Heritage destruction in Myanmar’s Rakhine state: legal and illegal iconoclasm

Ronan Lee & José Antonio González Zarandona

To cite this article: Ronan Lee & José Antonio González Zarandona (2020) Heritage destruction in Myanmar’s Rakhine state: legal and illegal iconoclasm, International Journal of Heritage Studies, 26:5, 519-538, DOI: 10.1080/13527258.2019.1666294

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/13527258.2019.1666294

Published online: 21 Sep 2019.

Submit your article to this journal

Article views: 356

View related articles

View Crossmark data
Heritage destruction in Myanmar’s Rakhine state: legal and illegal iconoclasm

Ronan Lee and José Antonio González Zarandona

Queen Mary University of London, International State Crime Initiative, London, UK; Alfred Deakin Institute for Citizenship and Globalisation, Deakin University, Burwood, Australia; Centro de Investigacion y Docencia Economicas, División de Historia, Mexico, Mexico

ABSTRACT
In this article we map heritage destruction in Myanmar’s Rakhine state. We outline the historic and contemporary political context in Myanmar explaining the background of the Rohingya Muslim ethnic group and addressing the contribution of religion and political change to anti-Rohingya discrimination and violence in Myanmar. We trace patterns of heritage destruction as legal and/ or illegal iconoclasm and specify the key elements of heritage destruction in Rakhine state. Our analysis focusses on the use of heritage destruction in Rakhine state as a tool of genocide, and we suggest that heritage destruction in Myanmar’s Rakhine state ought to be understood as part the authorities’ policies of genocide against the Rohingya. We conclude the article with a call for UNESCO to act to extend its ‘Unite4Heritage’ campaign to include the destruction of heritage by state actors.

ARTICLE HISTORY
Received 30 May 2019
Accepted 3 September 2019

KEYWORDS
Heritage destruction; Myanmar; Rohingya; Genocide; UNESCO; iconoclasm

Introduction
In recent years, the deliberate destruction of cultural heritage, particularly in conflict contexts, has become increasingly visible. Cultural heritage destruction in Afghanistan, Iraq, Mali, and Syria drew the attention of the world’s media, caused public outcry, and in one instance led to a successful International Criminal Court (ICC) prosecution (Burke 2016; González Zarandona, Albarrán, and Isakhan 2018; Kraak 2018; Moffett 2017; UN News 2017a). Although the deliberate destruction of cultural heritage in Myanmar (Figure 1) has been less visible internationally, throughout the 2017 Rohingya refugee crisis there were numerous documented examples of cultural heritage destruction both by the Myanmar authorities and by ordinary residents of Myanmar (a country often still known as Burma1). The 2017 Rohingya refugee crisis drew world attention to the circumstances of this persecuted Muslim ethnic minority and to the nature of the military crackdown that caused around 700,000 Rohingya to flee their homes in Myanmar’s Rakhine state for Bangladesh (UN News 2017b; OCHA 2018; UNHCR 2018).

During 2017, Myanmar’s military, known as the Tatmadaw, partially or totally razed almost 300 Rohingya villages and destroyed numerous mosques in northern Rakhine state (Human Rights Watch 2017a, 2017b, 2018). The Myanmar authorities have subsequently remodelled large parts of northern Rakhine state which has included constructing at least one military base on lands previously occupied by the Rohingya (Amnesty International 2018a, 2018b; Associated Press 2018; Child 2018). Largescale destruction of heritage in Rakhine state did not begin in 2017. During 2012, conflict between Buddhists and Muslims caused the destruction of entire neighbourhoods around the Rakhine state capital, Sittwe,
displacing more than 140,000 people, overwhelmingly Muslims (Human Rights Watch 2012; Republic of the Union of Myanmar 2013).

In this article we map heritage destruction in Myanmar’s Rakhine state from the time of this 2012 violence to the present, and we consider the role of religion and recent political change in violence towards cultural heritage in contemporary Myanmar. We trace patterns of heritage destruction as legal and/or illegal iconoclasm specifying the key elements of heritage destruction in Rakhine state. Our analysis focusses on the use of heritage destruction as a tool of genocide, and we suggest that heritage destruction in Rakhine state ought to be understood as part of the authorities’ policies of genocide against the Rohingya. We conclude the article with a call for UNESCO to act to extend its ‘Unite4Heritage’ campaign to include the destruction of heritage by state actors.

Traditionally, iconoclasm was considered the destruction of images – paintings and statues, mainly – for religious and political motives. Particular (Western) iterations of this phenomenon have been identified during the eighth and ninth centuries in Byzantium, and the Reformation in Europe, where religious images were considered idols and thus erased to avoid idolatry. Nonetheless,
the concept of iconoclasm has gradually evolved to start considering other types of destruction, not only images, but also ideas, buildings, cultural property and heritage; the targets of iconoclasts because they reflect a part of a group’s identity (see Latour 2002 for an extended discussion).

In this paper, we not only consider Rohingya heritage as those culturally significant sites for them, such as mosques and neighbourhoods, but also the traditions practised by the Rohingya for centuries in those sites. The paper does not point to a particular type of 'heritage', but rather it takes heritage in its broadest meaning. That is, we consider heritage not only the tangible expressions of Rohingya culture as exemplified by mosques, but also other forms considered intangible and moveable, and providing evidence of long-term Rohingya settlement in Rakhine state such as the presence of Rohingya villages (the destruction of which can serve to erase physical evidence of long-term Rohingya residency). In doing so, the aim of this paper is not to detail all the heritage which has been destroyed in Rakhine state, but to map the destruction of Rohingya heritage to demonstrate the link between heritage destruction and a genocidal campaign against the Rohingya.

We characterise heritage destruction by ordinary residents, mobs or violent extremist groups as ‘iconoclasm from below’ or illegal iconoclasm. This is iconoclasm which may be deemed illegal by the government. This type of deliberate heritage destruction has been the focus of UNESCO’s ‘Unite4Heritage’ campaign which urges state actors to highlight and tackle heritage destruction by violent extremist groups (UNESCO 2018). However, much of the deliberate heritage destruction in Rakhine state, including most destruction of mosques, is perpetrated by state actors and is appropriately characterised as ‘iconoclasm from above’ or legal iconoclasm – the destruction of material culture that is perpetrated by the state and therefore perceived as legitimate within that state’s legal framework. Characterising the destruction of heritage in this manner allows for a nuanced account of the recent landscape of heritage destruction in Rakhine state. This leads us to argue in this article that UNESCO’s focus on preventing the deliberate destruction of heritage is too heavily focused on preventing iconoclasm from below and does not adequately seek to prevent iconoclasm from above.

