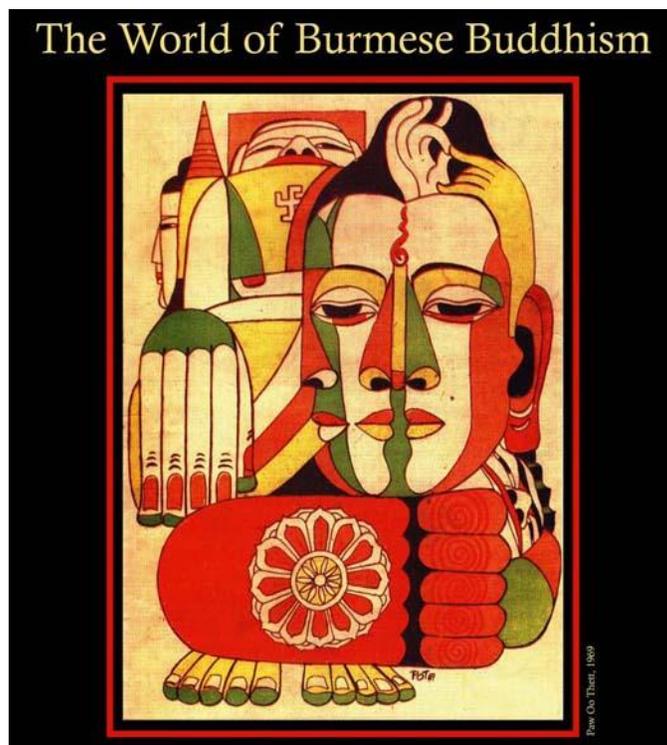


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***BULLETIN OF THE  
BURMA  
STUDIES GROUP***

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**Exhibit of the Burma Art Collection at NIU  
International Burma Studies Conference, 2004**

***Number 74***

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**Next Issue**

March 2005

**CONTENTS**

---

Introduction.....	3
Religious Personages, Religion, and Environment.....	4
History.....	5
Language, Literature and Linguistics.....	7
State of Burma I.....	10
Cultural Interfaces.....	15
Crossing Burmese Boundaries.....	17
Music.....	19
Art and Archaeology.....	20
State of Burma II.....	25
Book Review.....	27
Past/Future Conferences.....	31

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## INTRODUCTION

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See you soon in De Kalb

In this issue we provide a preview of the upcoming Burma Studies Conference in De Kalb. Clearly, Burma Studies has grown considerably in the past few years, as the large number and variety of papers to be presented next month attests. It will be a pleasure to see old friends, as always, but also to get to know people newer to the field when we meet on October 22 - 24.

Participants who have not yet registered and/or made travel arrangements should look online at the following web site:

<http://www.grad.niu.edu/burma/conference/Opening.htm>

Holdouts against the web can learn more by phoning the Center for Burma Studies, phone: 815-753-0512.

Ward Keeler, Editor  
See you soon in De Kalb

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**FRIDAY, OCTOBER 22**  
**RELIGIOUS PERSONAGES, RELIGION, AND ENVIRONMENT**

---

**“FOREST GREEN AND BUDDHIST YELLOW:  
THE ROLE OF THERAVADA BUDDHISM IN BURMA’S FOREST CONSERVATION”**

Dominic Nardi  
*freedom4@mac.com*

Burma has a strong tradition of Theravada Buddhism, which many academic and popular studies claim has a strong conservationist trend. Yet Burma currently faces an environmental crisis, with a deforestation rate of around 1.4% annually. While scholars have looked at the role of Buddhist monks and philosophy in forest conservation in neighboring Thailand, there remains a lack of understanding of the role of Buddhism in forest conservation in Burma.

This paper will use documentation, personal interviews, and scientific observations of the ecological situation to determine any links between Burma’s Buddhist religion and conservation efforts in the country. Along with this, it will analyze the State Peace and Development Council’s public pronouncements to determine any Buddhist influence or rhetoric in official forest policy. It will also recount where Buddhism has failed to protect the forests, or has even encouraged deforestation.

**“DEFENDING THE FRONT-LINE FORTRESS:  
TRANSMITTING THE PATTHANA IN CONTEMPORARY BURMA”**

Jason Carbine  
*jcarbine@holycross.edu*

A massive textual body concerning the conditioned flow of all phenomena, the Patthana (P. Conditional Relations) is the last and, according to many Theravada Buddhists in contemporary Burma, the most important of the seven books of the Abhidhamma-pitaka (P. Basket of Fundamental Law). In fact, drawing on classic Theravada mythologies of decline, Burmese Buddhists have emphasized that when the Buddha's Dispensation falls, the Patthana will be the first to go. In ways distinctive to their Theravada co-religionists in Sri Lanka and Thailand, contemporary Burmese Buddhists have called for a defense of the Patthana as a "front-line fortress in the territory of the Dispensation." To elucidate part of what that defense entails, this paper examines a collection of Patthana sermons given by a Burmese monk.

**"SPECIALISTS FOR RITUAL, MAGIC AND DEVOTION:  
STUDYING THE PUNNAS OF THE EARLY KONBAUNG PERIOD"**

Jacques P. Leider  
EFEO Yangon  
*jacques.leider@ci.educ.lu*

The presence of Brahmins at the courts of the Theravada Buddhist kings of Southeast Asia is a well known fact. It is generally acknowledged that they played an essential part in the ritual of king making (*abhiseka*) and that they acted as court astrologers. Their functions were thus related to the transmission and the practice of a special knowledge basically imported from India.

This paper is an attempt to deal with a subject that has raised little scholarly attention. It is largely based on evidence from the early Konbaung period when new badges of Brahmins were imported from Arakan, Manipur and North India. A first part will take a look at the sources and deal with issues of methodology and terminology. A second part will briefly present the functions and the complex organisation of the Brahmins during the Konbaung period. The third part will highlight the role that Brahmins played in King Bodawphaya's religious and foreign policy.

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**FRIDAY, OCTOBER 22  
HISTORY**

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**"TROPES AND TRAPS OF THE MODERN FEMALE:  
A GENDER HISTORY OF LATE COLONIAL BURMA<sup>1</sup>"**

Chie Ikeya  
Department of History, Cornell University  
*ci14@cornell.edu*

This paper examines a general anxiety prevalent in late colonial Burma's popular press about a moral, sexual, and cultural 'crisis' resulting allegedly from the demise of Burmese culture and tradition—an anxiety that became fixated on the bodies of women and construed increasingly as occasioned by contact with the West. What propelled the representations of Burmese women as *excessive* and *miscegenating* (i.e. excessively domineering, excessively modern, excessively sexual)? Was the 'crisis' in fact contemporaneous with profound changes in the configurations of and relations between the sexes? If so, in what ways and by whom were fundamental ideas of masculinity and femininity challenged, and to what extent were the women themselves involved in the rethinking? This study shifts scholarly attention away from the metanarratives of anti-colonialism and nationalism, which have failed to engage seriously with either gender issues or

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<sup>1</sup> By late colonial Burma, I mean the period between the end of the First World War and Burma's independence in 1948.

with women as historical actors, to women's struggle to transculture the hegemonic discourse that defines gender and that seeks to appropriate them as female national subjects. How much influence did Burmese women have in mediating and shaping their own representation? In addressing the questions posited above, this paper explores the complex interface of political, economic, cultural, religious and ideological vectors of power (i.e. Burma's increasing entrenchment in "the world system," the enormous expansion of the education system including missionary schools, the burgeoning popular press which sought continually to boost sales through titillating material, and the emergence of a new group of cultural intermediaries—intellectuals, writers, journalists, academics—grappling to define the public/private spheres) that were pushing the boundaries of the old gender-ethnic, social order in Burma.

