

In its exploration of the experiences of single women across diverse caste, class, region, and educational backgrounds, this book stands as a profound testament to the potency of ethnography in unravelling the intricate tapestry of human existence. It delves deep into the lives of single women, shedding light on the nuanced ways in which their individual stories are woven into the broader fabric of society. However, it is essential to acknowledge that the book's focus on Hindu interlocutors limits its ability to capture the religious distinctness of the single women's experiences. India's rich religious diversity, with Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists, Parsis, and tribal faiths coexisting alongside Hindus, holds the potential for unique perspectives and challenges related to singlehood. Nevertheless, for students, scholars, and enthusiasts of anthropology, sociology, and gender studies, this book offers an awe-inspiring journey into the struggles and strategies employed to interpret and narrate the intricacies of human experience, as it emerges organically from the rich and textured narratives of single women.

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## The Rohingya Crisis: Analyses, Responses and Peacebuilding Avenues

**By Kawser Ahmed and Helal Mohiuddin. Maryland, USA and London, UK: Lexington Books, 2020. p. 386. Hardback, £92.00, ISBN: 978-1-4985-8574-3. Paperback, \$42.99, ISBN: 978-1-4985-8576-7. Ebook, £31.00, ISBN: 978-1-4985-8575-0**

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Following clearance operations in Rakhine State by Myanmar's security forces, Rohingya refugees fled to neighbouring Bangladesh in August 2017. This book, by authors with an in-depth knowledge of Bangladesh and the broader region, takes a deep historical look at the roots of conflict. For those happy to take an ahistoric view of the Rohingya refugee 'crisis' as a recent phenomenon, this is not the book to read. Conversely, those wishing to understand the historic causes of the contemporary conflict, take into account the importance of colonialism and imperialism in shaping processes and events leading up to August 2017 and/or take a deep dive into the range of actors involved, this

book will be invaluable. The five-page glossary alone is valuable in highlighting just how many actors and concepts there are in any attempt to understand this complex displacement.

Over an introductory chapter, seven further chapters and a short conclusion, the authors detail their 2 years of research with Rohingya participants living in camps, historians and others, funded and supported by members of the diaspora and others mainly in Canada, Bangladesh and the UK. The authors begin by asking three key questions around how root causes to the conflict can be understood, what the ramifications of the conflict are and what peacebuilding avenues might be available to transform the conflict.

The introduction provides selected historical context and the colonial roots of conflict inside Myanmar over centuries of the Burman and then British empires, detailing how the territory has previously seen people seeking refuge in the Cox's Bazar area of southeast Bangladesh, itself named after the British administrator Captain Hiram Cox. The introduction reveals not only the colonial roots of the conflict but also how ethnic minority groups continued to be persecuted by the Burmese military (the Tatmadaw) after the transition to democracy and Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy (NLD) co-sharing of power with the military from 2011 and then as state counsellor from 2015. Published in 2020, the authors could not have foreseen the coup d'état in February 2021 in which elected NLD members were deposed by the Tatmadaw, and this book should be read in light of this subsequent event.

Chapter 1 asks why over two million people who for centuries called Rakhine State in Myanmar their home are left stateless and subjected to genocide on the grounds of differences in ethnicity and denial of Rohingya identity. The chapter then provides comprehensive historical detail from 1057 to the present day. This includes the beginnings of British annexation from 1824 when British records began – a date that became increasingly important as the cut-off date for citizenship under Myanmar's 1982 Citizenship Law. It also includes accounts of Arab and Indian merchants arriving in Burma from the eighth century, the arrival of Portuguese, Dutch, British and French European traders in the fifteenth century, the fifteenth-century Dutch and Portuguese slave trading and the sixteenth-century expansion of the Indian Mughal empire. The historical details continue through the first (1824–1826), second (1852–1853) and third (1885) Anglo-Burman wars and subsequent colonial strategies. Given the often disputed nature of Burmese history, further references in this section would have been beneficial. Nonetheless, this chapter provides an overview of the ethnogenesis of different Muslim populations and the politics of language within Rakhine State as well as differing stories and folklore around the origin of the identity of the Rohingya.

