
BULLETIN OF THE BURMA STUDIES GROUP



**International Burma Studies Conference, IRSEA, Université de Provence
Marseille, France, July 6-9, 2010**

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Memories of Marseille

Most of this issue of the *Bulletin* is devoted to recapping the Burma Studies Conference held at the Université de Provence this past July. Every Burma Studies conference has its own highlights and pleasures. Yet it is hard to think back on this year's conference without waxing particularly nostalgic. The city itself, one that many people in France apparently speak of unkindly, is both beautifully situated and rich in history. Granted, it was hot, and the lecture halls were sometimes stuffy. But whereas the weather was not under the organizers' control, everything that was, everything for which they could be held responsible, seemed to work effortlessly. Technical assistance, each day's lunch and the big dinner, the optional sightseeing tour, the wonderful morning and afternoon tea breaks: all of it must have taken considerable work to arrange, but it all went so well that it was hard not to imagine that one was at some event center where the staff did this sort of thing all the time. And that berries en croûte dessert for the final lunch was to die for!

In celebrating the circumstances, I would not want to appear to slight the intellectual stimulation that was the conference's rationale and did indeed come in spades. The remarkable increase in the number of people working in and about Burma has meant that panels must be scheduled simultaneously, and many of us gnashed our teeth at what panels we missed in attending others (sometimes our own!). Still, that so many interesting papers were on offer, and that scholars came from so many different parts of the world, can only bode well for the future of the field. All in all, it was a

thought-provoking and thoroughly enjoyable way to spend most of a week in July, and I am sure that all the participants in the conference share my sense of indebtedness to François Robinne, Alice Vittrant, and Louise Pichard for making it all happen as well as the Center for Burma Studies at NIU particularly Beth Bjerneby who maintained the conference website until the last day.

I have received from the organizers of many of the panels summaries of what transpired these make up the bulk of this issue. Catherine Raymond has sent along a brief account of the lacquerware exhibit she mounted at Northern Illinois University recently. At the risk of inciting charges of abusing my role as editor, I have included an announcement about the release of a two-CD set of classical Burmese theatre music I produced, including information about how to order copies. Think of it as a country-music performer flogging the CDs you can buy in the lobby during intermission. Finally, U Saw Tun, Jake Carbine, and Juliane Schober are putting together a reader on Burma/Myanmar for Duke University Press and include an ongoing call for submissions for that volume.

—The Editor

**2010 International Burma Studies
Conference, Université de Provence
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**Panel 1: Pre-Historic Burma—between
China and India—in its South-Eastern
Asian Environment**

The panel took place on the morning of the first day of the conference. The convenors were Jean-Pierre Pautreau, Anne-Sophie

Coupey, and Janice Stargardt. The panel was divided into two thematic parts: the first on pre-historic Upper Burma and the second on historic landscape archaeology of Burma. The presentations were given in broadly chronological order from the Neolithic to the early Historic periods.

The session began with the presentation by Jean-Pierre Pautreau *et al.*, which dealt with the Neolithic settlement of Ywa Gon Gyi in the Samon valley (Mandalay Division), excavated by the French Archaeological Mission in Myanmar. Pautreau presented the occupational remains of a domestic building (clay associated with a posthole, lithic tools, pottery items and remains of animal bones). Two radiocarbon dates gave an age range from the end of the 3rd millennium BC to the first half of the 2nd millennium BC. These dates are significant as they are the first available for the Neolithic period in the central region of Burma.

Anne-Sophie Coupey gave the following three presentations: her own, that of Aung Aung Kyaw (Assistant-Director of the Archaeological Department of Mandalay) and that of Ch. Maitay (specialist in ceramic studies). Coupey's subject was the burial traditions in the Samon River Valley during the Iron Age (the last four centuries BC). The question of cultural connections with other Southeast Asian communities came to the fore in discussing the similarities and differences between the neighboring groups, which are very useful in specifying what kind of relationships, contacts and influences existed and what role they played in the formation of one of the first cultures in Upper Burma.

The next paper dealt with the recent discovery of two Iron Age sites, Kan Thit Gon and Mauk Le, by the Archaeological Department of Mandalay, headed by Aung

Aung Kyaw. The question of relative chronology between the Samon Valley sites was considered from the associated grave goods (the shape, number and position of the ceramic vessels, the stone and glass ornaments and the copper-based objects). This paper revealed that the late Prehistoric chronology of this region is not easy to define, but research in progress is encouraging.

Then Coupey presented the work of Ch. Maitay on ceramic-making traditions in Upper Burma. He examined the similarity and difference between the archaeological ceramic corpus of the Iron Age sites of the Samon River Valley and the ceramic vessels made by present-day potters of the same area in order to demonstrate the timelessness of some manufacturing techniques.

The fifth paper in this session was by Emma Rambault on the late prehistoric copper-alloyed grave-goods from the Samon River Valley. She described tools, weapons, vessels, body ornaments and some specific grave-goods, such as bundles of copper wire and cut and decorated beaten sheets of bronze. Then she discussed the similarities of some metallic goods with those known in Yunnan Province dating from late Prehistory.

Then Ni Ni Khet talked about the prehistoric iron artifacts from the Samon Valley. Metallographic study revealed the iron quality of those artifacts, the technology of their fabrication, and use. The study of some iron furnace remains contributed to comparisons with research on ancient iron metallurgical processes (iron making, casting, forging) in neighboring countries. She concluded that the emergence of iron working was an important component in cultural, social and economic changes. This first set of papers provided new insight

into the late Prehistory in Upper Burma, especially in the Samon River Basin, giving a very complete view of one of the first Upper Burmese cultures, with specific studies, analysis and interpretations by specialists of the joint excavation project of a Burmese-French team.

The second topic, on the landscape archaeology of Burma, was taken up after the coffee break. Pierre Pichard talked about his database of Pagan monuments, providing information on 2300 monuments organized by type, size, configuration and decorative features. This research tool is new and very valuable to all scholars who work on architectural problems in Burma and other Southeast Asian regions.

Finally, the unique site of Sri Ksetra formed the subject of Janice Stargardt's paper "Irrigation is Forever." She explained that an ancient irrigation system played an important role in the urban development of this site from before the 4th c. AD. Her paper documented the sub-surface and surface movement of moisture across the site from combined resources: space-borne multi-spectral and multi-temporal satellite imagery, aerial photographs and archaeological maps. Using medium resolution satellite imagery, which is available free on the internet, she presented the results obtained by the special methods developed by her Cambridge colleague, Dr. Gabriel Amable, to enhance wetness differences visible in the soil in the four months following the end of the rainy season. Those images show water flowing across the site, mainly below the surface, along the channels of the canals and tanks of the ancient irrigation system. Thus they demonstrate the enduring effects of ancient man-made water works on the harvests gained by modern farmers occupying this site. She concluded by pointing to the

potential value of such imagery, given the right geological conditions, for archaeological research on other ancient landscapes embedded in modern ones.

Anne-Sophie Coupey and Janice Stargardt

Panel 2: Dealing with Burmese Historical Sources: New Perspectives on Old Challenges

Over the last ten to fifteen years, a younger generation of historians has been investing its energies in the study of Burmese history and historiography, less for the sake of developing new interpretations than with the stated aim of broadening our knowledge and deepening our understanding of Burma's past. The panel "Dealing with Burmese Historical Sources: New Perspectives on Old Challenges," conceived as a follow-up to the 2006 panel of historians at the BSC in Singapore, gave some of these historians a floor. Ideas and projects ripened during several preparatory sessions that took place mostly in restaurants and coffee shops in Yangon.

