's peace making. With this tendency, it will be even possible to solve multiple-layered Rohingya Muslim related problems in Rakhine State.

Myanmar, since entering the modern time, experienced many dramatic events, both good and bad. Now the country is facing new challenges after the opening up and becoming the newest 'darling' of the international community. Many eyes are watching the future of this country which is rich in potentials.

These Conflicts are highly connected, and they are like the foundations lead to the tensions between Muslims and Buddhists in the following period which will be further discussed in details in Chapter 3.

Chapter 3

Buddhism and Politics in Myanmar before and after 2010 reform

3.1 Buddhist Sangha and the court politics in old Myanmar.

The unification of the state and the church could be found in many places around the world. Almost most of the religions had the historical connections with politics. The Middle East was the birth place of three main monotheism - Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Judaism is the oldest monotheist religion. It had numerous influence on Christianity and Islam. Keeping the living disciplines according to Judaism and have a deep faith in Judaism became the symbols of Jewish nationalities. Even though ancient Israel was conquered by the Roman Empire, Jewish people were sent on exile around the world by the Roman forces, many in the Jewish population had inter-racial marriages when they moved to new places. It was Judaism that kept the Jewish lineage from the ancient time. After the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, in 1984 Israeli government had *Mivtza Moshe* and in 1984 and *Operation Solomon* in 1991, transferred thousands of Ethiopian Jew to Israel. We can find out even in the modern era, as a religion Judaism also had plenty of influences on political actions in Israel. According to *The Gospel of Matthew of The Holy Bible* and what has been presented in the movie *The Passion of Christ*, Judaist kohens (priest in Hebrew language) insisted that Roman governer Pontinius Pilate crucify Jesus Christ. In the East, Hinduism is considered the

oldest religion in the world, the Rigveda has mentioned that the Brahmin cast (the priest class) was born at the mouth of the Lord Brahma, and Kshatriya cast (the dominance cast) was born at the naval of the Lord Brahma, literally represent the social status of priests are higher than the kings and government officials, the wills of priests often have great impacts on the national decision making.

In the Middle Ages, the Holy See in Europe and the Set of Lama courts became the most representative cases in terms of religious influences on politics. During the Middle Ages in Europe, the Roman Catholic Church reached its peak of power. The coronation of the kings and queens in Europe was the only way for the royals to legalize their power. This special power of the Holy See was solid and stable until the Protestant Reformation took place in various locations in Europe in the early 14th century. In Tibet, after the Great Kubla Khan titled Drogön Chogyal Phagpe--the great master of Sakyapa of the Tibetan Buddhism and authorized him to govern the whole Tibet in the 13th century, that historical event was the first precedent of Tibet's unification of the state and the church. It lasted until the mid-20th century after the establishment of the Communist China in mainland China. This special political system made Tibet's religious cultural very outstanding in the world but at the same time it also set burdens for the developments for geographical isolated Tibet.

In Myanmar, the absolute unification of the state and the church never happened throughout its history. However, in the history, the religions also played important roles in the royal courts. Much earlier before the arrival of Sinhalese Theravada

Buddhism in anywhere of Myanmar, various types of Mahayana Buddhism and Vajirayana Buddhism already existed on the land of Myanmar. Doctor John Guy from Florence and Herbert Irving Curator of the Arts of South and Southeast Asia, Department of Asian Arts, The Metropolitan Museum of Art has noted that Buddhism played a very important role in the early Pyu period in the Upper Myanmar. *Chronicle of the Kings of Burma* has recorded that 25 Pyu kings became the dedicate royal patrons of Buddhism and anchored Buddhism in Pyu society²⁸.

World renowned French Southeast Asian studies expert--George Coedes argued in his book '*The Indianized States of Southeast Asia*' that according to China's Tang Chronicles, Pyu States were conquered by the Nanzhao forces from today's Yunnan province of China and became the weak vassals of Nanzhao and started to decline after the earlier glory, the 'shifted horsemen'--the Burmese left the other Tibeto-Burman groups in Yunnan and Tibet, moved southwards to the Ayeyarwady basin in central Myanmar, assimilated the Pyu population and cultures, established the Buddhist Kingdom of Pagan²⁹. At that time, during the peak of the Tibetan Empire, the Vajirayana Buddhist influenced Ari Buddhism was introduced to Nanzhao Kingdom and had a big impact on Pagan due its close ties between Nanzhao Kingdom. Before the arrival of Sinhalese Theravada Buddhism during the reign of

²⁸ Thein Lwin, Win Kyaing, and Janice Stargardt, *Lost Kingdoms: Hindu-Buddhist Sculpture of Early Southeast Asia.*, ed. John Guy, "The Pyu Civilization of Myanmar and the City of Śrī Ksetra." (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2014).

²⁹ George Coedes, *The Indianized States of South-East Asia*(Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1968).

Anawrahta, Ari Buddhism dominated the big portion of estates all around the kingdom, making the kingdom weaker to have further competence with Nanzhao Kingdom, in this circumstance, Ari sect's great dependence on the number of estates rather than earning the popularity from the people. Sinhala monks and Sri Lankan trained Burmese monks even if they were not as influential as the Ari sect they gradually earned more supports as the time went by, further caused King Anawrahta's introduction of the first full Pali *Tripitaka* Canon from Thanon after his army conquered the Mon Kingdom of Thaton at that time³⁰. This Royal action depicted the Ari church owing a huge number of estates, which resulted in big difficulties for the state. As an influential power in the kingdom, even the king has to use strategies to take certain power from the Ari church. Gradually when Sinhalese Theravada Buddhism earned more prestige all over the Kingdom, while Ari Buddhism was left the existence only in nearby Yunnan instead of Myanmar itself.

Furthermore, when Sinhalese Theravada Buddhism had its deep root in Myanmar and some other places in Southeast Asia, it still did not avoid the footsteps of their earlier Ari counterpart. Donald Eugene Smith from the South Asia Center, School of Arts and Sciences, the University of Pennsylvania depicted that Theravada Buddhism has played an important role in shaping the social and cultural aspects of Myanmar history after it has been firmly established in Myanmar in the eleventh century. In

³⁰ John R McRae, "Comparing East Asian and Southeast Asian Buddhism: Looking at Traditional China from the Margins.," *Chung-Hwa Buddhist Journal* (2009).

the twelfth century even though Sinhalese Theravada Buddhism had been introduced to Myanmar and further localized to Myanmar Buddhism, but the Sangha-Court relationship in Myanmar was kept a similar pattern to its Sri Lankan model. Theravada Sangha were not allowed to own any property, royal support became very essential to the development of Theravada Buddhism in Myanmar. At the same hand, the kings for example King Anawrahta paid a lot of respect to Buddhist Sangha to have a total suppression of Ari Buddhism. A monk from Thaton region named Arahan Ashin was appointed by King Anawrahta to supervise the religions national wide. The successors of Arahan Ashin played a similar role and gradually built up great influence over the royal court of Myanmar at that time³¹.

The Sanghrajya system could be found in all Theravada Buddhist countries in the ancient time. Even though this system has been abolished in Myanmar and Sri Lanka, today we can still see the hierachical order of Sangharaja in Thailand and Cambodia. The Sangharaja (called Thathanabaing in Myanmar) system existed in Myanmar for centuries. It was not built in one day, it paralleled the development of Theravada Buddhism in Myanmar history. The Sangharaja system is rather a hierachical set of the Sangha, according to the Buddhist Canons the Lord Buddha himself never mentioned such arrangement needed to be done for the Sangha communities. He himself believed a monk has to earn the respect from the others by showing his

³¹ Donald Eugene Smith, *Religion and Politics in Burma*, vol. Princeton(Princeton University Press, 2015).

wisdom and strict disciplines. The King is in charge of everything of the Kingdom, so does the Sangharaja controlled the religions and the whole Sangha communities, the Sangharaja became powerful influential personnel around the King.

Than Htun, a famous Burmese studies scholar from Myanmar, has noted the role of Buddhism in Myanmar in the history in his PhD thesis named "*History of Buddhism in Myanma, A.D. 1000-1300*". In his thesis, he depicted that Buddhism in Myanmar is not just a religion from the beginning, instead it's a part of social norm and a part of Myanmar legal system. Buddhism set the code of conduct of the Myanmar rulers and people³².

The Buddhist Sangha had a long lasting impact on Myanmar court politics. It also had changed the possible development track of Myanmar in the pro-modern period. In the 1860s Japan started its Meiji Restoration and soon became a power in Asia. Almost at the same period as Japan, Myanmar also attempted to be modernized with the campaigns led by the great Myanmar leader Kanaung Mintha--the younger brother of King Mindon. King Mindon ascended to the throne in 1853, and Kanaung Mintha was appointed by King Mindon to take care of the the *Hluttaw*--the administrative body of the Burmese Empire at that time. Different from his brother who was dedicated to Buddhism, Kanaung Mintha was eager to modernize his country. He funded Myanmar scholars to go to study in western countries in terms of finding a path for Myanmar's future. He did any means to try to modernized the

³² Than Htun, "History of Buddhism in Burma-A.D 1000-1300." (University of London, 1956).

royal army of Myanmar. It is popularly known in Mandalay, the former royal capital of Myanmar that it was the high monks of Buddhist Sangha in Mandalay who protested against Kanaung Mintha's scientific experiment on upgrading the old-fashioned cannons of Myanmar army. The monks urged the king to stop the experiment as it would harm the lives of tiny beings such as the insects. Religious King Mindon listened to the monks and decided to stop the promising experiment of his brother³³. When the author was visiting the military junta's replica of the former compound of the royal palace in Mandalay, a local tourist guide expressed his feelings through sincere words and earnest wishes. He plained that if the interference of the Buddhist Sangha at that time did not exist, probably Myanmar was already on the way to reform and restoration as it happened in Japan. However, the history cannot be changed.

After King Mindon's reign, the last Myanmar King--King Thibaw ascended to the throne after a fierce court power struggle. The court politics and the unsafe international environment did not allow Myanmar to be modernized. As a matter of fact, decayed Myanmar was defeated by the powerful and prosperous British Empire, the exile of King Thibaw to India putting an end to the connections between the Myanmar courts and the Sangha communities.

³³ *Aurore Candier, "Conjuncture and Reform in the Late Konbaung Period: How Prophecies, Omens and Rumors Motivated Political Action from 1866 to 1869.," Journal of Burma Studies 15, no. 2 (2011).*

3.2 Buddhist Sangha and the British Raj.

After the Burmese Empire lost the battles in the First and the Second Anglo-Burmese Wars, Myanmar lost its imperial ambition as it once had during the reign of King Bayinnaung of Toungoo Dynasty. With the rising up of industrialized western powers, the old Asian Kingdoms and Empires alternatively declined. When the British Raj was based in Kolkata sent well-equipped soldiers, with the excuses that King Thibaw was trying to ally with the French power in French Indochina, the British conquered Mandalay with very little opposition. The British force soon reached the Mandalay palace and captured the King and his consorts. They were forced to enter a steamer for their exile to the town of Rattanakiri at the western coast of the Indian sub-continent. It has been noted by some British photographers that many common people were only watching the exile of their king instead of fighting for him, representing the decay of the civil wisdom and the nationalistic feeling during the era of King Thibaw.

After the sudden exile of the last royal family of the Konbaung Dynasty and also in the Myanmar history, the once strongly connected relationship between the Sangha and the royal court had gone like the wind, leaving the Sangha along with the empty palace. The kings and the royal courts were normally considered as the tower of strength of the kingdom and the powerful patron of Buddhism and the Buddhist Sangha. With the sudden collapse of the Royal Court, the Sangha also had to face the crisis. The whole country turned into certain types of disorders without

the rule of the king as a leader. Aung Thwin from Asaian Studies Program of the University of Hawaii at Manoa argued that the British colonizers always defended that they brought 'law and order' but the reality was not the same as the British argued³⁴. As Myanmar studies became a hot potato of the global area study circle, the topic which related to the social order during the British colonial period was more often researched by the scholars from different countries of the world. It has been found that the British rule brought chaos not only to Burmese nationality but also to Myanmar as a nation. The British rule created disunity amongst different ethnic groups in Myanmar, and also the Buddhist Sangha which belong to different nationalities.