Patterns of heritage destruction

Scholars working on the destruction of religious images during the Reformation in Europe claim there are two types of iconoclasm, based on who is the perpetrator (Eire 1986; Christin 1991). We argue that the destruction of heritage in Myanmar’s Rakhine state in recent times can be characterised using a similar framework. In adapting the framework that Eire and Christin used to explain some of the consequences of iconoclasm in Europe to the destruction of Rohingya heritage in Myanmar we point to Freedberg’s (2018) work, which demonstrates that the resonance of past acts of iconoclasm is astonishingly high in present acts. He successfully demonstrates how, for example, some of the destructions are replicated (perhaps unconsciously), thus drawing a line from the past to more recent moments of iconoclasm. Freedberg shows the ways in which some statues during the Reformation were defaced and humiliated – to dispossess them of their power – and how similar actions have been enacted in more recent times, with statues of Saddam Hussein targeted after his fall and statues of the Shah of Iran similarly treated. Likewise, adapting a framework that satisfactorily explains the form that the destruction of religious imagery took in Europe suits the Myanmar case, not because we believe that the political instability that occurs in Myanmar is identical to that of Northern Europe, but because the destruction of heritage occurs in a similar fashion to these historic examples.

Iconoclasms that are sponsored and encouraged by a state are considered as iconoclasm from above, or legal iconoclasm. That is, the state can use iconoclasm as a tool to obliterate certain ideologies, while promoting others, including communities’ rituals that the State may estimate ‘traditional, superstitious, and idolatrous’ (Noyes 2016, 1). By erasing these communities and their material culture, iconoclasm becomes an instrument of power used by the state to re-assert its
authority. As such, the state validates the destruction as it appears that it is operating within the law. Eire (1986, 154) identified this type of iconoclasm as ‘that which is effected with government approval (though not necessarily under its direction).’ Freedberg (2018) has extensively documented how, for example, the revolt in the Netherlands, the Beeldenstorm, during the sixteenth century that caused the destruction of statues and images was encouraged, in some instances, by the same local authorities. Likewise, since the military coup of 1962, Burma/Myanmar’s ethnic Bamar-dominated central authorities have regularly been accused of undertaking a nationwide campaign of Burmanisation with the aim of homogenising the country’s ethnic, religious and cultural minorities into a hegemonic Bamar state (Holmes 1967; Berlie 2008; Rogers 2013). A frequently referenced element of this campaign has been the destruction of non-Buddhist religious icons and structures, and often their replacement with Buddhist icons, particularly in areas with higher numbers of non-Buddhist residents like Chin, Kachin, Karen, and Rakhine states (US Department of State 2001, 2017; Sithu Aung Myint 2016; Coconuts Yangon 2018).

An alternate type of iconoclasm is the destruction perpetrated by individuals or by mobs which can be considered illegal and from below. These destructions are considered illegal because they are not allowed by the state and break the law. Removing or destroying cultural property regarded by the state as part of their heritage is also deemed illegal. The main difference between these two types of iconoclasm is that the perpetrator either fulfils the law or not. In some cases, one may ensue the other. For example, in 2003, the army of the USA performed a staged iconoclasm by toppling the statue of Saddam Hussein in Baghdad’s Firdos Square to signal the end of Hussein’s regime. The toppling of the statue, albeit an orchestrated performance by the USA military, motivated people to start attacking and hitting the statue once it was on the ground. In this case, we can see both iconoclasts being performed concurrently. However, in some cases it is only possible to discern one type of iconoclasm and at another times it can be difficult to draw a line to show when one finishes and the other starts. According to Warnke, while iconoclasm from above can be celebrated as a great moment in history precisely because it erases the old symbols and prepares the way for the new symbols to come, iconoclasm from below is often considered ‘blind vandalism’ (cited by Gamboni 1997, 23). Groys (2002) elaborates on this point, calling for careful consideration of who wins and who loses in this war of symbols, because the victors may lose the battle in the end and their symbols removed in the future.

Tackling such a sensitive phenomenon can be challenging given the context and circumstances specific to Myanmar. Studying the destruction of cultural heritage in the context of Myanmar’s Rakhine state should therefore not be seen as a sideline from important humanitarian considerations: the welfare of more than one million Rohingya displaced from Myanmar and forced to live as refugees in Bangladesh. Studying the destruction of heritage as part of the genocidal campaign that we argue has been orchestrated by the Myanmar state can show the extent to which the recent destruction and remodelling of parts of northern Rakhine state forms part of a long-term campaign by Myanmar’s authorities against the Rohingya.

**Violence and heritage destruction**

The destruction of material culture that belongs to a social group for religious and/or political motivations has been used as a tool since Antiquity by countless armies and empires to demonstrate power over conquered people. This practice has often been used as part of a strategy to destroy groups’ identities, histories and memories, their past and property. Clay (2012) explains this by asserting: ‘The breaching of representational objects’ physical integrity continues to be a means by which diverse groups and individuals represent and imagine contested power relations between a state, its citizens and wider communities’. The study, analysis and interpretation of this phenomenon has taken a turn in the last two decades thanks to a series of studies that have established that many acts of physical violence against people are usually accompanied by the destruction of heritage with different consequences and motivations (Bevan 2006; Mitchell 2015; Walasek 2015). A useful case study is the destruction of heritage in the territory of the former
Yugoslavia during the 1990s, including the destruction of mosques and significant cultural sites such as the National and University Library in Sarajevo in 1992, and the razing of entire villages including their mosques, to erase evidence of previous occupation by Muslims (Walasek 2015). The destruction that occurred in the Balkans demonstrated an explicit link between the destruction of heritage and the genocide that were both perpetrated on the ground. Thus, the acts of heritage destruction were not considered isolated events but acts of violence that sought to erase memories of the past embedded in archives, buildings, and traditions, deeply affecting the many groups’ collective identity that contributed to the social fabric of Yugoslavia.

