CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

The Name

Today the Arakanese call their countryvakhaing. The name is traditionally derived from the Pali vakkha, Sanskrit वाक्षर, synonymous with the Burmese ဗုံ့်. The country is said to have been named Vakhapura by Buddhist missionaries from India because of the prevalent nature of its inhabitants, and the transition from vakha to vakhaing to have taken place at the time of the establishment of the first city, Maunglawi, when the hermit Mungal told the founder Marayu that because the people now followed the Buddhist precepts, they might drop the final a from vakha, and be called vakhaing.

It is interesting to note that the old Tamil word for demos, derived from Sanskrit वाक्षर, is arukku. There appears to be some connection here with Tamil arukku, "shelves", said to be derived from the Sanskrit ये "laxa". It may be that Arakan, in the first centuries of the Christian era, was a major source of laxa, still a product

1 Phayre, "On the History", in Jangle, Dictionary, s.v. Bhu. This tradition is shared with the old Kama country of South Burma, where the ancient name for Shan was vākṣāra, and the original inhabitants, according to Buddhist sources, were regarded as demons. See G.S. Jones, "The Advent of Buddhism to Burma" in L. Cousins et al. (eds.) Buddhist Studies in Honour of I.B. Horner (Dordrecht 1974) pp.120-1.
3 First found in references to the Nāmaṇas in Tamil poetry of the 2nd-3rd centuries A.D. See G.J. Hart, The Poems of Ancient Tamil, their Milieu and their Sanskrit Counterparts (University of California Press, 1975) p.61.
of its oldest hill tribes. The earliest recorded trade routes to Arakan originated in the south of India. The classical geographers initially referred to Southeast Asia as the Golden land, Chryse, and the Silver land, Argyra. Ptolemy, whose informants seem to have obtained their information on the coastline of Southeast Asia from South India, may have been inclined to equate Taril orvamky or Kampana uru with Argyra, his name for the country stretching from the Red River to Cape Negrais. As has often been pointed out, evidence of silver production in this area is almost nonexistent.

The name Harikela, first mentioned by I-tsing in the 7th century as the easternmost country of India, may be connected with Arakan.

As we shall see, the histories of Southeast Bengal and of northern Arakan during this period are intricably bound together. The fragmentary prasasti on the north face of the Shittharung pillar, written in the mid-11th century, mentions Arakadesa, the land of Araka, which was probably the name for Arakan at the time. In the inscriptions of Fagan and Ava, from the 15th to the 16th centuries, the country is


6 C. de la Rue, "Orbis des Persepolitans des Chinois" (c. 50 A.D.), quoted in C. de la Rue, "Textes d'Asie centrale et du Tibet à l'Extrême-Orient..." Paris 1910, pp. 11-12.

7 cf. McBrindle's Ancient India as Described by Ptolemy, (1884, repr. Calcutta 1927).

referred to as Ḍākhuḍ/ḃākhaṅgā, from which Nicolò dei Conti, quoted in Poggio, De Variarum Fortibus, derives his Pacchani in 142010, Tarāṅga in his देव-देश-काव्य of 1668 Bākhā, and the Sri Lankan chroniclers Rākṣaṅga. The form Arakan was first used by Barbon quoted in Monsanto in 1528, and he was followed in this by the later Portuguese and English writers.

The Land

The physical boundaries of Arakan determined on one hand the extent of control possible by a central authority and on the other the opportunities for migration of peoples and cultures from Bengal on the west and Burma proper on the east. Throughout most of her history, the country reached from Lat 21°20′ N to Lat. 16° at Pagoda Point, and from Long. 92°20′ E at the Har River to Long. 95°20′ E at the crestline of the Arakan Yoma. The latitudinal spread varies from about 160 km. in the north to about 40 km. about the latitude of Sandoway, narrowing to a point at Pagoda Point. The early capitals were based on the narrow alluvial plain in the north, comprising a region between 12,000-15,480 sq. km in area, and the addition of the small strip to the south gives a maximum area of 38,700 sq.km.