Alexey Kirichenko's investigation into the life of Atula Hsayadaw Shin Yatha, one of the key figures of Burmese monastic history of the eighteenth century, "Tracing the Life of Atula Hsayadaw Shin Yatha: A Case Study in Burmese Historical Evidence," was an oral presentation about his recent field work in the region that that monk hailed from. As Atula has been portrayed, controversially, as a leading advisor of King Alaungmintaya, and as an enemy of the Buddhist sasana heavily punished by a later king, Kirichenko offered an analysis of relevant sources that lead him to the conclusion that evidence concerning the monk's biography must have been forged.

Patrick McCormick, thanks to his splendid mastery of Thai, Burmese and Mon, has recently contributed remarkable new insights on the genealogy of the *Rājāvaṃsa Kathā* and the *Rājādhirāj*, considered emblematic texts of Mon historiography and historical identity. Why are these texts, which present only a partial view of Mon history at large, so much revered? In his paper, “Lingering in the Distant Past: Local and International Perspectives on Writing Mon History,” McCormick showed that Mon intellectuals do not confidently venture outside the realm of ancient history as they are fixed on maintaining the status of the Mon as primary bearers of Buddhist culture in Southeast Asia, as conservators of a prestigious ancient Mon lineage, and at the same time, as victims of cultural destruction within modern Burma.

Aurore Candier has been doing research for several years in libraries in Yangon on the subject of modernization efforts, their conceptualization and their practice at the Burmese court in the nineteenth century. Based on her analysis of Burmese historiography and prophetic texts as much as of French and English primary sources, she showed in her paper, “Disorder, Rumors and Reforms in the Late Konbaung Era (1866-1870): New Perspectives for the Study of Political Theory and Practice,” that the kings performed what she calls “standard” reforms to re-establish the balance of the cosmic order and “conjunctural” reforms to face the challenges of modernization.

Alicia Turner questioned the widespread but uncritical and anachronistic projection of the concept of “nation” back into earlier periods of Burmese history. Based on sources from the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, her paper, “Narratives of Nation, Questions of Community: Examining

Burmese Sources without the Lens of Nation,” looked at other religious or political formulations of community.

Tilman Frasch’s paper, “Writings on the Wall: Inked Inscriptions from Pagan,” offered a detailed examination of the relatively rare ink inscriptions in the temples of Pagan. He focused on the donative and commemorative inscriptions, explaining their interest for the study of early Burmese history.

Jacques Leider’s paper on King Alaungmintaya’s self-representation, “The Rise of a Dynasty Founder and the Making of a King: An Investigation into Alaungmintaya’s Self-representation,” offered a case study of the transformation of a village headman into a Buddhist king. He demonstrated that king-making and royal identity-building was a complex process—with psychological, practical, ideological, religious and political dimensions—that was conditioned as much by the king himself as by his entourage.

Jacques Leider

**Panel 3: Burma, Northern Thailand,
Laos, and Southwestern China:
Connections in Material and Visual
Cultures**

Catherine Raymond and Alexandra Green organized the panel on connections in material and visual cultures between Burma, Lanna, Laos, and Sipsong Panna. Cross-cultural interactions in the region are abundantly evident in the art and architecture of the region, yet few studies have addressed the results of historical interactions among them. This panel was an opportunity to explore some of the

expressions that resulted from such cross-cultural contact. Four papers were given: one by each of the convenors, plus those of Gillian Green and Klemens Karlsson.

Catherine Raymond discussed representations of Mount Meru, the Buddhist cosmic mountain, from its earliest depiction in the wall paintings at Pagan, its illustration on palm-leaf manuscripts from nineteenth century Burma, to its incorporation in the architecture and art of Lan Na, Siam, and Lan Xang. She emphasized how different the cosmological model was in varying contexts, showing that in central Thailand it can be found in murals, manuscripts, and on chests, for example. In Laos, it was transformed into carved wood and iron candelabra placed in front of altars, and in Lan Na, it is found, as in Lan Xang, surmounting wat structures. Mount Meru iconography thus functions in multiple ways within Buddhist temple compounds.

Klemens Karlsson talked about Buddhist visual culture in Keng Tung and Upper Southeast Asia, examining examples of architecture, wooden sculpture, paintings, and banners. He analyzed the similarities and differences between the Tai Khun and the rest of the Shan/Tai Yai and Tai peoples living in Lan Na, Northern Laos, and Sipsong Panna, arguing that despite similarities in culture and religion, there are also numerous local variations. Although focusing on the structural designs of vihan, he also compared wooden Buddha images, briefly discussed the gold leaf illustrations applied to temple walls, and looked at the types of banners utilized in the regions.

Alexandra Green's paper looked at central Thai and Lan Na influences on Burmese murals from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century period. Green argued that

the 1767 sack of Ayutthaya and the subsequent relocation of Thai people to central Burma had an impact on stylistic features of the murals. However, the colonization of Lan Na and the trade networks and religious exchanges with that region, the Shan States, and Sipsong Panna introduced stories and concepts of religious practice into the wall paintings, imagery that continued in use long after the central Thai styles had fallen out of favor.

The panel was concluded by Gillian Green, who presented a paper on a recently discovered late-nineteenth century cloth painting. She argued that its presentation of the Vessantara Jataka narrative is entirely novel and bears no resemblance to traditional mural paintings, kalagas, or lacquer panels. Some Western painting techniques, such as shading and perspective, were used, and a modern context was displayed through such items as telegraph poles. She initially proposed that this painting related to the cloth scrolls used in festivals in Laos and Northeastern Thailand. Despite superficial resemblances, she concluded that the Burmese cloth painting was not produced to be carried in a ceremonial re-enactment of the story, but most likely was a piece made for use at a monk's funeral (pongyi bian) or at a marionette performance. In addition, she noted similar features with published nineteenth-century photographs.

Alexandra Green and Catherine Raymond

Panel 5: Encountering the *Weikza*

This panel was convened by Bénédicte Brac de la Perrière and Guillaume Rozenberg with the express intention of giving voice to

different visions or understandings of the *weikza* phenomenon. This label refers to the transformation of the self through esoteric and ascetic practices in making the mystical figures of *weikza*. And it refers also to the sociological dimension of the phenomenon, *weikzas* being the focus of devotion and of multifarious practices. All together eight contributors gathered at Marseille to discuss the topic, their number an indication of the renewed interest in these outstanding figures of Burmese Buddhism and of the variety of practices linked to them. Steve Collins, whose efforts to look anew at Buddhist traditions have inspired most of these young scholars, was there to comment on the contributions.

In the first session, the issue of power was discussed as something the practitioners of the *weikza* path are supposed to deal with. Thomas Patton focused on one of *weikzas*' techniques for developing potency that has never been described before. This technique is grounded in the use of cabalistic squares and diagrams (*inn/sama*) or esoteric devices encompassed in the category of *yantra*. Having first looked precisely at the inner workings of some of these devices, he sought to explain how they are supposed to transform one's self into a full-fledged *weikza*.

Céline Coderey presented a paper on the *weikza*'s role in Arakanese healing practices in the Thandwe area. She demonstrated that this involvement can take various forms according to the healer and at different stages of the healing process. She argued that the main reason for the success of *weikza*-related practices is their in-between character, allowing someone to manipulate different forces held responsible for health and sickness.

Guillaume Rozenberg looked at the working of congregations devoted to exorcist practices such as the Shweyingyaw *gaing*. These congregations develop as a rule around an individual claiming to have been selected by a *weikza* from whom he got his power to exorcise, a power that he can distribute to his disciples. Rozenberg examined the power unleashed in this context, asking what exactly makes this power possible and what are its limits.

