





The Arakanese Student and Youth Movements Series-6: The Struggle of A Hidden Colony and Globalization

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More than 200 years, the people of Rakkhapura, which is a *hidden colony*, have been struggling for their freedom. Today, we see the dawn of a new international movement that is known as *the Globalization*. We can expect that the philosophy, theories and practices of *the Globalization* will be marching forward progressively with the advancement of the 21st century. What could be the fate of the people of a hidden colony during the process of the Globalization? In this communication I shall make an attempt to define *the hidden colony* and its prospective in the context of today *Globalization*.

Hidden Colony. The term, *hidden colony*, was minted by a young Rakhaing intellectual in my university days. I prefer not to name him for the sake of his security. The philosophy was popularized by Sara San Kyaw Tun who incorporated it in the manifesto of his organization, Arakan Independent Organization (AIO)¹ in 1969.

Rakkhapura kingdom became a Burmese colony when she was brutally occupied by the Bama (Myanmar) King Bodaw in 1784, violating the 1454-border treaty² between the Rakkhapurean King Mun Khari (Ali Khan) and the Myanmar Ava King Narapati³. Our kingdom with her people was handed over to the British by the Myanmar King Bagyidaw under the Rantapo Treaty, at the end of the First Anglo-Burma War (1824-26). What could we expect? We were just the colonial salves! Our kingdom became a district of British India. **Thus, our Rakkhapura became a hidden colony under the veil of British India.** Inside the vast British Empire, which ruled half the world, our Rakkhapura was lost and became known as Arakan, her Persian name⁴. Some historians refer her as *the lost kingdom*. In 1937, our land and our people were transferred to British Burma upon its separation as new administrative unit of the British Empire. No matter what, our country remained as a hidden colony. The only difference was that she was put under the cloak of British Burma. This was done in total negligence of the protest against Burma's separation by our *Awakening Father* Bikkhu U Uttama and without any

plebiscite in our land. Sadly, *the Cradle of Parliament*⁵ did not consider that we deserved the right to self-determination. Why? Please let a Britisher answer this question. Please also let them know that when they returned home they left our kingdom divided into three parts, 10% inside India, 15% inside East Pakistan (Bangladesh), and 75% inside Burma, violating the Arakan-British Agreement (1824)⁶.

In the post WWII, the people of Rakkhapura joined hands with others British subjects to take independence in unity and form a Union of Burma, in which Arakan or Rakhaingpray would be *a federating nation*. They put absolute trust in the Bama people and their leadership. This was an attempt made by our founding parents to shed the colonial cocoon and breathe the fresh air of sweet freedom. To our great anguish, the Bama people betrayed our trust and monopolized the state power in their hand, making *the federating nations* their subjects as the ethnic or racial minorities. The blind world fails to see the history and treats us as the Burmese minorities. A Rakhaing exists only when he or she identifies him- or her-self as a Burmese or Myamarese. Otherwise, a Rakhaing is totally alienated in this world; such is our irony. Therefore, in this blind world we shall beat the drum of a hidden colony⁷.

Nu-Attlee Agreement 1947. We cannot deny that the territory that is known as the Union of Burma came into existence as an independent and sovereign country under the Nu-Attlee Agreement signed on 17th October 1947. The Rakkhapurean people were divided into two major factions at that time. The faction led by Bikkhu U Seinda wanted to become independent as a sovereign Rakhaing Republic, separately from other parts of Burma. U Seinda's political philosophy was based upon our historical existence as an independent sovereign kingdom, in pre-1784 era. However, the majority faction wanted to form a new and bigger nation in union with other people of the British Burma, joined the Anti-Fascist and People's Freedom League (AFPFL) and subsequently took the independence in unity. The Union of Burma came into existence in 1948 with a parliamentary constitution, under the leadership of Prime Minister U Nu. Greatly dissatisfied, U Seinda and his men rebelled to no avail. They surrendered to the Union Government in late 1950s and accepted the Union of Burma. The 1947-Union Constitution of Burma was not a federal constitution. Nevertheless, our founding parents accepted it and tried to transform it into a genuine federal constitution as envisaged by the 1947 Panglong Agreement.