The deliberate destruction of cultural heritage often involves the systematic targeting of cultural property to erase the traces left by a cultural group and claim the group has never existed or inhabited that territory, thus allowing history to be rewritten through the creation of new symbols. Feierstein (2014, 2015) explains that erasing evidence of the past is often a tactic used by perpetrators of genocide to reorient societies for a future without the targeted group. The motivation to destroy material culture arises from a mandate that seeks to delimit the territory that the group inhabits (Mitchell 2015). By destroying the cultural features that are considered to make the territory unique (these characteristics might include buildings of religious or political significance, images and traditions), the perpetrators claim the territory for themselves. The destruction of cultural heritage symbolises, by proxy, the destruction of the group to which the targeted material culture belongs. Research on this topic has framed the destruction of certain sites and places as part of the objective of erasing and destroying not only material traces of the past but also seeking to eradicate memories associated to those sites and places (Bevan 2006).

Beyond the work of these scholars that have established the links of heritage destruction with the destruction of evidence of the past, the concepts of iconoclasm (destruction of images for political and religious reasons), defacement (destruction of human or facial characteristics in images) and vandalism (thoughtless and wanton destruction of property) are also often employed by scholars to explain why and how a destruction of cultural heritage occurred and the motivations behind it (Freedberg 1989; Taussig 1999; Mitchell 2015). For example, destruction of heritage in Iraq and Syria has been characterised as iconoclasm (Isakhan and González Zarandona 2018) due to theological arguments that the so-called Islamic State (IS) put forward in their digital mediated propaganda through social media to justify the destruction of archaeological artefacts (González Zarandona, Albarrán, and Isakhan 2018). A key argument present in the literature is that the act of destruction is not meaningless, but instead it has a meaning in itself and occurs, in the first place, due to the symbolic power that the object exudes or possesses – this is a form of communication with a specific message. As Gamboni claimed (Gamboni 1997, 22), iconoclasts ‘must be considered as means of communication in their own right, even if the “material” they make use of is – or was – itself a tool of expression or communication’. However, heritage destruction is only meaningful as far as the message delivered resonates within the targeted group, and other stakeholders, and produces a reaction. An attack upon a Shia mosque, for example, will not have the same resonance in a Christian community as in the Shia community where the attack took place. As Isakhan, González Zarandona, and Jamal 2019, 274) has demonstrated, the targeting of a culturally significant site may trigger violent acts against people perceived to be the perpetrators, in retaliation for the attack on the heritage site, thus unleashing catastrophic consequences as was the case in Iraq, when the Shia Al-Askari mosque was targeted by Al-Qaeda in 2006.

During the twenty-first century, the Taliban’s destruction of the Bamiyan Buddhas to avoid idolatry amongst the Afghan population, inscribed the destruction of heritage as part of the deliberate intent to destroy religious images. The notion of iconoclasm was mainly adopted to characterise the destruction of these statues, but there was also emphasis on the primitive and barbaric nature of the Taliban regime – a claim that resurfaced during 2015 when IS released their infamous video shot at Mosul Museum. However, in defining the destruction of the Bamiyan statues, an array of scholars (Gamboni 2001; Flood 2002; Falser 2011) were successful in framing the destruction as an attack not on the idol of Buddha, but on heritage as an idol, derived from policy as exercised by international bodies, such as UNESCO, that oversee the safekeeping,
preservation and conservation of cultural heritage. The fact that this heritage destruction was characterised as an iconoclasm, reflects the emergence of this phenomenon in recent decades as a violent act that fuses political and religious motives and attacks where it most hurts. In this case, the destruction of the statues also aimed to destroy the Western values attached to the conservation and preservation of cultural heritage policy in Afghanistan. The Buddhas of Bamiyan’s destruction highlights how defining heritage destruction is not always straightforward and depends on its context. It is to the Myanmar historic and contemporary political context that we now turn.

Myanmar: historic and contemporary political context

Myanmar is an overwhelmingly Buddhist Southeast Asian nation located on the Bay of Bengal. Bordered by Bangladesh, China, India, Laos, and Thailand, its controversial 2014 census – the first in three decades – reported a national population of around 50 million people that is estimated to have increased to more than 54 million by 2019 (Department of Population 2019; Myanmar Information Management Unit 2014). However, Myanmar’s government, keen to maintain the official position that the Rohingya do not represent a legitimate Myanmar ethnic group, prevented enumerators from collecting data from more than one million people who wished their ethnicity to be recorded as ‘Rohingya’. Living mostly in Rakhine state, close to Myanmar’s westerly border with Bangladesh, the Rohingya are a persecuted Muslim group and are denied citizenship rights by Myanmar’s Buddhist dominated authorities (Human Rights Watch 2012; Lee 2014; Amnesty International 2017a). By 2018 the Rohingya represent one of the world’s largest stateless groups and with this statelessness has come official discrimination, appalling rights abuses, and waves of destruction of Rohingya heritage (Ibrahim 2018), as has been the case in other similar contexts (Saunders 2008; De Cesari 2010).

Nationwide, 87.9% of Myanmar’s residents are Buddhist and only 4.3% Muslims, but in Rakhine state the Muslim population is greater than 35% (Department of Population 2015). The most populous ethnic group in Myanmar is the ‘Bamar’ (also known as ‘Burman’). This mostly Buddhist group comprises close to three-quarters of Myanmar’s population and has dominated the institutions of Myanmar since the country gained independence from Britain in 1948. The dominant ethnicity in Rakhine state is a Buddhist group known as the ‘Rakhine’ who account for a little under 2 million of Rakhine state’s around 3.2 million people (Republic of the Union of Myanmar 2015). The area today known as Rakhine state had been an independent kingdom (known as Arakan), with a Buddhist ethnic Rakhine majority but with a sizeable and well-integrated Muslim minority when it was invaded by the Burmese in 1784. This was less than four decades before the Burmese subsequently lost this territory to the British during the 1820s. Burma’s Konbaung dynasty, which ruled Burma from the early 1750s was militarily aggressive and claimed territory in areas that are today parts of Bangladesh, India, Laos, and Thailand (Hall 1950). Conflict with the British who had relatively recently gained control of territory adjacent to Arakan and subsequent defeat in the first of the three Anglo-Burmese Wars saw Burma’s Arakan territory ceded to the British (Treaty of Yandabo 1826). Military defeat ended Burmese sovereignty in 1886 and Burma became a province of British India, ruled from Calcutta and later New Delhi (Phayre 1883; Hall 1950; Myint-U 2007). The ultimate humiliation for many Burmese Buddhists at this time came when the British, during December 1885, exiled the last Burmese king, Thibaw, to India (Christian 1944).