In the second session, contributors examined the role of the *weikzas* as champions of Buddhism. Niklas Foxeus made a presentation of a specific *weikza* cult focused on the legendary figure of Setkya Min (P. *cakkavattin*). Inherited from the postcolonial *weikza* organizations described by Mendelson and Spiro, the cult combines identification with royalty and esoteric *weikza* practices and beliefs. The author put in perspective what the main concern of the organization's members is: to defend and support Buddhism. This goal leads them to see themselves as engaged in a cosmic battle, albeit without ever resorting to direct physical violence.

Keiko Tosa examined another role of the practitioners of the *weikza*'s path, that is, their participation in pagoda building. Through the analysis of rituals linked to laying the foundation of Buddhist monuments, she demonstrated that they are places in which *weikzas*' practices and beliefs are displayed.

Finally, papers in the third session tried to locate the *weikza* phenomenon in the context of the Burmese religion and in the field of Buddhism.

Patrick Pranke first reviewed what is known of the parallel emergence of *weikza* figures and of the development of insight meditation

(*vipassana*) in Burma. Then he turned to the comparison of these practices as two competing paths to Buddhist liberation and human perfection in contemporary Burmese Buddhism.

Bénédicte Brac de la Perrière started with the currently booming celebration of Bo Min Gaung's disappearance from Mt. Popa and then went on to describe interactions and ramifications among the practices linked to the *weikzas* and those pertaining to the spirit cult of the Thirty-Seven Lords. Comparing specialists of the *weikza* with spirit mediums, she argued that their distinctive way of establishing contact with spiritual agents backing their agency in the world serves to sustain statutory claims to being closer to mainstream Buddhism.

Finally, Juliane Schober put forward the idea of center/periphery dynamics in the making of the *weikza* phenomenon. She emphasized several creative tensions between the *weikza* phenomenon and the center, notably the challenge that *weikza* cults represent for the central political as well as monastic authorities and the vision of Buddhism they promote.

Steven Collins gave a concluding talk that opened onto a general discussion.

Bénédicte Brac de la Perrière
and Guillaume Rozenberg

Panel 8: Wa Studies

Sylvie Pasquet, a member of the French National Center for Scientific Research (CNRS), presented a paper on "'Lawa' in Burmese Historical Sources." Her

meticulous manuscript trawling led to an assessment of references to the 'Lawa' in Burmese royal chronicles and other Burmese sources, including maps.

Ron Renard, who worked in the Wa-speaking lands for several years between 2003 and 2007, spoke on the administration of the Wa Special Region since 1989 and the various consequences of the banning of poppy cultivation and opium use in 2005.

Ma Jianxiong of the University of Science and Technology in Hong Kong presented a fascinating account of the development of the frontier between Burma and Yunnan since the 15th century and the various roles played by the Wa in that story. He found that the border functioned as a conduit for interaction between neighboring peoples, as a border between nation states, and as a local border between smaller ethnic nationalities.

Justin Watkins, from the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), offered a light-hearted insight into some of the rich and earthy proverbs and sayings to be found in the language corpus compiled for his Wa dictionary project.

Atsushi Yamada of the University of Hokkaido presented the findings of his inquiry into some of the socio-linguistic factors affecting the lexicons of Northern Mon-Khmer languages, including Wa. A number of scholars with a Wa bent, such as Liu Tzu-Kai, Tom Kramer, Magnus Fiskesjo and Jeremy Milsom, lent their support to the panel but were able to be present in spirit only.

Justin Watkins

Panel 9: India & Burma—the Shaping of (Mis)perceptions

Dr. Julie Baujard (IRSEA/ Université de Provence, France), panel organizer—“A Situation of Cultural Encounter: Chin Refugees from Burma in Delhi.”

Dr. Renaud Egreteau (The University of Hong Kong), panel organizer—“Debating ‘Indophobia’ in Burma: Historical Perspectives and Contemporary Salience.”

Dr. Lian H. Sakhong (University of Uppsala, Sweden)—“The Future of Indo-Burma Relations: an Ethnic Perspective.”

Mr. Andrew Jarvis (Magdalene College, University of Cambridge)—“Indian ‘Subimperialism’ in Burma, c.1886-1941.”

Dr. Tin Maung Maung Than (ISEAS, Singapore), Chair.

This panel proposed to highlight the way mutual perceptions are shaped in India and Burma, past and present. How does the Indian psyche portray its Burmese neighbor (its history, culture, people, and regime) and vice-versa? What are the contemporary political and cultural resonances of such perceptions (or misperceptions) for policymaking and society-to-society relations? Enduring resentment born out of the British colonial era when Indian communities were brought to the province of Burma to run the colony has had considerable implications in postcolonial Burma, Andrew Jarvis informed us. Renaud Egreteau underscored the contemporary salience of these colonial legacies and indophobic sentiments in 21st century

Burma. The decades-long civil war in Burma has also played a crucial role in mapping out mutual (mis)perceptions. Cross-border ethnic strife plaguing the Chin/Mizo communities and a Burmese democratic struggle that has produced wide refugee flows since 1988, have for their part also reframed these Indo-Burmese mutual perceptions, as was highlighted by Dr. Lian Sakhong. For instance, the Chin community, which constitutes by far the largest Burmese refugee community in India, offers a valuable case study of the difficult, if not nonexistent, interactions between Indian and Burmese societies, as Dr. Julie Baujard stressed. The four papers included in this clearly multidisciplinary panel, chaired by Dr. Tin Maung Maung Than, have exhaustively examined the possibilities of India and Burma achieving better mutual understanding through closer cultural exchanges and enhanced knowledge of each other.

Renaud Egreteau

Panel 10: The Moving Frontiers of Burma

This panel applied different approaches (historical, social, juridical and anthropological) to the study of Burma’s borders and frontiers, or what is nowadays the Union of Myanmar. The aim was to draw attention to the marginal history and contemporary dynamics (social, ethnic) of the making of the Burmese identity, or *Burmeseness*.

The eleven speakers on the panel made it clear that a frontier is finally a matter of perception more than a definite line enclosing social, ethnic or cultural identities. Frontiers are, rather, dynamic places in which the social is created, thus evolving in time as they are shaped by their populations.

Frontiers are perpetually renegotiated by their actors, as Jacques Ivanoff underlined, notably through the example of interactions between nomads (Moken) and sedentary (Burmese) populations. In fact, he showed that borders (cultural between nomadic and sedentary ways of life, ethnic between Austronesian and Tibeto-Burman populations, administrative between south Burma and south Thailand) help reveal the ethnic potentialities and adaptability of the interacting groups. However, borders between ethnic and social processes are blurred by the adaptive behavior of the Burmese fishermen and Moken, thus highlighting the high potential rewards for understanding societies and their interactions through the study of borders. His findings correspond closely to Mizuka Kimura's research on the ethnicization of Panthays (Chinese Muslims) originating from Yunnan. Instead of being subjected to the border, these refugees, who fled the "Phantay conflict" under the Qing dynasty used the dynamic of resettlement to reaffirm their identity and ethnic particularities by identifying themselves with reference to their new location, Panglong. A singular fact is that they inscribe their reconstructed origin (Panglong) on their tombs, while Yunnanese tombs usually refer to the birthplace of the deceased when abroad. And as shown by Alexander Horstmann, even a highly materialized administrative border such as the Thai-Myanmar one along the Karen state—exacerbated by the conflict opposing Karen forces and the Burmese government—is shaped and used by the Karen on the Thai side. Indeed, Horstmann brought to light how the Karen in Thailand, from refugee camps, border towns and villages, play on the international Christian missionary and humanitarian networks in order to return to Myanmar, to claim a place in Thailand despite their lacking ID cards and citizenship, or even to resettle in the US.