Chapter 2 looks at what the authors call the 'normalization of hatred' towards Muslim Rohingya by the majority of Burmese people, be they citizens, monks or politicians from 1962 onwards. We are taken through discussions around genocide of the Rohingya and how acts that took place meet the 1948 Genocide Convention. In a section on statelessness, we discover the significance of the first Anglo-Burman war (1824–1826) according to the Tatmadaw. The chapter then examines the Rohingya conflict at macro, meso and micro levels. At the macro level, historical tensions before and during World War II, with Imperial Japanese troops against British colonial forces and the training and arming of Muslim populations, are outlined. At meso level, the importance of the 969 and MaBaTha movement inside Burma are outlined, detailing how the Ashin U Wirathu's movement, with its links to the Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP), became powerful in influencing state policies and legislation that targeted Muslims generally and the Rohingya specifically. At the micro-level, interpersonal relationships between Muslims and the majority Buddhist population are considered. This section also details how, post-2012, the Rohingya were rounded up into internally displaced person camps for their 'protection' from the non-Muslim population.

Chapter 3 maps the actors involved, their motivations, how their interests have exacerbated the conflict and the role of China within the country. With reference to Bourdieu's habitus, the authors then suggest that actors in the conflict mimic each other within the ongoing conflict. Scapegoating, othering and the roles of old and new internal (Tatmadaw, Buddhist nationalists, the NLD) and external actors (Bangladesh, Pakistan, plus other non-signatory States to the 1951 Refugee Convention and its subsequent 1967 Refugee Protocol) are then outlined. From here, the chapter touches on past cases

of repatriations of the Rohingya from Bangladesh to Burma, ‘pushbacks’ and what is referred to as ‘constructive refolement’ from Thailand (p. 77), plus details of refugees living in the UAE, Indonesia, India, Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and Bangladesh. Some details of forced marriage from Bangladesh camps being seen as a viable option for escape are included and a quote from a Rohingya refugee in Pakistan (p. 79) which sums up the dilemma facing Rohingya refugees today:

‘They won’t let me be a citizen, because they have to give me rights and they won’t call me a refugee because then they have to give me aid. [...] I am not a citizen or a refugee. I am an illegal alien. I am nothing.’

The roles of NGOs, INGOs and diaspora groups in what the authors call ‘an age of diaspora’ (p. 81) are discussed before the important question of who represents the Rohingya is posed. Rohingya political and resistance groups are detailed in a useful Table 3.1 and the interests, needs and fears of those involved in Table 3.2 (pp. 85–88). A section on the use of social media provides important details on the manipulation of images used to incite violence. The intention to repatriate Rohingya through a bilateral agreement between the governments of Bangladesh and Myanmar in January 2018 is reiterated.

Chapter 4 views the local, regional and global security implications of the Rohingya conflict and state and non-state discourses around radicalization. Then the concept of state or human security is addressed. Refugee camps are invariably difficult places in which to live. The authors detail how drug gangs, human trafficking and other crimes are ongoing. Chapter 4 then details Myanmar’s and Bangladesh’s Independence from Britain in 1948 and 1971 respectively, also detailing what the impact of Myanmar’s Independence and colonial divide-and-rule strategies had on ethnic groups beyond the Ministerial Burma area and in the Frontier Areas (p. 112). Table 4.1 details the ethnic armed organizations, helping readers to navigate the many acronyms encountered within this conflict, and the ceasefire status of these. Figure 4.1 helpfully plots these across a visual timeline. The roles of the Arakan Army and the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army are then explored.

In Chapter 5, geopolitical, strategic and economic interests of Myanmar, Bangladesh, India and China, manifested through security and foreign policies, are detailed. It also looks at Japanese and South Korean economic interests plus the potential development of a gas pipeline through resource-rich Rakhine State. A look at regional groups such as ASEAN demonstrates how the Rohingya context has been considered a human trafficking concern in the region and debates held about Myanmar sovereignty rather than issues around Rohingya citizenship. Other economic groupings such as the Asia-Africa Growth Corridor (AAGC) and the roles of Japan, Thailand, Bangladesh and Turkey are described. In comparison, the ineffectiveness of the United Nations is detailed. Hopes of repatriation (p. 184) are reiterated.