The high ranges of the Arakan Yoma extend from the Chin hills to Pagoda Point, forming a series of ridges and spurs reaching to the sea, and enclosing narrow strips of land in the Kyaukpyu and Sandoway

9 List 963a, p. 94, Fagmg Hupaymā pagola inscription, Obersle, II.20-21, 804 a. 1442 A.D.
districts. In Akyab district, west of the main ranges, low ridges trend south-south-east, a continuation of the Chittagong Hills, separating the series of Arakanese rivers, Nan, Maya, Kalsan and Lemy, which have built up narrow alluvial flood plains. The flood plains of the Kalsan and Lemy rivers have coalesced to form a single deltaic plain, with a few ridges rising above the plain like islands. The ridges, of early Tertiary age, were to supply the sandstone for the religious structures and city walls of the urban period. Over the last two millennia, the extent of mangrove (slash and burn) cultivation in the hills has increased. The land of silt carried by the rivers, and during the early urban period, the deltaic areas were larger and tillable land must have spread out as islands. At the time of early settlement the entire plain was criss-crossed by tidal streams, ringed with mangroves, and even today in the southern portion, large areas of mangroves need extensive draining to alleviate flooding and drain salt water so that cultivation is possible. However, the agricultural base of Northern Arakan was capable of producing a surplus of rice, and this area was always the most important part of the kingdom.

The narrow plains behind the coastal towns of Sandoway, Ramree and Mamanung prohibited the formation of agriculturally based urban centres, although they comprised the traditional administrative divisions controlled by the Khyaw, Akyab district: Dehravati, Sandoway district, Hamawet, modern Kyaukpyu and Meikawadi, Mamanung. The northern base is also referred to as Sakhair-geyi, or Sakhairi land, while the rest of the country is known as Bohrning-teing-geyi, or Bohrning kingdom.

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12 Dwy Thin Pyi notes (pp.2 and 12, n.1) that the chronicles refer to "islands" separated by tidal creeks, while today deltaic lands separated by tributaries of the Kalsan and Lemy are referred to as "islands".
The hot wet tropical monsoon climate allows continuous cultivation throughout the year. However, although Arakan is dry for half the year it is swamped with water during the wet season, obviating means both of water retention and of extensive drainage. The problem of water supply is acute on the Ayeyawady plain. The streams are tidal and the water brackish, while the mountain streams are short and swift, and hold little water in the dry season. All the Arakanese capitals have a series of large storage tanks centred around the palace sites and apparently administered through the court.

Most internal and external communication is by water. While the ridges retard east-west movement in the north, and even north-south movement in the south, the rivers are tidal, the Kaladan as far north as Palewa. It would have been possible for sailing ships to reach Dhinshwehti, via the Thare-chauk, and Venell via the Ramchauk, both tributaries of the Kaladan, contact between the capitals and the islands of Rangun and Shanung was maintained by sea-going ships.

Overland contact with Bengal is possible via the coastal road passing from Chittagong and Cox's Bazaar to Rann, crossing the Rann river near the mouth and bifurcating, either along the coast to Ayeyawady or passing over the ridges to Buthidaung on the Mayu river, and to Palewa on the upper Kaladan, from which the early cities could be reached by boat or by road. This route connected with the Tshaw-tse road between Szechuan and Assam, which was in use from about the 4th century to the mid-7th century.
Recent excavations by the Bangladesh Archaeological Survey have unearthed a Buddhist complex at Romhot, on the road known as the old Arakan highway, two miles east of Rangoon. The archaeological remains provide a link between the great Yashōnā Buddha centre at Mrauk U near Comilla, and the 7th-8th century culture of Pədëll. I have also seen eye copies of votive inscriptions found by monks in the north Arakan Yoma, which appear to be typical of the 6th-7th century inscriptions found in the area of the old Arakan capitals. Another route used in the late 6th and early 7th centuries went from Tihmin to the Pyu capital, crossed the Arakan Yoma and went overland to eastern India, probably at Kṣarapā, whence it led to Magadha. Although it is not certain whether by the Pyu capital either Bahn or Sāktpat is meant, it seems that the route used across the Yoma went through Payawtawya road, said to have been built across Mt. Victoria by Pyu kings with the intention of invading Arakan.

If any of the southern passes were used, the easiest route to eastern India would have been by sea from Sambhavā, and no sea journey is mentioned in the Itineraries. Pədëll is never mentioned in the Chinese sources, probably because the land routes were mainly in use during the 7th century, a period of great confusion in the country.


[19] Polliot, op cit pp.131-134, quoting the itineraries compiled by Chia Tan (A.D. 730-805) dating from the period 783-905, now only extant in summaries preserved in the Anh T'ang shu, Ⅲ(n),170-120; cf Luce "The Ancient Pyu" JBES XXVII (1937) pp.239-51; A. Christie, "Wa-Ch'in P'o-lo-men" ESMAS XX (1957), pp.159-166.
Contact with the east by land was easier. A number of routes over the Yoma in the south are possible, although the best-known is over the Taunggyi pass, which connected the Sanchau district with Sefeyra. Further north the An pass provided a link between the cities of central Burma, connecting An with the Ima valley in the Mibya district. The traditional route between the northern capitals of Arakan and the city of Halin and Taga was the Buyewtungmyo road, mentioned above, which led to the Imao valley. Contact with the west via the Bay of Bengal was not doubt well-established by the beginning of the Christian era. The early references to "The Islands of Gold and Silver" which must have included Arakan, are vague.

