

CHIN IS NEITHER BURMA (BAMA) (ဗမာ) NOR MYANMAR (မြန်မာ)

Pu Lian Uk

The need of a new name:

Many people, especially the non-Burma nationalities in the Union of Burma would agree to replace the names Burma and Myanmar with an appropriate new one which all the nationalities in the Union could share like the name “Soviet Union” was shared by the different people in the then Soviet Union.

The reason why we should find a new name to replace the two terms is because neither of the two names has ever been shared by any non-Burman nationalities of the Union. It is for sure that the union of Burma is formed of several nationalities who have never shared a name in their long history. According to my understanding no Chin has ever accepted that he or she is Burma, Bama, Burman or Burmese.

Burma and Myanmar the same term:

The term Burma (ဗမာ) or Myanmar (မြန်မာ) can be seen to indicate the Burman only synonymous, long before the British occupation of the kingdom of Burma by the British in the first, second and third Anglo-Burmese wars in 1825, 1855 and 1885, exclusive of the territories of Kayah, Kachin, Karen, Chin, Shan etc., in the kingdom of Myanmar or Burma.

According to the context of many publications daily use, it will be seen that Myanmar is mainly used in written form and Burma (ဗမာ) is used in colloquial form in speaking. The British adopted the term Burma from the colloquial use of the term (ဗမာ) as Burma, and this term continues to be used in referring to the country whenever one speaks about it and the term Burma or Burmese when it refers to the people of Burma in English.

Here it is undeniably clear that the term Burman is a derivation from Burma according to a regular phonetic process. Think of how Mergui (မြို့) in Burmese is referred to as Beik (ပိတ်) and Man-maw (မန်းမော်) is referred to as Bhamo (ဗန်းမော်). In another words there is a saying in Burmese: “Ye a hman ,phat a-than” (ရေ အမှန် ၊ ဖတ် အသံ) . That means reading in Burmese literature is made as it sounds in accent though the correct way could be known only in writing. In the same way it is no wonder that “Myanmar” is read and transliterated as “Burma or Bama”.

Even the constitution of the Union of Burma 1947 section 1, it is written as “Burma is a sovereign independent Republic to be known as “The Union of Burma” in the English

version, and in the Burmese version as “Myanmar Naigan thee achoke acha ana paing tha-ma-tah naigan phit tee. Hto naigan ko ‘phi htawng-su Myan-mar nai-ngan huh khaw yah mie’. (မြန်မာနိုင်ငံသည် အချုပ်အခြာ အာဏာပိုင် သမ္မတ နိုင်ငံ ဖြစ်သည်။ ထို နိုင်ငံ ကို ပြည်ထောင်စု မြန်မာနိုင်ငံ ဟု ခေါ် ရမည်။”)

Only the Union or Pyitaungsu includes all the nationalities:

The reason why the term “Union” of Pyitawngsuh has been added to the term Burma or Myanmar in statutes is that the terms Burma or Myanmar have not traditionally included the non-Burma nationalities in the Union. It was known as British Burma during the British colonialism of the territories (non-Burma nationalities were included in the context). So it is not true as some persons believe that the term Burma is coined by Thakin Kodaw Hmaing and the “Dobama A-si A-yone”.

Thus it will be found in many publication that the term “Burma” has existed long before the birth of Thakin kodaw Hmaing and Dobama A-si A-yone to indicate only the Burman and not any other people in the Union of Burma. This makes it crystal clear that Burma was not coined by Dobama A-syi Ayone which came into existence long after Burma became a part of British empire.

No nationality accepts Burma or Myanmar:

No nationality in the Union other than the Burman accepts the term Burma or Myanmar to be the name of their respective nationalities, as every nationality in the Union recognizes it traditionally to be purely the name of only the Burman. It is this reason why there has been seen no statute that provide that the term Burma includes all nationalities in nor can we see in any succeeding the statute after the independence of the Union of Burma that the term Burma includes all the nationalities in the Union.

The reason is if the Chin people and their fellow Union nationalities, other than the Burma, accept to pass any statute which provides that the term Burma, Burman, Myanmar or Burmese includes all the different nationalities indigenous to the Union of Burma, it will in the long run eventually make extinction of non-Burma nationalities as Chindwin loses its name when it joins the Irrawaddy river. Thus it will surely be to dig their own grave of extinction to exist as distinct people. Who in the world in their common sense will dig their own grave to their total extinction?

So any suggestion to include non Burman nationalities in the term Burma, Myanmar, Burman will be celebrated only by the Burman chauvinists like the State Law and Order Restoration council (SLORC), who are launching a programme to wipe out the existence of the indigenous nationalities in the union other than the Burmans .We hope that no

Democratic forces are giving a hand to the SLORC to let them succeed in their programme to eliminate the existence of non Burma nationalities.