In the end, instead of being constrained by the administrative border, the Karen use it to stretch their social space into the centers. Indeed, it is the entire opposition between "centers" and "peripheries" that may be contested, according to Marion Sabrié, who showed that the Kachin State, instead of being a "peripheral" state (mostly inhabited by hill tribes as opposed to the dominant ethnic groups of the plains), is a key place in the new development policies of Myanmar and its relations with China. An approach that focuses on borders, therefore, challenges the political model of the nation, and brings out important issues that may arise in the case of a government breakdown in a country where unity, although long sought, is always challenged by intermingled ethnic and economic interests.

A representation of borders may imply that they stand outside jurisdictional and political governance. Kirsten McConnachie demonstrated, on the contrary, how refugee camps along the Thai-Myanmar border are spaces claimed by different kinds of stakeholders, whether at the level of international jurisdiction (humanitarian organizations) or that of ethnic customs. Indeed, borders are catalysts for exchanges that challenge traditional time and space conceptions.

But as underlined in the panel's introduction by Maxime Boutry, borders—or frontiers, to see them as a singular social space and not just a line—can be found not only on the peripheries of the state or of imagined centers. Frontiers are a phase of dynamic social construction and social change. From recent history to contemporary processes, Boutry showed that as frontiers advanced (for instance in the Ayeyarwaddy delta and later in the case of the Burmese colonization of the Tenasserim), and social, cultural and ethnic frontiers were transformed, this kept

pushing the adaptativity of Burmese in appropriating their new environment, developing strategies based on socio-economic structures (for instance the patron-client oriented *kyezushin* system) and socializing their space. In this perspective, defining social space is doubtless a matter of defining borders. The presentation by Su Lin Lewis showed how studying cosmopolitan cities makes it possible to study changing interethnic relations and perceptions of culture. Through the multicultural influences of jazz, literature, artists and media broadcasting among the multiethnic populations of Yangon during the colonial period, her work defies the idea of an ongoing and unavoidable globalization progressively erasing the interethnic borders and particularities of societies. It shows, on the contrary, the perpetual reorganization and appropriation of foreign cultural elements within the racialized culture industries of that time. Noriyuki Osada showed the creation, through compulsory vaccinations, of what he calls an “embryonic border” between Burmese and Indian workers under British colonial rule. Thus, beyond the health issues raised by viewing Indian immigrant workers as a threat to the Yangon population, this ethnically differentiating process was meant to generate a sociological border between Indian and Burmese at a time when the job market was highly coveted by foreign workers, especially in industrialized sectors.

Construing Burma as an interstitial region has been further stimulated by the development of “Chinese studies,” represented by no less than four researchers on this panel: Wen Chin Chang, Li Yi, Mizuka Kimura and Tharaphi Than. On analyzing the life stories of Yunnanese migrants who followed mule-driven caravans from Burma’s Shan States to Thailand, Wen Chin Chang tackled in a

single approach a very complete set of social, cultural and ethnic processes. These individual identity processes definitely transcend geographic, ethnic and national borders. At the same time, they contribute, through their narratives and imaginings, to the social construction of caravan drivers’ communities, as well as, in an important way, the socioeconomic making of Burma’s and Thailand’s borders. Indeed, while the different Chinese populations have been an important component of the Myanmar economy and its development since colonial times (at least), Li Yi showed that the construction of their identity as Myanmar citizens received different, mostly negative, representations in Western media during the colonial era, and induced varying reactions within Chinese communities in Burma. And of course, this play of perceptions had an important impact on colonial policies regarding Chinese and Chinese-organized activities. Tharapi Than’s account of how Chinese arriving at different times and from different places (Fujian and Guandong in the early part of the century and Yunnan towards the end of the century) were integrated into Burmese society in different ways also illustrated the perpetual movement of socio-cultural frontiers in the making of societies. Thus analyzing frontiers proves relevant to interpreting government policies with respect to such issues as citizenship and the integration of outsiders, whether these are Chinese in the heart of the country or the nomad Moken at its fringes.

To conclude, the panel succeeded in bringing to light some common traits of frontiers. On the one hand, administrative borders that result from territorialization (as determined mostly by ethnic groups, but also by anthropologists in their work on Asian societies) are always overwhelmed by their actors, who paradoxically use them as

hubs for bringing together in one place many different kinds of networks, including ones extending internationally. People in these groups use ethnic and identity strategies in order to fulfill their cultural aims. On the other hand, societies need to create cultural, sociological and ethnic frontiers (or interfaces) to define their social space. Again, these frontiers are not limitations but structures defining the modalities of interethnic relations, and of the appropriation of resources and territories, while preserving identities in a perpetually changing world.

Maxime Boutry

Panel 11: Assessing Resilience of Political Opposition

Two lectures were given. Because several scholars could not find funding to travel from Southeast Asia, there were many last-minute cancellations.

Lecture 1: The Dynamics of Political Opposition in Burma especially by Borderland and International Connections. Presenter: F.K. Lehman, Professor Emeritus, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign

Lecture 2: Kachin Political Culture of Opposition 1962-2010: an Anthropological Look Into Resilience as Adaptive Social System Change. Presenter: La Raw Maran, Emeritus, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign; Kachin-Americans & Friends, Inc. for Democracy & Human Rights in Burma.

The panel was attended by about 21 people. Much discussion and many questions followed the presentations. We hope to hold a subsequent gathering in Germany to bring together those researchers interested in how

resilient opposition is being sustained by minority societies and political cultures.

La Raw Maran also made a presentation on “ethnicity” in Panel 12, and distributed a third paper. Both of these addressed topics related to that of Panel 11.

La Raw Maran

Panel 13: Burmese Regional and Popular Music

The initial three presentations concerned music of ethnic minority groups in Burma.

Gretel Shwoerer-Kohl discussed the role of shamans in Lahu society, a group among whom she has conducted research for a number of years. In particular, she discussed the links between shamanic practices, the nat cult, and singing. She played a recording of a shaman singing a song, unaccompanied, about a nat, noting that although there is a single melody for all such songs, the pitches are adjusted in singing in accordance with the tones of the individual syllables in the spoken language. There are seven tones in Lahu. [Since the relations between pitch in tonal languages and pitch in songs in such languages are both thorny and intriguing, this point seems deserving of further study.] Another question Gretel raised about Lahu music is what the consequences of religious conversion will be. She mentioned two influential and respected shamans with whom she worked who have already converted to Christianity.

Gavin Douglas reported on his very recent research concerning the way various ethnic groups in southern Shan State assert their distinct identities sonically. Showing short videos (shot only a couple of weeks before the conference) of Pa’o, Danu, and Shan

troupes performing at a pagoda festival in Taunggyi, he pointed out the way that similar ensembles (made up of ozi drums and gongs) nevertheless were distinguishable by virtue of the varying number of gong strokes per minute: rare in the case of the very deliberate Pa'o ensemble, more frequent for the Danu, and fastest of all in the case of the Shan. He made an intriguing parallel with the use of anthems and flags to differentiate nations the world over: given that the point is to declare one group or nation's difference from all others, he noted, it is surprising that in either case, that of music and that of flags, the constraints of the genre keep variation within a very narrow range. Similarly, the troupes he recorded introduced no other instruments to vary the aural effect: drums and gongs are used just as consistently as the rectangular shape is de rigueur in national flags.

Ta Zawn Eng recounted the evolution of Chin music over the past forty or so years, drawing as much on his own experience as a performer and songwriter as on other materials. He sang a few lines of Chin music himself, adding a welcome bit of live performance to proceedings otherwise dependent on recordings. As is the case for many regional musics in Burma, Chin music has developed both a religious tradition, derived from Western hymns, and a popular style. He also noted that a number of very famous contemporary figures in Burmese pop music, particularly guitarists, are of Chin extraction.