15 R.H. Pontington in his *Report on the Eastern Frontier of British India* (1837), *Repr. Casaulti 1960* pp. 100-3, reports that "Almost all the passages between Ava and Rangoon were comprised within the ancient limits of the Sanchau district; and between Salash and Sagaing there are said to have been no less than twenty-two of these however, not more than four or five have been generally reported to..." in *Paw Thiri Rya, op cit* p. 3

16 John Orme *"Buyewtungmyo Road"* *ASB* 1922-23, pp. 33-40

17 Java has summarised the Greek, Latin and Indian texts relating to Burma in "The Ten and the Naiad" *JHRE* XIV (1924) p. 327-37 and "Burma down to the Fall of Pagan" (with Ye Young Hin)*JHRE* XXIX (1929), pp. 294-311; see also R. Fink, Le Palais de la Mer Carthaginois (Cleeborg 1947) pp. 316-61; J. Fink, La Géographie de l'Islam de la VIIIe à la XIIIe Siècles (Paris 1929), pp. 141-46; G. Candeb, Les tables d'amonts-vents et leurs relations à l'océan Orientale (Paris 1940) Hechtel, op cit.; L. C. Brier, Geography of Antiquity and Medieval India (Calcutta, 1960). Ponponius Nela, in 50 A.D. was the first to mention the islands of Chryse and Andrae between the Ganges. These correspond to the vague *Rumakati* or the *Jumagah* (ed. Oldenburg) VIII, 12, Somonpamagha, (ed. PFB) 3, 64, 65, 1, Muhh- zuke (ed. PFB) XII, 16, 64, 65, Milhonkasan (ed. PFB) 151, 64, 66, Miltolos (ed. PFB) 33, 64, 66, and *Badhakshana* (ed. PFB) 33, 64, 66, who identifies the islands of gold and silver with the *Sawara-Nagapakha* of the Rumanaka and *Siyagara* and *Samaeka* of the *Pajugapakha*. For further identifications see *S. Levi, Journal Asiatique*, *seq* (*Sp. 1916-17*), 74-76 and his "Pakha, le Nagapaca et l'Ephraimita" in *Studios Asiatiques* (Paris 1925) II, pp. 13-55.
However, after the first century the references are more specific.
In the latter half of the first century, the anonymous author of
the Periplus saw in SouthIndia some vessels 'called Kalantiphanta',
very large, which hoist sail for Chryse and the Ganges', implying a
route passing across the Bay of Bengal and along the Arakan coast. 18
Ptolemy in the 2nd century mentions a number of ports in Argyra,
which must be Arakan. His list begins with the port of Barakura,
which as we shall see can be identified as situated on the south of
the Mayu river, the traditional border between Bengal and Arakan.
Southwards along the coast comes Sambha, possibly at the mouth of
the Mayu river and a port through which the forest products of the
hills were dispersed. The same may survive in modern Sinbauk and
Simbalikuang, west of the mouth, or Sanytohun and Sabyingyi to
the east of the mouth where the Kyauk river meets the Mayu. Sada
can be identified with Sandoway (Burmae Thamno), which has a
reasonable port, probably even larger 2000 years ago before the build-
up of silt washed along the coast from the Ganges delta. Ptolemy
mentions a sea-route to Sada from Malagala in Eastern India, identi-
ified by Yule with Pular in Orissa, whereas Rawdall preferred the delta
between the Kieta and Gondwadi Rivers. 19

Archaeological evidence further corroborates the existence of a
sea-route from South India to northern Arakan from about the end of the
4th century. As the overland route from China to India became more

18 cf. Frisk, loc. cit.; Cooks, op. cit. pp. 25-26; Luce and Pe Maung Tin,
op. cit. p. 265.
19 Cooks, op. cit. p. 37; E. Rawdall "An Introduction to the Study of
ancient times in the Malay Peninsula and the Straits of Malacca",
difficult, from the middle of the 7th century we find accounts of Buddhist pilgrims who used a sea-route which passed around or over the Malay peninsula, and along the Arakan coast to the Ganges, terminating at Tamralipti. Another route from Sri Lanka was used by at least the 7th century, when the monk Wu-hing, some time between 671 and 695, took a month to reach A-li-ki-lo. Shortly before 725 A.D. the Arakanese king Anandacandra sent a gift to the monks of Sri Lanka by the same route.