When the Lord Buddha was still alive, he witnessed the Magadha-Vajji War. He was not engaged in the war even though king Ajatashatra of Magadha Kingdom had a very close relationship with Devadatta--the evil cousin of the Lord Buddha. After a foul wind and a rain of blood had taken place in the Magadha Palace, he determined to be faithful to Buddhism and respect the Lord Buddha. Moreover, the Lord Buddha himself even saw the disappearance of his home kingdom-Kapilavastu and the persecution of his Sakya clan. When the king Virudhaka of Kosala kingdom decided to attack Kapilavastu the Lord Buddha himself tried to persuade king Virudhaka but it did not help. The Lord Buddha did not try further and admitted the karmic

³⁴ Michael Aung-Thwin, "The British "Pacification" of Burma: Order without Meaning.," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* (1985).

consequences of the Sakya clans. Despite Arhat Mavdgalyayana urged the Lord Buddha to use supernatural power to save Sakya clans. During the early period of Buddhism when Buddhism was spreading all over India Buddhism and Buddhist Sangha usually avoided involvement in the state and society. When Buddhism later on has been introduced to Myanmar and many other places, as the time passed by Buddhism and the Buddhist Sangha gradually had more connections with the politics especially in a very Buddhist state like Myanmar. Buddhist Sangha was considered as the masters of the nation and thus expected to give guidance to the people and even the royal family members. When the Lower Burma was firstly conquered and controlled by the British, many Buddhist monks moved to the central Myanmar especially in Mandalay. After the whole Myanmar was under the flag of the British Empire, the British rulers did not behave like the former rulers, Buddhism and Buddhist Sangha were not given extra privileges by the British rulers. At the same time, the Christian faith--under the support of the British government or different religious organizations was able to enter Myanmar on a large scale. Christian missionaries moved around Myanmar freely and further converted many Myanmar people including the Burmese and the other ethnic groups into Christianity. The tensions between the British rulers and the Myanmar Buddhist Sangha have been enlarged.

Since the Buddhist temple has reserved the cultural identities of Myanmar nationality, despite Myanmar as a nation been colonized by the British power, there

were some people chose to be educated by the westernized educational system since then, many people especially the people out of the major cities still chose to learn in the temples and monasteries. In this case, the earlier stage of Myanmar nationalism and Buddhist nationalism were inoculated in the Buddhist temples and monasteries. In his other book '*South Asian Politics and Religion*', Donald Eugene Smith has noted that a British civil servant who had stayed in Myanmar for many years by the end of the nineteenth century wrote in his diary that: "no one can imagine even in the far future any monk of the Buddha desiring temporal power, or interfering in any way with the government of the people." Donald Eugene Smith discussed that even though the Buddhist Sangha were not encouraged to be engaged in political power according to the Buddhist *Vinaya* rather than pursuing Nirvana instead, leading the people to fight for their freedom and open their wisdom is another way to seek more spiritual progress for a monk himself and for the well-being of people³⁵. During these days, '*Minlaung*'--the rebellion leaders who called themselves with this folk title, literally means the future kings, led many rebellions at various places against the British rulers. Some of them were monks and some of them were laypeople. The folk stories of Myanmar mentioned that they have the qualities such as honor, merit-making, and the love and support of the people, the Myanmar people at the time had great expectations on them.

³⁵ Donald Eugene Smith, *South Asian Politics and Religion*(Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015).

During the British colonial period in Myanmar, there were two monks who shook the foundation of the British rule in Myanmar. They were Venerable U Ottama and Venerable U Wisara. Both of them were active almost at the same period. Today we can find the streets and monuments were named after U Ottama and U Wisara at different places in Myanmar. In certain aspects they were Myanmar national heroes. U Ottama was born in Rakhine while U Wisara was born in Sagaing, the differences of the places they stayed did not end up with different ideologies, Buddhism as an icon of Myanmar linked them together. U Ottama received education in Kolkata and got chances to travel both the Asian Buddhist countries such as Siam, Sri Lanka and Cambodia, and also to the modernized nations like France and Japan, while traveling he experienced the wakening of nationalism against colonialism world-widely, the powerful and prosperous images of France and Japan must sow the seeds in his minds to make his own country better. In India, Mahatma Gandhi was working hard for the independence of India, in Myanmar U Ottama was the pioneer. Earlier than General Aung San, he gave anti-British colonialism speeches in public places. The British authorities soon arrested him, and the British ignored his hunger strike for peace in the jail. In contrast, U Wisara had a very traditional Buddhist education including Pali language and Buddhist Canons in Myanmar monasteries. He never traveled as far as U Ottama. He had met U Ottama and they exchanged their revolutionary ideas. He was sentenced to jail by the British authorities twice because of his public talks on anti-British activities. The first time was in West Bengal of the

British India and the second time was in Myanmar. Like U Ottama the British authorities also ignored his peace hunger strike, which led to his death.

After the death of these two leading monks and many other following monks and laypeople, Myanmar nationalism was pouring out after years of suppression by the British. The continuous hard work by General Aung San and many other unknown people finally triggered the collapse of the British rule in Myanmar. After the sad result occurred to the last Konbaung royal family members, when facing the downfall situation of the nation, the monks took responsibility to lead the people and the nation. In an alternative interpretation, at that time even if the monks were engaged in politics and society they did many good things in general and the limitation for monks to be involved in the politics has never become extreme has happened today.

The British Raj triggered the appearance of Myanmar nationalism and also the Buddhist nationalism in Myanmar, created many potential problems with the health growth of Sangha communities as the Buddhist nationalism keep growing until today. However, they just left this land when Myanmar attained independence, leaving the problems to be solved by innocent Myanmar people themselves. As a *de facto* state religion of Myanmar since ancient times until today, as Muang Muang Than from the Institute of Southeast Asian Studies (ISIAS), the National University of Singapore has mentioned that Buddhism has always acted as a buffer zone between the rulers and

the general public, Buddhism has empowered the Myanmar people's identities and nationalistic sentiments during the British colonial hegemony³⁶.

3.3 Buddhist Sangha and the military government of Myanmar.

Almost at the dawn of the independence of Myanmar in 1948, General Aung San - the founding father of independent Myanmar was assassinated at the age of 32 led by U Saw--who once had close ties with the British. U Nu, as a revolutionary fellow of General Aung San, replaced the status of General Aung San. The sudden death of General Aung San also led to the tensions between the civilian politicians and the military officials. Both of these groups were eager to seek more power from the fruit of the anti-British revolution which was led by General Aung San. The newly founded civilian government was beset with troubles internally and externally. While the military power were challenging U Nu's civilian government, and the Karen rebellions, during the 1950s when Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) was in the power peak the military power of it even reached the outskirts of Yangon. General Ne Win, the leader of Myanmar military at that time overthrew U Nu's civilian government with the excuse that U Nu and his civilian government could not control the turmoils internally. In 1962 General Ne Win applied a military coup and controlled Myanmar with the military backup, U Nu was arrested by General Ne Win. Interestingly, both U

³⁶ Tin Maung Maung Than, "The" Sangha" and" Sasana" in Socialist Burma.," *Journal of Social Issues in Southeast Asia* (1988).

Nu and General Ne Win were former members of the Dobama Asiayone Movement, which means they had more or less connections with earlier nationalist monks such as U Ottama and U Wisara. During U Nu's period, Theravada Buddhism was set as the state religion, even General Ne Win preferred to use Theravada Buddhist ideologies as the base of Burmese way to Socialism instead of Soviet type of communist ideologies.

At the time of Myanmar's independence, Myanmar was once one of the most prosperous countries in the whole Asia. When General Ne Win took the state power, he raised the idea of Burmese way to Socialism. This policy isolated from the outside world, since then as the time went by Myanmar gradually became one of the poorest countries in the world. Mya Maung from Boston University depicted the failure of Communism and Communist parties in Myanmar although Communism won the victories like avalanches in mainland China, Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos has told that Buddhism is the essential social and cultural substratum of Myanmar.

“Man's endeavor to build a society set free at last from anxieties over food, clothing, and shelter, and able to enjoy life's spiritual satisfactions as well, fully convinced of the sanctity, dignity and essential goodness of life, must proceed from the premise of a faith only in a politico-economic system based on the eternal principles of justice, liberty and equality. This is our belief...³⁷”

³⁷ "The National Ideology and the Role of the Defense Services," ed. The Union of Burma(Yangon1959).

However, while the Myanmar military was grabbing the power and influence from every corner of the Myanmar society, the tensions between the Buddhist Sangha and the military reached to outburst level despite they might had certain levels of co-operation. The prestige of Buddhism in Myanmar was used by former kings during the imperial period of Myanmar, at the same level Buddhism was also used by Myanmar military to legitimize its governance since military dictatorship is not the mainstream of the world politics. In such circumstances, the Myanmar military itself or with the rich businessmen in Myanmar and the other countries constructed many big Buddhist complexes including huge new monasteries, big pagodas. Moreover, the Buddha's tooth relic in Lingguang temple, Beijing, China was invited by Myanmar military government to be demonstrated in Myanmar for three times at different periods, the military government fully understood the importance of Buddha's relics in Myanmar Theravada Buddhist context. In addition, the Myanmar military government tried its best to maximize the function of Buddhism as a social tool, but the false policies applied by Myanmar military government since it got political power however didn't improve the economic development successfully and increase the living standards of Myanmar people. Instead many civil wars occurred domestically and the sanctions from the western countries disturbed the natural process of Myanmar's progressing. In a word, in Myanmar Theravada context, the Myanmar military government also needed to bear the karmic consequences it created, which means the longer it controlled Myanmar the less legitimacy it had.

In 1988, the world renowned 8888 Uprising took place in various places around Myanmar, especially in the main cities such as Yangon, Mandalay and Sittwe. This uprising was led by students from the main universities in Yangon. They were disappointed with General Ne Win's ridiculous money reform which caused the loss of money in students and peasants pockets. Across the whole country more than two million people participated in the uprising, which counts many monks from different monasteries. The military cruelly suppressed the demonstrators even in front of the sacred religious icon of Myanmar--Shwedagon Pagoda. Numerous people were beaten to injuries, thousands of victims were beaten to death or shot by the military, as well as many monks. During the 8888 Uprising, General Aung San's daughter-- Aung San Suu Kyi stood out and started to lead the opposition. The National League for Democracy Party (NLD) was set up by her. She delivered many speeches in front of the iconic Shwedagon Pagoda. By the end she was arrested by the military government. General Ne Win withdrew from the power center of the Myanmar military, and the era of General Than Shwe thus arrived.

No matter the head of the state was General Ne Win or General Than Shwe, the poor condition of Myanmar did not have any big changes. Facing sanctions from overseas the Myanmar military government turned to suppress people. On August 15th, 2007, General Than Shwe's military regime suddenly increased the prices of petrol and the prices for public transportation. This action added a lot of pressures to ordinary people. Students as usual led the demonstration to show their anger

about the military regime, the military government again sent their soldiers and police forces to suppress the students. This time as the issues grew bigger. Later on the monks attended the demonstration and began to lead the demonstration on September 18th, 2007. This long standing demonstration was called the “*Saffron Revolution*” all over the world. In Myanmar society, Monks were considered to be in highest positions. In the old times, even the kings and the royal family members had to pay respect to the monks. Since the revolution was led by the monks, people in Myanmar and the international watchers were waiting to see the actions of Myanmar military government towards those Buddhist monks. The monk-led demonstration grew bigger and bigger, more and more laypeople attended the campaign of demonstration. The fear of the military government also increased. By September 26th, 2007 the regime ignored the privileged image of monks in Myanmar society. Aiming to crackdown the monks’ determination for demonstration, some monks were killed and many more monks were arrested. On 27th more armed forces were even sent to many monasteries around Yangon to watch the monks, many monks were beaten and the windows of some temples were broken by the regime’s armed forces as well.

Although the ‘*Saffron Revolution*’ was forcefully suppressed by General Than Shwe’s military regime, the ‘*Saffron Revolution*’ was raised to the same level as the ‘*Jasmine Revolution*’ in Arabian countries and the ‘*Tulip Revolution*’ in Ukraine by the international communities. The international communities as well condemned

the deeds done by the Myanmar military government. Myanmar military regime faced the legitimacy crisis internally and much stronger sanctions externally. In such circumstances, General Than Shwe switched his public image from the stages to the places behind the curtains. He still had a big power indeed but at least not as arrogant and domineering as before. The Myanmar military regime was beset with troubles internally and externally as well as U Nu's civilian government once had, it had to have some reforms to be done politically and systematically. On 7th November 2010, the Myanmar parliamentary election was restarted again, and the military backed USDP (National Solidarity and Development Party) won the majority seats in the two parliamentary houses. On November 13th, 2010, the opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi was released by the regime after 15 years of home arrest. In reality, 25 percent of the whole seats were reserved as military seats in the two Myanmar parliamentary houses. This was considered as it partially opened democratic politics in the eyes of the international communities. Myanmar's progress still earned lots of claps from the international communities.