**“TEXTUALIZING BURMA:  
ORAL HISTORY AND THE MAKING OF THE 1947 CONSTITUTION”**

Maitri Aung-Thwin  
National University of Singapore  
*hismvat@nus.edu.sg*

This study focuses on the making of the Burma Constitution in 1947 through the recollections of Dr. Myint Soe, lawyer and contributor to its redrafting. Through oral interviews, archival materials, and official histories recently published under the UHRC, this paper is intended to reconstruct how Burmese leaders attempted to translate "British" political forms and legal models into "Burmese" terms to fit immediate, local, and personal concerns on the eve of Independence. Special emphasis will be directed to how events are remembered, "made historical", and authenticated through documentation projects, law, and legislative procedures. As part of a larger project on oral history in colonial Burma, this work in progress will address current themes in post-colonial scholarship such as: (1) nation-building in Southeast Asia, (2) the role of law in history and memory, (3) colonial administrations and the construction of knowledge, and the epistemological forms of the "State".

**TRIBUTE TO MAY KYI WIN**  
FRIDAY, OCTOBER 22  
5:00-6:30 p.m.  
Founders Memorial Library  
4<sup>th</sup> Floor, Room 403

Opening given by: Dean Arthur Young  
Homage  
Exhibition – “Envisioning Burma: Selections from the Burma Collection at Northern Illinois  
University Libraries”  
Reception

---

**SATURDAY, OCTOBER 23**  
**LANGUAGE, LITERATURE AND LINGUISTICS**

**PANEL 1**

---

**“PROTO WA-LAWA-BULANG PHONOLOGY”**

Gérard Diffloth (to be read by *in absentia* by J Watkins)  
*gdifflth@hotmail.com*

**“WA LEXICOGRAPHY”**

Richard Kunst (SOAS)  
*richard.kunst@soas.ac.uk*

**“THE GRAMMAR OF PUGAM”**

Maung Tha Noe  
English Language Institute, Yangon  
International Writing Program, University of Iowa  
*drklkywe@mptmail.net.mm*

The grammar of Pugam is basically not very much different from that of Modern Burmese. Noun Phrases are formed in much the same way as its modern grandchild, with their usual prefixes and suffixes, or postpositions, and modifiers and particles. So are Verb Phrases with their auxiliaries and affixes, Adjective Phrases and Adverb Phrases. In the three or four inscriptions, dating around 1200 plus something, which we are studying, there are statements or narrative sentences, imperatives, exclamations, negative sentences, but no interrogative sentences. A unique feature of the old grammar is that what are very clearly Adjective phrases or clauses are used in place of nouns. Instead of saying: "He gave it to a boy called John," they would say: "He gave it to called John." Instead of "The book you lent me is interesting," they would say, "Lent me by you is interesting."

**“LANGUAGE OF THE PAST:  
A STUDY OF THE COLLOQUIAL BURMESE (1750-1850)”**

Saw Tun  
Northern Illinois University  
*sawtun@niu.edu*

Although literary and colloquial Burmese are obviously different at present, it has not been thoroughly investigated when and how these differences began to occur. This paper, using written documents dated from 1750 A.D to 1850 A.D, will make an attempt to explain the status

of colloquial Burmese during that time. Spoken Burmese will be compared and contrasted with both the literary and formal language used among the members of the royal society in these years.

**“TEACHING AND PRESERVING INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES IN BURMA (MYANMAR):  
AN OBSERVATION OF LANGUAGE PROGRAMS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF DEVELOPMENT FOR  
NATIONAL RACES/PEOPLE, YWA-THIT-KYI”**

Phyu Phyu Win  
Linguistics Department  
Mandalay University of Foreign Languages  
*phyuwin@myanmar.com.mm*

Indigenous Languages such as Shan, Kayah etc. have felt the domination of Burma (Myanmar) language to the extent that slowly and surely the number of people speaking them is diminishing. Some sadly are nearly extinct. But at the above university an attempt is being made to teach languages other than Burma (Myanmar) that are used/spoken in this country such as Kachin, Kayah, Sakaw Kayin, Po Kayin, Chin and Shan. Opened in 1990-91, with students attending for four years and mostly destined to be teachers at primary to high school levels in rural/outlying areas, this university has now added Mon and Yakhine to the above languages in its curriculum. All courses taught are by native speakers of the respective languages, and the materials used have been developed by the staff themselves. As the students will be posted to the outlying districts, communication in indigenous languages is the objective. The characteristics of the language programs are as follows:

1. 4 skills training from an elementary level.
2. The syllabi of all language programs are coordinated as much as possible.
3. Apart from language, cultural aspects such as the traditions, song, dance and music are included as part of the programs.

This presentation will cover such topics as: to what extent have the language programs/policy been effective? What can be done to make the programs more effective in the future? And an overview of the governmental policy in implementing these programs.

**“TEACHING AND LEARNING ENGLISH IN BURMA TODAY:  
PLACES AND PEOPLE”**

Avon Crismore  
Department of English and Linguistics  
Indiana University-Purdue University Fort Wayne, Indiana  
*crismore@ipfw.edu*

The purpose of this presentation is to raise awareness of the situation today in Burma for teaching and learning English. This topic is important because of our current global society and its possible consequences for Burma's future regarding English language teaching and learning. Because I teach English as a Second Language (some students are Burmese) in Fort Wayne,

which has the largest population of Burmese in the U.S., and because I study cross-cultural rhetoric, I decided to spend a month in Burma during my sabbatical in 2000 to study the current English language teaching/learning situation. I gathered data: 1) observed places that teach English, 2) interviewed former and current teachers and learners of English, and 3) gave presentations to university teachers and students. In my talk I will give a brief history of English teaching in Burma, report my study findings, discuss implications for researchers and teachers, and encourage audience questions, responses.

**“SYLLA AND GMSWORD APPLICATIONS TO MYANMAR LANGUAGES COMPUTERIZATION”**

Vincent Berment  
*Vincent.Berment@imag.fr*

Among the writing systems that remain poorly computerized, several are used by populations living in Myanmar: Burmese, Mon, Shan, Khamti... Like many other writings of Southeast Asia, those writings are unsegmented, in the sense that the words are not separated by blanks. In order to develop a segmenter for those writings, we designed *Sylla*, a tool that allows linguists to make rigorous descriptions of the syllables, under the form of rewriting grammars. Four grammars have already been done: Burmese, Khmer, Lao and Thai.

Such syllabic descriptions can then be used by computer programs, in particular to ease mouse and keyboard selections, to sort words lists, and to produce phonetic transcriptions. Those functions, as well as others including text input, have already been embedded for the Lao language in *LaoWord*<sup>2</sup>, an application that can be extended to a *GMSWord* (*GMS* standing for *Greater Mekong Subregion*), after having allocated a range in the Unicode's private usage zone to the writings which are still outside the Unicode standard<sup>3</sup>.

**“PHRASE FOCUS IN BURMESE”**

Justin Watkins and Andrew Simpson  
SOAS  
*justin.watkins@soas.ac.uk, as4@soas.ac.uk*

**“PULP FICTION AMONGST THE PAGODAS, RANGOON ROMANCE”**

Vicky Bowman  
British Ambassador, Rangoon  
*Vicky.Bowman@fco.gov.uk*

Regular visitors to Bangkok airport will have noticed a recent surfeit of new fiction on the bookshelves set in and around Burma. My paper will review a dozen or so such thrillers and bodice-rippers which have appeared in the last two decades, identify a few common themes, and recommend some rattling good reads, and some penny dreadfuls best avoided.

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.LaoSoftware.com> or <http://sabaidi.imag.fr>.

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.unicode.org>.

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**SATURDAY, OCTOBER 23**  
**THE STATE OF BURMA I**

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**“AGRICULTURAL MARKETING LIBERALIZATION AND RURAL ECONOMY IN MYANMAR  
(BURMA)”**

Ikuko Okamoto  
Institute of Developing Economies, JETRO  
*ida@ide.go.jp*

The purpose of this paper is to examine the impact of marketing liberalization implemented in the late 1980s on the rural economy in Myanmar. The marketing liberalization, though partial in its nature, had a significant impact in the production and trade of certain crops such as pulses and beans. This study takes up the case of a newly developed pulse (green gram) producing area near Yangon. Changes of the rural economy and its participants (farmers, landless laborers and marketing intermediaries) after the liberalization are analyzed based on empirical data collected by the author. The main conclusion is that the liberalization opened up new economic opportunities and had a positive impact on income and employment in the area. The capital constraint of the rural economy has been relaxed by the development of factor and output market, driven by market forces.