These military and political reversals significantly dented Burmese pride, leaving many among the country’s Buddhist population resentful of the British, and over time, of those perceived to have benefited by British colonial rule – in recent decades the Rohingya have borne the brunt of this bitterness. Resentment was fuelled by perceptions, often valid, that the British privileged those of Indian origin, frequently Muslims and with darker skin than many Buddhist Burmese and Rakhine, for plum roles within the colonial administration (Charney 2009; Taylor 2009; Steinberg
The British imported large numbers of administrators from the sub-continent and encouraged the inward migration of low-income labourers into the province of Burma which was considered underpopulated for Britain’s commercial purposes. Indian moneylenders arrived too and through loan defaults would become major landowners in colonial Burma (Turnell and Vickary 2008; Taylor 2009; Steinberg 2010).

This colonial-era migration contributed to attitudes that persist in contemporary times that Indian, often Muslim, migrants flooded into colonial Burma from the sub-continent and then gained an economic advantage over the country’s mostly Buddhist indigenous population. These attitudes greatly contribute to contemporary ethnic and religious tensions, as does the perception among many Myanmar Buddhists that Rakhine state Muslims, by supporting the British rather than the Japanese during the Second World War, demonstrated a disloyalty to Burmese Buddhist aspirations for independence (Charney 2009; Steinberg 2010; International Crisis Group 2013, 2014). Today, colonial era migration to Burma, particularly to Arakan, is a commonly raised grievance by Myanmar’s Buddhist nationalists. Despite Muslims living in the Rakhine state area for centuries, nationalists claim the ancestors of the contemporary Rohingya were colonial-era imports who ought not to be considered a group indigenous to Burma and thus not entitled to collective rights to citizenship like other ethnic groups, whose pre-colonial heritage is acknowledged (Freeman 2017; Peck 2017).

The Burmese independence movement led by Aung San, father of Myanmar’s current de-facto civilian leader, and Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Aung San Suu Kyi, auspiced a Japanese occupation during the Second World War to push out the British. A change of heart and of sides by Aung San’s Burmese forces, and Japanese wartime defeat saw the return of the British to power in Burma and the post-war grant of independence in 1948. Independent Burma was democratic and was created as a multi-ethnic and multi-religious state whose laws acknowledged the citizenship rights of virtually all resident within its borders when independence was achieved, including the Rohingya Muslim population (Union of Burma 1947, 1948). But Burma was democratic for only a brief period that ended with a military coup in 1962. Subsequent military-led governments privileged Bamar ethnicity and the Buddhist religion, crushed political opposition, sealed the country from the outside world, oversaw an economic collapse, continual conflict between the military and dozens of ethnic armed groups, and enforced one of the world’s most restrictive media environments (Charney 2009; Steinberg 2010).

Burma’s military-led governments considered Burma to rightfully be a Buddhist, Bamar-dominated country and they aggressively discriminated against ethnic and religious minorities, arbitrarily applied citizenship laws and pursued policies to force those they considered ‘foreigners’ out of the country (Berlie 2008; Walton 2013; Egreteau 2014). Who might be considered foreign was determined by the military-led government not by reference to existing citizenship laws but based on the military government’s view that Bamar ethnicity and the Buddhist religion ought to be considered the norm of national identity (Walton 2013). The subsequent policies of cultural assimilation are commonly described as Burmanisation and routinely involved discrimination against minority groups in areas of culture, language, religion and education (Holmes 1967; Collins 2002; Berlie 2008). The Rohingya, who had previously been accepted as citizens found these and other rights were rejected by the authorities throughout the period of military rule (Ibrahim 2018). The authorities rejected Rohingya claims to pre-colonial heritage and the group increasingly became victims of official persecution and rights restrictions including strict limits on their freedom of movement, access to healthcare and education, livelihood opportunities, and restrictions on their ability to marry and have children (Médecins Sans Frontières-Holland 2002; Lee 2014; Green, MacManus, and de la Cour Venning 2015, 2018; Amnesty International 2016, 2017a; Physicians for Human Rights 2016).

Military-led governments remained in power until a quasi-civilian administration led by former general Thein Sein won the stage-managed 2010 general election. This administration did not pursue policies to improve the Rohingya’s circumstances but did endorse policy
liberalisations in areas including the economy, media, and politics (Zin and Joseph 2012; Renshaw 2013; Lee 2016). Policy changes to telecommunications law meant that from 2012, internet access became accessible to ordinary Myanmar residents for the first time. The 2015 general election saw the opposition National League for Democracy (NLD) party led by Aung San Suu Kyi win a substantial majority of elected constituencies. An NLD administration took political power in 2016, with Aung San Suu Kyi becoming State Counsellor – a Prime Ministerial styled role created to overcome a constitutional hurdle barring her from the Presidency because of her marriage to a foreigner and her children’s foreign citizenships. The NLD administration made little effort to improve the Rohingya’s circumstances, did not acknowledge the group as having a rightful claim to citizenship rights, and as is discussed below, the most widespread destruction of Rohingya heritage took place during this time.

In a Myanmar where ethnicity and religion have the potential to be major political fault lines, greatly improved access to communication technology and political freedoms, allowed by the country’s quasi-civilian governments, meant Myanmar’s residents could receive and disseminate opinions about political and social issues, including issues of ethnicity and religion, with the click of a button. Myanmar’s education system has been poorly funded for decades, and internet and media literacy are low (Baker 2016; UNESCO and IMS 2016). Journalists working in Myanmar often report that people accept news posted to Facebook as being as reliable as news sourced from mainstream media outlets (Douek 2018). Among the most active political users of social media in Myanmar are extreme nationalist groups like the monk-led Ma Ba Tha (Association for the Protection of Race and Religion), and figures like the activist monk Ashin Wirathu, dubbed the ‘Buddhist Bin Laden’, who argue Myanmar’s national interest is served by the protection of the special place of the Buddhist religion that is threatened by other religions, especially Islam (Beech 2013). Wirathu and other Buddhist nationalists tap into dissatisfaction with immigration from the sub-continent during the British colonial period, beliefs that many Muslims did not adequately support the Burmese independence movement, and perceptions that Myanmar’s Buddhist character is threatened by Islam, to call for restrictions on the rights of Muslims in Myanmar, like the Rohingya.

