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Introduction¹

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Often viewed as marginal spaces at the edge of a nation, borders are in fact sites of social, political and cultural change that impact local and national politics. This edited volume underscores this relationship by drawing attention to the significance of the frontier regions in defining and exemplifying many of the dilemmas that beset Myanmar. As van Schendel and de Maaker assert, “[t]he making of borders cannot be separated from attempts to define nations” (2014, p. 3).

The border is often understood as the “line of physical contact between states” (Paasi 1999*b*, p. 13). In everyday parlance and in the field of international relations, borders are taken to be stable features that separate one nation state from another (Minghi 1963, p. 407), created by and negotiated between state agents, and codified in maps.

This book takes a different approach. It conceptualizes borders — and boundaries — as social practice — processes rather than objects (Berg and van Houtum 2003; Baud and van Schendel 1997), verbs rather than nouns (van Houtum 2011, p. 50) — that are constantly being enacted.

The production and reproduction of boundaries is part of the institutionalization of territories — the process in which their territorial, symbolic and institutional ‘shape’ is determined (Paasi 1991). Therefore boundaries manifest themselves in numerous social (economic, cultural, administrative and political) practices and discourses that may be simultaneous and overlapping (Paasi 1999*a*, p. 670).

Boundaries may be viewed as constituting

lines of separation or contact [that] may occur in real or virtual space, horizontally between territories, or vertically between grounds and/or

individuals. The point of contact or separation usually creates an ‘Us’ and an ‘Other’ identity, and this takes place at a variety of sociospatial scales (Newman and Paasi 1998, p. 191).

Looking at this obversely, we can say that the act of creating boundaries is the act of constructing figured or symbolic worlds. Practice theory is used in this introductory chapter to frame local practices of border-, boundary- and world-making while referencing larger structures and sociohistorical production. This enables us to consider Myanmar’s frontiers not just as entities defined by the border but as spaces where symbolic worlds emerge from local context, partly transforming widely circulating models of nation, identity and culture, and vice versa. The chapters in this volume, by providing compelling studies of local practice — spiritual, religious, economic, intimate, cultural and imaginary, for example — relating to territorial claims, social organization, mobility, and identity (in individual and institutionalized forms) help us understand these life worlds and the ways in which non-state actors challenge and/or circumvent the state’s attempts to control their relations with material and non-material space.

The elaboration of these local practices in the context of border spaces is significant because Myanmar’s border regions share commonalities that, besides the presence of national borders, distinguish them from the heartlands in three ways. First, as this introductory chapter and Section I of the book describe, Myanmar’s border zones are situated in the mountainous and maritime regions of the country while the heartlands are located in the lowlands. This alerts us to the differences wrought by geography, topography and ecology in these three zones, and their contribution to the creation of distinct historical and political ideologies, institutions and identities. For this reason, this volume includes chapters that consider the seas that Myanmar shares with Thailand, Bangladesh and India. Further, this reminds us of the transboundary and transnational nature of these geographical features: mountains do not conform to state borders, rivers change course, oceans are fluid and continuous.

Nevertheless, geography alone does not determine the course of history. Myanmar’s borderlands, unlike the seas and the heartlands, have been shaped by decades of armed and other forms of conflict, resulting in a space that is militarized, fragmented, precarious and regulated by multiple authorities. Since the signing of ceasefire agreements, they have been characterized by the ambiguity of “not war, not peace” (Grundy-Warr and Dean 2011). Combined with the opening up of the economy, which has introduced diverse actors (including foreign corporations), these regions

(and the seas) are experiencing new forms of conflict and instability on top of those which have plagued them for decades.