In Myanmar, Buddhist Sangha communities are independent and powerful influential stakeholders. The Buddhist Sangha and the military regime had complicated relations for a long time. By the end it was the Buddhist Sangha who brought the last straw to the military regime, since then the military had to do nothing but open and reform the country. U Gambira, a leading monk in 2007's

Saffron Revolution whom was sentenced for 58 years in the prison was released on January 13th 2012 as a part of the 2010 Reform.

3.4 Buddhist monks and Politics in Myanmar after 2010 Reform.

In early July of 2014, an incident of a Buddhist - Muslim conflicts in Mandalay broke the peaceful atmosphere of the city. The trigger point was a false information reported that a Buddhist woman was raped by a Muslim man which was posted on the internet by an anonymous blogger. Earlier in January, 2015, U Wirathu posted a photo-shopped picture of a child monk with a gun, said "You can be full of kindness and love, but you cannot sleep next to a mad dog. If you are weak, our land will become Muslim." At the beginning of the conflicts, U Wirathu again posted a report of this sensitive raping issue on his Facebook page, continuously he asked for a harsh government reaction to the "Jihadist Muslim". Shortly after his post spread fast on the internet, Buddhist nationalistic feelings were dramatically heightened with the consequence that 2 people were killed and 14 injured. The government had to stop the running of the internet in case that the hate speech would worsen the situation. U Wirathu played a pivotal role in these conflicts. CNN observed that the Mosque where this incident took place is only 5 minutes driving distance from U Wirathu's new Masoyein monastery. When interviewed by *the New York times* in 2013, U Wirathu announced to the public that "he is proud to be a radical monk."

The Rohingya issue has long been recognized as an international concern. Rohingya people constitute one fourth of Rakhine State's total population. The Rohingya has a big population base and the increasing rate of the population growth, their totally different physical features, their different cultures and languages, their South Asian look always reminds Rakhine people about Bangladesh and Bengal - their neighbors to the west whom they once confronted for hundreds of years. Rakhine people claim that the Rohingya people are Bengali-originated and fled to Arakanese territory since 1950, and when they arrived they grabbed lands from Buddhist Rakhine people. Since the Independence of Myanmar in 1948, unlike Kaman Muslim who had been recognized as full citizens of the country.

The Rohingya people, with their habitations mainly located at the Bangladeshi-Myanmar border, are facing difficult challenges. With a forefront location near heavily populated Muslim majority Bangladesh, causes insecure feelings amongst Rakhine Buddhists. The Bangladeshi government refuses to accept Rohingya refugees by giving the reason that the Rohingya people belongs to Myanmar but not Bangladesh. Meanwhile Buddhist nationalistic movements are fermenting fiercely in Myanmar especially in Rakhine State against the Rohingya people. In June and October, 2012, two riots took place in Sittwe Rakhine State, Buddhist Rakhine and Muslim Rohingya continued to attack each other. In early 2014, angry rioters attacked the UN office for the reason that a UN staff member relocated the Buddhist flag on the building. According to the investigation of an organization network called "Burma Partnership"

that U Wirathu has been whipping up ‘anti-Muslim fever’ among the local Arakanese Buddhist population, demanding that the UN-census must be changed. In January 2015, U Wirathu called the UN’s special rapporteur for human rights in Burma Ms Yanghee Lee a “whore”. He remarked to Ms Yanghee Lee that “ don’t think you are a respectable person just because you have a position in the UN”, as a Buddhist monk, U Wirathu spares no efforts to preserve the race protection law in Myanmar. In September 5th, 2013, the Human Rights Watch reported that U Wirathu dreams to see the Myanmar government adopt an anti-interfaith marriage protection law. He shouted that Buddhist women should not marry non-Buddhist men.

Instead, functions the same as a senior ordained monk, after the Sittwe interfaith riots, his Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama, the spiritual leader of Tibetan Buddhism openly criticized the Buddhist nationalistic attacks in Myanmar while he was visiting Maryland in America. He said: *“Killing people in the name of religion is unthinkable -- very sad.”*

The various conflicts between Buddhists and Muslims in Myanmar societies were not built in one day, from the complicated and multiple layered current conditions in Myanmar societies depicted the long term development of Buddhist nationalism, Buddhist nationalistic sentiments and affiliated conflicts when it turns on how to deal with their Muslim neighbourhood.

From the start of Buddhism during the early imperial period Theravada Buddhism experienced the campaign over Ari sect of Buddhism and earned the predominant

position in Myanmar. Through centuries Buddhism gradually had twisted interest with the royal court of Myanmar, the court became the patron of Buddhism, Buddhism instead set the code of conduct to the courts and the ordinary people in Myanmar. By the end of the imperial period, the sudden disappearance of the royal court felt the Sangha to carry Buddhism as a flag to gather together the Myanmar people, at that time Buddhism and Buddhist monks raised the campaigns against the British colonial rule in Myanmar. During the colonial period, many monks sacrificed themselves against the British, inspired the later independent movement and raised the awareness of Myanmar people. Before and after the independence of Myanmar, throughout U Nu, General Ne Win and General Than Shwe's periods, Buddhism and Buddhist Sangha encountered a short dawn before restricted and used by the military regime for its own legitimacy for decades. The '*Saffron Revolution*' in 2007 broke the daydream of the military regime and in parallel became the last straw for the regime to make a change.

In 2010 a reform was carried out by Thein Sein, the former president of Myanmar. The social atmosphere was warmed up in general, once suppressed tempers were able to be released, the whole nation was facing a big change. The freedom of speech, the freedom of information and the freedom of demonstration were granted by the change. It was at the point of change the Buddhist nationalism and the common nationalistic sentiments were raised to the forehead of the wave and **further developed to a domestic and international concern.**

Chapter 4

Buddhist Nationalism in Myanmar.

4.1 The Atmosphere before the merge of the 969 Movement.

Myanmar—this new darling of the international community is now under the leadership of Aung San Suu Kyi, the iconic democratic figure in Myanmar, the country is on the way to many other further changes and gradual adjustment internationally. Back to 2010, the whole country was filled with the smell of change, Aung San Suu Kyi was released from 15 years house arrest after the presidential election in 2010, Thein Sein was so called elected as the president of Myanmar. The change slowed down the tensions domestically as well as drew a huge attention from the neighboring countries and many other countries around the globe.

Thein Sein, with his military background and backup, also carried the messages from the military tycoons, the military tycoons of Myanmar experienced the sanctions from all over the world for decades, at this time they thought it will be a time for slight changes in Myanmar. Thein Sien showed his courage on many aspects of the reform, earned the applauses from both Myanmar and overseas, in Myanmar he pushed hard on democratic reform, by the end of 2013 even the political prisoners were amnestied by him. Due to his determination, the freedom of Myanmar reached a new height. The freedom of speech, the freedom of publication

and the freedom of demonstration which were totally prohibited before suddenly eased to everyone.

4.2 Buddhist nationalism in Myanmar.

Mahinda and Sanghamitta, the son and daughter of King Asoka, were sent to Sri Lanka and warmly received by King Devanampiya Tissa of Sri Lanka and this was an important historical event in Buddhist history. Dr. Madhukar Piplaya, the author of *'Asoka the Great'* pointed out that *"Sri Lanka has played a major role in preserving Lord Buddha's law and Sri Lanka is also credited with first inscribing the whole of Buddha's sermons and creating and preserving the Pali Atthakathat"*³⁸.

In the case of Burma, the story is slightly different. According to Sri Lanka's Chronicle *Mahavamsa*, Sona thero and Uttara thero were sent to Suvarnabhumi to teach Buddhist Dhamma. A hypothesis was raised by many scholars to associate Suvarnabhumi with modern day Myanmar. In today's Myanmar territory, Mon people were first to accept Theravada Buddhism from Sri Lanka. Burmese, Rakhine and Shan people converted to Theravada Buddhism soon after the Mon people. In the early and middle Konbaung period, Mon, Rakhine and Shan territories were annexed by the Burmese, however, Buddhism was still the predominant religion. In 1885, after 3 Anglo-Burmese Wars, Burma was transformed into a British colony and regarded as a province of British India. A big population of Indian people voluntarily came to Burma,

³⁸ Madhukar Piplayan, *Asoka the Great* (New Delhi: Samyak Prakashan, 2011).

which including Hindu and Muslim. The immigrants also took their faiths to their new homes. The growing number of non-Buddhist foreign-ancestral population stimulated Burmese people's religious nationalistic feeling. After the independence of Burma in 1948, more than 0.5 million of Sub-continental originated population went back to where they came from, leaving a small community of them in Burma. Moreover, shortly after the independence of Burma, a Karen armed group began to fight with the national military force of Myanmar at that time. Kachin, Chin and various armed groups started to fight with the military one after another - many of these groups are actually non-Buddhist such as the Kachin and Chin. This phenomenon was also quickly utilized by the Ne Win military government's Buddhist Nationalistic campaign.

In the section on 'Non-Buddhist method' in Matthew J. Walton and Susan Hayward's publication "*Contesting Buddhist Narratives-Democratization, Nationalism, and Communal Violence in Myanmar*", they argued that if taking the vast Theravadin Buddhist corpus as a whole, there is no single ethical principle like pacifism was mentioned in Theravadin traditions. On the contrary, a number of Buddhist legends showed that time and again using violence was considered to be a righteous action when done for religious protection.

One important core of the Buddhist *Noble Eightfold Path* is right action--action which will not harm any other living beings, dedicated practice of *Noble Eightfold Path* will lead to the cessation of *Dukka*. However, the reality is that alongside with modernization and globalization, the latest Buddhist Nationalistic movements against

non-Buddhist groups proves that many people in Sri Lanka and Myanmar seem already to have forgotten the essence of the *Noble Eightfold Path*.

4.3 The 969 Movement.

Nationalism is a double-edged sword. Nationalism is one of the significant keys to the success of a Nation. Nationalism can be described as the patriotic feeling, principles, or efforts of the people to go forward hand to hand together as a single body. On the other hand, in 2001 Friedland, a scholar with a high reputation in the University of California argues that both nationalism and religion evolve around the imagination of order and power and considerations of how one should relate to those ideas. The religious nationalism which includes Buddhist Nationalism is not a new phenomenon. It derived from historical sequences long before it came to the attentions of people in recent years³⁹.

Nationalism, which can be seen in almost every corner of the world, during a war period, nationalism was rising up to fight with the invaders of the country. In terms of Chinese nationalism during the Second World War, a strong sentiment of anti-Japanese nationalism was spread nationwide. In the case of anti-colonialist period in

³⁹ Roger Friedland, "Religious Nationalism and the Problem of Collective Representation.,"(Departments of Religious Studies and Sociology, University of California, Santa Barbara., 2001).

many Asian countries, nationalism appeared in different forms. In Sri Lanka, Sinhalese Buddhist nationalism is mentioned frequently in its fight against British colonial role in Sri Lanka. In Myanmar, Buddhist nationalism was chosen by the people as an ideology to fight for independence from the British. Buddhist Nationalism became more significant in Myanmar in recent years as the democratization and opening up process is going on.

Matthew J. Walton and Susan Hayward discuss in their book *“Contesting Buddhist Narratives: Democratization, Nationalism, and Communal Violence in Myanmar”* that “while Myanmar is facing social-economic and political challenges during the transition period, the religious conflicts between Buddhist majorities and Muslim minorities have become spectacular since 2012 by the rise of the 969 movements and some other Buddhist nationalist groups⁴⁰. The leaders of these groups, which are mostly Sangha community members, proclaim that their aim is to protect Buddhism (Sasana) and its values and tradition in midst of the country’s transformation as it gradually opens up to the modern world. U Wirathu, the leader of the 969 movements states that the objective of the movement is to protect Buddha Sasana and the Myanmar country as a whole to avoid potential threats within the country and from the outside. He demonstrated that Islam as a religion is against traditional Myanmar values. The way Muslims treat women is unacceptable.

⁴⁰ Matthew J. Walton and Susan Hayward, *“Contesting Buddhist Narratives: Democratization, Nationalism, and Communal Violence in Myanmar.”*(Honolulu2014).