Federation of Burma. The key to a Federation of Burma is the 1947 Panglong Agreement reached by the Provisional Government of Burma and the representatives the Shan, the Kachin and the Chin, at the Panglong Conference on 12th February 1947. They agreed to take independence in unity and form a Federation of Burma. This agreement was embedded in the Aung San's Federal Constitution that was adopted by the AFPFL Convention on 23rd May 1947. The Provisional Government of Burma was constituted with the AFPFL representatives headed by Aung San as the prime minister. The majority of the Rakkhapurean people supported the AFPFL⁸ and the Rakhaing leader U Aung Zan Wai, who was a cabinet minister in the AFPFL government. Along with Prime Minister Aung San, Minister Bo Khin Maung Gale, and Minister U Tin Htut, he represented the Provisional Government of Burma in the Panglong Conference. Therefore, it is politically right to say that our founding parents were part and parcel of the Panglong Agreement as well as of the Aung San's Federal Constitution. I agreed with them and accepted the rights, and responsibilities that were devolved upon me as their heir. Anti-federationists conspired and killed Aung San and his cabinet members on 19th July, leaving behind the only survivor, U Aung Zan Wai. As a result, the Federation of Burma vanished in the cyclone of chaos and political uncertainty. (Note: U Saw, a former prime minister from

September 1940 - January 1942, was found guilty of killing and sentenced to death by hanging. About a year earlier, a group of uniformed men in a military jeep badly wounded U Saw. He openly charged that Aung San and his men attempted to kill him. He planned his revenge systematically and acquired two hundred Bren guns from a military depot. With these guns, he killed Aung San and his cabinet while they were having a regular cabinet meeting right inside the prime minister's office, which was in the interior part of the well-guarded Secretariat. U Saw was sentence to death, but those gunmen who wounded U Saw, were never found. It is logical to conclude that the guilt lies with the person or person(s), who masterminded to injure U Saw in disguise as Aung San's militia, resulting in U Saw's deadly revenge. It was a super plot that killed two most capable men of Burma, worthy of an Agatha Christie's book).

Union of Burma and Hidden Colony. The British Governor Sir Hubert Elvin Rance invited U Nu, who was the Speaker of the Parliament, to form a new government soon after the assassination. U Nu accepted it with the approval and support of AFPFL. But, under the circumstances, he scaled down and abandoned Aung San's Constitution. His constitution that was drafted and adopted by his Constituent Assembly was a Unitary Constitution. Federalism was unceremoniously dumped. **Our Rakkhapura was melted inside the Burma Proper in the pretext of Bama king Bodaw's conquest of our kingdom in 1784; this was the exercise of Bama (Myanmar) Colonialism.** Unwavered, the Federating Nations struggled to amend the constitution into a federal system, legally inside the parliament as per provisions of the Constitution Chapter XI: Amendment of the Constitution. When the federalist movement gained momentum, the anti-federationists seized the power, abolished the Union Constitution, dissolved the parliament and arrested U Nu and his cabinet in 1962, with the limp excuse that the federating nations were planning to secede the Union as per Constitution Chapter X: Right of Secession. They introduced absolute Bama (Myanmar) military rule and covered it up with the cloak of Burmese Way to Socialism and renamed the country as the Socialist Republic of Union of Burma in 1974. **As such our dream of shedding the colonial yoke was crushed and our Rakkhapura Rkhaingpray remained as a hidden colony.** Ridden with grief and sorrow we rebelled, with the maxim that "armed or unarmed our struggle is legitimate." The Chin, the Kachin, the Shan, the Mon, the Palaung, the Pa-O, the Lahu, the Wa, the Rohingya, the Khamee, the Rakhaing, etc. joined the Karen and the Karenni who had been in armed insurrection¹⁰ since 1949.

Union of Myanmar. When Senior General Saw succeeded General Ne Win he declared as follows, in his address to the Myanmar Armed Forces on 27th May 1989 on the occasion of the 44th Anniversary of Resistance Day (Armed Forces Day).

"Comrades,

Of the three main duties of our *Tamadaw* at present, the first is that of defending and protecting the State and ensuring its security.

Our State has been in existence as an independent one among the nations of the world for thousands of years. It is a State that had stood tall with its own kings all through the eras of Tagaung, Sriksetra, Pagan, Myinsing, Sagaing, Pinya, Ava and Konbaung

Our Mother land which Anawrahta, Kyansittha, Bayinnaung, Alaungapaya, Sinbyushin, and Bogyoke Aung San had built up nurtured and consolidated through ages, cannot be allowed to be in disorder and to disintegrate during our time."