The remainder of the presentations concerned music of the lowland Burmans or music of the national, popular style so ubiquitous since the 1950s.

Sayouri Inoue presented the results of her assiduous and remarkable research on how

the classical Burman music tradition has been transmitted over the past several decades. She has turned up palm-leaf manuscripts as well as books and sheafs of paper, on which everything from international staff notation, a more approximate numerical notation system, and even Javanese gamelan's (now abandoned) "chain" notation, appear. Sayouri also showed video clips of her harp teacher, Daw Khin May, teaching students the instrument, highlighting the inventive ways in which Daw Khim May can pluck strings from the "wrong" side while a student plays, or use the "mouth instrument" to indicate the notes and combinations of notes that Burmese musicians label with specific names.

Kit Young championed the work of a Burmese commentator, U Gon Ba, who gave radio addresses on the subject of Burmese music on the Burma Broadcasting Service in the 1950s. Passionate, articulate, and charismatic, he attracted a wide audience, and it is Kit's contention that, although Burmese musicians now grant him little respect, U Gon Ba deserves more attention than he receives. She played a brief excerpt from one of his radio addresses, and held up the two-volume reprint of his broadcasts' texts, reissued recently by the Ministry of Culture. Much that is obscure or puzzling about the aesthetics of Burmese music, Kit tells us, become clearer in light of U Gon Ba's lucid explanations.

Chris Miller participated in a project, organized in large part by Kit Young, to make digital copies of Burmese music recordings dating back to the beginning of the twentieth century. Based on records, 78s as well as 33s, made by a number of companies working in Rangoon, the project has already produced a large number of digital copies. These will eventually be released to several libraries around the

world. The work is ongoing (although funding is always at risk), carried out by people at the Gitameit Foundation in Rangoon. Documenting each recording is sometimes difficult: catalogue numbers do not always make it possible to identify performers definitively, and labels on the original disks themselves are sometimes inadequate or even unreliable guides. Still, the project itself will provide researchers an invaluable audio history of Burmese music, from classical to popular.

Jane Ferguson, who has been conducting fieldwork among Shan living in and around Chiang Mai for a number of years, discussed the use of “copy songs” among Shan musicians. Taking melodies from songs popular elsewhere is a longstanding practice among Shan as among other Southeast Asian pop songwriters. Indeed, much of the pejorative tone implicit in the phrase “*copy thechin*” can be dispelled, Jane noted, by calling them instead “cover versions,” which is a perfectly respectable practice among pop singers everywhere. Notable is the extent to which Mandopop and Enka songs have come to enjoy great popularity among Shan listeners, without most of those listeners knowing what the origins of the songs are.

Tasaw Lu made it clear that Mandopop has had an important influence on Burmese pop music in recent decades, and demonstrated that fact by describing several singers’ place in recent Burmese pop history. Teresa Tang was popular in Burma as in much of the rest of Asia. Remarkably, one particular Sino-Burmese singer, born in the PRC, has based his career on living half the year in Taiwan and half the year in Burma, and singing in both Burmese and Chinese.

Heather MacLachlan continued to address the topic of contemporary pop music, based

on her research among Burmese songwriters, performers, and fans in Rangoon. Arguing against the Frankfurt School’s gloomy indictment of the culture industry’s supposed ability to impose conventional and stultifying art upon the clueless masses, Heather emphasized the pleasure Burmese take in their pop music. They feel themselves not victimized by the pervasive influence of international pop music on their own music-making, but instead enriched by the various genres that they seek to master.

My paper, at the end of the day, in the heat of the day, on the last day of the conference, may very well have tried people’s patience rather more than it enlightened them. I discussed what I perceive to be a certain bland uniformity of tone in contemporary Burmese pop music, no matter what the lyrics of any given song may be. I noted, however, that while Burmese pop music fails to fulfill the standard criteria by which Western music is judged—with respect to originality, authenticity, and emotional expressiveness—we should allow that Burmese, like other Southeast Asians, bring contrasting expectations and wants to their musical experience, desires that, in light of its immense popularity, Burmese pop music obviously satisfies for a great many contemporary Burmese listeners.

Ward Keeler

Panel 15: Burmese Education, History and Politics

This panel went through many transformations between the time it was planned and the time it took place. Some of the original participants could not attend, and we were lucky to have others fill in.

Brooke Treadwell started us off by presenting part of her research from her dissertation, which concerns the strategies that schoolteachers in Burma use to resist, appropriate, or collaborate with government education policies. In this presentation, she focused on resistance, which she carefully defined as “the conscious intent to prevent the implementation of SPDC-mandated education policy on the grounds that it is unjust.” She shared with us her intricate process of analyzing the “resistance narratives” selected from interviews she conducted with teachers who had ended up in Thailand (acknowledging that this population was not a random sample). Brooke placed these narratives on a spectrum from passive to active, pre-political to political, and non-confrontational to confrontational, providing memorable examples of each. She found that the majority of resistance was active yet non-confrontational. For instance, a high school history teacher who was educating students about human rights “played dumb” when questioned by a superior, insisting that she was only teaching what was in the textbook.

Next, I presented research drawn from my dissertation, which investigates methods of teaching history to promote national reconciliation and critical thinking. Along with the Migrant Curriculum Team (MCT), a group of Burmese educational stakeholders based in Mae Sot, I had come up with the idea of using primary source documents instead of textbooks at the high school level. By testing this idea in a training for a multi-ethnic group of seventy social studies teachers in Mae Sot, we found that this method does have the potential to reduce the conflicts that can surface in multi-ethnic classrooms when history is taught. For instance, we examined documents written by Aung San, Saw Ba U Gyi, and various British officials in order to

understand their positions, and then we did a role-play in which randomly selected teams represented these standpoints. Teachers reported that after the training they felt better able to understand and sympathize with these different perspectives and with people from other ethnic groups. I am now working with the MCT to gather together documents for this curriculum; I encourage those who are interested in this project to email me at rose.metro@gmail.com.

Ko Soe Myint Aung provided a response to the presentations Brooke and I made. He noted that both papers were timely and much-needed kinds of research in Burma Studies. He appreciated Brooke’s study of daily resistance by ordinary Burmese in the education sector and stressed its importance in the transition period when a significant literature has only focused on the perception of military-political elites in policy making. At the same time, he wondered if Brooke’s theoretical framework could account for the ways in which subaltern groups are linked in a chain of oppression and passive resistance—as when a civil servant shirks his duties until he gets the “tea money” from clients to pay the “multi-media room fees” demanded by his child’s headmistress (who in turn will not fulfill her obligations until she is paid). In his comments on my paper, Ko Soe Myint Aung recognized the difficulties in both the scope and depth of curriculum-making for Burma. He deplored the increasingly militarized Burman state that tried to impose its centralized version of history on the new generation, while he also acknowledged radicalizing trends on the state’s peripheries. Both, in his mind, were hindering the emergence of a “collective national imagination.” He added he was also dismayed at the intellectual impoverishment of the country’s best-educated class. He viewed the method and methodology I adopted in a positive light

and emphasized the need to draw teaching materials from primary source documents.

Ko Kyaw Win Tun also joined the discussion. Responding to my presentation, he noted that writing a history curriculum to be used in Burma either in the border area or inside was no small task. He felt that using primary sources to discuss history from different perspectives through role-playing was an innovative idea. As someone with experience teaching Burmese history to different ethnic groups, he suggested it would be helpful to have students learn other methods of studying history such as separating facts from opinions in a text. In responding to Brooke's presentation, he noted that looking at classrooms through the lens of daily resistance was a good idea, and he suggested that it would also be interesting to examine the power dynamics among teachers, students, and administrators.