By considering Myanmar's border regions as a whole, this book uses them as tools to problematize deep-seated divisions and recent changes in the country, enabling us to investigate the dialectic relationship we posit exists between the borderlands and the hinterland. Further, by treating the country as a common demonimator, this book provides context to the borders, going some way to countering the criticism of border studies as a field populated by isolated case studies (Sidaway 2011, p. 974). In doing so, it contributes to the growing body of work on Southeast Asian (see Horstmann and Wadley 2006; Miyazaki 2004; Rajaram and Grundy-Warr 2007; Horstmann 2011c among others) and Asian borderlands (see van Schendel and de Maaker 2014; Cons and Sanyal 2013 on South Asia).

SOCIAL PRACTICE THEORY, BORDERS AND THE MYANMAR NATION

This chapter grounds the practice of boundary- (and border-) making in practice theory as proposed by Bourdieu (1972) and developed by other scholars. In essence, practice theory holds that social practice is relational, situated and "sited", that is, it only acquires meaning when understood in context (space) (Schatzki 2002) and in history (time) (Holland and Lave 2009). In the first instance, the production of figured worlds, identities and cultural artefacts happens locally through practice. The figured world is the socially produced and culturally constructed "realm[s] of interpretation in which particular characters and actors are recognized, significance is assigned to certain acts, and particular outcomes are valued over others" (Holland et al. 1998, p. 52). "Orders are arrangements of entities (e.g., people, artifacts, things), whereas practices are organized activities. Human coexistence thus transpires as and amid an elaborate, constantly evolving nexus of arranged things and organized activities" (Schatzki 2002, p. xi).

Cultural production generated in and around these encounters — a ritual (de Mersan's chapter, this volume) or a song (Decha Tangseefa and Farzana's chapters, this volume), for instance — usually has relatively limited translocal currency. Sociohistoric production, in contrast, occurs over a longer time span and in multiple, local institutional arrangements or are represented in artefacts that circulate widely through extended, translocal networks (Wortham 2006). These then become installed as collective and powerful social formations that have significance in many local spaces and

timescales. In a nutshell, socially produced identity and worlds emerge “historically, locally and interactionally” (Wortham 2006, p. 10).

There is a dialectic relationship between shorter timescales and longer timescales: the latter are collectively mediated through and changed by processes at a particular time and space, and vice versa, just as the interaction between individuals and social life is relational and dialogic. Thus, local practice and production result from the dynamic interaction of two types of history materialized in the present: “history-in-person” (where the past is brought to the present through persons) and history in institutions (historically institutionalized struggles) (Holland and Lave 2009, pp. 4–5). In other words, encounters between persons are dependent on past relations (class, gender, ethnic and so on) in the “embodied histories-in-person of the two people and in the sociohistorically produced, collectively recognized discourses, practices, policies and artifacts that constitute the institutional arrangements (supposedly) governing relations” in a specific space (Holland 2010, p. 274).

Tensions and contestations occur as sociohistoric formations are brought into spaces of local practice, become established and dominate the social order. Conversely, social formations sometimes lose their power when actors articulate new worlds. These manifest in contentious local practice that may be collectively or individually enacted.

To illustrate practice theory in understanding Myanmar’s borders, we take the issuing of Myanmar’s border passes as an example of local practice. Myanmar issues border passes to people who seek to enter its territory through official overland channels. However, local practice surrounding these institutionalized arrangements differs throughout the borders and depends on local context and diplomatic relationships with neighbouring countries. For example, in 2010, Thai citizens were issued a border pass at the Myawaddy (Myanmar)-Mae Sot (Thailand) border allowing travel around Myawaddy for a day on a single entry pass, whereas at the Muse-Ruili border, Chinese citizens could obtain single or multi-entry passes valid for a year of travel around Mandalay and Myitkyina and the rest of the country depending on their residential status (whether they lived around the border or not) (Ishida 2013, pp. 317–20). Who is issued these passes, the area of travel permitted, the duration of stay and whether these passes may be used multiple times differed according to location in Myanmar (and time) (*ibid.*).