**“ECONOMIC PUSH-FACTORS IN BURMA-THAILAND LABOUR MIGRATION:  
INFERENCES FROM OFFICIAL WAGE DATA”**

Wylie Bradford  
Burma Economic Watch  
Department of Economics, Macquarie University  
*wbradfor@efs.mq.edu.au*

Sectoral and occupational wage data for Thailand and Burma are analysed using new estimates of Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) deflators, in order to identify underlying economic factors driving the significant volume of cross-border Burmese labour migration. The analysis reveals the dramatic extent to which the purchasing power of wages in Burma fell relative to those in Thailand during the 1990's. Furthermore, taken at face value, occupational wage data imply that incomes for a wide range of Burmese workers fell short of international absolute poverty benchmarks throughout that decade. The difficulties associated with accurate assessments of economic conditions in Burma are highlighted via an examination of the inconsistency evident between official data sources.

## **“SURVEY: THE ECONOMICS OF MIGRANT WORKERS IN THAILAND”**

Alison Vicary  
Macquarie University  
*avicary@efs.mq.edu.au*

A preliminary review of a recent survey undertaken in Thailand of migrant workers from Burma is discussed with the aim of illustrating the economic situation of migrant workers in Thailand and their contribution to important sectors in the Thai economy. The survey included 130 questions and involved approximately 1,500 migrant workers employed in 11 different provinces – Bangkok (& Mahachia), Chiang Mai, Ranong, Mae Hong Son, Ratchaburi, Singburi, Lopburi, Saraburi, Kanchanaburi, Phetchaburi and Tak. The survey provides extensive micro-data that will allow an analysis of the demographic background of migrant workers, reasons for ‘migration’, sectoral employment, payment methods, wage and income details and the conditions of employment in Thailand. This information will be used alongside Thai macro-economic data and industry analysis to assess the contribution of migrant labour in particular to a number of important export industries in Thailand – agriculture and food processing; fishing and the seafood processing industry; and the textile and garment industry.

## **“THE IMPACT OF SOCIALIST LAW ON THE BURMESE LEGAL SYSTEM- 1962-1976”**

Paul Sarno  
Burma Studies Group  
*paulsarno@aol.com*

In 1962, Ne Win and the Revolutionary Council decided to transform Burma’s economy into state socialism. Over the course of the next few years, the Council, in reality the Burmese Army, nationalized virtually all Burmese manufacturing and trade and reiterated the royal doctrine that the king (now the State) owned all the land. Thus alienation or lease of real property was subject to the Council’s approval. In addition, the Council had the right to confiscate land without trial or compensation.

The Council also substantially modified the Burmese judicial system over 1962-1974. First, the entire Supreme Court bench, the tribunal of last resort, was removed and new judges selected by the Council. Second, early in the Council’s administration, special courts were created for the trial of political crimes. Its members or other military personnel sat as justices on those courts. Next, in 1972 People’s Judges, without any legal training, were appointed to replace the professional judges who had served at the trial level during the democracy and early socialist periods. Sometimes, the previous judge of a particular court was retained as a professional advisor to the lay jurists.

Later, with the passage of the 1974 Constitution which incorporated such socialism and a one party state into the fundamental law, the judicial system was further transformed. A Council of People’s Justices was created. It appointed all of the judges. All of the members of that Council were also members of the parliament. The President, elected by the parliament, was charged

with the authority to remove justices of the High Court, the new name for the court of last resort. The system of People's Courts was retained. The Bar was effectively nationalized and both prosecuting and defense counsel, as well as attorneys practicing civil law, became state employees on salary. Legal education was restructured and diminished in both educational and social importance.

Many of these concepts of judicial administration were based on the Soviet Union and East European models. After 1962, the Burmese studied the procedural and substantive laws of those jurisdictions. However, the Revolutionary Council and the succeeding Burma Socialist Program Party, the only political entity permitted to organize under the 1974 Constitution, chose not to change virtually all of the substantive civil laws which existed before 1962 except in the area of industrial workers' rights.

It is my hypothesis that the Revolutionary Council and the leaders of the Burma Socialist Program Party, essentially the high ranking army officers who administered the government under the Council, never understood the intimate details of a socialist legal system and determined that it was sufficient that the administration of justice be altered rather than most substantive law. They decided that changes in the latter would have minimal impact on their desires to transform Burmese society.

**“TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE STRATEGIES ON THE THAI- BURMA BORDER:  
ANALYZING THE THEORY AND THE PRACTICE”**

Cindy Kleinmeyer  
*ckleinmeyer@hotmail.com*

In the event of a future transition to democracy, transnational advocacy networks, activists and scholars working on the Thai-Burma border and in the surrounding area are preparing to deal with Burma's legacy of past and current human rights abuses. This paper analyzes their proposed and current transitional justice strategies and compares them with the current theory that supports amnesties as the best mechanism for deterring future human rights abuses, and as the most successful method for bringing “real” justice to the victims.

**“AUNG SAN AND AUNG SAN SUU KYI’S POLICY TOWARDS THE KARENS”**

Dr. Angelene Naw  
Judson College  
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Aung San was the first politician to consider the importance of the minority peoples. His work with the ethnic groups of Burma began with the Karens in 1943, when he prepared to resist the Japanese advance. A bloody racial conflict had occurred only a few months earlier in the Myaungmya district where many Karens were killed and the resentment between the Karen and the Burmans deepened. In spite of these circumstances, Aung San won over the confidence of the Karens and until his death was able to convince many Karen leaders to join him in the struggle for independence.

Aung San Suu Kyi, in her fight for democracy, is supported by various ethnic groups including the Karen National Union. This paper will investigate Aung San Suu Kyi's political attitude towards the minorities and particularly towards the Karens.

**“THE KARENS IN BURMA: A POLITICAL DILEMMA”**

Ardeth Maung Thawngmung  
Political Science Department  
University of Massachusetts, Lowell  
*dehlay@yahoo.com*

Recently, the issues of “Burmanization” or/and “ethnic cleansing” have increasingly attracted attention from scholars and activists on Burma. This paper will evaluate these claims by analyzing the junta's official and unofficial policies toward ethnic groups as well as the perspectives of one minority ethnic group, specifically the Karen. This study is based on opinion survey among the Karens, who have lived inside Burma and will describe their first-hand experiences with the Burmese military regime and their relationships with Burman fellows. It attempts to analyze the roots of the Karen's diverse positions toward the Burmese military regime.

**“RECONCILIATION POLITICS IN BURMA”**

Toe Zaw Latt  
University of Bradford, United Kingdom  
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A new emphasis has emerged in recent times over the role and importance of transitional justice and reconciliation initiatives in achieving and sustaining democratic transition. This new emphasis has seen the emergence of a burgeoning literature concerned with transitional justice and theorizing 'reconciliation'. This paper is the result of preliminary research concerning the usefulness and the problem of practically advancing a reconciliation process in Burma that can contribute to long term social and political transformation. It considers the nature of the conflict in Burma, barriers to reconciliation in Burma, as well as existing policy and program responses concerning reconciliation in Burma. It also draws upon a range of positive and negative experiences of 'reconciliation' processes from Cambodia, East Timor South Africa and Sri Lanka. Tentative conclusions are reached about the limits of state-centric approaches to understanding reconciliation politics, the problem that ethnocentric nationalism poses to prospects for reconciliation in Burma, and the need for an integrated, grass roots approach to implementing a reconciliation agenda in a post-regime Burmae.