Imposition of *the State* of Tagaung, Sriksetra, Pagan, Myinsing, Sagaing, Pinya, Ava and Konbaung in the place of *the State* of our republic, Union of Burma, is Myanmar colonialism. According to him sovereignty of the Union of Burma emanates from the First, Second, and Third Myanmar Empires. Asserting Myanmarism, he also renamed the country as the Union of Myanmar.

Senior General Than Shwe, who is the current military ruler also upheld Myanmarism and glorified the Myanmar Imperialism as follow in his message to the nation on the occasion of the 56th Union Day, 12th February 2003. The Union Day, 12th of February, marks the day the Panglong Agreement was signed, as mentioned above. You may read his complete message at http://mission.itu.ch/MISSIONS/Myanmar/03nlm/n030212.htm#State_Peace_and_Development_Council.

“Myanmar is a Union in which various national races such as Kachin, Kayah, Kayin, Chin, Bamar, Mon, Rakhine, Shan and so on are living in all parts.”

“.....Thus, the national races were able to found the First Myanmar Empire in Bagan Period, the Second Myanmar Empire in Toungoo Period, and the Third Myanmar Empire in Konboun Period, achieving the glory and winning the respect of neighbouring countries.”

Please note that both of them, like General Ne Win, erased the 1948 demarcation line that separate the republic of the Union of Burma and the pre-1948 feudal and colonial era. They merged the post-1948 republic with the pre-1826 Myanmar feudal empires. Accordingly, the sovereignty of the Union of Myanmar emanates from the feudal Myanmar Empires of the past and hides her colonial subjects as the Myanmar National Races, which are divided into 135 ethnic groups. The irony is that in that ethnocentric Myanmar the sovereignty of the state emanates from the Bama (Myanmar) National Race. As such, the Union of Myanmar finally exhibits her own true self, Myanmar Colonialism. As a result our Rakkhapura remains as a hidden colony.

Sara San Kyaw Tun. As mentioned earlier, Sara San Kyaw Run was the person who promoted the concept of the hidden colony as the core philosophy of his organization, Arakan Independent Organization (AIO), in 1969. The Kachin Independent Organization (KIO) kindly nurtured his organization. Before he went to his base at the Kachin area he took time to come and see me at Rangoon in 1968. At that time, I was already a liberation war veteran, and working as a Demonstrator at the Department of Zoology, Rangoon University. Sara San Kyaw Tun was a member of the Rakhaing Net Work for Federation and Democracy. The Network was a loose organization that we established after a meeting at the Rangoon Union Students Union Conference Room, on the 2nd March 1962, the day General Ne Win and his commanders seized the power from the parliamentary government and abolished all democratic institutions of Burma. Before me, he laid down his plan and sought my support. After lengthy discussion and amidst serious disagreements we reached a consensus that our freedom lies in decolonization of Burma and that we should leave no stone unturned for that end. I shall write more about him later, but I would here like to quote a few of his philosophy. Secretary San Kyaw Tun in his AIO's manifesto expressively wrote as follows.

“.. By vociferating .. and by misreferring the word ‘Union,’ the Burmese tried to cover up the reality of the colonies – Shan, Chin, Kachin, Karen, Kaya, Mon and Rakhine – and also tried to camouflage it fascist imperialism. Those colonies are hidden and thus known as ‘Hidden Colonies’ ...

I agreed with him in 1968 and, today, I agree with him more than ever before. **We must decolonize Myanmar**¹¹.

The principle of Our Struggle. “Every body has right to self-determination.” This is the principle of our struggle. The fine points of the right to self-determination have been defined by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which can be read at <http://www.un.org/Overview/rights.html>. In our struggle of securing “the right to self-determination” we have no intention to violate “others’ right to self-determination.” This is what our leaders Bikkhu U Uttama, U Seinda, U Pyinyathiha, Bo Gri Kra Hla Aung, Chairman Kyaw Zan Hrwee, Secretary San Kyaw Tun, and President Khaing Moe Lunn had practiced and said. This is also what I learned from my grandparents, my parents and their generation, who were the founding parents of the Union of Burma with 1947 Union Constitution. In recent days, I have said, “Please treat everyone according to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and also make sure that you are being treated in the same manner.” If anyone of us violates this principle, he or she is not on the right path.