Despite less than 5% of Myanmar’s residents being Muslim, Wirathu and other nationalists argue Myanmar’s Buddhist religion is at an existential threat from the encroachment of Islam. They point to former Buddhist countries that are now majority-Muslim like Afghanistan, Indonesia and Malaysia to suggest that unless local Islam is held in check, Myanmar and its Buddhist character could follow a similar path. By doing so, they elevate anti-Islam attitudes and actions to a nationalist’s moral duty. In this context, with Myanmar’s Buddhist religion considered by many to be under siege from Islam, nationalists have successfully used Myanmar’s new media and political freedoms to promote anti-Muslim hate speech and to politically marginalise Muslims, particularly the Rohingya Muslim minority (Lee 2019). This marginalisation has included successfully pursuing the enactment of the ‘Protection of Race and Religion’ laws, which limit the rights of ethnic and religious minorities and women, and by convincing both the pro-military Union Solidarity and Development Party and Aung San Suu Kyi’s opposition NLD to field no Muslim candidates at the 2015 general election. As a result, there are no Muslim representatives in Myanmar’s parliament and in Rakhine state, the Rohingya who were disenfranchised prior to the 2015 polls, often live in areas represented by Buddhist nationalist politicians. While Myanmar officialdom has discriminated against the Rohingya for decades, today anti-Rohingya attitudes have also become part of Myanmar’s political mainstream.

Genocide, anti-Rohingya violence, and heritage destruction

for Human Rights (2013, 2016), and Refugees International (2014). A study by the International State Crime Initiative concluded the Rohingya were victims of genocide, having found,

“... ample evidence that the Rohingya have been subjected to systematic and widespread violations of human rights, including killings, torture, rape and arbitrary detention; destruction of their homes and villages; land confiscation; forced labour; denial of citizenship; denial of the right to identify themselves as Rohingya; denial of access to healthcare, education and employment; restrictions on freedom of movement, and State-sanctioned campaigns of religious hatred” (Green, MacManus, and de la Cour Venning 2015, 15).

Periodically, this discrimination manifests violently, and actions by Myanmar’s military contributed to a series of large-scale forced migrations of Rohingya to Bangladesh during the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s (Amnesty International 1992; Human Rights Watch 2000). In recent years, two periods of violence in Rakhine state stand out as significant inflection points: the 2012 violence between Buddhists and Muslims – characterised by the authorities as communal conflict – and the Myanmar military’s 2017 ‘clearance operation’ (UN News 2017b; UN Human Rights Council 2018). These examples of destruction include both iconoclasm from above and iconoclasm from below and we argue that both instances of violence and the associated destruction should be understood as part of an official strategy of genocide against the Rohingya that aims to remove them from Myanmar as well as evidence of their long-term residence there.

Article II of the ‘Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide’ (Genocide Convention) defines genocide as

“any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such: (a) Killing members of the group; (b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; (d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group; (e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group” (UN General Assembly 1948).

Alongside long-term human rights violations against the Rohingya and the forced deportation of Rohingya to Bangladesh, the destruction of Rohingya villages, the targeting of culturally significant Rohingya sites such as mosques, restricting access to them, and erasing evidence of Rohingya connections with these sites provides strong evidence the Myanmar state is actively undertaking a genocide against the group as defined by the Genocide Convention.

The destruction of heritage is in many cases a sign that a genocide is taking place, or that it will take place (Bevan 2006). In instances of genocide, the specific crimes outlined in Article II of the Genocide Convention are often proceeded by the targeting and destruction of monuments and sacred spaces. While the wholesale destruction of physical communities and heritage sites is not specifically listed in the Genocide Convention, according to the UN’s Office on Genocide Prevention and Responsibility to Protect, the destruction of culturally and religious significant places is a key indicator of likely further crimes that will put at risk the existence of groups and so indicate a risk of genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity (United Nations 2014). This type of destruction has been witnessed throughout the recorded history of genocide, and it was listed by Raphael Lemkin as one of the eight techniques of genocide, with the deliberate intent to destroy a group in whole or in part (Lemkin 1944). Lemkin’s point is echoed too by Feierstein (2014, 2015) who suggests a final step in the genocide process is the employment of strategies to erase the collective memory of the victim group. In the Rohingya’s case, the final step has been characterised by Green, MacManus, and de la Cour Venning (2018) as the destruction and remodelling of former Rohingya communities in a way that removes physical evidence of long-term Rohingya residence in Myanmar. Moses too has argued (Moses 2010, 34) the destruction of cultural symbols and heritage is always ahead of the physical and biological genocide. Examples such as the destruction of Armenian churches and Yezidi mausoleums in Iraq and Syria by IS are among recent examples (Isakhan, González Zarandona, and Jamal 2019). However, in the case of Myanmar, the official attacks on the Rohingya that we consider in this article were not preceded by the destruction of their mosques, but happened at the same time, perhaps in an effort to accelerate the deliberate intent to destroy the group as a whole.
**Violence in Rakhine state in 2012**

The 2012 violence in Rakhine state between Buddhists and Muslims left almost 200 dead and displaced around 140,000 people, the overwhelming majority of whom were Rohingya Muslims (International Crisis Group 2013). Despite rising ethnic tensions in Rakhine state, Buddhists and Muslims told Human Rights Watch that the, ‘authorities provided no protection and did not appear to have taken any special measures to pre-empt the violence’ (Human Rights Watch 2012).

Witnesses describe Myanmar’s security forces disarming Muslim communities before retreating and not intervening while armed Buddhist mobs attacked the defenceless Muslims (Human Rights Watch 2012; Wade 2017).

The 2012 violence occurred following weeks of rising sectarian tensions. Yet despite this, both Buddhist and Muslim communities reported Myanmar’s authorities as providing little or no protection and having seemingly not prepared to prevent conflict (Human Rights Watch 2012; Wade 2017). The proximate sparks for widespread violence in Rakhine state were the rape and murder of a young Buddhist woman by three Muslim men, and the retaliatory murders of ten Muslims and one Buddhist mistaken as Muslim who were dragged from a Yangon bound bus by a Rakhine Buddhist mob (Al Jazeera 2012; Human Rights Watch 2012). Human Rights Watch (2012, 18) described how, during June 2012

> “Arakan [Rakhine] and Rohingya mobs attacked homes, shops, and houses of worship. Witnesses described mobs from both populations storming neighbourhoods, pillaging and setting fire to homes and other buildings, and beating those they found with crude weapons, such as swords, bamboo sticks, metal bars, and poles.”