**“ASPIRING TO BE A DEVELOPMENTAL STATE:  
MYANMAR’S DEVELOPMENT EXPERIENCE SINCE 1948<sup>4</sup>”**

Tin Maung Maung Than  
National University of Singapore

This paper examines Myanmar’s development experience since gaining independence in 1948. In the first four decades of planned development, successive governments of Myanmar pursued a state-led import-substituting industrialization strategy (ISI) in different political and socio-economic settings. Nevertheless, the common thread was a nationalistic approach with an overwhelmingly inward orientation informed by an indigenised socialist ideology. It is argued that the state, in implementing an investment-driven ISI approach towards economic development was, in fact, trying to mimic a developmental state without adequate institutional and financial resources. As such, Myanmar suffered a developmental failure that led to its virtual bankruptcy and its classification as a least developing country (LLDC) in 1987. When the State Law and Order Restoration Council (military junta, now known as the State Peace and Development Council or SPDC) took over power, in September, 1988, from the collapsed Socialist regime in the wake of widespread public demonstrations, the new military government abandoned the socialist command economy and introduced market-oriented reforms. However, nationalist inclinations, development planning, and significant state controls over the mixed economy were much evident in the junta’s economic policies and practices, perhaps accentuated by economic sanctions imposed by the West. The state has continued to play a leading role in the national economy despite increasing participation by the private sector in production, trade and services. It appears that the leaders of Myanmar are still trying to emulate successful developmental states like Korea and Taiwan.

**“THE ORIGIN OF CHALLENGES FOR THE MAKING OF MODERN NEW BURMA”**

Tun Myint  
School of Public and Environmental Affairs and School of Law  
Indiana University  
*tmyint@indiana.edu*

This paper juxtaposes two potential, complementary ideas of Burmese political development for the emergence of a constituent State of Federal Union of Burma. The first idea proposes home-grown constitutions or local traditions as the foundation for a modern constitution in Burma. Looking at the modern history of post-independent Burma, it can be asserted that neither the rule of law nor democracy has had a chance to properly take root to govern Burma’s human order. In Burma’s historical experience, constitution-making processes have had little to do with citizens, and the livelihoods of rural villages and local communities. This is because “constitutions” in Burma were either imposed by the colonial administration during the British colonial period or conveniently imported from outside sources by the elite leaders of post-independent Burmese

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<sup>4</sup> In May 1989, the ruling military junta decreed that the country’s name be changed from “Burma” to “Myanmar”. The author does not imply any political connotation in using those terms.

governments. This historical practice of finding short-cuts and quick-fixes to address constitutional crises in Burma is one major reason why the country broke out into civil wars after Burma gained independence from the British. The second idea considers the literature addressing Burmese mental culture that reveals potential problematic characteristics of traditional (mis-) beliefs and (mis-)practices arising from three major sources (1) the Burmese Buddhist concept of *karma*, (2) the expected emergence of a *minlaung* (king to-be) in an era of political transition, and (3) the *silone-nyi-nyunt-yay* (unity) as a prerequisite synergy of political struggle and political development. The paper argues that these two ideas, which are theoretically complementary yet potentially contradictory in practice, are at the origin of challenges for the making of a modern Burma where the rule of law will triumph and democracy will nourish governance processes of human order in Burma.

**MUSEUM EXHIBIT RECEPTION**

6:30 p.m.

Altgeld Hall

**KEYNOTE SPEAKER: U THAW KAUNG**

8:30 p.m.

Chandelier Room

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**SATURDAY, OCTOBER 23**

**CULTURAL INTERFACES**

**PANEL 2**

---

**“TRADE, IDENTITY, AND IMPERIALISM IN UPPER BURMA”**

Joerg Schendel

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Whereas it is commonplace to examine the nature of the commercial performance of distinct ethnic, religious, or other groups, thereby acknowledging a connection between identity and commercial prowess, the opposite concept, namely that "Ethnicity was probably as much a consequence of entrepreneurial minority status as its cause" (Anthony Reid) has been relatively neglected. This paper, thus, will seek to emphasize the instrumental nature of aspects of identity, most importantly state affiliation, in the process of trade. In Burma, the strong commercial position of the monarchy rendered it very desirable to display loyalty to and maintain close connections with the court. Consequently, even foreign merchants aspired to merge into the Burmese social fabric to some degree; in turn, Burmese society was open enough to integrate new entrants. After the British annexation of Lower Burma (1852) and the conclusion of commercial treaties with independent Upper Burma (1862, 1867), citizenship became a factor in commercial success, as it regulated access to different jurisdictions, British consular support, and preferential treatment by the Burmese court. Merchants of both Asian and European origin availed themselves of this opportunity and manipulated the still fluid boundaries of citizenship

for their own advantage, siding with the side proving most profitable at the time. Hence, national identity became, indeed, a tool in the competition for commercial success.

### **”PAST AND PRESENT OF THE RAKHINE MUSLIMS”**

Jean Berlie  
*berliej@hotmail.com*

This paper, based on direct interviews and a participant anthropological study in Sittwe, looks at the society and religion of the Rakhine Muslims of Arakan, whose history, even following recent publications, is not so well-known.

The relationship of Rakhine Muslim society and its mosques will be studied. Mosques are the center of Islamic society. In Mrauk only the Sandikhan mosque, east of the palace, is known, but there are many others. In Sittwe, 110 mosques are officially recognized. A list of 94 of them will be provided. Around ten of them do not exist anymore. Half of the land of Jami Mosque, the biggest Muslim worshipping place of Akyab, was also taken by the government. The Cultural Museum of Sittwe was constructed on this site.

The present condition of Muslim society in Arakan is bleak. The United Nations and NGOs are trying to help the Rakhine Muslims who are also assimilated Bengali Muslims from Bangladesh. One possibility, rather utopian, is to try to have a real productive dialogue between the Myanmar government and Bangladesh (this really started for the first time in 2002) and the United Nations, to try to improve the social and economic conditions of the refugees on both sides of the border. This paper will give some life stories to illustrate the point, the fact that the Rakhine Muslims are prisoners in their own land.

### **“REMARKS ON THE ETHNOGRAPHY OF THE CHINESE IN BURMA FROM THE CHINA BORDER: PRELIMINARY RESULTS OF A YEAR'S FIELD WORK (2003)”**

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My presentation will have two foci integrated around my study of the cross-border trade (largely the gem trade). On the one hand, I shall put forward my data on the organization of the overland Chinese Burma community, and its interface with the overseas China community in Burma. This will deal with cultural accommodation and innovation of the Chinese in Burma as well as the cultural interface between Burmese and Chinese understandings of this trade, which turns out to be rather different from what is reported in the literature on the Chinese elsewhere in South East Asia. On the other hand, I propose to take a look, for once, at the remarkable overland Chinese contribution to Chinese information and scholarship about northern Burma, in particular the work and career of YIN Ming-de (and others) of the key overland Chinese base of emigration, He Shun (Ho Shwin in that dialect), work virtually unacknowledged to date in Western literature on this matter.

This work was conducted for almost eleven months in 2003 in Yunnan, largely at Ruili and Teng Chong, as well as Kunming, and also for a month in Burma (Mandalay, Myitkyina and Lashio). This is part of a longer-term project started in 2001 and to be continued hereafter farther East along this border, and connected with Dr. SUN Laichen's historical work on the overland Chinese connection, as set forth first in his panel at the 2002 Burma Studies Conference at Göteborg.

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**SATURDAY, OCTOBER 23**  
**CROSSING BURMESE BOUNDARIES: NEGOTIATING ETHNICITY, NATION**  
**AND GENDER**

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**“THE INDIAN DIASPORA IN BURMA AND IDENTITY POLITICS IN AMITAV GHOSH’S THE GLASS PALACE AND MIRA KAMDAR’S MOTIBA’S TATOOS”**

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Northern Michigan University  
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How do Indians in Burma define themselves in terms of their national identity? Are they considered as ethnic people of Burma, or are they still seen as foreigners even after a few centuries of dwelling there? When and why did they immigrate to Burma in the first place? Are the few remaining Indians able to retain any sense of “Indianness,” or have they transformed themselves into something else, something more acceptable in the aftermath of mass migration of Indians to India during the repressive regime of Ne Win? What about the question of gender in these texts?