Objectives of Our Struggle. Our objective is to achieve *justice, peace, and freedom*. Again, this 3-point objective is also what our above-mentioned leaders and founding parents have said and practiced. Forceful occupation of our kingdom in 1784 was injustice. Forceful abolition in 1962 of the 1947 Union Constitution was injustice. Annexation of our republic, the Union of Burma, to the feudal Myanmar Empires in 1988 was injustice. Our founding parents believe that *the future is more important than the past*. With this belief they joined hands with all the people of British Burma and accepted the Panglong Agreement to establish a Federation of Burma, based upon the principle of self-determination. In his AIO Manifesto, Secretary San Kyaw Tun wrote as follows.

“...the collectivism is more beneficial than individualism. The leaders of non-Burmese peoples therefore agreed with the Burmese leaders to settle genuine Union...”

A genuine union, which we call a federation, is the objective of our struggle. We have maintained that “armed or unarmed our struggle is legitimate.” Our objective is not to rob away justice, peace, and freedom of others. Nor shall we surrender ours.

If anyone of us violates these objectives, he or she is not on the right path. Indeed, we, i.e. many others and I, have picked up arms and fought against the injustice and oppression. It is our right to bear arms in defense of our just and peaceful existence in freedom. I shall again quote the words of Secretary San Kyaw Tun from his AIO Manifesto, “No one except the Burmese¹⁰ themselves is, therefore, the betrayer of the Union and Union Constitution and the Union destroyer. We deeply appeal to the world to see this point clearly.”

Globalization. The word ‘globalization’ is a new term that espouses an old phenomenon, which is as old as the history of *Homo sapiens* evolution. In the light of present scientific knowledge, we have evidence to believe that globalization begun when the children of Lucy¹² dared to explore beyond their home, some 3 million years ago. Because of their bold initial steps entire globe became inhabited with mankind and interwoven with the principles of humanity. This surely was the ancient, but most vital globalization. Today, more than 6 billions of their evolutionary descendants are making a new attempt to materialize the dream of *one-world-one-family*, once again.

The World Wide Web has erased the international boundaries. An email from New York City reached Beijing in a matter of few seconds. When I telephone at midnight from my home at Columbia, Missouri, USA to my financial institution at downtown for my account information it

is immediately answered from New Delhi, India, where it is almost noon next day. These are just a few examples of the speed of today globalization.

Computers and artificial intelligence have delivered unimaginable power into the individuals as well as to the industries and governments. Very soon, robots will be at home to do the laundry and clean the house. The Global Positioning System (GPS), which is generated by a constellation of numerous satellites and their ground stations, can guide a lost motorist in a cross continental rally to its finishing line. It is also used to guide a missile, e.g. LGM-30 Minuteman III, to hit a small target across the world, at a speed of Mach 23 or 24,000 kph (15,000 mph) from a height of 1,120 kilometers (700 miles)¹³. Late US President (1981-1989) Ronald Reagan's dream of Star Wars has already materialized.

While the international pharmaceutical companies screen the world for its herbal fauna with the hope of finding new drugs, stem cell research could lead to immortality. Gene therapy would eventually wiped out all diseases. Human will live longer, healthier, and stronger with enormous power of construction and destruction.

Humankind has passed what we call the planetary civilization and is already approaching the solar system civilization. The planetary civilization is an epoch of technological achievement when humankind is fully capable of exploiting all available planet earth's resources. We will reach the solar system civilization the day the technological advancement allows us to exploit the resources in our solar system. Today, there are a few nations that are fully capable of exploiting the planetary resources wherever they may exist. They have money, technology, and manpower. These nations have spread up their enterprises all over the world.

It is such paramount power of technological globalization, which is beyond imagination of an ordinary, uneducated, and poverty-ridden person of the Fourth World, that we, the underdeveloped people of a hidden colony, face in our struggle for freedom today.