Continually he argued that the nature of the Muslim is violent, they inherited violent traditions for generations, and they are driven by an agenda to take over the country, region and globe. As a result, many people within and outside of Buddhist communities are puzzled by these arguments and began to support anti-Muslim violence movements.

The 969 Movement is comparably a new thing in Myanmar, during the hard line control of the military regimes, the 969 Movement was rarely heard about. After the 2010 reform started by former president Thein Sein, U Wirathu utilized the opportunities to format the 969 Movement, the whole country of Myanmar was free from the cage, the Buddhist nationalism also left '*Pandora's Box*'. The 969 Movement today is known as an anti-Muslim organization and its affiliated activities, it aims at spreading the Islamophobic sentiments all over Myanmar society. The 969 Movement believes Buddhist Myanmar is under the threat of the global expansion of Islam, the mission of the organization is to protect *Sasana*. In the case of the Rohingya-Rakhaine conflict in Rakhine state, the 969 Movement feels that Buddhist Rakhine in Rakhine State faces tremendous pressures from the 'Bengali' Muslims.

U Wirathu, the leader of the 969 Movement, is a controversial personnel, he constantly travel around Myanmar and also to Sri Lanka to preach the Buddhist nationalistic and anti-Muslim ideologies. He was introduced to the world by the title '*the Buddhist terror*' which was given by the *Time Magazine*. The work done by the

969 Movement and U Wirathu gained many followers around Myanmar meanwhile encountered the groups of people who are not actually agree with his preaching and ideologies. In 2012 a Buddhist-Muslim conflict occurred in Mandalay, his words on his Facebook page brought a big stimulation on the conflict in Mandalay. His Buddhist nationalistic speeches became popular in problematic Rakhine State, his words didn't bring the resolution to the problems in Rakhine State, instead the situations in Rakhine State became more twisted. On September 2014, he was invited by Sri Lankan nationalistic monks to deliver Buddhist nationalistic speeches in Sri Lanka.

In its inception, the organization's three digit number of 969 represents three Buddhist gems: the Buddha, the Buddhist Dhamma and the Sangha. In Myanmar Buddhist tradition, the first 9 stands for the nine special attributes of the Lord Buddha. The 6 for the six special attributes of Dhamma and the last 9 represents the nine special attributes of the Buddhist Sangha⁴¹. U Kyaw Lwin, a religious official in the Burmese military junta remarked that across South Asia, Muslims represent the phrase "*In the Name of Allah, the Compassionate and Merciful,*" with the number 786, and businesses display the number to indicate that they are Muslim-owned. The 969's proponents see this as evidence of a Muslim plot to conquer Burma in the 21st century, based on the implausible premise that 7 plus 8 plus 6 is equal to 21.

⁴¹ Alex Bookbinder, "969: The Strange Numerological Basis for Burma's Religion Violence.," *The Atlantic* 2013.

The number 969 is intended to be 786's cosmological opposite in the traditional belief of numerology in Myanmar.

Extremism, which seems far from Buddhism, has already become an established thinking habit. Charles S. Liebman summarized his idea that "*Religions modernization can be accounted for by the mixed motivations of religious adherents, either individuals or groups, who tempered their 'religious' impulses in order to achieve 'non-religious' goals at the individual or communal level.*"⁴² The modernization of every religion including Theravada Buddhism creates challenges. When Islam confronted the modernization and globalization process after the colonial period, fundamental extremism came to the surface. Parts of the religious orders and civil society stood up to fight with the threats what they thought in order to protect the fundamental teachings of Islam. After many years of struggle, the Islamic countries around the world still face serious challenges. The emergence of the Islamic States of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) movement has made the issue even more complicated as their aims go beyond national boundaries.

Buddhism, unlike monotheism, derives from Sakyamuni Buddha's diligent meditation practice and the merits which he gained during many terms of his past lives as mentioned in *Mahajanaka*, was traditional considered as a peaceful religion. Prince Gautama Siddhatha himself was sick and tired of the inequality of Hinduism

⁴² Charles S. Liebman, "Extremism as a Religious Norm," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 22, no. No.1 (1983).

expressed through the cast system found within Hindu society and the extreme self-control of Jainism, he made up his mind to develop the idea of “the middle path”. Later on this idea became the core of Buddhist practice. To conclude, the tendency to extremism was not included in the Lord Buddha’s original intentions.

It follows that any kinds of extreme positions are far from original Buddhist teachings. Buddhists believe that it is greed, anger and delusion which cause the everlasting suffering. However, some Sangha community members, due to different reasons, are themselves trapped in greed, anger and delusion. U Wirathu argues that what he is doing is to protect the purity of Buddhism. The author depicts that his deeds are the opposite of Buddhist teachings and disciplines such as the teaching of the *Noble Eightfold Path* which has been frequently mentioned in the *Tripitaka*, it will cause more troubles for the revival of the Theravada Buddhism in modern days.

U Wirathu and the 969 Movement with their little friendliness to the Muslim population in Myanmar, certainly will be bound to the conflicts between the Buddhist and Muslim population in Myanmar. In an international perspective, the Buddhist-Muslim conflicts in Myanmar also represents the Buddhist-Muslim tensions at the international level.

4.4 The role of U Wirathu.

U Wirathu, nowadays many people regard him as the leader of the Myanmar’s Buddhist nationalistic organization—the 969 Movement and an icon on anti-Muslim

sentiments in Myanmar or in the Buddhist world. From the news agents to the ordinary people, seldom of people was familiar with his past. In 2003 he was arrested by the regime for his sermon with severe hate speech, he was sentenced for 25 years in the prison, he was first imprisoned in Mandalay, and then transferred to the prison in Myitkyina in northern Myanmar. In his Masoyein Monastery at the suburb of Mandalay, the pictures of him with white cutums which were taken in Mandalay and Myitkyina were stickered to the wall, showing Satigu Sayadaw was shaking hands with him⁴³.

Born in Mandalay, U Wirathu is a native Mandalay resident, when he was at the age of 14 the same as many other Myanmar youth he chose to be ordained as a Buddhist monk, he had traditional monastic education rather than the modern education. In 2012, he was amnestied along with many other political prisoners by the amnesty order from the former president Thein Sein. For a long time, the history and religion related communal violence is a headache of any Myanmar regimes, in 2012 Thein Sein had the idea to deport Rohingya population to third country attracted great support from U Wirathu and his 969 Movement. U Wirathu and Thein, the 969 Movement and the new government of Myanmar, they echoed each other and pushed the Buddhist nationalism in Myanmar higher and higher.

On July 1st 2013, America based *Time Magazine* magazine published an article named “*The Face of Buddhist Terror*”. In the context of the article the author of the article called the Burmese monk U Wirathu as “the Pol Pot of Myanmar”. In reality,

⁴³ U Wirathu, ed. Yifan Zhang, Mandalay (2015).

he titled himself “the Burmese Bin Laden”. *Time Magazine* is well known for its reporting on world leaders or globally significant people. In this edition, unexpectedly this magazine spared lots of space to present the stories of this ‘legendary’ monk. The author of this article described that from his mild appearance, you could not recognise his intense purposefulness at all. Based in New Maesoeyin monastery in Mandalay, Myanmar, he traveled around the country to give sermons to Buddhist monks and laymen. In Mandalay and the other places in the country, he collected plenty of followers. These followers agreed with his ideas to raise campaigns against Muslims, including shunning Muslim businesses and communities.

Historically speaking, the emergence of the Dobama Asiayone in the 1930s, with its members calling themselves Thakins (literally Masters) was the first nationalistic group to be formed in Myanmar’s modern history. Its ideology contains religious nationalistic content, aiming to use violence against Britain’s role in Burma and assimilate the country’s ethnic groups with different traditions and cultures. This thinking was seen as Burmese Chauvinism in a later era. And this movement particularly attracted students and intellectuals, one of whom was General Aung San.

In the Article 20 of Chapter 2 of the first Union constitution which had been made in 1947 before independence stated that all people are equally entitled to freedom of conscience and the right to freely profess and practice their religion subject to public order, morality or health and to the other provisions of this Chapter. In Item 2 of the 21st Article, it distinctly described that the State alongside Buddhism

recognizes Islam, Christianity, Hinduism and Animism as some of the religions existing in the Union at the date of the coming into operation of this Constitution⁴⁴. In Item (a) of Article 22 of the 1974 constitution, that all people are equal before the law, regardless of race, religion, status, or sex was clearly stated⁴⁵; the Article 32 of the 2008 constitution emphasized that every citizen is equally entitled to freedom of conscience and the right to freely profess and practice religion subject to public order, morality or health and to the other provisions of this Constitution⁴⁶.

Along the Myanmar-Bangladesh border, the Rohingya Muslim-Rakhine Buddhist conflicts were in the teeth of the storm for many decades. The Rohingya issue was the hot potato of the media around the world. Various historical reasons and political mismanagement caused the homeless state of the Rohingya communities in their homeland in Rakhine state. Both Myanmar and Bangladeshi governments refused to help them nor fully accept them.

The showing up of U Wirathu strengthened the Buddhist-Muslim conflicts images in many peoples' minds. Current affair buffs and Myanmar experts not only put their concentration on the Rohingya Crisis, but also moved their focus to U Wirathu and this newly emerged Buddhist movement - the 969 Movement. After the *Time Magazine* published this article about U Wirathu, Buddhist nationalism and its affiliated organizations attracted various news agencies within the country and from

⁴⁴ "The Constitution of the Union of Burma," ed. The Union of Burma(Yangon1947).

⁴⁵ "The Constitution of the Union of Burma," ed. The Union of Burma(Yangon1974).

⁴⁶ "Myanmar Constitution," ed. The Republic of the Union of Myanmar(Yangon2014).

overseas. A statement on Myanmar's president's website argued that: "The *Time Magazine* report creates a misunderstanding of Buddhism, which has existed for thousands of years and is the religion of the majority of our citizens." As a following consequence the ending of press restrictions in Myanmar in 2013 resulted in the establishment of various civil news agencies. People with different opinions and educational backgrounds became editors and journalists, releasing the news with totally different points of views to Myanmar readers, many of them who held pro-U Wirathu views and the others of them who did not agree with U Wirathu's ideas.

U Wirathu, who now is famous for his anti-Muslim sentiment was not in the public eye for the first time. In 2003 he was jailed by Myanmar authorities for inciting anti-Muslim violence. In 2012, he was released by a prisoner amnesty. On September 29th, 2014, he was even granted a visa to go to Sri Lanka by the island nation's former president Rajapaksa. In Colombo, Sri Lanka he signed an agreement with Sri Lanka's nationalist monks from the island's Buddhist extreme organization the Boda Bala Sena. After the publication of U Wirathu related article on the *Time Magazine*, his ally Boda Bala Sena in Sri Lanka, successfully urged Sri Lankan government to ban that monthly edition in Sri Lanka.

The role of U Wirathu in a Myanmar after 2010 reform is not only religiously but also rather politically in many ways.

4.5 Politics behind the Buddhist nationalistic movements in Myanmar.

4.5.1 Muslim groups in Myanmar.

On the basis of governmental statistics, the Muslim population consists 4 percent of Myanmar's population. Nevertheless, the Muslim proportion is often underestimated in Southeast Asia and South Asia by governmental authorities, in special the cases in India and Myanmar. Myanmar Muslim Association estimated that the current portion of Muslim population probably makes more than 8 percent of the total population. Most Muslims in Myanmar are Sunni Muslims, in a big category of Sunni Muslims there are many sub-types, each of them has its own ethnic background, socio-economic-cultural status, and of course different relationships with Buddhist mainstreams and the Myanmar government. It is notable that not all of these Muslim groups have been fully recognized as citizens of Myanmar. All in all, when it comes to Rohingya Muslims, even if they have not been fully recognized and entitled with citizenship, the likely reality is that their population grow faster than the average, forgathered again with Belgium based poet Ko Ko Thet in Sittwe, the author and Ko Ko Thet had consistently observed that from the town Ann at the foot of Arakan Yoma to Kyukpyu Port in west Rakhine state, a stunning view was that Rohingya settlements are in an unbroken line. As some Rohingya refugees in the refugee camp estimated, the Rohingya population in Rakhine state is 2.5 million, no one could be able to give a precise data of Rohingya Muslims in Rakhine state.

