

ARAKAN

Photographic documentary by

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Photo 01 - 2010, **Sittwe**

Over the last decades, Arakan has been totally abandoned by the central authorities and has remained very isolated.



Photo 02 - 2010, **Mrak-U**. Disastrous roads conditions, a widespread lack of infrastructure, running water and electricity supply hamper economical development in this area. It is the second poorest state in Burma.



Photo 03 - 2010, **Sittwe**. In 1989, the junta renamed Arakan “Rakhine State”, a reference to the region’s majority Buddhist Rakhine ethnic group.



Photo 04 - 2010, **Sittwe**. It took me two days to find Sittwe's small Muslim market. When I asked the local people where it was, I almost always got the same answer: "There are no Muslims in Sittwe." Nevertheless, the Rohingyas make up the most important Muslim ethnic minority of the country.



Photo 05 - 2010, **Sittwe**. They are called "kalar," meaning "nigger" or "Bengal", in order to deprive them of any claim to being Burmese.



Photo 06 - 2010, **Sittwe**. Without freedom of movement, the Rohingya minority has limited access to employment. Two thirds of the Rohingya people are very poor day labourers.



Photo 07 - 2010, **Sittwe**. This young Rohingya is waiting for the return of the fishermen to beg for fish that are too small or otherwise unsaleable. Fishing is forbidden for the Rohingya.



Photo 08 – 2010, **Sittwe**.

Waiting outside the central market in Sittwe; she is not allowed to go inside.



Photo 09 - 2015, **Thabbru-Chaing**. In 2012, a wave of violence broke out between Buddhists and Muslims. A state of emergency was declared in 2012, and was lifted only in March 2016. The Jamait Sonny mosque was one of the mosques attacked. On October 1st, 2013, a horde of Buddhist extremists attacked the village of Thabbru-Chaing, located to the east of Thandwe. Five men were killed, the mosque was partially burnt and the religious school was destroyed.



Photo 10 - 2015, **Thabbru-Chaing**. Everyone in the village of Thabbru-Chaing belongs to the Kaman ethnic group, another Arakanese Muslim minority. U Nay Win, Thabbru-Chaing's Imam, was attacked with sticks and slingshots. Violence against Muslims has been spreading throughout the whole state.



Photo 11 - 2015, **Kyauktaw**. In the space of a few years, ethno-nationalist Rakhine thinking has become dominant.



Photo 12 - 2015, **Mrauk-U**, headquarters of the ANP.
 During the national elections on November 8th, 2015, the Arakan National Party (ANP) won 4.5% of the votes. The ANP came third, behind the two main national parties, NLD and USDP.



Photo 13 - 2015, **Sittwe**. Their slogan : « *Love your nationality, keep pure blood, be Rakhine and vote ANP* ».



Photo 14 - 2015, **Sittwe**. The Bamars, eponymous of Burma, are the ethnic majority of the country. They are at the head of almost all the administrative bodies, supporting anti-Muslim propaganda, on the pretext that they are fighting for the defense of the Burmese nation.



Photo 15 - 2015, **Sittwe**. Jama, the historical mosque in the town centre of Sittwe, is nowadays surrounded by the Burmese army and has become totally mute and inaccessible.



Photo 16 - 2015, **Sittwe**. The Muslims have been running away, but some Buddhists too, including the elites who have been suffering from the poor economical context generated by religious animosity.



Photo 17 - 2015, **Gwa**. Almost three quarters of young men, whatever their religion, seek to leave Rakhine State in order to escape from poverty.



Photo 18 - 2015, **Ma Zin**. In some fishermen's villages, only the old and newborn stay on.



Photo 19 – 2015, Sittwe. Since 2010, the small harbour in Sittwe has been changing gradually. It is planned that it will become a deepwater port.



Photo 20 - 2015, **Sittwe**.

The new harbour will open a new route between Burma and the very landlocked South-East India via the Kaladan River. The greater part of this ambitious project has been funded by India, and it will certainly foster economic growth. Nevertheless the widening of the Kaladan River is likely to create serious issues for the local population due to the confiscation of their lands.