Audience members also contributed insightful questions and comments. I hope that this panel is only the beginning of a discussion about the political dimension of Burmese education that will continue in the coming years.

Rosalie Metro

Panel 16: The Impact of Globalization on the Burmese Economy

The panel was the only panel devoted to business in Myanmar. U Myo Myint (Energy Analyst, New York) and Dr Htwe Htwe Thein (Senior Lecturer, Curtin University, Australia) were the conveners of the panel. It attracted papers from both academia and the business world. The panel was split into two sessions.

The first session, entitled "Energy Resources and Commodities," included three presenters. U Myo Myint discussed his paper, entitled "Energy Poverty Amid Plenty," which featured detailed statistical data concerning Myanmar's oil and gas resources. The main thrust of his paper was the extent of energy poverty faced by ordinary Burmese in their resource-rich nation and suggested ways forward in terms of utilizing endowed energy resources to improve the lives of the local Burmese.

Our second presenter for the morning session was Matthew Smith (Senior Consultant from Earth Rights International). His paper was entitled "Natural Gas, Democracy, and the Role of Multinational Corporations in Burma (Myanmar)." Matthew's paper questioned whether natural gas has had antidemocratic effects in military-ruled Burma (Myanmar). While there is nothing inherently antidemocratic about natural gas, Smith argued, problems and complications arise in how natural gas is extracted and transported to market, how the substantial revenues generated are managed, and how these issues affect the political behavior of leaders.

Dr Ikuko Okamoto (Overseas Research Fellow, Institute of Developing Economies-JETRO & Visiting Fellow, the Australian National University) presented her research based on surveys conducted in a fishing village in the Rakhine State in Myanmar. Ikuko's paper was entitled "The Shrimp Export Boom and Small-Scale Fishermen in Myanmar: Profitability and Changing Resources." It examined the impact of the shrimp export boom on the economic condition of small-scale fishermen in the coastal areas of Myanmar.

Our last presenter for the morning session was Professor Takahashi Akio (Institute for

Advanced Studies on Asia, University of Tokyo), who presented his paper entitled, “Swiddens, Rice Terraces, and Malaysia Connections: Resource Use and Socio-economic Strata in the Chin Hills, Myanmar.” Based on a case study in Hakha Township, Chin State, the paper examined the natural and social circumstances which sustain village livelihoods and economic strata in a village where swidden and rice terrace farmers live.

The afternoon session on “Economic Policy and Development” featured three presentations. Dr Htwe Htwe Thein (Curtin University, Australia) presented the first paper, entitled “Privatization of State-owned Enterprises in Myanmar: Economic Reform or Private Gain?” It was not the principle of privatization that she was concerned with, but rather the controversial way in which the Myanmar government has implemented such activities. The paper unpacked a phenomenon whose specific implementation and implications are largely unknown, due primarily to the Myanmar government’s failure to disclose information about these processes.

Dr Toshihiro Kudo (Institute of Developing Economies, Japan) presented his research on border trade in Myanmar, entitled, “Myanmar’s Border Trade with China: Situation, Challenges, and Prospects.” Toshihiro’s paper explored how the growth of the border trade between China and Myanmar depends primarily on the restored political and security situation in the border areas, as well as the development of transportation infrastructure and legal and institutional arrangements. The sustainable growth of border trade is faced with challenges, and he argued that the prospects for Myanmar’s border trade depend mainly on how the Myanmar government deals with such challenges.

We were also delighted to have a participant from Myanmar. Daw Aye Aye Khine (Save the Children, Yangon, Myanmar), who presented a paper entitled “Post-Disaster Assessment Study: Bangladesh, Myanmar and Yemen.” Aye Aye Khine’s study reported on the post-disaster damage, losses, and recovery needs of the three countries.

The panel was well-attended and the papers generated lots of interest. We look forward to hosting another panel on business in Myanmar at future Burma Studies Conferences.

Htwe Htwe Thein

Panel 17: Myanmar and ASEAN

Tin Maung Maung Than spoke about Burmese migrant workers and refugees in Thailand and the relevant push and pull factors as drivers for migration. He also explored some avenues for alleviating their hardship and regularizing the migration process. This concerns some 800,000 migrant workers who now seek registration and work permits and perhaps another 140,000 refugees in camps along the border.

I examined ASEAN’s collective statements over the last five years concerning human rights violations by Myanmar in the areas of imprisonment of political prisoners, political reconciliation, free and fair parliamentary elections, and forced migration. These have consumed an inordinate amount of time at ASEAN’s meetings, all to its representatives’ consternation. Yet neither ASEAN as a whole nor most of its members have consistently or forcefully protested such human rights violations. In some instances, ASEAN has decided explicitly to issue no criticism. No collective action has

been taken to change Burmese policy. The individual policies of the members range from the Philippines, which has been the most vocal in its condemnation, to Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam and Brunei, which oppose almost all statement of disapproval. The expressed public positions of Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia have varied over the years. I then advanced six reasons for this inaction, including structural barriers within ASEAN's governing documents, concern that a member's own human rights violations would be examined by ASEAN if it questioned Myanmar's, and substantial trade and investment in Myanmar by some of the members after the country joined ASEAN in 1997. Finally, I posited that ASEAN, recognizing that criticism or action is unlikely to alter Myanmar's policies in these areas as long as India, China and Russia support the regime, considered it senseless to change ASEAN's course of action toward Myanmar for the foreseeable future.

Kyaw Yin Hlaing talked about ASEAN's policy toward Myanmar and concluded that there is a power struggle in the Secretariat about how much to pressure Myanmar on human rights issues. The members are split between the Philippines, which Myanmar thinks is hypocritical, given Arroyo's corruption and its human rights violations, and Indonesia and the Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam and Brunei group that want no internal interference. Some ASEAN countries consider the Myanmar situation repetitious and boring; some new ASEAN staff started energetically to advocate pushing Myanmar but then got busy with other things.

Bob Taylor said that ASEAN was founded as an organization of nationalistic, recently independent states which sought to preserve their independence by limiting their mutual

conflicts and seeking the protection of the United States at the height of the Cold War. Burma under General Ne Win sought similar ends, but for reasons relating to his suspicions about American motives and a concern not to antagonize China, Ne Win refused to join the organization. After the end of the Cold War, Myanmar sought to develop multilateral contacts but with no interference in its domestic affairs. Since this is the first principle of ASEAN, joining made sense in 1995-97. That membership did not encourage United States and European acceptance of Myanmar was a disappointment but not a hindrance to its ASEAN membership.

Paul Sarno

Panel 18: Multiple Paradigms of (and for) Burmese/Myanmar Democracy

Sub-panel 1: Defining Burmese/Myanmar Democracy

1.1 Hans-Bernd Zöllner. Moralised Democracy. Burmese Paradigms vis-à-vis the International Community and Vice Versa

From the beginning of a discourse on "democracy" in Burma in the early 1920s onwards, the Burmese concept of democracy was characterised by moral categories rooted in the Buddhist tradition and the depreciation of "other" concepts of democracy as represented by the British. In 1988, this contrast was extended by the Burmese "democracy movement" and turned against the socialist and military regimes. The new fight for democracy was conceptualized as a battle between "moral forces" by all sides both inside and outside the country.

1.2 Swapna Batthacharya. The Influence of Indian Political Ideas on Concepts of Burmese Democracy

Four eminent political leaders and social reformers of India influenced the political and social life of Myanmar until the late 1950s: Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Subhas Chandra Bose, and M.N Roy. As India and Myanmar grew apart, starting in the early 1960s, there was little opportunity for India to interact with Myanmar in the latter's political experiments. The real story of the "India connection" has still to be reconstructed and put into a proper historiographical perspective.