Rohingya and Indian/Bengali originated Muslims, in many ways different from the other ethnical groups when it turns to the whole country as a big background, which make senses. Ethnically, their appearance is distinctly closer to the inhabitants in the sub-continent. Religiously, the differences between the teachings and the way of practices are greatly in existence. Many Muslim considered Buddhism as an idol worshipping religion, and some Buddhists thought that Islam is a big threat to Buddhism since historically Buddhism suffered from Islamic expansion. Culturally, Muslim people have separate marketing places in case to avoid non-Halal environments, they choose to live in more exclusive societies to sincerely practice Islamic ways of living continuously, and distinguish their own communities from the others. Buddhist communities, left spontaneous images to the rest of people, practiced their religion with less regulations and more about society based rather than community based when compared with Muslim counterparts. Linguistically, through years of Burmanization among Muslim communities in Myanmar, Muslim populations gradually prefer to use Burmese more often, however, Rohingya, Urdu and Bengali and various Indian languages are the mother languages they use to communicate with each other.

Beside the Indian sub-continent originated Muslim population and Rohingya Muslims, China originated Yunnanese Muslims is another Muslim group in Myanmar, or Panthays in Burmese language. Since Khubilai Khan's army's invasion of the Pagan Kingdom, many Muslim soldiers from China have been left in Myanmar territory,

became ancestors of Panthay Muslims. Some other Panthay Muslims descended from Chinese Muslim caravan traders between Yunnan and Myanmar in the old times. Even today they are playing important roles in strengthening the commercial connections of Yunnan and Myanmar, and also many of their ancestors came to Myanmar after the collapse of Du Wenxiu's Sultanate in Yunnan in 18th century. Panthay Muslim are different from their other Muslim counterparts in Myanmar. Even though they are much smaller in population, they considered themselves both as overseas Chinese and also Muslim. Normally they have their own mosques and practice religious rituals in their own places of worshiping. They prefer people to call them Burmese or Burmese Muslim, because of less differences including similar physical figures and their mild religious approaches despite religious differences with the Buddhist majorities. It seems Panthay Muslims integrated better with the majority Buddhist communities in Myanmar. Currently, when anti-Muslim Buddhist nationalistic movements are on the teeth of the storm, they did not usually become targets of the clashes.

Myanmar, geographically close to India, also historically had long connections with India. In a common sense probably Myanmar was one of the earliest countries in Southeast Asia to be in contact with Indic cultures. Early Indic cultures endowed spiritual, material and intellectual resources to Myanmar, and also most of Southeast Asian region. India, gave Myanmar the faith of Hinduism and Buddhism, also played as a medium in the arriving of Islam in Myanmar. Because of India's excellent

location as the center of goods and information exchanging for Arabians and Far Easterners, Arabian and Persian Muslim traders usually transited to Myanmar from India. In the history, Mughal invaders from Afghanistan reached their power throughout India, but did not make any extensions eastward to the Myanmar border, The thick jungles and hilly mountains prevented the arrival of Islam to Myanmar via land, only left Arakan as an exceptional place where the Islam came through maritime trade with Arabians, Persians and even Indians. Islam successfully mingled with local culture, becoming a unique part of the Arakanese culture.

According to retrospective historical records, early Muslim inhabitants were Pathi or Zerbadee. Now the term more often refers to a person with Burmese mother and Muslim father, had adopted Burmese culture and Buddhist elements in their daily lives. Their involvements in fortune telling and Buddhist rituals made many Indian originated Muslims have conceptions that they are non-orthodox Islam believers. In reality, Zerbadee Muslims have very slight differences with their Burmese fellows except religion. The Zerbadee Muslims were always by the side of Burmese, during the colonial period. They criticized the Indian Muslim are too obedient to the British rulers, and took advantages of the privilege as the second class citizen which were given by British rulers to suppress the Burmese, upon those suppressions, Burmese developed anti-Indian feelings towards all Indian looking populations. '*Kala*' became a popular insulting nickname for the Indians. In terms of language used in mosque schools (madarasa), Zerbadee Muslims urged Indian Muslim mawlas to use Burmese

as the preaching language, while Indian Muslim mawlas insisted to use Urdu as the preaching language. A mawla called Ismail Ibn Mohammed Bismillah once argued that: “Urdu has long been an Islamic language in India, if the preaching language transferred to Burmese from Urdu, the Islamic knowledge in Myanmar will become extinct eventually, and it will cause Muslim disunity as well.” However, as time went by, the concern of the mawlas were disregarded. Burmese gradually became a common preaching language in the mosques along with Arabian and also fluently spoken by the younger generations of the Indian sub-continent originated Muslims. Urdu, instead, was preserved by the older generation.

In spite of their various origins in India and different religious backgrounds and castes, the Burmese generally call them Indians. Moshe Yeger indicated that Muslims from India were appointed by Burmese Kings for important administrative positions, and early Indian Muslim immigrants also played roles in guarding the Kings and defending the Kingdom. Throughout the centuries, a few Indian Muslim immigrants migrated to Myanmar before the colonialization of Myanmar by the British, and these Indian Muslims have been quickly absorbed into local population. The cultures which were brought either by Indian Hindus or Muslims have been assimilated into Myanmar Buddhist population⁴⁷. Larger scale Indian Muslim immigrants pouring into Myanmar was done and encouraged by the British colonialists step by step. The

⁴⁷ Moshe Yeger, *Between Integration and Secession: The Muslim Communities of the Southern Philippines, Southern Thailand, and Western Burma/Myanmar*. (New York: Lexington Books, 2002).

Indian immigration waves firstly reached Arakan and Tanaserrim areas right after the first Anglo-Burmese War. The second and third Anglo-Burmese Wars as following sequences, with the Lower Burma and the Upper Burma one after another became the British territories, the number of Indian immigrants had been increased tremendously. After Myanmar officially became a part of the British India, the immigrants from India to Myanmar became inter-provincial migrants. The British had been planning to use the fertilized land at Ayeyarwady Delta in Myanmar for rice cultivation, like the British turned Ceylon its tea plantation and Malaya its palm oil storage.

With this idea to develop Myanmar, the British imported cheap labor from the sub-continent to work in the paddy fields since Myanmar itself was small in population while its western neighbor had far enough labor power. Educated Indians were also recruited by the British as teachers and civil servants and also loan sharks (Chettyars). Gradually the population of the Indian migrant Muslim population surpassed local Muslim population, as taking roots in Myanmar they established their thorough networks by building mosques, constructing religious institutions and starting their own radio stations and newspaper. They maintained their own identities in a Buddhist environment. As aliens, when the World Financial Crisis struck Myanmar in the 1930s, Indians as well as Indian Muslims became targets of the Burmese nationalists. The nationalists claimed that the Indians grabbed the jobs and opportunities from the Burmese and Indian loan sharks (Chettyars) caused

bankruptcy of Myanmar's rural economy. As a result, many anti-Indian riots came to surface during that period. After the independence of Myanmar, without British support, Indians lost their status as second class citizens, some of those Indian Muslims returned to the modern state of Pakistan. Many of them stayed in Myanmar, the broken of Mujahidin Rebellion in Arakan didn't affect much between Indian Muslims and Buddhist majorities.

When General Ne Win put nationalization into effect, everything quickly changed, As many Indian Muslims owned shops, workshops and factories, were generally came into the pocket of the military government to comply with Burmese Way to Socialism, The national economy of Myanmar went into a backwater, Indo - Burmese relationship has been strained. Until now, even though many Myanmar Indians including Myanmar Indian Muslims tolerated the hardships during General Ne Win's regime, they still were not able to become civil servants. This ultra-left wing policy helped Myanmar avoid either USA or USSR intervention, but it also blocked the country from the outside world and destroyed the national economy, made Myanmar one of the most prosperous nation in Asia to another end-one of the poorest countries around the world.

4.5.2 The Case of Rohingya people.

In Darwin Detention Center, Northern Territory, Australia, a Rohingya Muslim man called Habiburahman wrote a poem '*I Have A Dream*'. In the poem he said "Home is my dream, my dream for a life, my dream for a life. Home sounds Shield, home

evokes Identity, home promise rights, home is life. I am Homeless, I am identityless, I am stateless, I am rightless, I am lifeless. I am a Rohingya.” Rohingya people have long been known as the most oppressed minorities in the world.

According to the term 15 of *the Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, everyone has a right to own a citizenship. The term 20 to 23 further argued the stateless person must be able to receive basic education, social welfare and housing support⁴⁸.

Rakhine state, the place where former Arakanese Kingdom was built, lying at the western coast of today's the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, is the home residential land of Rakhine, Rohingya, Kaman, Chin and many other ethnic groups, and is also the hope of current problems on cross-national Rohingya issues and Buddhist-Muslim conflicts in a global context.

The name of “Rohingya” is controversial in Myanmar. Most of Rohingya Muslim people insist that the name “Rohingya” came from ‘Rohang’ or ‘Rashang’, the earlier name of Arakan land. They argue that Rohingya language has been recorded as one of the native languages in Myanmar by Francis Buchanan (an early Scottish botanist and explorer who visited the Burmese Royal Court in Amarapura) in his article entitled “*A Comparative Vocabulary of some of the languages spoken in the Burma Empire*” in 1801A. D.. They cited that Francis Buchanan mentioned that ‘ a Hindi-derived language was widely spoken by Mohammedans (Muslims) in Arakan, and these

⁴⁸ Rezwan, "Bangladesh: Citizenship Rights for Myanmar's Rohingya?,"(Globalvoices.org, 2012).

speakers call themselves Roinga--the native of Arakan”⁴⁹. However, Rakhine Buddhist and the Buddhist majorities in Myanmar have a totally different opinion. They rather believe that Francis Buchanan stressed that after the Kingdom of Arakan fell into the Burmese Empire in 1785 A.D., many ‘Hindustanee’ looking people had been transported to Amarapura- the Burmese capital by Burmese forces, they are either Hindu or Mohamedans, the proper native of Arakan who called themselves ‘Yakain’ call these ‘Kulaw Yakain’ -means stranger in Arakan⁵⁰.

Rakhine Buddhists and the main stream opinions in Myanmar believe that is an invention of the name ‘Rohingya’ was during the British colonial period. In author’s field trip, he interviewed some Rakhine Buddhists in Sittwe-the capital city of Rakhine state. These Rakhine people mentioned that the term ‘Rohang’ or ‘Rashang’ are actually the old names for Rakhine Buddhist. So as a consequence, the derived word ‘Rohingya’ which has been widely used by the Muslim population in Rakhine state actually has been stolen by the Muslim people from Rakhine Buddhists. In reality, a common name for the Muslim population in Rakhine state like ‘Rohingya’ had never been widely used before as how widely used and accepted today. Coming with the formation of a solid Rohingya identity and acceptances, Rohingya nationalism is also merging. After the 2012 Sittwe clashes, many Kaman people have been relocated to several refugee camps along with Rohingya people-the target of the clash because of

⁴⁹ Mohammed Ashraf Alam, "Marginalization of the Rohingya in Arakan State of Western Burma," Burmaconcern.net.

⁵⁰ Derek Tonkin, "The ‘Rohingya’ in Myanmar," Networkmyanmar.org.

the reason that same as Muslims they lived next to the Rohingya neighborhood, resulted in many excited Buddhists cannot or not bother to distinguish the differences between the Kaman Muslim and the Rohingya Muslims. Many Rohingya individuals claim that every Muslim in Rakhine should be Rohingya. The overwhelming Rohingya nationalism is trying to cover the other Muslim groups in the region. What's more the author found out that many Rohingya in the camps even think all of the Muslims population in Myanmar should be Rohingya, which even include Panthay Muslims (Myanmar Chinese Muslims).

Rohingya people, even though they have been denied full citizenship by the Myanmar government, attracted lots of sympathies within Southeast Asian region and also globally. Undoubtedly historical disputes and political interest and religious misunderstandings drove the Rakhine Buddhist-Rohingya Muslim relationship to a bad direction. The Rohingya is a tenacious race, in such a conditions, they still find many ways to survive and make progress, certainly despairing patients could look for any doctors. It is reported that the government allow some Rohingya people who can afford to pay a big amount of bribes to get citizenship and even move to Yangon to live. The reports presented that the soldiers in Rakhine state once found the policemen are hiding Rohingya people in their vehicles and helping them to go to Yangon. There is a long corruption chain at different levels of governmental officials and individuals in concerns by the Rohingya issues. Rohingya population is widely spread, except Myanmar. They also live in many different refugee camps along

Myanmar-Thai border especially at Mae Sot; and in Bangkok, Kuala Lumpur. Many Rohingya people are living with UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner For Refugees) refugee status documents or temporary residential visas; in Ruili (Shweli), Yunnan province, China, many Rohingya people are doing jade&gem businesses.

