

Burma's Unique Culture: Papermaking With Bamboo

The “Rohingyas” – that’s the name the Muslims from Bengal (that is, both West Bengal, and Bangladesh), who had a lot to do with first installing Bengalis in northern Burma, and then, after the British left, they continued to drift in – are not part of this distinctive Burmese culture. They bring with them, they cling to as their sole identity, they defend and wish to promote, if they can, Islam. Burma, Burmese culture, so wedded to Buddhism, means nothing to them and they have no interest in the monuments or artifacts of Burmese culture.

The surprisingly informative Wikipedia entry on the “Rohingyas” quotes scholars such as Professor Andrew Selth, who support the Burmese contention that these people are self-named Bengali Muslims:

“Jacques P. Leider states that in precolonial sources, the term *Rohingya*, in the form of *Rooinga* appears only once in a text written by [Francis Buchanan-Hamilton](#).^[29] In his 1799 article “A Comparative Vocabulary of Some of the Languages Spoken in the Burma Empire,” Hamilton stated: “I shall now add three dialects, spoken in the *Burma* Empire, but evidently derived from the language of the *Hindu* nation. The first is that spoken by the [Mohammedans](#), who have long settled in *Arakan*, and who call themselves *Rooinga*, or natives of *Arakan*.”^[30]

After riots in 2012, academic authors used the term Rohingya to refer to the Muslim community in northern Rakhine. **Professor Andrew Selth of Griffith University for example, uses “Rohingya” but states “These are Bengali Muslims who live in Arakan State...most Rohingyas arrived with the British colonialists in the 19th and 20th centuries.”**^{[15][17]} Among the

overseas Rohingya community, the term has been gaining popularity since the 1990s, though a considerable portion of Muslims in northern Rakhine are unfamiliar with the term and prefer to use alternatives. [\[16\]\[29\]](#)

Now about that Burmese culture that the monks, frightened at the spectacle of what the demographic explosion of Muslims wherever they have been let in has meant for the indigenous non-Muslims, are so concerned to protect – for there is only one Burma – here's something that I just ran across, for example, at a website about paper-making:

“Also on display is this paper made painstakingly from bamboo fiber with incredibly long preparation times. The paper is so specialized that the common person will never see this paper or know of its existence.



The wall text provided describes this incredible process:

This special bamboo paper is made for the process of beating gold into gold leaf. In Burma, the thin strips of gold are beaten by hand until they become so thin that the gold

becomes translucent. The fold is beaten on a very strong substrate, which is the bamboo paper. A sandwich of paper, gold, paper, gold, etc. is made covered in deer skin, and then pounded with a 9 pound hammer for hours.

The lengthy and curious process of making the bamboo paper begins with retting the bamboo strips in lime for 3-6 years! Next it is boiled for 24 hours! Then it is beaten for 15 days! After a few more steps, the paper is finally made and it takes 20 minutes to make one sheet. The sheet is next cut into small squares, and then burnished with pointed sticks on a convex metal plate until the paper becomes translucent. This steps takes place underground. Finally the paper is sent to the goldbeating house where a thin piece of gold is placed on each sheet until a packet is made of about 600 sheets of paper interleaved with gold. Next it is beaten into gold leaf.

The only people that ever see this truly incredible paper are the people that work in the goldbeating house!

Should the Burmese be expected to accept this business of the "Rohingya people" – so akin to that of the "Palestinian people" in its propagandistic value and essential emptiness – in order to satisfy the likes of the Malaysian writer Thaw An, who may be of Chinese descent (he studied in Taiwan) but has become, in this matter, more Malaysian than the Malays – or is he simply a Muslim Malay, determined to ignore the rights and claims of the indigenous people of Burma?