Hopes and Despairs. With today's globalized technology, human rights, education, economy, and freedom can be enhanced as much as controlled. Which direction will it go in our small and primitive hidden colony? On-going Arakan gas development project (Shwe Prospect)¹⁴ that is jointly operated by Korea, India, and Myanmar sets an example of globalization in our land. A Trans-Arakan-Bangladesh gas pipeline into India from Arakan coast is being finalized. The gas project will supply badly needed fuel to the energy thirsty India and provide some \$250 millions a year to Bangladesh for maintenance and servicing of the pipeline. After distributing the dividends to the international consortium, the Myanmar military junta could earn as much as three billion dollars a year. While Korea, Myanmar, Bangladesh, and India are preparing to fill up their coffer the people of hidden colony are conscripted for forced labor to build the pipeline. Their villages are abolished and they are forcefully relocated without compensation to make room for the passage of the pipeline. Their land is being occupied by 50,000 Myanmarese forces in the name of national security to protect the pipeline. Their poverty is deepened, as they have to feed, clothe, shelter, and pay salary to the occupation army that rules the country with the excuse of national solidarity. It was nice to hear that Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh said he would like to see "globalization with a human face." So far, we have been seeing *human faces with cruel hearts*.

A New Question. When I was at high school I learned about three *M's* in the history courses. They stand for the Mission, the Merchant, and the Military. The westerners sent their religious missions first to the east, in the name of God and peace. Once the Missions were rooted, they sent such big merchants as East India Company. The military was brought in to protect the interest of the company. Then, it was East India Company that colonized India and

Burma on behalf of the British Crown. Ancient globalization produced our ancestors who established our Rakkhapura Kingdom. The 18th century globalization left us as a hidden colony. Will the 21st century globalization make us extinct?

We shall have to examine this question very seriously.

Notes.

1. An excerpt can be read at Chapter 7.1 in Shwe Lu Maung, *Burma: Nationalism and Ideology*, University Press Ltd., Dhaka, 1989. The quotations given here are in his own writing.
2. Senior General Than Shwe failed to accept this historical fact when he said, "In our country, all the national groups have lived together in harmony since prehistoric times. Even during the feudal period, there was no thought of creating boundaries within the nation according to national groups." Please consult his speech an address at the 57th Anniversary Armed Forces Day Parade in the Resistance Park on U Wisara Road on 27 March 2002. Similar all Myanmar leaders and people, including Mrs. Aung San Suu Kyi Aris, dare not to admit their violation of the border treaty.
3. In earlier communications, I have wrongly mentioned of Ava Min Khaung in the place of Ava King Narapati. It was due to an error in converting the Common Era (C.E.) to Myanmar Era (M.E.). I apologize for the mistake.
4. Please also see The Arakanese Student and Youth Movements, Series-2: AFPFL in the Arakanpost Issue – 3, March 2004.
5. Great Britain is known as "the Cradle of Parliament."
6. Arakan-British Agreement (1824) is also known as Prince Hwree Ban Agreement. It was signed in 1824 by Commissioner De Cean and Mayor Thomas Robertson on behalf of the British Crown and Prince Hrwee Ban, Mayor Aung Kyaw Zan and Dewan Gri Aung Kyaw Hrwee on behalf of the Rakhaing (Arakan) Nation. A complete text has been published Rakhaing Ah-Man Has Hsaung (3), Arakan Historical Research Association, August 1997.
7. This phrase is an adaptation of Buddha's reply to Upaka the Ajivaka, Majjhima Nikaya 26, Ariyapariyesana Sutta.
8. Please also see The Arakanese Student and Youth Movements, Series-2: AFPFL and Series-3: Bo Gree Kra Hla Aung in the Arakanpost Issue-3 (march 2004) and Issue –4 (May 2004) respectively.
9. For details please see Shwe Lu Maung, *Burma: Nationalism and Ideology*, University Press Ltd., Dhaka, 1989, Chapters 3 and 5.
10. Please visit ADF web pages at <http://www.shwelumaung.org>.
11. The term "Burmese" means the Bama people only. We, the Rakhaings, do not call ourselves the Burmese. The same is true for the Chin, the Kachin, the Shan, the Karenni, the Karens, the Mons, etc. The world calls all of us "the Burmese" just for the sake of convenience. It is politically wrong. Nor are we the Myanmar.
12. Lucy was an Ethiopian *Australopithecus afarensis* woman, who lived some 3.18 million years ago as per the 40Ar/39Ar (Argon-Argon) dating technique.
13. Minuteman III information is from http://www.fas.org/nuke/guide/usa/icbm/lgm-30_3.htm
14. Please see Supratin Mukherjee's article *Gas Discovery Will Benefit Junta, Say Dissidents* in Arakanpost Issue-3, March 2004.

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