The People

The nature of the population during our period is a complex question and only the broadest outline can be attempted here. The present minority groups, Mru, Sak, K'umi and other Chins can be seen to have preceded the Rakhain and the related Chaungtha. Phayre noticed that the names of the Bilu, or Rākṣasas, the demon-like creatures in the chronicle accounts of the coming of Buddhist missionaries to Arakan bear a strong resemblance to names common among the K'umi and Chin, and certainly the reputation of some Chin tribes is consistent with the activities of the Bilus. Before the slow drainage and formation of the alluvial plain of the Kaladan valley, the population was confined to limited ecological niches; the ridges, where tawngya agriculture has long been practised, for now most of the natural tropical rain forest has been replaced by secondary growth and the

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20 S. Beal, Life of Hiuem-Tsiang (London 1914) pp. xxvii. The priest Tan-Kuang [T’an Kuang] is recorded as having travelled to India by the southern sea route, arriving at A-li-ki-lo (Marikela/Arakan) where he found favour with the king (p. xxxix)


22 see below, p. 49
banks of the streams and rivers where sedentary dry rice and millet production is possible. These remain the habitat of the minority groups today.

The Nru23, who numbered 14,000 in the 1931 Census, now inhabit the northern part of Arakan and the southern part of Paletwa subdivision, while a further 34,000 live over the border in the Chittagong Hill Tracts. Professor Luo considers that the Nru entered Arakan from Central Burma, noting that "linguistic connections with Sak-Yant 7, Karen and Old Burmese seem certain, and a few influences from Old Mon likely. Connections with the Shan are not obvious. Chin connections are often plain, and pre-Chin connections with K'architecture are sometimes striking... an early Tibeto-Burman language, grafted, it seems, on an earlier pre-Tibeto-Burman stock". They are, he says, essentially hillmen, slow in progress from the state of hunters and food-gatherers to that of food producers, and were never wet rice cultivators.

Their original claim to the land is reflected in the Arakanese chronicles, which refer to the Nru as inhabitants of the country when the Arakanese entered it, and imply that both races are of the same

lineage. The legendary hero-ancestor of the Arakanese, Maraya, founder of the city of Dinekkhali, is said to have married the daughter of a Nru chief, and to have cleared the country of Bilwa who had ravaged it before that. The story no doubt has its origins in the time of the advent of lowland rice cultivators and the fierce fighting with the original inhabitants which ensued before they were able to control the land. The same sources refer to a succession of three Nru kings ruling Arakan in the confused period after the mid-10th century. During the 12th century, two Nros are said to have helped Bahraraza, King of Arakan, in his search for the Mahānuni image. Phayre mentions that local tradition regards the Nru as having been a very powerful tribe on the Kaladan, in remote times driven out of its possession by the K'Ndui, who came from the north.

The Ava and Ahaung (K'Ndui, neighbours of the Nru living on the ridges in the central Arakan district and the western part of the Palaung subdivision, numbered over 30,000 in 1931. About 2,000 K'Ndui also live over the border in the Chittagong hill tracts. Also taungya cultivators, they speak languages more akin to the western Tibeto-Burman Kuki-Chin than Nru, and are usually classified

as Chin. The culture of the K'Ndui tribes in Arakan is in many respects identical to that of the Yao, widespread in southern China, including Yunnan, and regarded there as

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24 Phayre "On the History...", p.54; L.Bernt Les Fayanze Arakanaie du Pakistan Orientale (Paris 1967) p.149
25 Ibid pp.37-8, 270
26 San Shwe Pu "The Story of Mahānuni" JBS Vol.VI (1916) p.227
a Tibetan tribe.28

The Sak (Burmeso: SETH29) were probably the next group to move
into Arakan. Once spread over the north of Burma, from Manipur
perhaps to northern Yunnan, the Sak and the closely related KES
people are fragmented in a series of tiny minorities in remote places.
Luce describes their Tibet-Burman language as "remarkably pure,
as well as old", with little admixture, if any, of Mon Khmer, and
not very much of Burmese. In the 1921 census the number of Sak speak-
ers in the Arakan district is given as only 691, but that of their
neighbours, the Dainget, also classed as Sak, is given as 699,
suggesting a mistake here, as Dainget (or Haung-sa) is more akin
to modern Chakma and Chittagongian. Luce estimated that there were