In April, 2015, many Rohingya tombs and temporary Rohingya settlements were found by Thai border police at Thai-Malaysian border. It is said that many of them could not pay enough money to human traffickers or their relatives who already settled down Malaysia could not make it to showing up to pick up them and pay money to the human traffickers⁵¹. The Thai police investigated the case and found out not only international human trafficking personel and groups got involved in the Rohingya trafficking networks. Many of Rohingya people who reside in Myanmar, Bangladesh, Thailand and Malaysia also helped to traffic Rohingya people for their own good. As the active Rohingya human rights activist Bo Min Ang mentioned based on his rich experience, he said he is in sorrow when he thinks of what his Rohingya fellows are suffering. On the other hand he said he cannot deny many of Rohingya people participated in wrongful issues and businesses.He mentioned that Rohingya people in Ruili (Shweli) , China are helping to traffic drugs to mainland China, Recently shocking Ratchaprasong blast released more information about the involvement of Rohingya human traffickers. Thai police and many intelligence

⁵¹ Beh Lih and agencies in Wang Kelian, *"Malaysia Migrant Mass Grave: Police Reveal 139 Sites, Some with Multiple Corpses," The guardian* May 25th 2015.

discovered that Rohingya traffickers are one of the main forces that brought Uighur Muslim refugees from the Chinese border via Vietnam and Cambodia to Thailand through complicated human trafficking networks. According to Islamic Sharia Law, eligible Muslim men are able to have up to 4 wives. Without proper marriage registrations some of the Muslim human traffickers could easily find different places to live and hid. As Bangkok and Mae Sot already experienced many criminal cases caused by Rohingyas even if many things are prohibited by Islamic teachings. Bo Min Ang sadly assured that probably only 20 percent of the Rohingya people in Thailand and Malaysia do not have major or minor criminal backgrounds. He underlined that the internationalization of the Rohingya issue by western countries especially the countries who did not encounter the real Rohingya streams like the USA and some other western countries and even the international organization like the UN are mainly consider about their own interest rather than helping the people in troubles by heart and soul, thus due to this factor, to a certain degree that Rohingya diaspora leaders in western countries tried to use western powers to solve the problem and on the other hand it's likely that the western powers probably are also using Rohingya leaders and Rohingya diaspora leaders in the western countries to satisfy their own interests.

In spite of little concerns and comparable helps from the outside world, Rakhine Buddhists in Rakhine state established their own grass-root NGOs to defend their rights as well. 'People for People' is one of them which is based in Sittwe. In 2012

Rakhine Buddhists-Rohingya Muslims clashes in Sittwe many Rakhine people complained that the international organizations are applying double standard treatment towards Rakhine people and Rohingya people. Angry crowds of Rakhine Buddhists attacked the UN offices and attracted lots of international concerns. How could international organizations like the UN branches solve the problems in Rakhine state effectively and equally, for the sake of progress for both Rakhine Buddhists and Rohingya Muslims will be a big concern in the future. If those organizations expect to achieve more accomplishments in Rakhine state, at the time a trust and respect from Rakhine people is very essential.

In contrast, Rakhine Buddhist who lived side by side with Rohingya Muslims for centuries have a much less diaspora population thus smaller influences internationally. Rakhine Buddhist, is facing a serious problems of marginalization. In the history, since the kingdom of Arakan has been defeated and annexed to the Burmese Empire, transformed from a separate kingdom to a subordinate region of the Burmese Empire, it was the first time that they have been marginalized. The second time was the booming of Rohingya Muslim population in Rakhine state. It is recorded in history that Rakhine Buddhists and Rohingya Muslims lived beside each other for centuries and the tensions between them seldom appeared. A hypothesis is that the growing of Muslim population in Rakhine state made Rakhine Buddhists feel more pressures, and those pressures finally turned into conflicts between two groups in Rakhine state. Like in Sri Lanka, Myanmar is also witnessing a faster growing

rate of Muslim population when compared with Buddhist majorities. In Sri Lanka and Myanmar, even according to inaccurate official data the percentage of Muslim population is growing year by year. The percentage of Muslim in Sri Lanka firstly passed 10 percent in 2014. And it estimated that the Muslim population of Myanmar is much more than governmental figure of 4 percent. It is recorded that the growing trend of Muslims are generally faster than the other religious groups.

When asked about the faster growing rate of Muslim population in Myanmar including Rohingya Muslims compared with the other groups of people in Myanmar by the author, U Ba Sein, a community leader at a Rohingya refugee camp near Sittwe argued that reproduction is a part of basic human rights. If the Myanmar government is going to apply birth control policy, it must be universal in Myanmar. If it's only for Rohingya people and the other Muslim groups it will be ridiculous and unacceptable⁵². In reality, today the northern part of Rakhine state is known as a Rohingya Muslim pre-dominant area, townships like Buthidaung and Maungdaw are mainly inhabited by Rohingya people rather than Rakhine Buddhists. Many of the remained Rakhine Buddhist chose to move to the south of Rakhine state due to the Islamization and communal pressures from Rohingya communities. The growing number of Muslim population in a basically Buddhist majority state and the shrinking of Buddhist population is one of the main concerns and worries of Buddhist majorities.

⁵² U Ba Sein, ed. Yifan Zhang, Sittwe (2015).

The 969 Movement and its iconic figure U Wirathu are more popular in Rakhine State among Rakhine Buddhist than the other regions of the country. The 969 stickers and posters all around Rakhine Buddhist region which handed out by the 969 Movement's followers showed the influence of it in Rakhine state. A brief interview was done by the author to 40 shop owners and buyers in Ann, Myauk-U and Sittwe townships in Rakhine State. 100 percent of them showed their passion on supporting the 969 Movement's anti-Muslim ideologies⁵³. Due to severe Buddhist-Muslim tensions in Myanmar, Rakhine State is the most severely afflicted area. It's acquiescence that the shops with the 969 Movement's symbols are not welcoming Muslim buyers and on the other hand Buddhist buyers usually show their boycott actions by never purchasing goods from Muslim's shops. Rakhine Buddhist-Rohingya Muslim tensions accumulated through history and developed many complicated layers. It is so sensitive that even the most respected politician like Aung San Suu Kyi was very careful on the issues in Rakhine state. After the national election on 8th, November 2015, her NLD party (National League for Democracy) won most of votes decisively in most places around Myanmar. In contrast in Rakhine state her party enjoyed much less joy before and after the election. She has been criticised by some international organizations and Rohingya communities that despite her fame as a democratic idol in Myanmar, she kept silent on widespread difficulties and problems

⁵³ Myauk-U and Sittwe townships in Rakhine State 40 shop owners and buyers in Ann, ed. Yifan Zhang(2015).

bore by Rohingya people. Moreover, hard-line Buddhist monks like U Wirathu preached around and accused her of paying too much sympathy on Rohingya people⁵⁴. From her point of view, the issues in Rakhine are absolutely spiny.

Many Rohingya have been called Bengali by Myanmar mainstreams. Even non-Buddhist groups such as many Burmese Christians also believe that Rohingya people are actually illegal immigrants from Bangladesh. No matter if it is true or false, many reasons make this issue a disputed one. Soe Lunn, a representative from the 'People for People' organization shared his experienced that after the student 8888 nationwide uprisings in 1988, he and his friends crossed the border from Rakhine state and escaped to Chittagong region of Bangladesh and were issued refugee documents by the UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioners for Refugees) office in Bangladesh, during his 25 years exile in Bangladesh, he became capable in Bengali language and had a deep understanding of Bangladeshi society. He shared his experience with the author that when the border and the flow of people were not effectively controlled, many illegal service providers made fake documents for some Bangladeshi and the human traffickers further transported them to northern Rakhine state⁵⁵. Sharing similar languages, cultures and appearances, differentiation between Bangladeshi and Rohingya people is difficult. On many occasions the internationalization of Rohingya issues were also used by some opportunists as a

⁵⁴ Associated Press, "Myanmar Election: Aung San Suu Kyi Campaigns in Contentious Rakhine State.," *The Gurdian* 2015.

⁵⁵ Soe Lunn, ed. Yifan Zhang, Sittwe (2015).

chance to migrate. Sovanna, a graduate student from Southeast Asia studies program at Chulalongkorn University who attended a summer school at the University of Oslo in 2015 shared the information with the author that his lecturer at summer school told them that sometimes even Tamil refugees from northern Sri Lanka pretended to be Rohingyas in terms of getting migration chances. In Sittwe Soe Lunn discussed that while Indians build long walls and fences along the borders with Bangladesh to prevent undocumented Bangladeshi migrants to Assam and Tripura and the other northeastern states of India, as many of them already immigrated to many districts in Assam near Bangladesh and had long lasting communal conflicts with Bodo people and some other ethnic groups in Assam, the Myanmar government did very little to supervise the sensitive border when compared with their Indian counterpart. The Myanmar government not only refused to give full citizenships to most Rohingya people, but also they denied to give full citizenships to Rakhine people who escaped to Bangladesh and resided there for a long period, Although Soe Lunn is working by the side of Rakhine Buddhists, he and many of former student revolutionary fellows were refused by Myanmar government to issue them citizenship cards.

To live in harmony for Rakhine Buddhists and Rohingya Muslims and the increase of religious tolerances are the hopes of many people in Myanmar and around the whole world. The religious tolerance and harmony basically based on the certain levels of understanding of each other's religions and social atmospheres for peace building. However, sometimes people are self-oriented no matter what are their

religions. While radical Buddhist nationalism is emerging among Rakhine Buddhists, Wahhabism is gaining more popularity in Rohingya communities. Wahhabism was the main force which helped to found the modern nation of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Regarded as the national ideology of the country, Saudi Arabia is behind the current developing of Wahhabism around the Muslim world. Wahhabism advocates the application of Islamic Sharia law and strictly applies revivalist way of livings. Based in Saudi Arabia, supported and funded by Gulf Cooperation Council (a political and economic organization consists Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Qatar, Oman and Kuwait), Wahhabism, this fundamentalistic trend of thought gradually spread westward to Nigeria and eastward to Indonesian islands. This trend also flew to Rakhine state where Rohingya people live. Walking around the refugee camps near Sittwe, the author saw many Rohingya women are dressed in niqab, the black dressed covering their bodies from the top to the bottom. Some of them even covered their hands with gloves in hot and humid Sittwe. When asked about this issue by the authors in the refugee camps, many Rohingya men proclaimed that they are devout Wahhabists. They stated only Wahhabism is the right way to practice Islamic faith. A man who didn't want to share his real name in a tea shop told the author that Rohingya women are supposed to wear conservative Islamic dresses even from the age of 12. The way how Rohingya people generally conceive their religion is also impressing the feelings of Rakhine/Burmese Buddhists. While practicing their religion by the side of Buddhist population, how to deal with the fundamentalistic & extreme behaviors and

have certain levels of mutual understandings on Buddhist neighbours are the core elements for Rohingya people to gradually learn grow to live in harmony with Rakhine Buddhists.

Inversely, Kaman Muslims, even though they are Muslims chose a milder approach to practice their faith. It's not a necessity for Kaman women to dress conservatively. As a consequence, Kaman Muslims were recognized by Buddhist mainstream and get along well with their Buddhist neighborhood, said by U Kyan Chae, a Kaman senior whom the author used to talk with in the camp. Under the umbrella of one faith, Rohingya Muslims and Kaman Muslims do not always live in peace. Many Kaman Muslims complained the Rohingya Muslims are imposing their understandings of Islam and furthermore the Rohingya identities on them. In fact, after the 2012 clashes in Sittwe, Rakhine state, Rohingya people were driven by the mobs with government support to the current locations, understanding that the problems in Rakhine state based on complicated backgrounds, how Rohingya people understand the art of living together is questionable⁵⁶.

The refugee camp, in a generalized view, is the synonym of places with worst living conditions which is full of miseries and sorrows. Despite huge destruction during the clashes in 2012, the reviving of the Rohingya communities in many Rohingya refugees camps in Rakhine state are still on the way. The author noticed in the refugee camps near Sittwe, goldsmith and jewelry shops are easily seen along

⁵⁶ James Giggacher, " Islam and the State in Myanmar,"(New Mandala, asiapacific.anu.edu.au, 2015).

the main roads of the refugee camps. Many of the shops owned by Rakhine Buddhists but recruit Rohingya Muslims to keep the shops, and the others directly owned by Rohingya Muslims, we do not know the real financial conditions of each Rohingya family in the refugee camps. 5 owners of the goldsmith shops in a main refugee camp near Sittwe told the author that they are doing well in their businesses. The refugee camps transformed quickly from paddy fields to marketplaces. Market-oriented economy is functioning well in the camps, the camps generally consist of cinemas to show updated Indian movies and all kinds of necessary shops and groceries. Moreover, a noticeable phenomenon that could be found is that many of the donations from international communities (USAID, Australia Aid, Turkish Aid, Japanese Aid, China Aid and so on) and many other INGOs (international non-governmental organizations) are on sale by some recipients.