Amitav Ghosh as well as Mira Kamdar trace the trajectory of the lives of Indians in Burma, taking us back to the time when Burma was part of British India. Ghosh and Kamdar have vastly different reasons for writing the novels, however. Why are two writers, who are not from Burma writing novels about Indians in Burma? Who are their audiences? As a Burma-born Indian, I will contextualize these two author’s ethnic backgrounds and histories and show how they are able or unable to provide an accurate account of the positions of Indians under the repressive regime of Ne Win. This paper will address some of the above questions as well provide critical analysis on the gendered identity constructions for the Indian women in the diaspora and how they negotiate for empowerment in troubled territories.

**“THE FUNCTION OF MONASTIC SITE  
IN THE MAINTENANCE OF BURMESE CULTURE AND IDENTITY”**

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While Asian American Studies tends to bracket religion when studying the intersections of race, ethnicity, gender and class as they relate to Asian American identity and culture, the issues concerning religion and spirituality have remained not far below the surfaces of these wider debates. This is particularly true in the lives of immigrants, whose circumstances have been so dramatically altered by their migration that religion cannot but play a role – often a significant one – in their search for meaning in a new setting. In my presentation, I will examine the function of *phongyi kyaung* in the maintenance of Burmese culture and identity. I will focus mainly on the congregation (monks, lay leaders, and the second-generation) of the Dhammananda Phongyi Kyaung in the city of Half Moon Bay, California.

**“WOMEN OF THE TEMPLE:  
BURMESE BUDDHISM AND GENDER IN A U.S. FRAME”**

Tamara Ho  
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There exists a paradoxical discourse of women within Buddhism and Burmese culture. The question of whether Buddhism provides a liberatory window of opportunity for Burmese women, or whether Buddhism is just another means of rendering Burmese women "second class" citizens has yet to be thoroughly investigated. Within the Burmese Buddhist temples in Southern California, women make up the majority of the active laity. Thus I suggest that Burmese American women negotiate gender and power hierarchies in the space of the temple in ways that demonstrate their agency despite the andocentric tendencies of Burmese Buddhism. My presentation will discuss how Buddhist food rituals, which are instrumental in building a sense of "Burmeseness," subvert or reify gender roles. Other questions which my presentation will address include: How does religion enable or restrict Burmese women in terms of identity, community, and nation? How does Buddhism affect these women's negotiation of "Burmeseness" and Americanization? How does religion affect the possibilities for transnational and trans-ethnic/interracial coalition or community building? By comparing scholarship on Buddhism, Burma, and gender against ethnographic observations and interviews of Burmese American women, I hope to provide some insight into these questions of identity, community, religion, agency, and power.

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**SATURDAY, OCTOBER 23**  
**MUSIC**

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**“SONGS OF THE PA’O: MUSIC, TEXT, AND MEANING IN TAUNGGYI”**

Christopher A. Miller  
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Accompanied by modified twenty-button Anglo concertinas, Pa’O vocalists not only offer insight into their everyday lives but also indicate prevailing attitudes concerning such diverse topics as: the British colonial period, the American Baptist mission, Theravada and Tantrayana Buddhism, the Pa’O nation, and the Myanma state. This paper seeks to analyze both the performance practice (how the music and musical instruments mean) and vocal text (what the songs mean) of this tradition. Special attention is focused on the ways in which Pa’O songs may contribute to a better understanding of Pa’O identity and sense of place locally, within the state, and beyond. Based on recent field research conducted by the author, the paper relies on three major sources: commercial recordings available in Taunggyi, musicians associated with the Pa’O Literary and Cultural Council (a sub-group of the Pa’O National Organization), and independent musicians from outlying villages.

**“TIT PYA, HNIT PYA’ AND ‘THE BEAUTIFUL COLLISION OF NATIONS’:  
BURMESE MUSIC AND THE WORLD MUSIC MARKET”**

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In 1997 the Shanachie record label released *White Elephants and Golden Ducks*, one of the first recordings of traditional Burmese music designed for the fast growing world-music market. Using some of the most revered traditional musicians in the country, the recording captures some top quality Burmese musicianship. Pitched to a Western audience, however, these recordings were completed (engineered and mixed) in the United States under the control of non-Burmese musicians and, subsequently, reveal a strong Western aesthetic in both sound and presentation.

In this paper I examine multiple versions of one folk song, Tit Pya, Hnit Pya (One Penny, Two Penny) that appears on the *White Elephants and Golden Ducks* CD. Copies of master tapes were left in the hands of local musicians and engineers and were re-mastered and re-mixed creating a new version of the song designed for the local market. The contrast in the end products of these projects reveals significant discrepancies between local Burmese aesthetics and the aesthetics of the world music market. Issues of misrepresentation and misunderstanding become complicated not only by the market-oriented system that distributes such products but also by the limited control that musicians within Burma have over their own representation, and finally, by the

international pro-democracy movement which flavors all things Burmese with the struggle for human rights.

**"WHAT'S BURMESE ABOUT BURMESE RAP?"**

Ward Keeler  
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In recent years, rap music has developed a following among young Burmese. Some theatre troupes include rap songs in their performances, and a few rap groups have attracted much attention. Burma has a long-standing tradition of rhythmically intoned verse, its content often politically tendentious. The questions to be addressed in this talk are whether Burmese see a connection between the two genres, and whether the potential for political comment many analysts have looked for in Western rap can be found in its Burmese variant.

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**SATURDAY, OCTOBER 23**  
**ART & ARCHAEOLOGY**

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**"ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATIONS AT LETPANYWA"**

U Nyein Lwin  
Archaeology Department, Bagan  
(to be presented in absentia)

Bob Hudson  
Archaeology Department, University of Sydney  
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<http://acl.arts.usyd.edu.au/~hudson/bobhpage.htm>

The excavation of a small cemetery and associated brick platform at Letpanywa, on the west side of the Ayeyarwady, south of Magwe, suggests a fascinating link between Myanmar's Late Prehistoric and Pyu cultures. Inhumation burials of a small group of individuals, accompanied by beads, iron artifacts, and funerary offerings in pots sit in front of a platform whose construction includes fingermarked bricks, a characteristic artifact of the Pyu walled complexes. The finds from Letpanywa suggest that the large enclosed Pyu settlements of the first millennium AD, Beikthano, Maingmaw, Halin and Sriksetra, were not isolated giants, but central places that grew out of and came to dominate networks of culturally linked settlements across Upper Myanmar.

## **“BURMESE CERAMICS EXPORT”**

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Although the term ‘Martaban’ has long been used to describe large storage jars of all types in Southeast Asia, Burmese ceramics were not securely identified until the mid 1980s. At that time a series of green and white lead glazed wares that were being unearthed from cemeteries along the Thai-Burma border were assigned to Burma. Their site of production is still unknown, but the search for a kiln site suddenly and surprisingly turned up production sites for celadon ware. Examples of Burmese celadon have been documented as far away as the Philippines, and they have been recovered from at least four shipwreck sites. These include the Pandanan, Lena Shoal and Santa Cruz sites in the Philippines, and the Brunei Junk off northern Borneo. The lecture will illustrate the known types of Burmese ware and present the shipwreck evidence that indicates Burmese celadon was exported circa 1470-1510.

## **“STYLISTIC CHANGE DURING IN THE EARLY PAGAN PERIOD (1044–1113)”**

Charlotte Galloway  
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During the early Pagan period, Pagan was transformed from a local village to the capital of a powerful kingdom. This rapid transformation was indicative of the Burmans' willingness to absorb cultural practices from their neighbors, including religious ideals, language, architectural techniques and a wide range of artistic skills. As a consequence, the Buddhist artifacts from this time reflect diverse styles and influences. This paper aims to highlight some of the major stylistic themes that emerged, and suggests possible sources for these differing styles. The focus is on the main artistic forms of the period – votive tablets, jataka plaques, and sculptural images. Relationships between media and stylistic form will be discussed and agencies for artistic change will be explored.