1.3 Myint Zan. Snippets of Comments on Constitution-Making Processes: Praetorian Provisions and Selected Comparisons of "Internal" and "External" Constitution-Making Processes of the 2008 Burmese Constitution

The "spirit" of "disciplined democracy" that is embodied in the 2008 Burmese Constitution is not only oxymoronic but also a sham. Comparisons with other neighbouring countries and other formerly authoritarian and even currently authoritarian states or regimes indicate that the "Burmese dilemma," as far as using constitution(s) to consolidate, formalize and perpetuate military rule, and refusing to extend any options to obviate this even slightly, is indeed very great.

Sub-panel 2: De- and Re-constructing Theories of Burmese/Myanmar Democracy

2.1 Wolfram Schaffar (in absentia). Waves and Breakwaters: Burmese Democracy As Conceptualised by Western Political Science

If we follow empirically Huntington's concept of consecutive waves of democratization, Burma / Myanmar is an enigma for political science: It seems to defy all trends of the past decades. Rather than trying to explain this situation as a particularity of Burma / Myanmar, Schaffar challenges the concept of liberal democracy underlying index-based empirical theories of democracy. Drawing on critical theory, he argues that the pattern of liberal democracy is the result of a highly embattled and contradictory historical development, closely connected with the establishment of a capitalist economic system and a specific social structure. This context has to be taken into account if we wish to discuss the prospects for democracy in Burma.

2.2 Yoshihiro Nakanishi. Winner Takes All: Political Elites in the Ne Win Regime, 1962-1988

Democracy generally guarantees political plurality. Although we can find undemocratic regimes in the world today, there are few non-plural political regimes like the one in Burma/Myanmar. Even in other military regimes that once existed in Southeast Asia, as time passed the power structure became more plural. In Burma, however, the people in power have been relatively monolithic since the March 2, 1962 coup d'état. The presentation addresses the question "Why was it so?" by documenting how political elites in the Ne Win regime (1962-1988) were formed and changed, using data of social profiles and career histories of party leaders and parliament members. It is argued that the drastic reshuffle and monopoly of political elites in every regime transition made it difficult for the "part-time elites" to accumulate such political skills as negotiation, discussion, compromise,

competition, cooperation, patience and so on.

2.3 Ko Ko Thett. Not Out of Place: The State of the Burmese Exile

Over the past twenty years, the efforts of the Burmese exile movement, shored up by its supporters from the West, have been crucial in exposing to the world the human rights violations and the hopeless governance practices of the Myanmar military state. Burmese exiles' success in globalizing the Burma problem is no mean feat. Yet that sums up just about everything they have achieved so far. Inside Myanmar, meanwhile, it is said that every single problem the exiles are concerned about—human rights, health, food security, education, etc.—has only deteriorated further. This study asserts that the Burmese exile “pro-democracy” organizations have been incapable of bringing about change inside their home country because, just like their nemesis, the Myanmar regime, Burmese exile groups have been trapped in their own struggle for survival and identity—so much so that they can hardly think of any creative way out. Despite the exiles' call for “national reconciliation,” the antagonistic relations between them and the Myanmar regime have not translated into a workable agonistic model. This is unlikely to change as most Burmese exile groups will continue to resist the state of Myanmar beyond the elections of 2010.

2.4 Sanjay Pulipaka. Understanding Political Transition in Myanmar

The movement of a political system from an autocratic/non-representative form of governance to a democratic one, and vice-versa, is often termed a *political transition*. The articulation of “roadmaps” does not necessarily imply that a transition will always be a linear

path. It is not mandatory for political systems to move from non-democratic to democratic political systems in a structured format. Political systems may oscillate between democratic and undemocratic forms. The recent political developments in Myanmar seem to suggest that Myanmar is not moving towards full-fledged democracy. Instead, it seems to be transiting into the grey area that lies between liberal democracy and authoritarianism. More specifically, the paper argues that Myanmar seems to be heading towards an electoral authoritarian regime and not towards diminished forms of democracy.

2.5 Pinitbhand Paribatra. Democratic Transition in Burma: Comparative Case Studies

In contrast to the cases of Argentina (1984) and South Africa (1994), wherein elites and organized trade unions and opposition political parties played interactive roles in transforming those countries into democratic ones, this paper argues that the failure of the democratic transition in Burma in 1988 resulted from military elite cohesion and disorganized political opposition.

Sub-panel 3: Assisting Democracy in Myanmar

3.1 Chohsein Yamahata (in absentia; presented by Yuka Sasaki). Remaining Opportunities for Burma's Democracy and Freedom: Internal and External Pillars of Change

Burma is remarkable for the constant reversals in efforts to develop democracy there despite the presence at the time of the monarchy of democratic ideals enshrined in “the ten precepts incumbent on kings.” These require the ruler to be reasonably responsive to the citizens' wishes. However, the long-time absence

of democratic practices due to military rule does not mean that Burma will never be ready to meet the conditions for a flourishing democracy. Instead, most of these foundational conditions have been forcefully suppressed by successive military regimes. Meanwhile, the international community, because of its lack of commitment, preparedness, or understanding, has missed every opportunity for promoting Burma's democratization. Past failures have followed from underestimating the military junta on the one hand, and overestimating the potential hegemonic factor of Burma's big, powerful neighbour, on the other hand. It is argued that the remaining prospects for a peaceful democratization of Burma really depend on addressing these issues.

3.2 Maaïke Benders. The Role of Burmese Civil Society in Democratization Efforts

Many international analysts and donors seem to look to civil society for bringing about democratization in Myanmar. However, academic literature does not show a one-to-one relationship between civil society activities and democratization. Both concepts are subject to multiple interpretations, and democratic principles are increasingly applied to civil society actors themselves. Similarly, theories differ as to the extent to which civil society can legitimately take on political forms.

Hans-Bernd Zöllner

Panel 23: NGOs

It was an honor for the participants to contribute to the first panel on this subject at a Burma Studies Conference. The event

itself indicates the increasing interest among people working in Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) to participate in researching contemporary Burma. Primary sources—field data collection and analysis—generated by NGOs have till now been used only marginally for academic purposes.

The first four papers discussed NGOs operating in Burma. Common findings included: the ability of these groups to operate in a restricted number of thematic sectors and geographic areas; their ability to influence the decision making process at the local level; and the importance of peer networks for exchanging information and maintaining precarious boundaries within which they can operate independently of the central authorities.

Presenting findings from research conducted with the assistance of my colleague Khin Hnit Thit Oo, I provided an overview of indicators of an increased civil society space in Burma following the devastation of Cyclone Nargis. The number, areas of intervention, and capacity of local NGOs—including numerous faith-based organizations—significantly expanded after the natural disaster. I then elaborated on the political and social legacies of these Burmese NGOs. I suggested that varied modalities of interactions with the local government enabled them to work at varying degrees of independence from central government control.

Lindal Barry focused on the “Pyoe Pin issue-based approach” and outlined how a range of stakeholders including local NGOs, the private sector, government authorities, and international agencies could collaborate in addressing certain issues. Ms. Barry presented the case of HIV/AIDS projects. She assessed local advocacy vis-à-vis the Burmese government as a key to tackle the

HIV/AIDS issue. She insisted on the role of information exchange and networking among organizations in order to have greater impact and credibility. Whereas HIV/AIDS used to be an extremely sensitive issue, the UN and NGOs managed to include it as a priority in the Ministry of Health's agenda. Ms. Barry elaborated on the example of a fruitful lobbying effort directed toward local authorities, as well as its limitations, as this is not replicable at higher levels.