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28 See H.Barhard, The Local Cultures of South and East China (Leiden
1968) pp.33-139. Notable is the association of both groups with the
dog. Barhard, p.99 says "That the descendants of the dog god had
tails was already reported in the Rama-Ram Shah (166, 1a) and this
has been repeated frequently. In Burma, too, there was a tribe
supposedly wearing tails, and it was reported at the Al-te in
that area that they had tails on their clothes (Rama-Ram Shah 116, 6a).
"St.Andrew St.John in his "A Short Account of the Hill Tribes
of North Arakan" 3 of the Anthropological Institute II (1913)
p.30 writes that the word Ikamie means "man" when the people are
speaking about themselves, which is expanded by T.H.Lewis in
"The Hill Tribes of Chittagong and the Natives Therein" (Calcutta
1890) p.88 "'Koei' or 'Dwee' in Arakanese means a dog, and
'kee' is an affix conveying the idea of men; Ikamie therefore
means 'dog man'". Now the K'ami wear a very scanty breech cloth,
which is so adjusted that a long and hang down behind him in the
manner of a tail; add to this that the dog is a favourite item of
food among them, and the derivation of the name seems pretty clear."
Both the Tau and the Arakan K'ami wear peculiar hairstyles, con-
trived by rolling the hair into a knot at the front of the head

29 For the Sak, varioulsly called Assak, Saak and Thet, and sometimes
not differentiated from the related KES, see Lecerf, "Ethnic Groups."
pp.153-1, esp. his bibliography on p.133, and his
Les Oubles Contribution à l'étude ethnographique d'une population
de langue lao. (Paris 1967). I have also used luce's chapter IV.
"Sak-Khata (Seth-KES) of his unpublished Phases of Old Burma.
approximately a dozen Sak villages between Bawtale, about 30 km.

south of Rama, on the Arakan side of the Irrawaddy, and Dotem, about

40 km. further to the southeast, at the foot of Thunhgyang-kaung, east

of Kyaukkaung Linnar. Across the border, about 3,000 Sak live in

15 villages in the southern Chittagong hill tracts, and in others

alongside Mra and Marmas (Arakanese).30

The Sak attained a higher cultural level than any of the other

minority peoples in Arakan. Their descendants, the Loi "conquered

people" of Manipur31, are according to Hodson, "the silk manufacturers,

the smiths of iron, the distillers of spirits, the makers of earthen

vessels for containing water or for cooking in, the centres of posts

and beams and canoes, manufacturers of salt, shipers etc. etc."32. The

Loi also manufacture stone bowls which they turn from rough sand-

stone which is blackened by long-black and then brought to a high

polish. Such bowls are often found at Phaikhtaw at Yeddii,(below,

p. 334) and are said to have been used by the ancient kings.

Today the Sak women wear large round earrings inserted into the ear-

lobes, remarkably similar to those portrayed on the late 5th century

Maheshu sculptures. If not Sak themselves, the ancient kings must

have had Sakas in their employ. Lacce even proposed that north Indian

religions arriving in Burma via the overland route were transmitted

30 Berriot, Lao Cak..., p.31

31 V. K. Singh Report on the Archaeological Studies in Manipur,


32 Ibid., The Marthetas (London, 1938) quoting McCulloch's summary

in his Account of the Valley of Manipur and of the Hill Tribes

published as Select lion from the Reports of the Government of

India, Foreign Department, No.XVII (Calcutta 1859), cited in Lacce,

loc cit.

33 L. Berriot, Lao Cak, Pl. XTVI, or below, pl. XVI-2.
to the Tpyu from the Sak, noting however that they do not seem to have had a script of their own, other than Burmese and Shan.

The Sak controlled central Burma in the 9th century, when the Burmans (Mrauk) sought to rule the plains. Eight miles southeast of Pagan stands Mt Thatso (Old Burmese Saka-yota) "Fuling the Thetas" and Pagan ministers and their title, Sanokrit Mahadakki, "great and powerful", corrupted into Maññadakki, meaning "Great Terror of the Thetas". The Burmans also came into conflict with the Sak in Arakan. Luce writes:

"It seems, from the Burmese chronicles, that there were Thetas in the Arakan Yoma (Maurjapalli "The Fish Mountains") with whom some early Pagan kings were rather shamefacedly in conflict; in particular with Than-mi-kala, King of the Sak". A giant king with a similar name, Nga Missau Kafon, appears in the folklore of the Sagain valley and waterfall in North Arakan, not far to the east of Boden. Now the Pagan and Shan word for "Burman" is still "Ekad". During the Pagan dynasty, the pioneers of the invading Burmans, the Mahkud, must have been pushing over the passes into North Arakan. Was the giant king really one of the pioneer Burmans who had made himself king of the Sak?

Perhaps it was a result of Burman invasion into the central plains that Arakan suffered another Sak invasion, or uprising, in the 10th century when they are said to have destroyed the Mahamuni shrine.