There were reports too of security forces committing abuses, including arbitrary arrests and unlawfully using force against Rohingya communities, and of security forces working in concert with ethnic Rakhine mobs to target Rohingya communities (Amnesty International 2012; BBC 2012; Human Rights Watch 2012). At least five thousand buildings, overwhelmingly homes in Muslim areas of Sittwe like the Nasi Quarter were razed to the ground leading to the large-scale displacement of Rohingya Muslim residents (Human Rights Watch 2013).

This 2012 violence involved not only the destruction of entire Muslim neighbourhoods of Sittwe displacing tens of thousands, but also involved acts of heritage destruction like the ransacking of the historic Jama Mosque, a previously prominent feature of Sittwe’s main commercial street. Built in the mid-nineteenth century, in Arabesque-style, Jama Mosque’s age and location close to the Rakhine State Parliament and other official buildings, like the Rakhine State Museum, made it a key and symbolic representation of the long-term and legitimate presence of Rohingya in Rakhine state. Dr Anita Schug, a Rohingya community leader underscored its significance to the Rohingya by describing how Jama Mosque,

> “… carries the importance of our faith of our Rohingya people in the past and present. Its physical presence in Arakan proves our existence and belonging to Arakan. It holds the key to our unity. Its physical presence stands as a historical witness that practising Islam once was acceptable and didn’t threaten others. The mosque is the proof of our past that Rohingya did co-exist with other religions peacefully. [The] Jama Mosque [is] now witness that Rohingya and their faith are under attack. Demolishing the mosques is erasing our history of being natives of Arakan. [Myanmar’s] Military is not only killing us physically but also spiritually. Protecting the mosque is protecting our identity, our faith and our history and our heritage.” (A. Schug, personal communication, July 21, Schug 2019)

Another Rohingya leader, Habiburahman (Habib), also points to the importance of structures like Jama Mosque to the Rohingya community. He cites the existence of these Rohingya religious buildings as evidence of the group’s lengthy residency in Myanmar and he notes particularly the importance of Jama Mosque explaining that it was ‘central to every Rohingya to visit at least once’ (Ro Habib, personal communication 21 August, Habib 2019). Habib points as well to other, formerly prominent, Rohingya mosques in the Sittwe area that are now closed to the Muslim community and public. The Budder Mukam (also spelled Badar Makkam) Mosque for instance was annexed into a naval base during the 1970s with the building now believed to be exclusively...
used for Buddhist religious purposes. The Babagyi Mosque was also occupied by the military during the 1980s and closed to the public and Muslims from that time. Habib notes too that mosques around the ancient Rakhine state city of Mrauk-U have been demolished by Myanmar’s authorities with the Musa Pali Mosque destroyed during the 1980s, and the Sandhi Khan (also spelled Shindhikhan/Santikan) Mosque destroyed during the 1990s. He describes how, ‘These ancient buildings were pillars of Rohingya existence and religious, ancestral and historical evidence, so they are very important for Rohingya’ (Ro Habib, personal communication 21 August 2021, Habib2019). The evidence of their long-term residency in Myanmar and the presence of established and culturally significant built structures are important to the Rohingya whose claims to legitimate Myanmar residency and citizenship are rejected by Myanmar’s authorities. Erasing evidence of long-term Rohingya heritage can be understood as the final step in a process of genocide against the group (see Feierstein 2014, 2015; Green, MacManus, and de la Cour Venning 2015, 2018).

Restricting a minorities’ access to sites of worship may not only be considered an iconoclasm from above, but it also contributes to create an ambience of tension between Buddhists and Muslims who are sharing the same space – a sign that heritage destruction may occur in the near future. As Eire (1986) discusses, it is the friction of two groups co-existing within the same space that motivates the destruction of the Other’s heritage in an attempt to control the territory and erase the signs of occupation. Moreover, strategies that restrict the access to and enjoyment of cultural heritage have an impact on its conservation, not only affecting its integrity but also on the well-being and rights of the people associated with that particular cultural heritage, as noted by the UN Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights, Karima Bennoune (United Nations Human Rights 2017). By accessing cultural heritage, the identity of the people associated with that heritage is not only asserted but it is also exerted as a right. Without this interaction, the process of heritage simply cannot exist (Harvey2001). In contrast, limiting the access ‘to and enjoyment of cultural heritage’ is a tool to ‘exert political or social pressure’ (Shaheed 2011, 5), thus the destruction of cultural heritage ‘with discriminatory intent against a cultural community can be charged as a crime against humanity’, as well as ‘evidence of an intent to destroy a group within the meaning of the Genocide Convention’ (Shaheed 2011, 7).

Since its ransacking during 2012, Jama Mosque has remained closed and is guarded by armed government security who prevent all access and routinely prevent photography, even by tourists, thus exercising a form of symbolic iconoclasm by prohibiting the production of images that could strengthen Rohingya claims to long-term residency in Rakhine state and a legitimate collective claim to Myanmar citizenship rights. This mosque’s ransacking represented a prominent symbolic rejection of Rakhine state’s Islamic history, but to the Rohingya the razing of their neighbourhoods, and subsequent confinement in camps, similarly represented a rejection of their legitimate residency in Myanmar.

Myanmar’s authorities treated the 2012 violence as a communal dispute between Buddhist and Muslim communities (Cheesman 2017). The Myanmar authorities’ strategy to prevent further outbreaks of violence was to separate both communities, but the burden of this policy fell overwhelmingly on the Rohingya Muslims who found their rights further restricted and were confined to camps or locked down in their neighbourhoods or villages. More than seven years later, 120,000 of those Rohingya originally confined to camps during 2012 continue to be prevented from leaving and Rohingya are no longer visible throughout Sittwe as they once were (UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs 2017; UN News 2019). Hyaw Hla Aung, a Rohingya leader now aged in his 80s, was once a prominent lawyer in Sittwe but was confined to a house adjacent to the Thet Key Pyin camp outside of the city when his neighbourhood was destroyed during 2012. During 2015 he summarised his feelings about the actions of Myanmar’s authorities and is clear that, in his former neighbourhood, what fires did not destroy, the authorities subsequently did: ‘We lose everything there, our property, and our house and Mosque were destroyed by government bulldozer. Why government bulldoze Mosque? Mosque was bulldozed. Since independence, not a single government do such thing, so this Thein Sein government did it’ (Kyaw Hla Aung, interview, November 4, 2015).
The majority of those Muslims who lost their homes to fire were confined to camps on the outskirts of Sittwe, while other Muslims whose homes survived the violence were locked down in their neighbourhoods. The Aung Mingalar Quarter of Sittwe, a Rohingya area, became a ghetto where the few thousand remaining Rohingya residents were confined, unable to leave, and years later remain there with limited access to education and healthcare. Mosques that were damaged during the violence have remained closed since 2012. While much of this violence is appropriately characterised as destruction from below and thus illegal iconoclasm, the authorities’ subsequent actions indicate official approval of its outcomes. The Rohingya’s former communities, their homes having been turned to ash, were mostly not actively re-built, instead, once homes and mosques within Rohingya areas were destroyed they were left untouched so that nature reclaimed this land with foliage. By 2019, much of these areas resembles scrub land or disused agricultural land – most traces of these areas as former Rohingya communities have been erased. Myanmar President Thein Sein’s 2012 announcement that the ‘only solution’ was to remove the Rohingya to other countries added credibility to Rohingya accusations that anti-Muslim violence formed part of an official Myanmar strategy designed to force the Rohingya out of the country (Mizzima News 2012; Human Rights Watch 2012).