Hla Hla Win presented her research on non-formal education. She highlighted current shortcomings in formal education as a consequence of the gradual erosion of the government's education system over a period of sixty years. She depicted increasing educational lacunae in the public school system. She identified a number of NGOs and local groups taking on the remedying of these lacks as their objective. Hla Hla Win discussed how the upcoming elections could create spaces for those non-governmental service providers to expand and potentially influence the expected political transition of the country in the foreseeable future. Replying to audience questions following her presentation, Mrs. Hla Hla Win acknowledged the limitations of her research, focusing on the current situation in Yangon and the main urban centers of the country. But she noted that such findings could not be reported in rural areas.

Kyaw Soe Lwin discussed the diversity of the NGOs working in Myanmar in terms of size, programs and funding. He selected four international NGOs' and one local NGO's operational modalities to demonstrate the diversity and heterogeneity of NGOs in Burma. In addition to technical knowledge, funding, and human resources, he highlighted relations with the authorities as a condition for any project's achievements. He

depicted a knowledge and understanding of local contexts as a significant prerequisite. He insisted on the need for NGOs to rely on context analyses in geographic areas where the political situation is notably complex, such as the Wa Special Region and Rakhine State.

The last two presentations took place after the tea break and discussed international perceptions of humanitarian issues such as human rights and protection in Burma.

David Scott Mathieson discussed the methodology of human rights research in Burma. Whereas human rights researchers often focus on ruthless violence, degradation, and extreme oppression by the ruling military government, the reality is often more complex and variegated. Systematic condemnation has often come at the expense of deeper comprehension of the patterns of violations and of methods of effectively researching these issues. By reviewing the broad literature of human rights in Burma, and taking into account more reflective (instead of victimized Burmese) voices, Mathieson distinguished three broad methods of state control: urban surveillance aiming at the limitation of political mobilization; rural repression; and patterns of abuse on the part of the state and non-state armed groups in conflict-affected rural areas. Mathieson argued that all three control methods imply significantly different patterns of repression, resistance, survival, and their consequences, and that one's research methodology must be adjusted to each method in order to calibrate more effectively domestic and international protection.

Ashley South presented results from research undertaken by the project called "Local to Global Protection (L2GP)" to explore what communities caught up in

armed conflict do to protect themselves in contexts where international presence is limited. Vulnerable people's options depend upon the resources they have available—particularly money and relationships such as family and group solidarity. They often have to choose the “least worst option.” Sometimes resourceful local leaders are able to engage with power holders to exercise some local advocacy. South highlighted the work of civil society groups that have provided assistance in the absence of effective state or international responses. In the southeast of Burma, aid agencies may in some cases also help to prolong the armed conflict. Meanwhile, various armed non-state actors position themselves as defenders of civilian populations in terms of providing physical safety and security of livelihoods, as well as protecting elements of their culture and national identity. Assessments of these different approaches to protection depend on the legitimacy granted to the key actors. South concludes that local protection will become increasingly important in a shifting global context, in which Western powers, which have promoted rights-based interventions, are in decline.

Carine Jacquet

Legacy in Lacquer: A Living Art from Burma

Exhibition
NIU Art Museum, DeKalb, IL.
August 24–October 2, 2010

The art of Burmese lacquer originated in China, where for more than 3000 years, black and red colors were used exclusively. According to the Chinese chronicles, lacquer existed in central Burma at least since the mid-first millennium C.E.

Applied originally as a natural varnish and waterproof coating for vessels, thence in architectural embellishment and later for palace decoration and sculpture, lacquerware's artistic range expanded considerably in Burma in the eighteenth century with the adoption of green, yellow, and orange base colors.

Intermittent warfare against Burma's eastern neighbors—especially the former kingdom of Lanna (now in northern Thailand) and Siam—from the fifteenth century C.E. through the close of the pre-colonial period, had the positive effect of bringing Burmese artists into contact with higher levels of craftsmanship, new lacquer techniques, as well as an expanded color palette. This was particularly the case with the *Yun* community—the Lao Shan community living around Chiang Mai—whose finest artists were brought to the Court of Ava, where they introduced several new techniques: engraved *Yun* lacquerware entailing the incision of the surface layer; the *Shwe Zawa* technique of applying gold leaf to glossy black surfaces; *Thayo* relief moulded lacquer; and *Hman-zi Shwe cha* incorporating mosaic glass inlay.

An art form highly patronized by successive courts, fine lacquerware was presented by the Burmese kings to diplomatic missions from adjacent countries, and comprised also a key element of the obligatory tribute to the Chinese emperor. Later, lacquer pieces were gifted to European embassies, and served also as a token of appreciation to Burmese officials.

With the successive annexations by the British during the nineteenth century eventually encompassing the whole of Burma—and the enlarging presence of foreign travelers, tourists, traders and diplomats—the lacquer industry underwent a marked revival to satisfy this new clientele

with new styles and forms, even while the domestic demand remained strong for traditional forms of lacquerware for secular and religious usage.

This small exhibition explored the art and technique in the widest aspects of the long and unique Burmese lacquerware tradition: an art form still living, vibrant, and evolving. Some of the artifacts displayed here were produced under the patronage of the Burmese courts, along with later exemplary pieces from the period of renewal during the British era, in response to new markets and new clienteles, continuing through modern (*i.e.*, from the end of the nineteenth century until today) times. Our analysis was presented in four sections:

- Ceremonial and courtly traditions from the nineteenth century;
- *Shwe zawa*, or the gold and gloss black lacquerware tradition.
- The art of giving and receiving within Burmese traditional society —comprised of examples of serving trays, betel and snack boxes for secular uses; and also cases and covers for religious manuscripts.
- Innovation and tradition in accommodating a dynamic and increasingly sophisticated tourist trade.

2 CD Set: Classical Burmese Theatre Music

Archives internationales de musique populaire

BURMA: Classical Theatre Music

Conceived, produced, and annotated by Ward Keeler

Recorded (2005) by Philip Yampolsky
2 CDs / Archives Internationales de Musique Populaire AIMP XCVI–XCVII
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Cover photograph: A troupe’s “prince” or star. Photo: Daniel Ehrlich.

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**Call for Submissions:
The Burma / Myanmar Reader**

Many thanks to those who have submitted articles; we are grateful to have a number of submissions thus far. As we start to review these and work on the concrete scope of the collection, we are continuing to accept submissions. Details are as follows.

As part of Duke University Press' "reader" series in history, culture, and politics, we are seeking submissions for The Burma / Myanmar Reader. Our objective is to produce a collection of about 50-60 short texts related to Burma's history, culture, politics, and natural environment. Ideally, most of the material in the collection will be translated from Burmese primary sources or primary sources from other languages in Burma. Possible primary sources include newspaper accounts, histories, biographies, petitions, memoirs, songs, poems, interviews, descriptions of religious events, etc. Ultimately, we seek to produce a balanced collection expressing a variety of viewpoints and developments over the course of time.

Submissions accepted on a rolling basis until end of February 2011.

Submissions should consist of a copy of the original source material and an English translation; these should be sent via electronic copy to jcarbine@whittier.edu.

The total length of the translation should be between 3-6 pages each, or between 750-1500 words. Below is an initial outline of topics, which give a sense of the range of submissions that we are seeking.

- I. Pre-Colonial Histories and Narratives
- II. Colonial Disruptions and Local Syntheses
- III. World War II and Independence
- IV. The Military Councils
- V. Protests and Disasters
- VI. Laws, Constitutions, Elections
- VII. Cultural Orientations and Practices
- VIII. Burma and the World Today

Many thanks for considering a submission.

Saw Tun, Jake Carbine, Juliane Schober