## **“THE CHANGING LANDSCAPE OF PALI BUDDHISM IN PAGAN”**

Lilian Handlin  
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This paper traces one aspect in the evolution of elite Buddhism in the course of Pagan's history as an independent entity. The nascent polity's conversion into a regional powerhouse entailed not only political centralization and economic growth but also ideational adjustments, echoed in its official ideology, that is, its Buddhism. Integrative efforts adapting Pali-articulated dogmatics for popular consumption are noticeable in the surviving temples' content. The transition from the scholasticism of the Mon-inscribed structures to a more user-friendly 'Buddhism for Dummies' in

the early 12th century, culminating in the painted homilies and narratives of the 13<sup>th</sup> century, suggests altering sensibilities. The change was facilitated by the kingdom's elastic ideational matrix, the early endorsement of a written vernacular for temple use, and the perception that the contours of the Pali canon were a work-in-progress. The shifting uses of canonical and commentarial materials are evident in the emergent popularity of one such Pali text - the *Vimānavatthu* - Stories of the Celestial Mansions.

**“THE MURALS OF THE TILOKAGURU CAVE-TEMPLE:  
A REASSESSMENT AFTER JANE TERRY BAILEY”**

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In 1976, Jane Terry Bailey published an article on the murals of the Tilokaguru cave-temple. She discussed the paintings stylistically and narratively, as well as briefly linking them with earlier traditions both in Burma and in India. This paper proposes to rectify some of the identificatory errors in Bailey's work, and attempts to further the study of the Tilokaguru murals through an extended narratological analysis. This entails exploring the organization of the murals in relation to the architecture, the construction of time and space, and the importance of the written glosses. Through this analysis, it is possible to see that the murals have been deliberately produced to enhance and confirm religious and social beliefs.

**“THE BURMESE ART COLLECTION AT NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY AS A TEACHING  
RESOURCE AND A KEY TO BURMESE CIVILIZATION”**

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The Burmese Art Collection at NIU was established in 1986 with the creation of the Center for Burma Studies by the Burma Studies Group of the Association for Asian Studies. At that time Dr. Sarah Bekker donated nearly a hundred Burmese artifacts comprising the original Konrad and Sarah Bekker Collection: the core of what is now the much larger assemblage of Burmese Art at NIU.

The Bekkers' objective was not only to see their Collection publicly displayed, but also to promote the study of Burmese art within the greater context of South and Southeast Asian art.

Certain of these pieces hold particular value in demonstrating the diversity and complexity of Burmese Buddhism, including several artifacts in the Bekker Collection which have no close equivalents outside a purely Burmese context: foremost among which are the *Dekhinathaka* image, the *Tagundaing*, and the *Lokanat*. The aim of this paper is to elaborate their specific cultural resonance.

**"THE POINTING BUDDHA AS CENTERPIECE  
FOR KING MINDON'S CONSTRUCTION PROGRAM AT MANDALAY"**

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The Pointing Buddha image of Mandalay in Burma is important art historically due to its rare iconography, colossal size, and the political context in which it was created in the mid-nineteenth century. The image is most notable for its innovative and dramatic pointing gesture (*mudra*), and stands as the symbolic fulcrum of King Mindon's construction program at Mandalay.

The image illustrates a moment in a narrative, recorded in the Burmese Royal Chronicles, in which Gautama predicts a great Buddhist capital at Mandalay. However, the iconography exceeds its illustrative function, and can be seen as a response to British threats to Burmese autonomy. Similar pointing Buddhas are minor figures in Tibetan and Nepalese Wheel of Life mandala (*thangka*) paintings, and portray the Buddha as teacher, *showing the way* for the faithful Buddhist to follow. In Burma this Mahayanist or Tantric symbolism has been reinterpreted into a Theravadin context, and made suitable for King Mindon as he sought to drive the British from Burma.

**"NINETEENTH CENTURY BURMESE PARABAİK PAINTINGS AS VISUAL NARRATIVES"**

April Tin Tin Aye  
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Since the eleventh century Burmese art has been mostly associated with religious edifices. *Jataka* stories and the life of the historical Buddha were portrayed in mural paintings that adorn the walls of the temples. In the nineteenth century both religious and secular paintings were portrayed on paper. They are known as painted *parabaiks* or picture books of hand-made paper folded accordion-style. After Burma fell to the British in 1885, many of these books were taken away by the British as curiosities. Many of these books also ended in museums and libraries over the world. These paintings were interpreted by some as "picture books depicting royal amusements". In fact they are visual records of royal duties, special events, beliefs and amusements, many of them recorded in the book of sumptuary laws, Burmese chronicles, accounts of early western travelers, and journals of imperial officials. This paper will attempt through a close analysis of some of these paintings to portray certain aspects of nineteenth century Burmese history.

**“POWER DRESSING COURT DRESS:  
LAN NA SHAN SIAM”**

Dr. Susan Conway  
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This paper discusses ‘power’ as expressed in the 19th and early 20th century court dress and regalia of the eastern Shan States and Lan Na (north Thailand). The major powers at the time were Burma, China, and Siam, and the Lan Na and Shan princes paid them tribute in the form of taxes, military conscripts, and goods in kind. In exchange, they received gifts that included woven and embroidered textiles and high quality metalwork and jewelry made by skilled artisans. These items were distributed according to sumptuary law. The status of individual rulers rested on the wearing and display of these highly prized objects. Powerful Lan Na and Shan princes also maintained tributary systems that affected even the most remote settlements. This paper examines dress and regalia in the context of these complex tribute systems and sumptuary law.

**“MODERN BURMESE PAINTING ACCORDING TO BAGYI AUNG SOE (1923-1990)”**

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Instead of adhering strictly to the European or Burmese artistic traditions or his European contemporaries' experimentations, Bagyi Aung Soe (1923-1990) is unique in that he attempted to develop a style which is simultaneously "modern" and Burmese - the challenge which his contemporary literary figures like Min Thu Wun and Dagon Taya also addressed. Much as he is regarded by fellow artists in Burma as a pioneer in the field of modern painting, his idiom remains little understood due to the lack of understanding of both his motivations and the context which inspired them. In discussing the significance of Tagore's Shantiniketan, the Burmese script, and particularities of Burmese Buddhism, this paper aims to elucidate the vision of Bagyi Aung Soe: the fusion of the international, the national and the individual. With reference to his style, technique and subject matter, I would attempt to demonstrate how Bagyi Aung Soe's art is "modern" without sacrificing the Burmese tradition.

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**SUNDAY, OCTOBER 24**  
**THE STATE OF BURMA II**

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**“THE VAGARIES OF DESPOTIC CONTROL:  
WHY THE BURMESE JUNTA IS CLUMSY, ROUGH AND INEPT”**

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Despite its status as a human rights pariah, the Burmese junta remains inadequately conceptualized, theorized, and investigated. Most accounts of the regime fail to analyze its inner workings and the political dynamics they generate. In order to account for the junta's function and dysfunction, this paper sketches a theory of the regime, examines its evolution, and situates it within the broader family of authoritarian governments.

In Burma, the state apparatus is often the despot's own worst enemy: state interventions frequently beget societal animosity and resentment rather than quiescence, and they provide human rights critics with a steady supply of misdeeds with which to further castigate the regime internationally. Why does the Burmese government do the seemingly stupid things that it does? The answer lies in the particular path beaten by Burmese despotism: repressive and despotic power has been achieved at the expense of governmental capacity in other domains. The result is not the well-run brutal machine that many imagine, but rather, a lumbering blundering beast that is all (or at least mostly) thumbs.

**“THE MEDIA, AUNG SAN SUU KYI, AND THE FEMINIZATION OF DEMOCRACY”**

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The concepts of human rights and democracy have been important clarion calls for successive administrations of the U.S. government but have been applied around the world for differing purposes and with different effects. The U.S. has had a mixed record in its response to the call for democracy and human rights from the people of Burma. Consistent in the U.S. response to the Burmese situation, however, has been sympathy for Aung San Suu Kyi. This paper reports on a textual analysis of recent major U.S. newspaper coverage of Aung San Suu Kyi, arguably the most powerful feminine personification of besieged democracy alive today. Following the work of Edward Said, Ann Stoler, and other theorists who have demonstrated the powerful function of gender in creating and maintaining hierarchies both within and between nations, this paper explores media representations of Aung San Suu Kyi, interrogating the ways in which she functions as a symbol in global politics today, and to whose benefit.