Violence in Rakhine state in 2017

Despite the appalling discrimination suffered by the Rohingya, mainstream Rohingya political opinion in recent decades has rejected a strategy of political violence. However, by late 2016 this attitude appeared to be changing for some Rohingya living in northern Rakhine state with the emergence of the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) militant group and its claims to represent the interests of the Rohingya community (International Crisis Group 2016; Lee 2017). ARSA’s August 2017 attacks on security posts in northern Rakhine state, precipitated a brutal crackdown by the Tatmadaw on the Rohingya. Myanmar’s military actions in northern Rakhine state led to the largest displacement of civilians in the region since the end of World War II. During a ten weeks’ period from late August 2017 more than 600,000 Rohingya fled Myanmar for Bangladesh. This crackdown was described by United Nation’s High Commissioner for Human Rights, Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein as an ‘example of ethnic cleansing’ (UN News 2017b). The military’s ‘clearance operation’ was characterised by extra judicial killings, arbitrary arrests, sexual violence, and the razing of hundreds of villages, including the destruction of mosques and led to calls by UN Human Rights Council investigators for ICC prosecutions of key Myanmar military figures (UN Human Rights Council 2018).

Within this violent environment, and as part of the ‘clearance operation’ that the Tatmadaw performed in northern Rakhine state’s Rohingya communities during 2017, a particular type of destruction of culturally significant Rohingya sites could be observed. Witnesses of the violence have spoken about how entire villages were burned by the military, and Human Rights Watch used satellite images to confirm the widespread destruction of Rohingya villages by fire (Human Rights Watch 2017b). Amnesty International (2018c) described this as a land grab by the military who constructed bases on the sites of razed Rohingya villages. The scale of the destruction of Rohingya villages and of the forced migration that accompanied it drew widespread international condemnation (Al Jazeera 2017a; The Economist 2017). While numerous Rohingya arrivals at refugee camps in Bangladesh described how the military set fire to Rohingya homes and mosques, by using military helicopters, and machines akin to flamethrowers, blame for this destruction was contested. Myanmar’s military, which has rejected accusations of wrongdoing during the 2017 ‘clearance operation’ claims Rohingya villagers set fire to their own homes to gain international sympathy (Wa Lone 2017). The military’s claim was undermined during a media tour of Rakhine state when journalists witnessed an apparent staged burning by residents pretending to be Rohingya and saw villages in military controlled areas burning days after the Rohingya residents fled (BBC 2017a; Head 2017). Further undermining the claims of Myanmar’s military is satellite
imagery showing how Rohingya villages were burned while adjacent Buddhist homes remain untouched by fire (Whiteside 2017). As witnessed in other cases, the destruction of material culture and significant sites does often draw the attention of the international media, generating sympathy towards the minority which suffers the trauma (Isakhan, González Zarandona, and Jamal 2019).

The violence in northern Rakhine state during 2017 was overwhelmingly undertaken by Myanmar’s military and was more comprehensive in its destruction than that of 2012, with around 300 Rohingya villages partially or totally razed (Human Rights Watch 2017b). Human Rights Watch (2017a) considered the military’s actions as amounting to ‘crimes against humanity’, and Amnesty International (2017b) characterised the situation as a ‘human rights and humanitarian catastrophe’. Hundreds of thousands of Rohingya fled their homes and villages in terror, and by the year’s end there were 650,000 more Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh (Al Jazeera 2017b; BBC 2017b; Inter Sector Coordination Group 2017). In contrast to the violence of 2012, which has often been characterised as inter-communal and which we describe as overwhelmingly involving iconoclasm from below, the violence of 2017 involved destruction undertaken by the authorities.

Rohingya refugees arriving in Bangladesh routinely described how Myanmar’s military came to their villages, forced out the population using violence, and then burned villages in their entirety. This destruction was documented by media, humanitarian groups, and by UN Human Rights Council investigators who used satellite images and collected first-hand accounts to report “systematic, deliberate and targeted destruction, mainly by fire, of Rohingya-populated areas across the three townships. At least 392 villages (40 per cent of all settlements in northern Rakhine) were partially or totally destroyed, encompassing at least 37,700 individual structures. Approximately 80 per cent were burned in the initial three weeks of the operations, a significant portion of which after the Government’s official end date of the “clearance operations”. More than 70 per cent of the villages destroyed were in Maungdaw, where the majority of Rohingya lived. Most destroyed structures were homes. Schools, marketplaces and mosques were also burned. Rohingya-populated areas were specifically targeted, with adjacent or nearby Rakhine settlements left unscathed.” (UN Human Rights Council 2018,9).

After Rohingya villages were depopulated and razed to the ground, many Rohingya villages were quickly remodelled by Myanmar’s authorities, erasing evidence of Rohingya connections with those places (Goldberg 2018; Miller 2018). In late 2017, Human Rights Watch published satellite images showing that the Myanmar authorities had used heavy machinery to clear all structures and vegetation from more than 50 villages, while Amnesty International documented the building of roads and structures including at least one military base over burned Rohingya villages and land (Human Rights Watch 2017b, 2018; Amnesty International 2018a; Amnesty International 2018b; Amnesty International 2018c; Associated Press 2018; Child 2018).