Therefore no nationalities other than the Burmans in the union are to accept adopting the term Burma or Myanmar as the name of their respective nationalities now or in the future. It is the name which tends to assimilate the respective distinct national identities in to the single Burman identity the long run. I am sure that the Karen people or any other people than the Burma do not accept that they are Burma (ဗမာ) or Myanmar. The Chin people never accept that they are Burma (Bama) or Myanmar either. The only which the different nationalities in the Union could share is Pyi-htaung-su-tha, which means the Union people.

It is for sure that all nationalities, including the Burman and the successive government in the Union have accepted and proclaimed repeatedly that the Union of Burma is formed of the different nationalities. Thus the terms Burma (ဗမာ) or Myanmar (မြန်မာ) are the sole and exclusive names of the Burmans synonymous just as India has such synonymous names as Bharat, Hindi and Hindustan. My opinion that it is the business of the Burman whether they prefer to be called the Burma or Myanmar or Myanmarese and it is not the business of other nationalities in the Union.

Chin leader neither accept....:

Some Chin led by U Vum Thu Mawng adopted “Thakin” as they joined the “Doh Bama A-syi A-yone” organization as members of the organization and not because they accept Chin is Burma (ဗမာ) or Myanmar.

It was also he, U Vum Thu Maung, who first founded the Chin National Political Party and created Chin National day, which clearly reflected that he neither accept Burma nor Myanmar to be the name of the Chin nationality. That is Vum Thu Mawng was against the idea of the Chin sharing the term Burma (Bama) or Myanmar or even Burmese.

Founding Union of Burma:

The Union of Burma was initially founded encompassing the different territories of the Shans, the Kachins and the Chins and the Burmese on the basis of the treaty of the Panglong agreement signed by the representatives of those territories on the 12th February, 1947, which is observe as an official holiday, “Union Day”, every year in the whole of the Union. As a matter of fact, it is the Union constitution of 1947, which has created the state of the Union of Burma as a subject of international law and therefore served as the basis for the admission of Burma to the United Nations organization as a member state in 1948.

Actually, the United Nations should not allow or accept any unconstitutional government to change the name of the country as they are not the democratic representatives of the people in whom lies the sovereignty of their respective nations. Such unconstitutional government have not any democratic legality to according to the rule of law, which the United Nations Charter has much esteemed. There can be no other name for the Union than the Union of Burma as this is the name which has been accepted by the United Nations in 1948 as its member nation.

Chapter I, Article 2 of the constitution of Union of Burma 1947 provides:

“The union of Burma shall comprise the whole of Burma, including -

- (i) all the territory heretofore governed by His Britannic Majesty through the governor of Burma, and
- (ii) the Karenni (Kayah) State.”

The territories of the Chin, Kachin, Shan, Kayah, Karen and other indigenous nationalities of the Union had never been under the rule of the successive kings of Burma, nor they ever an integral part of Burma before the British annexation. It was the Panglong agreement and the constitution of the union of Burma which created the state, the Union of Burma, these are only two documents, especially the section 2 provision, which bind these territories to be in a sovereign state together .The existence of the term Burma or myanmar, indicating only the kingdom of Burma before the Union of Burma was found in 1947, makes it more crystal clear that Burma or Myanmar are solely the name for the Burman unequivocally.

The democratic force of the Union of Burma in readopting democratically the 1947 Union constitution adopted the term Burma as “National Coalition government of the Union of Burma”, (NCGUB) whenever the subject matter is spoken and written in English and the term Myanmar whenever the subject matter is written in a Burmese version. They could also use Burma in colloquial speaking in Burmese.

Surreptitious Genocide:

It is the SLORC, in trying to wipe out the existence of the several Panglong agreement signatories and their fellow indigenous people as different people from the Burman, who adopted the term Burma or Myanmar wiping out the term “Union” or “Pyi Htaung Su” which the people in the union were sharing to be in a sovereign state.

Thus any attempt at using the term Myanmar or Burma or Burmese inclusive of the Chin and other indigenous peoples of the Union of Burma is an attempt at assimilating the non Burman nationalities into the Burman population for the success of Burmese chauvinism

.It is an attempt at wiping out the existence of distinct national identities of different indigenous peoples and nationalities in the Union. It is a denial of the existence of the Chin peoples and other non Burman indigenous people in the union as different peoples, which is a denial of their Human Rights to exist as peoples, and it is therefore against the United Nations Charter, the universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international conventions.

As a matter of fact, to use only the name Myanmar or Burma by itself in the statute is either exclusion of the non Burman nationalities in the Union or an attempt to assimilate the non Burman into the Burman Union against there will amounting genocide surreptitiously.

Conclusion:

Thus the people who advocate the fraternal peaceful coexistence of all the nationalities in the Union in true democracy must be against the use of Myanmar without the term “Union of” “Pyi Htaung Su”.