34 Luce, op. cit., of his "Note on the Peoples of Burma in the 12th-13th Century A.D." Census of Burma 1891, Vol.XI, pt.1, Report App. F, p.297; Saka-yota, IB, pl.1, Fig. (950a/1224 A.D.); Mahadakki, Ep. Nara III, pt.1 p.22 (Inscr. P.N. Nos. 110 and n.t); Mahadakki, IB 1,502, 1079 A.D., 1,291, 1,292, 1,303, 1,304, and Kace, etc.
35 P.E., pp.100-7, 118-9
37 Personal communication, Sept.3rd 1973, from "Phases of Old Burma"
Arakan. That they still posed a threat to the kingdom in the 18th century can be seen from the inscriptions of the Yattara bell at the Mahâmundi shrine, where a magic formula for the destruction of the Saks is given. The Saks, then, entered Arakan from the west and northwest at an early period. Was this the invasion which precipitated the transfer of the capital to YeMII at the beginning of the 6th century, or the cause of the fall of the Sanda kings at the beginning of the 7th?

The Chin (Kyang) the most widely spread and diverse of the minorities in Arakan, now occupy the Yoma as far south as Sandoway. They usually practice swidden cultivation, growing both rice and millet, as well as legumes, yams, taro, cotton etc. although some hill Chins also grow wet rice in the valley bottoms.

Luce considered that the Chin may have been in the lowlands of Burma east of the Chin Division from the middle of the 1st millennium A.D. It is difficult to say when they began to cross the Yoma, although the infiltration into Arakan had certainly begun before the arrival of the Burman Hakhaings, as considerable fighting is recorded between the two groups. The Chin do not figure prominently in the Arakanese chronicles, and later seem to have had fairly amicable relations with the lowlanders, trading forest products such as beeswax.

20 Foehrhammer, Arakan..., p.12
41 For the Arakan Chins (Burmeese Kyang, variously spelled Khyang, Khyan, Khyen etc. in the literature) see Bernot's bibliography in Ifowos Groups...pp.162-3.
and stick-le- for salt, iron and prestige goods.

The Rakhain were the last significant group to come to Arakan.

The date of their arrival is contentious, the chroniclers exaggerating the antiquity of their hold on the land. Both culturally and linguistically the Rakhains are closely related to the Burmans, although they regard themselves as the older branch of that race.

It is well-known that the Arakanese language preserves a number of archaisms, principally the use of r for y, no doubt because of the relative isolation imposed by the Yoma, but this same isolation has also led to the development of new forms\(^2\). A related group speaking an almost identical language, the Chaungtbas (Khongsa, Kwoowtha) "river's sons" live, as their name implies, along the banks of the rivers and principally practice taungya cultivation\(^3\). The majority of the Rakhain, however, practice wet-rice agriculture supplemented by taungya on the more accessible reaches of the plains, having displaced the previous lowlanders, some of whom must have been Oiks. In Old Burmese, the name Rakhain first appears in slave names in inscriptions.

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\(^2\) One of the oldest Western accounts of the Arakanese language, J. Layden's "On the language and Literature of the Indo-Chinese Nations" P., VII, 1897, Articins Asiatiq Researches Vol.3,1911, pp.220-238 states "The Rakhain race is admitted to be of the same radical stock as the Barma or Birman, and is understood to have greatly prevailed that nation is civilisation. The Barma, indeed, derive their own origin from the Rakhain, whom they generally denominate Barma Yma, or the great Barma, and they consider the Rakhain as the most ancient and original dialect of the Barma language." See also D.Bernet, "Vowel Systems of Arakanese and Arapuyan", in P.R.Milner and E.J.A.Anderon (eds) Indo-Pacific Linguistic Studies (Amsterdam 1965) "Rapports prograstiques entre le dialecte Barma et le birman" Bulletin de Linguistique de l'Asie Vol.LIII (1957-66) pp.273-294 and R.R.Sprouse, "Comparison of Arakanese and Burmese based on Phonological Formulas" in R. Sprouse, (ed) Linguistic Comparison in Southeast Asia and the Pacific (London 1963)

of the late 13th century\(^44\). The Sakaiu may have been an advance guard of the Bama, beginning to cross the Yoma in the 9th century and finally dominating the lowlands by the middle of the 11th, when the last Sanskrit inscription was written and the capital at Veśali was abandoned for a series of smaller cities in the Lenye valley, facing east rather than west, gradually adopting the religion and culture of central Burma.