Discussion

In Myanmar, as in many other places where conflict occurs, heritage management has been used as a political tool to create a strict division between different religious heritages, mainly Buddhist and Muslim. Historically, Myanmar’s authorities have privileged Buddhist heritage over the heritage of other minorities present in the country (Philp 2010). According to Philp (2010), the military junta that governed Myanmar for decades used the conservation efforts to restore Buddhist heritage to legitimise their position as the main political authority. For scholars like Logan (2007) and Morris (2015), the issue of privileging and using a certain type of heritage is entangled with human rights issues. The fact that Rohingya’s access to sites of worship was blocked by the Myanmar government is an example of how alongside destruction of Rohingya heritage, their human rights – to practice their religion, guaranteed by Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights – are denied by Myanmar’s authorities.

As we have outlined above, it may be sometimes difficult to determine which iconoclasm comes from above and is thus tolerated and encouraged, and which one comes from below and so
is outlawed. The case of the destruction of Rohingya heritage presents a case study to better understand this phenomenon. In recent years, UNESCO has adopted a strategy to fight ‘extremism’ and ‘cultural cleansing’ by producing ‘declarations, speeches . . . and a robust social media campaign’ (Meskell 2018, 182). Meskell (2018, 180) urges caution about such an approach which risks ‘fetishizing the loss of things over life itself’ by adopting strategies that suggest ‘culture and education’ can ‘promote peace’, focussing on the monuments while disregarding the people in the conflicts and crises. Indeed, speeches and declarations may not only backfire, particularly when they are expressed by international organisations such as UNESCO (see Isakhan and González Zarandona 2018), but they can also be quite limited in scope if they condemn iconoclasm from below, while other actors perpetrate iconoclasm from above. Our study of heritage destruction in Rakhine state indicates evidence both kinds of destruction can be present simultaneously.

In the past, several case studies demonstrate that it may not always be possible to prevent destruction by condemning it, but in other cases, efforts were successful in preventing further destruction of heritage thus allowing a recovery process. For example, during the Spanish Civil War, propaganda from both sides was created to stop the destruction of cultural heritage, appealing to all Spaniards to consider the effects of their actions before they would even think about destroying it (Barrios Rozúa 2008). The claim was based on the fact that regardless of who owned the heritage, it belonged to everybody, irrespective of religious or ideological affiliations. While UNESCO is a global organisation, it has limited power when it comes to stopping the destruction of cultural heritage – the case of Syrian conflict is perhaps the most notorious example (Van der Auwera 2013, 2014; Cunliffe, Muhesen and LOSTAL 2016; Meskell 2018). The organisation’s limited capacity means that its efforts to fight extremism and genocide can only focus on a limited number of international crises. However, crises can be condemned in the media and global attention drawn to them. Media is a powerful ally of heritage protection since it provides much of the information regarding the specific aspects of the destruction of heritage. It is through media that heritage destruction becomes a reality for most people, particularly for those outside the conflict zone. Media translates the destruction into an intelligible discourse that usually differentiates between the perpetrator and the victim.

UNESCO’s campaign to prevent heritage destruction, 'Unite4Heritage', focusses only on preventing iconoclasm from below and so misses an important opportunity to advocate for important heritage protections against iconoclasm from above. Condemning iconoclasm from above would be a useful step towards the prevention of further destruction. The case of Myanmar provides a reminder that the destruction of cultural heritage during a conflict is a sign of further violence to come. By demanding that iconoclasm from above ceases and making it clear that it is as destructive as that of below, some prevention might be achieved.

**Conclusions**

There is a lack of a nuanced analysis of the destruction of Rohingya heritage in Myanmar in media and academic literature today. Historically, the destruction of heritage has always been politicised and used by governments in order to sway the course of conflicts and war. Likewise, the destruction of heritage acts as a proxy way towards the extermination of particular groups, when governments and military forces aim to destroy a cultural minority or group. In the case of the Rohingya in Myanmar, we have demonstrated that the destruction of heritage can be characterised as involving both iconoclasm from above and iconoclasm from below. In this article we have mapped cultural heritage destruction in Myanmar, specifically in Rakhine state and we have argued that much of this heritage destruction should be understood as a tool of the genocide being committed against the Rohingya by Myanmar’s authorities. We have acknowledged that while international bodies like UNESCO might have limited capacity to intervene to prevent heritage destruction, they are not completely powerless. Bodies like UNESCO, can for instance, bring heritage destruction to the attention of key decision makers and the global community. This point is acknowledged by UNESCO who have started the ‘Unite4Heritage’ campaign to address
the deliberate destruction of heritage by violent extremist groups (UNESCO 2018). However, in light of the evidence of heritage destruction in Myanmar’s Rakhine state, we suggest UNESCO extend this campaign to include addressing the deliberate destruction of heritage by state actors.

Note

1. In this article our aim is to maintain meaning and avoid confusion where names are concerned. We use the name ‘Myanmar’ to refer to the country from the time its name was officially changed by the military junta in 1989. In referring to the country’s history prior to 1989, the name ‘Burma’ is used. Where necessary, to preserve meaning and avoid confusion, both the former and official name will be used in tandem as ‘Burma/Myanmar’.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

Notes on contributors

Ronan Lee is an Irish-Australian visiting scholar at Queen Mary University of London’s International State Crime Initiative. His research interests include Myanmar, the Rohingya, genocide, hate speech, and politics. Ronan’s PhD thesis titled “Myanmar’s Rohingya Genocide: Rohingya Perspectives of History and Identity” considered the identity, history, and politics of the Rohingya. Ronan’s professional background is in politics, media, and public policy. He was formerly a Queensland State Member of Parliament and served on the frontbench as a Parliamentary Secretary in portfolios including Justice, Main Roads and Local Government, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships.

José Antonio González Zarandona is an Associate Research Fellow at the Alfred Deakin Institute for Citizenship and Globalisation. He is also Associate Researcher in the División de Historia, Centro de Investigación y Docencia Económicas (CIDE), México. Antonio has been a Visiting Fellow at the University of Birmingham, the University of Oxford, and Goldsmiths University. He is the vice-president for the Barcelona-based NGO Heritage for Peace.

ORCID

Ronan Lee http://orcid.org/0000-0001-8020-1520
José Antonio González Zarandona http://orcid.org/0000-0002-3655-5898

References


https://theglobeandmail.com/2017/09/02/myanmar-rohingya-annan-refugees/