In Sittwe and many other townships in Rakhine state, except the refugee camps mainly hosting Rohingya people, in the nearby settlements we could also find the refugees who escaped from Chittagong hills and resettled in various places around southern Rakhine state, they are Buddhist Marma, Jumma and Chakma tribal people. Since Bangladesh is becoming more Islamicized, the Buddhist population in Bangladesh also felt difficulties to live. In 2002, the Ramu violence aimed at the Buddhist population in Chittagong district, Bangladesh shocked Buddhist communities in Sri Lanka, Myanmar and Thailand. More than 1000 Buddhist families fled from their original homes. More than 10 Buddhist temples in the area were burned down by

Muslim attackers. Many Buddhist people in Chittagong district claimed that it was Rohingya Muslims who caused the violenceⁱ. Violent actions done by these extreme Muslims also triggered the rise of international hatred on Bangladeshi Muslims. Many Sri Lankan Buddhists demonstrated in Colombo and attacked the embassy of Bangladesh in Sri Lanka. Despite that this serious communal violence attracted attentions from Asian Buddhist countries, the rest of the world did not pay much attention if we compare it with the Rohingya issues.

Facing a situation similar to Rohingya people, a big portion of Buddhist population in southeastern Bangladesh fled to Myanmar. The Myanmar government openly accepted them and arranged for them to be resettled. Coincidentally, many of these Bangladesh originated Buddhist peoples' new settlements are standing beside the Rohingya refugee settlement blocks. Compared with chaotic Rohingya settlements, the places where those Buddhists' people live are neater and tidier. The Myanmar soldiers are guarding the Buddhist temples near the Rohingya refugee camps, fearing some Rohingya people might attack the tiny Buddhist temples, or make them the Buddhist 'signal' towers to fight with mainstream Islam in the camps. In contrast, the current Bangladesh's prime minister Sheikh Hasina refused to have Rohingya refugees resettled in Bangladeshi territory⁵⁷. She told a reporter from *Al Jazeera* that the news agencies should go to talk with the Myanmar government instead of the Bangladesh

⁵⁷ Maryam Ramadan, "The Case of a French Aid Worker Arrested in Bangladesh, French Muslim Moussa Tchanchiung Says He Was in the Country to Help Refugees There When He Was Arrested.," *Al-Jazeera* 2016.

government, saying Bangladesh is already over populated and there is no more space for fleeing Rohingya people. And a blogger named Kornofulir Majhi also agreed with what his prime minister addressed. He pointed out the reality in Bangladesh basically the government can not even protect the rights of its own citizens. When the author was in Bangladesh in February 2016, he also interviewed some Bangladeshi citizens including Buddhist people from the Chittagong Hill Tract. Most of them regretted that the Rohingya issue became a stumbling stone for the development of mutual relationship between Bangladesh and Myanmar. Most of the interviewees insisted that Rohingya people are actually Myanmar and should be taken care of by Myanmar government. Interestingly a student from the University of Dhaka, Dhaka whom the author interviewed mentioned that it is possible some of those Rohingya people went to Myanmar from Bangladesh but they already lived there for generations, they should be Myanmar citizens. The European immigrants in North America and Oceania have been there for only a few generations and they have been naturalized as the local citizens⁵⁸. In more details, the Rohingya issue is also a sensitive issue in Bangladesh. Bangladeshi have watched this issue carefully at the border. The Qatari news agent *Al-jazeera* once reported a French Muslim aid worker called Moussa Tchanchiung who was based in the town of Teknaf to help Rohingya refugees was arrested by Bangladeshi government on December 22th, 2015

⁵⁸ Some Bangladeshi citizens including Buddhist people from the Chittagong Hill Tract, ed. Yifan Zhang, Sittwe (2016).

accusing him that he didn't follow the rules in Bangladeshⁱⁱ. The author further noticed that the Bangladeshi government didn't allow irrelevant foreigners to enter the Rohingya refugees camps at the border. In contrast, the Myanmar government still allow any foreigner to enter some camps under the sponsorship of NGOs when author was in Sittwe, Myanmar for his field research for this thesis.

The author attended a documentary movie released at Art & Culture Center of Chiangmai University, Chiangma. The documentary movie was called 'Michaels'. The movie showed that many Rohingya people escaped from Myanmar, and resided in several refugee camps in Maesot. Two men had the same names- 'Michael'. One Michael luckily applied for refugee status successfully and been accepted by the USA. Another Michael was not lucky enough. He did not gain either American acceptance or even temporary Thai citizenship. He was still trapped in a refugee camp in Maesot. The Michael who migrated to USA blamed the evilness of the Myanmar government and how he is enjoying freedom and democracy in the USA. He mentioned that he could not even travel outside of the refugee camp. Nowadays with a USA passport he can travel around the world with very little burdens. In contrast these Myanmar Buddhists whom he did not like even can not travel as free as he can. The author personally caught sight of three Rohingya young men who were holding their newly issued USA passports feeling upset when a shop assistant asked them to show their identifications for SIM card registration in a seven-eleven at Sathorn Soi 1, Bangkok, Thailand. Perhaps a sudden release made them still feel

puzzled in many ways. Furthermore, when the author was in Brisbane, Australia, the author interviewed a Rohingya young man called Sadek. His family was chosen by the UN to come to Australia when he was a baby. When the author was talking with him, he showed impatient hatred towards the Buddhist population and even Buddhist world as a whole. He shared his idea with the author that Myanmar Buddhists are generally very aggressive and evil, and it was Rohingya who established the splendid old civilization of Arakan. He even argued that every Muslim woman must fully cover themselves. He could not make it to discuss with the author but rather have very radical ideas on racial, religious conflicts and Islam⁵⁹. According to the author's observation, the Rohingya immigrants in Brisbane, Australia like Sadek's family and their friends usually have financial problems, and struggling from being living day by day for a long time. Even though they migrated to a stable place at least far away from insecurities, it seems they are still have a long way to go to integrate more with the Australian mainstream communities.

The concern today is how to manage the hateful feelings which connected with racial problems especially for the younger generations. For the Burmese and Rakhine Buddhists the radical Buddhism is around them more constantly than the former generations. Buddhist radical organizations like the 969 Movement and the Ma Ba Tha and their extreme ideologies spread out through social networks and daily lives. Many of them openly show their anger by participating in radical activities and gave

⁵⁹ A Rohingya young man called Sadek, ed. Yifan Zhang, Brisbane (2014).

hate speeches over social networks like Facebook and Viber. On the other hand notorious Islamic extreme organizations like the Al-Qaeda and the ISIL (Islamic state of Iraq and the Levant) infiltrate their terrorist ideas to Rohingya communities in Rakhine via Bangladeshi supporters and many other channels. The overseas Rohingya communities especially the younger generation whom has not experienced the real situations in Myanmar that much. But based on the influences from their families and communities, they began to hate Buddhism and Buddhist communities in Myanmar even without the first-hand information. And many of these young people gradually became the hard core of the Rohingya diaspora. Without a reasonable agenda for the gradual resolution of this spike issue, the accumulated rancours between Rohingya Muslims and Burmese/Rakhine Buddhists will develop in even worse directions.

4.5.3 Buddhist nationalism as a cross-bordered phenomenon.

Sri Lanka and Myanmar are not the only Theravadin Buddhist countries in this world. In the nearby area of Southeast Asia, Thailand, Cambodia and Laos are also countries with the same belief system - the difference is that these countries have a less Buddhist nationalistic atmosphere.

Firstly, the opening up of Myanmar in 2013 brought about dramatic changes within the country. David Madden, the founder of Phandeeyar Innovation Lab in Yangon argues that the recent hate speech waves on Facebook reflected that when

facing the challenge of change in the country, some conservative monks and laymen prefer to behave more nationalistically to maintain the sole authority of Buddhism in Myanmar⁶⁰. This transitional time for Myanmar which started in 2013 could be considered as a fragile turning point, careless negligence will trigger numerous problems.

Secondly, more and more, the focus of Buddhist Nationalist attacks has moved to the Muslim population in Myanmar. Compared with Thailand and the other Theravadin majority countries, some radical Buddhists in Myanmar pointed out that they are geographically faced by the Muslim world. Moreover, U Wirathu says that Myanmar must learn from Malaysia and Indonesia. These countries once were mainly Hindu/Buddhist but were gradually transformed to Muslim-majority nations. Despite the truth that Muslims consist are very low ratio of total population in Myanmar, U Wirathu together with many young and senior monks, claimed that Muslim people breed much faster than Buddhist populations, thus Buddhist culture and practice are in big danger.

In a word, the strained relationship between the Government and Sangha orders worsened the situation. In the case of Myanmar, in 2007, ignoring the despotic power of the Myanmar military government, to the world's amazement, the monks led the 'Saffron revolution' against the government. Nevertheless, some monks chose to

⁶⁰ David Madden. The founder of Phandeeyar Innovation Lab in Yangon, ed. Yifan Zhang, Bangkok (2014).

embrace the government after the sudden opening up in 2010 and the other monks have been used by the strong military power in Myanmar government for their political interests.

Buddhist nationalism and its related sentiments could possibly be noticed in the other countries and regions in Buddhist world as well except Myanmar and Sri Lanka. Even though Buddhism and Buddhist organizations were closely tied with the governmental departments, Thailand's deep south conflicts and recently occurred Ratchaprasong blast were teasing Thai Buddhists sensitive nerves. In Bhutan, the Buddhist majority and the Hindu minority in the south seldom emerged with each other. The Bhutanese government claimed that the Hindu population in southern Bhutan are illegal migrants from Nepal, In the 1990s the Royal Bhutanese government deported Nepalese Bhutanese from Bhutan to Nepal and raised the tensions between Bhutan and Nepal until today. Even as we did not notice in Tibet, the distrust between Tibetan Buddhist and Muslim people in eastern Qinghai province and southwestern Gansu province, China can be traced back to almost 1940s, when the current Dalai Lama was a child. He has been kept by Chinese Muslim warlord Ma Bufang in terms to blackmail the court of Lhasa. Currently these two groups of people still do not trust each other. In addition, group fighting occurred from time to time for so many years even under the rule of strict Chinese government.

We cannot deny that compared with the Christian world or Muslim world the

Buddhist world is rather smaller. However, as the nationalist sentiments have spread all over the world in many aspects including ethnics, religions and countries, Buddhism and Buddhist communities when encountered the change of the global ideological framework and when it is under the threat, even the original teaching of Buddhism is about the peace mainly, the rise of Buddhist nationalism is still going on.

Buddhist nationalism is not only about Myanmar nor Sri Lanka, or the Ma Ba Tha, the 969 Movement nor the Bodu Bala Sena, It's a cross-border issue.

4.5.4 Possible tendency of Buddhist nationalism at the era of the NLD regime.

After 2010 the political ecology of Myanmar has been changed at a slow pace. The official name of the country has been changed from the Union of Myanmar to the Republic of the Union of Myanmar as the country has been gradually exposed to the outside world. In 2010, the whole world suffered from the economic turbulence, so did Myanmar and its military regime. Since the military regime grasped the power after the coup d'état of General Ne Win in 1962 and his Burmese way to Socialism policy, the country closed itself to the outside world. Even the nearby neighbors as well as received many sanctions from many countries around the world.

After the exile of King Thibaw to India, the Myanmar people experienced the colonial rule of the British for 124 years after the fall of the Lower Myanmar. At the post-independent era Myanmar people naturally eager to build their country based

on the idea of democracy after many years of suppression. The retroactive action of General Ne Win, Myanmar people bore the rule of dictatorship for several decades more. During the military regime, different social groups of people including students, civilians and Buddhist monks one after another participated in the demonstrations and the campaigns against the cruel rule of the military regime. The military regime put down the demonstrations one by one, causing the whole society to convulse in fear. In October 2007, the monk led 'Saffron revolution' struck the last reputation of the military regime. The regime sent soldiers to suppress the actions of the monks, leading to the death of the monk as well as lost the regime's attempts to use Buddhism as the last straw to legitimize themselves in Myanmar. The western democracy watchers raised the importance of this revolution at the same level as the 'Arab Spring' in 2010 after a few years. In 2010, finally the military regime released the opposition leader - Aung San Suu Kyi after decades of her home arrest. Moreover, press restriction and society were relaxed by the military regime, many civil news agent and grass-root NGOs were set by these warm-blooded activists. All of these represented the signals from the military regime to welcome a change of Myanmar.