A late Burmese inscription (1342 A.D.) of the Htupayōn pagoda at Sagaing, which was built by the king of Ava, Narapati, tells of the king's accession to the throne and how the peoples of Burma from all the eight directions came to do him homage. These included the Sukhārak Mah 'King of Arakan', who ruled over the Sêk, Shwé (Mra) and Šhgyob (Chin)\(^45\). The situation in the 13th century was no doubt the result of the conflicts of the early period, resolved by the 11th century and remaining unchanged until the Burmese conquest in 1784.

The Cities

The earliest cities in Arakan, Dhamśavati (Danyawadi, Dimyawadi) and Veśali (Wathli) are both situated west of the ridge lying between the Kaladan and Lenye rivers, occupying the well-drained foothill area and backed by the ridge.

\(^{44}\) IB 1957, 1117\(^a\) 559\(^a\) (1127 A.D.)

\(^{45}\) IB 1962a, 12, 134, Sagaing Htupayōn Pagoda Inscription, Chau Say, II, 20-23 604\(^a\)/1440 A.D., cited by Luxa, for citation, where he notes that the final nasal of Mo'wei may be accounted for by the tendency in Burmese sometimes to add a nasal to a final back vowel, perhaps for euphony.
Dhaññavati (Plates IV and V) 9.6 km. east of the Kaladan, 96 km. upriver from Akhyab, was built in the middle of the 11th century, when only the upper Kaladan was above high water level. From about 32 km. south of the city the land was a vast mass of swamps and mangroves, with only the edges of the "islands" reclaimed for cultivation. Small ships could reach the city from the Kaladan tributary, the Tharrechaung on the east, while the ridge provided natural protection on the west. The remains of brick fortifications are still seen along the ridge, which protrudes into the city itself.

The city walls, made of brick and roughly forming an irregular circle, have a perimeter of about 9.6 km. and enclose an area of about 4.42 sq. km., almost the size of the contemporary Pyu city of Halin. Beyond the walls, the remains of a wide moat, now silted over and occupied by paddy fields, are still visible in places. The Tharrechaung may have fed the moat, and formed the western part.

Within the city, a similar wall and moat enclose the palace site, which has an area of .26 sq. km. Another single wall surrounds the square area of the palace proper, enclosing about .12 sq. km. At the northeast corner of the palace site, on a small hill, is the Mahàmauni shrine, once the centre of the royal cult, which played a central role throughout the history of Arakan. Daw Thin Kyi observed that, as at the Pyu cities Halin and Sàdàgàta, the majority of the population lived within the outer city, whose walls enclosed the fields in which they worked. At times of insecurity, when the city was subject to raids from the hill tribes or attempted invasions by neighbouring powers, there would have been an assured food supply.

Enabling the population to withstand a siege. Normally, the city would have controlled the valley and the lower ridges, supporting a mixed vet-rice and flax-seed economy, with local chiefs paying allegiance to the king.

The palace site, in the centre of the city, was the focal point of an irrigation system which can be discerned on aerial photographs. Water collected in the wet season was stored in four main tanks in the city proper, alligned north, south east and west of the palace. The tanks at the north, east and west are still in use today, the southern tank having recently silted over. The larger tank at the east, situated along the inner moat, appears also to have supplied the palace complex. The introduction of vet-rice agriculture and subsequent urbanisation is reflected in the chronicle traditions regarding the naming of the city. During Gotama Buddha's stay in Arakan he is said to have declared to his disciples:

"In Jambudīpā, among the sixteen countries of Mahāimadeva the food offered to the priesthood consists of a mixture of maize, beans, corn, and millet. But in this country, the food offered consists of various kinds of barley and rice; such food is eaten by the priests with relish; my preceding elder brothers (Kukusanda, Gopagovana and Kassapa, i.e. the three Buddhas who preceded Gotama) have called this country Dhaññavatī, and as the inhabitants have never suffered from famine, this region shall in all times to come continue to be called Dhaññavatī (i.e. 'grain-blessed')."

About 7 km. to the south of the outer wall of Dhaññavatī is the

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47 Porchhammer, Arakan...p.5, after the Viheśvari Thaunying and the Suvaṃśāṇaṇaśrīkṣaṇa. The mention of maize shows that the legend, in its present form at least, is a late one, as maize was introduced into India by the Portuguese. "Corn" in Porchhammer's translation presumably means "wheat".
small city now called Kamphaengphet, which appears to have been
built hurriedly and occupied for only a brief period as the kings
moved their capital southward. The city is rectangular, with an
outer moat and a wall, enclosing an area of about 1.9 sq. km.
There is no trace of an inner palace site. No survey of the site
has been undertaken, but it was most likely built during the
confused period at the end of the 5th and the beginning of the 6th
centuries.