**“PUBLIC SPACES IN RANGOON (YANGON):  
THEIR TRANSFORMATION AFTER 1988”**

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By “public spaces” I mean places where people associate not as consumers or as private persons but as members of a (national) community. Most capital cities have public spaces at their center such as the Mall in Washington D.C. and Tiananmen Square in Beijing, where buildings, monuments and open areas celebrate national identity. Rangoon’s most important public spaces encompass the Shwe Dagon Pagoda, the holiest site in Burmese Buddhism, and – to the west of the pagoda – Resistance Park, People’s Park and the *Pyithu Hluttaw* (People’s Assembly) grounds. One should also include the Martyrs’ Monument and Mausoleum, located to the north of the pagoda. During the British colonial period, much of this area, including the western entrance to the Shwe Dagon pagoda platform, was a Cantonment (military quarters). This paper investigates how the nature of these public spaces has changed over time, especially since 1988. Special emphasis will be placed on how the State Law and Order Restoration Council/State Peace and Development Council has asserted tight control over them, closing them off to public assembly, and how Buddhist and military sites have been purposely juxtaposed.

**“THE STATE OF SOCIAL CAPITAL IN MYANMAR”**

Kyaw Yin Hlaing  
National University of Singapore

Since attaining independence from the British in 1948, Myanmar has undergone three regime changes. Along with these political changes, the country has degenerated economically from one of the developing countries with a potential to catch up with developed countries to one of the poorest countries in the world. Therefore, there is a plethora of scholarly and journalistic works on how Myanmar deteriorated over time. These scholarly and journalistic works, however, focus mainly on the political and economic deterioration and pay little attention to social deterioration. The few existing studies of social deterioration in Myanmar are confined mainly to corruption in officialdom.

Recent studies of social impacts on politics and economics have highlighted the relationship between the state of social capital (or trust) in a community and the politico-economic development of that community. They all highlight how the social capital reserve of a country or a community helps members solve collective action problems. Drawing on the social capital literature, the proposed study will examine how regime changes have affected the social capital in Myanmar and how the state of social capital has affected social, political and economic cooperation among Myanmar people. Given the dearth of literature on modern Myanmar, this paper aims to contribute to a better understanding of socio-political and economic developments there. The purpose of this paper, however, is not merely to help fill the gap in existing studies on Myanmar. It also intends to make some theoretical contributions. Most existing literature on

social capital examines the relationship between the general trust people in a country have for each other, or for their government, and the economic and political developments of the country. This is probably because the existing literature focuses mainly on the state of social capital in western democracies. In this study, I will first show how the political and economic systems and the stock of social capital in a developing country shape each other and, second, the need to disaggregate the general concept of trust. In so doing, I argue that the economic and political developments and the state of social capital reconstitute each other. Furthermore, I also argue that in order to better understand the way social capital affects political and economic developments of a country, especially one with an authoritarian government, we should take into account the simple yet important fact that one might be willing to cooperate with a person on one matter but might not want to cooperate with him on another matter. Furthermore, I will show that the way people trust each other could be shaped substantially by the potential cost that could be incurred. This would be a useful addition to the existing social capital literature which focuses mainly on how formal and informal institutions shape the social capital stock of a country or a community.

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### BOOK REVIEW

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Mary P. Callahan, *Making Enemies: War and State Building In Burma* (2003, Cornell University Press, Ithaca and London), pp. 268+xx. Cloth, ISBN: 0-8014-4125-0, \$39.95/£23.95

In November, 1991, Mary Callahan was astounded when the Burmese government granted her visa request to study the history of the Tatmadaw with access to the archives of the Burmese armed forces. Accompanied by two liaison officers from the Ministry of Agriculture, specialists in entomology, the then graduate student spent six months in Myanmar. She was provided with many of the files for which she asked and was permitted to photocopy approximately 90% of the material she desired to duplicate. There appeared to be neither rhyme nor reason to the type of material to which she was given access or denied.

However, there was an overall limitation on her research. She was not permitted access to any records after 1962. When she sought permission from Colonel Ye Htut to review the archival material from the 1960s, he replied

You don't need to see the files on what happened after 1962. The Commission for Compiling the Facts of Myanmar History – no, I mean the Authentic Facts of Myanmar History, you know what it's called – is writing the book. You can buy it. (p xi)

Several years ago, when she returned to Burma, she again asked the Colonel to see post-1962 period documents. He rebuffed her with the statement, "You have all the facts," as he pointed to a copy of the official history of the Socialist era (1962-1988) (p. xiv).

Given these constraints, Ms. Callahan has authored an expansion of her admirable PhD thesis<sup>5</sup> into a most comprehensive study of the armed forces of Myanmar, from their informal beginning in the colonial era, to the Tatmadaw after independence, through to the present era, in which they have become the State. She has drawn on the archives to which she had access as well as on interviews with various military and civilian personnel, including Brigadiers Maung Maung, Aung Gyi, and Tin Pe, and Col. Chit Myaing, U Maung Maung, and U Kyaw Nyein (but, of course, not Ne Win), as well as extensive primary sources from the files of the British embassy in Yangon as well as the academic literature. Chapter subjects include the Colonial State, the Japanese Occupation, the Resistance, the three years leading to independence, the Insurgency and State Disintegration and the extensive Warfare and Army building (1950 to 1953), and 1953 – 1962 eras. During this last period, the military functioned as both warriors and State builders.

The author describes and analyzes in significant detail the forces that led to the formation of the Burmese army, the tensions within the army, and the friction between the military and the civilian governments during the indigenous democracy era which lead to the Caretaker Government. After that eighteen month military rule, Ne Win directed the armed forces in a retreat to the barracks which lasted an additional eighteen months.

In March 1962, Ne Win commanded a full fledged *coup d'etat* which ended Burmese parliamentary democracy and, for all practical purposes, reinstated military rule for what is now approaching forty-three years. The author describes this last period in a twenty-one page epilogue which offers some summary analysis of why there is no real political integration of the ethnic minorities into Burmese political life and why there is an historical intolerance of any form of dissent.

Some of the intermediate conclusions in the volume are already known to scholars, for example, the reliance by the British on Indian troops, at first exclusively, and, later, aided by certain ethnic minority troops from what were termed the martial races, namely the Chins, the Kachins, and Karens, to constitute a colonial army to suppress the majority Burmans. A corollary of this policy was that neither the Burmans nor the Shan were permitted to serve, to any material degree, in that Army. As the British prepared for independence, the Indian component disappeared. The Burmese thereafter readied themselves for self-rule and the Burmese army was both reduced in size and became fractionalized between the Patriotic Burmese Forces (the old Burma National Army) (PBF) and what was denominated (by the Burmans) as the rightist Karens.

Ms. Callahan then advances the new theory that two consequences arose from the tension caused by that reduction and division. First, substantial numbers of BPF members left the nascent Independence Army, retained their arms, formed the PVO (Patriotic Volunteer Organization), and went into rebellion. Second, the Karen in the Army ultimately decided that they would not be able to retain power nor positions of authority and also elected to become insurgents. One of the book's central theses is that the creation of these factions is an example of a cycle of armament, failed disarmament, and subsequent re-incorporation into new extra-state armies that continued until 1962.

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<sup>5</sup> *The Origins of Military Rule in Burma*, Ph. D. dissertation presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of Cornell University, May 1996.

A significant number of generally unknown facts are presented in print for the first time in this volume, although some of them appeared in the dissertation. For example, the assumption by the Burmese military of its initial eighteen month caretaker rule appears to have been instigated by the fear of staff officers, including Ne Win, Maung Maung, Aung Gyi, and Tin Pe, that the regional commanders were planning a coup. The latter had grown disenchanted with U Nu's "Clean" AFPFL faction, especially his attempt to purge high-level "Stable" faction supporters from the Union Military Police, the regular police, and the civil service. This was exacerbated when the 1958 AFPFL Congress openly and severely criticized the Army.