Even though the military juntas bravely transferred some of the basic rights to the civil society, some of the essential rights still were grasped tightly by those conservative stakeholders. As early as 2008, a new Myanmar Constitution was passed, In this new *Constitution*, it stated that 25 percent of both congresses of the

Assembly of the Union are reserved for the military representatives. And in this Constitution some restrictive frameworks were set up especially for Aung San Suu Kyi. In this Constitution, it is mentioned that whose partner is or was a foreign citizen, plus whose children are the foreigner citizens cannot be chosen as a candidate for president election. Many policy watchers from all over the world estimated that General Than Shwe and the military power had this action done in reverse to set an unbridgeable burden for Aung San Kyi and his presidency plans. In 2015 Aung San Suu Kyi already reached the advanced age of 70. This venerable age is risky for Aung San Suu Kyi to wait for another four years to amend the related rules in the Constitution. In June 25th, a Constitutional amendment was raised for the popular doubt in the civil society that Aung San Suu Kyi is able to become a president candidate or not. Even though many NLD (National League for Democracy) representatives supported her proposal on the Constitutional amendment, 25 percent of the fixed seat reserved for the representatives from the military resulted in the military representatives spoke against Aung San Suu Kyi's proposal.

In 2010, the military supported USDP Party (the Union Solidarity and Development Party) controlled the two Parliamentarian houses at then time, made U Thein Sein, the former president of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar. It was he who was considered domestically and internationally as the key person who opened the new page for Myanmar's politics. In 2012, he represented the Myanmar government to show the determination for a total change when he was interviewed

by a journalist from *The Washington Post*⁶¹. Singapore, as the best example of a nation's success in Southeast Asia and Myanmar's strategic partner since the military regime, also attracted U Thein Sein to pay a visit. In Singapore he has urged the international communities to pay more attention and supply Myanmar with more support. When U Thein Sein was Myanmar's president from 2012 to early 2016, he earned a good reputation. He was titled 'Man of the Year in Asia in 2012' by the Singaporean news agency *The Straits Times*, and many people civilians in Myanmar also call him the hero of Myanmar's democratization. He claimed that he will support the NLD to arrange a new government according to democratic disciplines. Moreover, General Min Aung Hlaing, the chief commander of Myanmar's national army, when was interviewed by a journalist from the BBC, announced to the world that the military won't step on the democracy and let the what happened 25 years ago happen again-the military regime refused to accept the result of the national election that the NLD has the landslide victory over the military and put Aung San Suu Kyi under house-arrest again. We cannot fully estimate the actual decisions of the Myanmar military may make and the roles they want to take in the future. Both U Thein Sein and General Min Aung Hlaing have strong military backgrounds, but at least visually Myanmar has embraced the democracy. However, Myanmar's

⁶¹ Lally Weymouse, "Burma President Thein Sein: Country Is on 'Right Track to Democracy.," *The Washington Post* 2012.

advanced footsteps on democracy will further stimulate the democratic process of mainland China and North Korea as a cross-bordered impact in Asia.

After Myanmar's parliamentary election on November 11th, 2015, even if the NLD won the majority seats in the parliamentary houses, nevertheless, the proposed candidates for president elections were not announced openly by the NLD until weeks before the real election on March 15th, 2016. On March 15th, U Htin Kyaw, Aung San Suu Kyi's trusted bosom friend, one of the veteran party members of the NLD has been elected as the new president of Myanmar. Aung San Suu Kyi, instead, will be in charge of four ministries which include the Foreign Ministry, the Education Ministry, The Ministry of Electrical Energy and the Director of the President Office. The UK's renowned new agency *The Telegraph* showed that in November, 2015, Aung San Suu Kyi stated that if her party-the NLD wins the majority of seats in the two parliamentary houses no matter she will be the next president or not, her actual position will be 'above the president'. In the interview she mentioned 'president' is only a name, the same as other names. By the end of the talk she told the journalist that her government will protect the country's Muslim community and punish those who spread hate speech⁶². On April 6th Aung San Suu Kyi was elected as the first State Counsellor of Myanmar by both of the parliamentary houses, in a sense, as the leader of the biggest party in both parliamentary houses and also with many

⁶² Philip Sherwell, "Aung San Suu Kyi Tells Burma's Military to Respect 'People's Will' after Election Landslide-in Election Described 'Not Fair', the National League for Democracy Will Win 75 Per Cent Seat in Burma, Also Known as Myanmar.," *The Telegraph* 2015.

important ministerial power she already has superior power over the President of Myanmar.

However, as a domestic issue of Myanmar mainly, the international communities need to give more time for the new government of Myanmar to deal with this knotty issue and also provide more assistance. In many occasions some western ideological oriented mediums interviewed the iconic people such as Aung San Suu Kyi. They asked questions straightforwardly on some sensitive points, forcing Ang Suu Kyi have difficulties to give exact answers. For example, on March 25th, famous BBC news presenter Mishal Husain, as a British Pakistani Muslim we fully understand she deeply loves her religion. But in the case of interviewing Aung San Suu Kyi, she often interposed remarks while Aung San Suu Kyi was still answering her questions and asking difficult to answered questions as well, making Anu San Suu Kyi left to remark that ‘No one told me I was going to be interviewed by a Muslim’. Since many problems were created during the British colonial period, even though the British already retreated from Myanmar after the Independence of Myanmar, the British still need to take partial responsibilities of what is happening in Myanmar today. The media from the UK and the other western should have enough patience for the new Myanmar government.

Generally speaking, Myanmar people gave Aung San Suu Kyi and her NLD Party big responsibilities. And the western democratic countries especially the USA pushed hard for Myanmar’s democratization process. The NLD’s new government

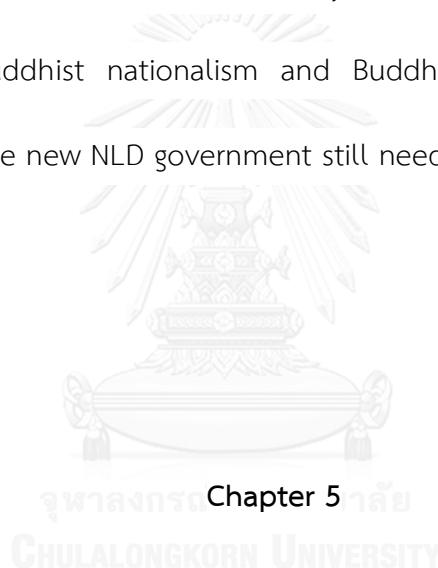
is not for granted. It carries a lot of pressures domestically and internationally. The NLD has to face all of these to make the country better such as to improve the conditions of worsened Buddhist nationalist movement and the case of the Rohingya issue. We shall not forget even if the NLD has the legitimized rights to arrange the new government, the military still reserved many powers in the parliamentary houses and the government. The Myanmar government had a bad reputation globally for its cruelty. We have no ideas that the Myanmar military will adhere to its promises to the Myanmar people and the international community again or not. Will it cooperate with the NLD to make Myanmar a more prosperous country, or repeat what happened for the past few decades after the General Ne Win's coup d'etat?

People around the world who have a strong sense of justice pray and fervently wish Myanmar a bright future and the uplifting of Myanmar peoples' general well-being like they did for South Africa and Palestine before. To be positive, a new Myanmar under the clear plan of Aung San Suu Kyi and her NLD Party will lead Myanmar to a new era, and as such the knotty issue of the growing sentiments of Buddhist nationalism could be ceased gradually. The hate between the Buddhist population and Muslim population will be smoothed. On the same hand, what is happening in Myanmar doesn't happen over one night.

On April 2nd many nationalistic monks demonstrated in Yangon to show their Buddhist nationalistic feelings towards the fact that 2 Christians named U Henry

Van Thio and U Myint Swe were elected as vice presidents. The demonstrators stated that the Christian vice presidents will ruin the religion and the country. However, Mao Somin, the speaker of Aung San Suu Kyi's NLD party responded that 2 Christian vice presidents will help the new government to achieve more goals on the issues which related to the national unity and the ethnic reconciliation.

In addition, the NLD did not give any clear attitude towards the anti-Rohingya demonstration in front of the US embassy on April 28th, 2016. The future development of Buddhist nationalism and Buddhist nationalistic movements during the reign of the new NLD government still need us to wait and see.



Chapter 5

Conclusion

The 969 Movement - the epitome of the severe Buddhist nationalistic tendency in Myanmar -- is bringing a minus score to the national images of Myanmar. The adding of the 969 movement challenges an already dis-functional Myanmar government rendering it further incapable of transforming Myanmar society. U Wirathu was jailed for causing Buddhist-Muslim conflicts before the transformation of the country, however, after he was released from the jail, a lack

of hate speech control provided U Wirathu lots of spaces to make waves to spread the hatred against the Muslim population in Myanmar.

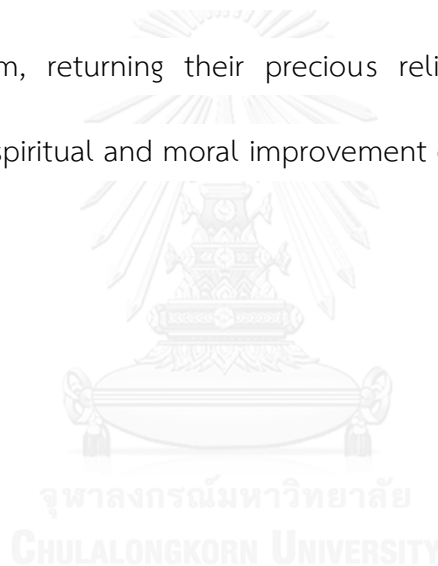
The 969 movement, as a nationalistic organization, reflects the worsened tensions between Buddhist communities and Muslim communities for the past decades. The thriving of the 969 Movement proved that Myanmar still has a long way to go to solve its complicated domestic issues. The lack of religious harmony and unity might bring future hard situations for the country and its people. The nationalistic monks in Sri Lanka give echoes to U Wirathu and his 969 Movement externally.

Buddhist Nationalism was first used to against British colonialists for the nation's independence. Afterwards it was used by the military regimes to legitimize themselves instead. Politicians who were concerned about their own power games desperately used religion for their own interests.

After the reform of Myanmar in 2010, when transitional moment took place, Buddhist nationalism became more significant and Buddhist nationalistic organization such as the 969 Movement began to have more impact on Myanmar society. With much easier accesses to the freedom of speech, the freedom of publication and the freedom of demonstration, Buddhist nationalists therefore use them as opportunities.

The rapid raising of Buddhist nationalism is an eye catching phenomenon in Myanmar. It was fermented in complicated economic, social, political, religious

and ethnical backgrounds. Stephen C. Berkwitz from the Department of Religious Studies, Missouri State University demonstrated that Buddhist nationalism can also be interpreted as an essential combination to fight against external power which is **harming** their existence in certain circumstances⁶³. However, we could see the nationalism is valid in almost every country in terms of religious belongings and patriotic feelings, how to balance nationalism above the limit is a difficult task. No matter what the story behind the scene, it needs people in Myanmar to work hard to end this problem, returning their precious religion to its original task of peacefully effecting spiritual and moral improvement of the individual and society.



⁶³ Berkwitz S C, "Resisting the Global in Buddhist Nationalism: Venerable Soma's Discourse of Decline and Reform," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 67, no. 01 (2008).

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APPENDIX

จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย
CHULALONGKORN UNIVERSITY

VITA

Yifan Zhang was born in Panzihua, Sichuan, P.R.China in 1990. He graduated from Sichuan Agricultural University with a Bachelor Degree in Social Work. He attended the Master Program in Southeast Asia Studies at Chulalongkorn University since August 2014. He published a paper about the accessibilities of the BTS skytrain system in Bangkok on Journal of Education And Social Science (Malaysia) and a paper on the spirituality and community management of the Baha'i Faith in Thailand on PSAKU International Journal of Interdisciplinary Research(Thailand).