According to the Dvanga-vat Agehamsana and the Rakkasungg Rama-recintik
chronicles, the last king of Dhammakavi, having reigned for six
years, decided to move the capital after his astrologers foretold
the destruction of the city. The "gardens, parks, ponds, wells,
pavilions, resthouses, pinnacled houses, moat and walls" of the new
city were completed within five months, although the king was to
reign for only one year in the new city before being assassinated
by his three ministers, who ruled successively for a total of 16
months. Another version of the decline of the city in the same
chronicle states that the site was inauspicious, as over 3,000 men,
elephants and horses died there, and a mass of red earth in the shape
of a dragon was found below the ground. These evil omens were construed
as being a result of the king's negligence in protecting the
king. After the king was forced to leave the city Indra assumed the
shape of a donkey and indicated the site of the new city of Vesali
by circumambulating it.10

Vesali (Plate VI) 9.6 km south of Dhammakavi is flanked by the
Kaan-cang, a tributary of the Kaladan to the west, and the ridge
between the Kaladan and Leac valleys in the east. The walls, almost
straight in the east and west, are rounded at the north and south, forming

10 RTI pp.256ff, 280ff
an irregular oval shape enclosing an area of about 7.02 sq km.
Parts of the wide moat still fill with water during the wet season.
The palace site, again surrounded by a moat, is a rectangular area
aligned slightly west of north. Its brick outer wall measures
about .45 km along the north side, while the east-west width is
.30 km. The main gate of the palace was at the east, marked by the
colossal Man- or Nobil Palace) image today. Within the inner walls
is the royal lake, which still remains full in the dry season. A large
tank in the eastern sector of the city provided the central water
storage, supplemented by a series of smaller tanks. Like Dhaśāvatī,
Veśāli had a large temple complex northeast of the palace. The city
is traditionally known as "Veśāli, the city of stone stairs"
(Vēśāalī kyākāḷīpya. Remains of these stairs, leading to the pier
on the old course of the Mann-chaung, can still be seen in the south
of the city.
Archaeological evidence points to the founding of Veśāli
around the beginning of the 6th century. The chronicles report that
in the building of the city the king was assisted by subject kings
from surrounding areas, who would have supplied corvée labour in
return for protection. Moving further to the south, Veśāli was even
more open to western influence than Dhaśāvatī. More easily
reached by the overland route, it also took advantage of increased
trade in the Bay of Bengal during the 6th century and later. When that
trade was interrupted by the Coja invasions of the mid-11th century
and the increasing incursions of the Meemā from the east, the
economic viability of the city was undermined. The next period was
characterised by the establishment of smaller capitals of the
Lenau valley, resulting in an influx of population and cultural
influences from the east.
The beginnings of urbanisation in India have been inadequately studied, and at this stage it is premature to draw any conclusions from a comparison. However, it is certain that the Arakanese, in the building of their cities, consulted the Hiê literature, notably the Arakhabas, portions of which are still retained in the chronicles. The royal cities of the Mayâpas, notably Mathurâ, dominated by the Buddhist royal sanctuary of Mat, may have inspired the builders of DhammaVâti, whose power centred around a similar royal shrine. The earliest sculptures at DhammaVâti and Vesêli are stylistically and iconographically connected with the later art of Mathurâ.

The geographical position and the nature of the economy of the ancient Arakanese cities, however, indicated a different rationale for nation building. The dominant problem was that of a regulated water supply, without which surplus grain production could not be maintained. The king, as we shall see, was symbolically given the power to control the coming of the rains and to placate the forces of the underworld in order to guarantee the fertility of the land, uniting in this rôle a triple hierarchy of heaven, earth and underworld.

Thus the state was seen as a miniature cosmos, centred around the king, whose palace was appropriately in the centre of the city and the focus of the water storage and distribution system. The king's secondary rôle was that of protector of the people in the four quarters of the country of Arakan against the inroads of the hill tribes and occasional foreign invaders. To maintain his authority to perform these tasks, divine sanction was ceremonially given in the royal shrine, situated in the auspicious northeast corner of the palace associated with the sun and the dead ancestors.  

69 cf. L. Bernet, Les Pharaons Arakanas... I, p. 160; P. Paris "L'importance rituelle du Nord-est et ses applications en Indochine" DEDDP XII pp. 313ff
This cosmological model of the state, typical of later kingdoms along the migratory routes from South China through the basins of the Irrawaddy and Mekong to Indonesia, is derived from Chinese as well as Indian prototypes\(^8\). Its importance and its ramifications will become apparent in the following chapters.

\(^8\) H.L. Sherrard, "The 32 Nvos in the Medieval Mon Kingdom" ASOS Vol. XXVII (1965) pp. 577-91