Shifting from macro to micro levels, and taking a different tone, Chapter 6 looks at potential livelihoods for the Rohingya in the context of a lack of freedom of movement, the absence of a right to work, and the lack of entitlement to land or citizenship. The chapter takes the household as the unit of analysis detailing Rohingya livelihood challenges and the high-risk measures adopted as a result of these constrained choices. It is noted that the word ‘livelihood’ itself is not allowed in the titles of projects by UNHCR or other agencies and projects such as those setting out to teach women how to sew use ‘skills development’. A section on the adoption of children reveals how the prohibition of international adoption by the government of Bangladesh leaves Rohingya women in the camps with these roles, with a lack of statistics as to the prevalence of this practice. The chapter ends by asking whether the Rohingya are refugees, given the non-signatory status and Forcibly Displaced Myanmar Nationals (FDMN) label assigned within Bangladesh. A plethora of other largely pejorative terms are discussed.

In light of the subsequent 2021 coup d’état by the Tatmadaw, the sections on peacebuilding activities in Chapter 7 feel a little redundant at present, as is the ‘Suu Kyi question’ posed (p. 230). However, it is a sign of hope that this coup d’état has resulted in something the authors had not expected but had detailed – the engagement of civil society actors and activists who ‘form the nucleus of any democratic reform movement’ (p. 232) inside Myanmar. The repatriation of the Rohingya to Myanmar and calls

for dialogue may remain a distant possibility but the Rohingya, now hosted in an area of Bangladesh that is earmarked as an export processing zone (p. 233), will need some form of long term conflict resolution beyond being taken to a remote island (Bhashanchar) (p. 238). Possible durable solutions listed in order of priority from post-fieldwork research are repatriation, resettlement and rehabilitation.

The term ‘crisis’ is used in the title of the book as a result of the passionately felt advocacy from the Rohingya diaspora around the now acknowledged genocide. However, the term ‘conflict’ within the book describes what the authors call a ‘systematic pogrom’ against the Rohingya population since the Ne Win coup d’état of 1962, six decades earlier. In Chapter 7, the authors point out that the Rohingya conflict is already protracted but became a ‘crisis’ in 2017 with the largest exodus of Rohingya from Myanmar to date. A Global Compact on Refugees is mentioned, with a worrying account of the creation of a ‘safe zone’ inside Rakhine State, under UN supervision but with a counter suggestion that this would be, under current conditions, tantamount to returning the Rohingya to ‘concentration camps’ (pp. 249–250).

The conclusion asks what could and should be done to resolve the conflict. The authors also outline how signs of the impending genocide were ignored by the international community. Summaries of each chapter then lead to a short conclusion that draws parallels with Canada’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The Rohingya conflict is already protracted and will require long term coordinated effort across internal and external actors to begin any form of the inclusive reconciliation process and/or engagement in peacebuilding dialogues. As the authors outline, for the Rohingya living in eight countries outside Rakhine State, such long-term conflict transformative initiatives (p. 274) cannot come soon enough.

This review requires a note on sources and References. This text draws on extensive, eclectic and temporally expansive sources. Anything to do with Burma/Myanmar requires verification of the accuracy of sources and this is never an easy task. Understandably, on occasion, details of sources have been left out to avoid repercussions to those providing quotes and detail. This is also a context wherein stated facts presented are often either accepted or deeply contested. A minor suggestion for any future edition would be greater attention to sources in the body of the text, the avoidance of secondary sources and reference to the most authoritative sources available. At times the authors lean on narratives such as dependency (p. 80) uncritically, rely on emotive terms and repeat key facts a little too much. However, these are minor distractions from a text which is comprehensive, full of historical detail and should be read by anyone involved in bringing about change with and for the Rohingya.

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## Reclaiming the Wilderness: Contemporary Dynamics of the Yiguandao

By Sébastien Billioud. Oxford University Press, 2020. 352 pages. Hardback, £65.00, ISBN: 9780197529133

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Sebastien Billioud’s new monograph seeks to explore the dynamics of one of the fastest-growing religious movements in Asia. Yet, it is also part of the author’s greater research endeavor to tackle the fate of Confucianism in modern and contemporary Chinese societies, a topic he studied even before the