Another revelation not generally known in academic writings is that when Ne Win decided in March, 1962, that Burma should embark on a State Socialist path, there was neither extensive forethought nor written ideology in place. Additionally, Tin Pe, whom journalists and scholars at the time thought was pro-Marxist, apparently had no such firm predisposition, at least if one is to credit what he told Ms Callahan in a 1992 interview<sup>6</sup>. According to Tin Pe, Ne Win asked him to research leftist ideology which might be an appropriate ideological foundation for the new regime. He then visited the University library and immersed himself in Marxist tomes for seven days. He told Ms Callahan: "What did I know about ideology?" However, on the basis of what is known of his membership in the Young Officers Resistance Group, familiarity with Marxist thought, and his friendship thereafter with Ba Swe, one wonders if Tin Pe protests too much.

Ms Callahan casts doubt on one of the reasons often offered in the scholarly literature for the 1962 coup, namely that the Army was concerned about the possibility of succession from the Union by the Shan and Kayah States, especially as possibly fomented at the minorities' Federal Seminar held in early March, 1962. In Callahan's opinion and through a report of at least one bystander at that seminar, it was not discussion of withdrawal from the Union at the seminar (which indeed may not have occurred), but the seminar itself which was a major reason for the Army's actions. The seminar gave the Shan leaders a forum for grievances concerning the institution of martial law dating, in the Shan states, back to 1950. Shan leaders also harbored more recent complaints against the Tatmadaw. They were perturbed that Ne Win had stripped the Sawbwas of their feudal powers in 1959.

Perhaps most importantly, the author advances the overall proposition that there was an accretion of power over military affairs to the Burmese Army, essentially as a result of the abdication by the emerging, frequently divided, and often pusillanimous civilian government. As a result, over the years the Tatmadaw essentially chose the models on which it would be based, mainly the Yugoslavian and, to a lesser extent, the Israeli armed forces; which arms it would purchase; the business ventures in which it would invest; the share of the budget to which it was entitled; and the method of allocation of supplies within the various regional military commands. By 1962, the Tatmadaw, was "a standing, unified, bureaucratized, and centralized institution" (p. 204) capable of eliminating challenges to it from local field commanders who might be allied with black marketers, smugglers, weapons dealers, and local political bosses. Thus Ne Win could be

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<sup>6</sup> Ms Callahan does explain that six years earlier the PsyWar Directorate of the armed forces had disseminated a First Draft of its official ideology incorporating certain leftist principles. It is reported that U Chit Hlaing, a former follower of Thakin Soe, probably was one of its principal draftspersons. The document was refined and presented at subsequent Commanding Officers Conferences. However, Callahan opines that document was not the basis for *The Burmese Way to Socialism*, the cornerstone ideological document of the Revolutionary Council after the 1962 coup.

sure his orders for the coup and subsequent policy directives would be followed with remarkable consistency throughout Burma. Since 1962, the organizational strength and pervasive power of the military has only increased, albeit with tensions remaining between the regional commanders and those at the Ministry of Defense who now constitute the central government. The 1995, 1997, and 2001 reorganizations confirm the continued existence of regional fiefdoms. Since the termination of the quasi-Marxist era and the demise of the Burma Socialist Program Party, the Tatmadaw has largely modernized the armed forces and assumed a more commanding role with the virtual elimination of Burmese civil society.

Another central thesis of the study is that the Burmese armed forces are essentially war fighters inured to constant organized violence who consider anyone outside the military their enemy, to be regarded with suspicion and controlled. This includes all ethnic minorities. This proposition, coupled with the Army's historical lack of mastery of politics and the widely discussed absence of a tradition of compromise in Burmese society<sup>7</sup>, presents a substantial obstacle to the institution of liberal western-type democracy in Myanmar. The author suggests, as she<sup>8</sup> and at least one other<sup>9</sup> have elsewhere, that consociationalism may furnish a way out of the present stasis (p. 225). This is a variety of governance that attempts to integrate diverse societies by granting minority rights, such as mutual veto and decision making, education and mass media in minority languages, and recruitment and promotion practices in the army, educational system, and bureaucracies that could favor previously excluded minorities.

The volume is densely footnoted with citations and supplementary factual information. The latter are often intriguing. The citations in Burmese to sources in that language (although somewhat difficult to read due to type size) should be of great assistance to future scholars. In that regard, Ms Callahan remarks that even the official Burmese government histories from 1962 onward should prove useful to scholars because they describe events little known outside of Myanmar. This, of course, always presupposes that the necessary verification can be undertaken. The book also has a number of maps and tables of military promotions and demotions which elucidate the text. The absence of a bibliography is unfortunate. Its inclusion would have assisted scholars by bringing together the various sources in one place. That aside, Burma watchers are certainly indebted to Ms. Callahan for the depth and breadth of this scholarly volume.

Paul Sarno

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<sup>7</sup> According to Ms Callahan, an ethnic group in the majority in a locality often persecutes the minorities within its jurisdiction.

<sup>8</sup> Callahan, "Democracy in Burma: The Lessons of History" in *Political Legacies and Prospects for Democratic Development in Southeast Asia: Burma and Indonesia*. National Bureau of Asian Research, May 1998, vol. 9, no 3, Seattle, Washington, pp. 18-19.

<sup>9</sup> Hoffmann, Ralf, "Traditional Political Culture and the Prospects for Democracy in Burma" in Uta Gartner and Jens Lorenz, eds, *Tradition and Modernity in Myanmar*, Proceedings of an International Conference held in Berlin from May 7-9, 1993 (1994, Munster, Hamburg), p. 178.

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## PAST AND FUTURE CONFERENCE

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### PAST CONFERENCE

Last May 22-23, 2004, Stanford University in California held a conference on “**Burmese Buddhism and the Spirit Cult Revisited: An Interdisciplinary Conference on Religion in Contemporary Myanmar.**” Hosted by: The Stanford Center for Buddhist Studies, Stanford University. Organized by: Naoko Kumada (Research Fellow, SCBS)

#### Symposium Description:

'Buddhism and the spirit cult' is a classic topic in the anthropological study of Theravada Buddhist societies. However, our knowledge of Burmese religion and society is still limited, due to the fact that Burma (Myanmar) has been inaccessible to foreign scholars since the military takeover in 1962. Furthermore, the renewed manifestations of Buddhism and spirit possession we find in Burma today raise a number of questions for our understanding of religion. As Burma slowly opens its door to face the rapidly globalizing world, this symposium seeks to revisit Buddhism and spirit possession: to re-examine old themes and explore new trends. The two-day interdisciplinary symposium attempts to situate the various issues of religion in Burma in larger historical, cultural, and Buddhist contexts. In particular we will discuss religious practices in Burma in relation to those of its neighboring Theravada country, Thailand, because of the known contrasts and similarities between the two regarding Buddhism and spirit possession. The symposium aims not only to develop new ideas and approaches but also to foster constructive interaction among scholars of Burma, Thailand, and Buddhist studies, and also between Western and non-Western academics. The diversity of the participants reflects our attempt to discuss what it means to study religion from multiple perspectives.

### LISTED BELOW ARE THE SPEAKERS THAT PRESENTED AT THE CONFERENCE

- Bénédicte Brac de la Perrière (LASELMA) - 'Nat Religion in Burma'
- Katsumi Tamura (National Museum of Ethnology) - 'Nat Religion in Burma'
- Pattana Kitiarsa (National University of Singapore) - 'Current Popular Theravada Buddhism in Contemporary Thailand'
- Naoko Kumada (Stanford University) - 'Rethinking Dana in Burma'
- Ven. Dhammasami (University of Oxford) - 'Idealism and Pragmatism: Dilemmas in Current Monastic Education Systems'
- Charles Keyes (University of Washington)
- Frank Reynolds, (University of Chicago, Emeritus)
- Katsumi Tamura (National Museum of Ethnology): Comments and Discussion

### FUTURE CONFERENCE

Myanmar Historical Commission, as part of the Golden Jubilee Celebrations, a special multi-themed International Conference on Myanmar and Southeast Asia will be held in Yangon, Myanmar on January 12-14, 2005 (in lieu of the annual December conference for 2004) to which foreign scholars are warmly invited.