The symbolic functions of the practice of issuing border passes are: to mark the beginning of the state’s jurisdiction and sovereignty, to demarcate territory and to establish the “imagined political community” (Anderson

1991, pp. 6–7) or symbolic world that is called “Myanmar”. The practice of issuing border passes is but one of a host of practices enacted at the country’s frontiers in order to “produce, express and reproduce” (Paasi 1999a, p. 670) territoriality and nation.

Over time, these local practices normalize the existence of the border and inscribe certain notions of history, territory and identity within and vice versa. This stems from the Westphalian concept of sovereignty, according to which, every political state must have a definite territorial boundary which ought to correspond with differences of culture and language. Thus, the boundaries of a state serve to contain territory and identity while simultaneously communicating the limits of state power and expressing national identity (Newman and Paasi 1998). The Burmese state attempts to corral nation and people within boundaries of territory that it defines through symbolic, political and discursive practices and structures (see Paasi 1996). Burman/Bamar cultural identity is used to define national identity and the ideological character of the state through cultural (Lewis 1924; Berlie 2008), social (Callahan 2003; Salem-Gervais and Metro 2012), political and spatio-territorial (Ferguson 2014; Lambrecht 2008) practices.

Going back to the example of border passes, we observe that local communities may or may not engage in the practice of acquiring border passes. Indeed, they were crossing the river into Myawaddy from Mae Sot long before the existence of state borders. While large numbers of people walk across the Friendship Bridge and obtain official border passes to enter Myanmar, equally large numbers cross under the bridge without doing so. At the same time, many who obtain border passes do not adhere to the conditions of the pass. This is contentious to state practice and institutional arrangements with regard to the border. Thus, the bridge and the river can be viewed as the site of history-in-person and historically institutionalized struggles.

What is important to the study of the ontology of borders is hence not the item of the border per se, but the objectification process of the border, the *socially constituent power practices attached to a border that construct a spatial effect* and which give a demarcation in space its meaning and influence (van Houtum 2011, p. 50, emphasis added).

In other words, power is represented and manifested in spatial formations through social practice: the border (or specifically the bridge and river in this example) represents “temporary stand-offs in a perpetual transformative ... socio-spatial power struggle” (van Schendel 2002, p. 658, citing Swyngedouw 1997, p. 169). Over time, certain practices gain dominance

and become institutionalized while others disappear. As such, we need to study the practice of border-making over the long *durée* (Baud and van Schendel 1997).

Local contentious practices regarding the border can take on a myriad of forms, combining over a period of time to generate sociohistoric production. Besides circumventing border checkpoints, local communities have moved border markers and/or occupied territory in defiance of state-delineated boundaries. The Kachin Independence Organization (KIO) and the Karen National Union (KNU), like the Myanmar state, cleave to the notion that physical territory is inextricably bound to identity and belonging but their idea of where the physical and sociopolitical boundaries lie differs greatly from that of the Myanmar state. The practice that these groups have of using the border as an escape valve subverts the state's authority imbued in the border. In such circumstances, the border — a political and symbolic marker of the sovereignty and territory of the Myanmar state — also limits the state's jurisdiction. Thus, counter-insurgency operations in these regions are less effective because insurgents and civilians can flee across the border into neighbouring countries and operate from bases there.² In doing so, they thwart the sovereignty of the state, both in escaping its reaches and in appropriating its resources.

Local practices become contentious when they rub up against the state's construction of space and social life. These are evidenced by inter-state disputes over border markings, the inadequate reach of state jurisdiction and authority at the borders, the diversity of cultures, languages and identities and the conflict of interests between border communities. Nevertheless, territory has become indispensable to everyday definitions of nation, identity and belonging (Abraham 2014, pp. 1–18). This conception has become so naturalized that it is often forgotten that it is a recently imported construct. With the exception of Vietnam, pre-colonial polities in Southeast Asia based their administration on the control of labour, not land (Steinberg 1987, p. 30). Thus, until the nineteenth century, the modern concept of national boundaries did not exist. While local people had concepts of territoriality that were understood in terms of flexible geographic boundaries and a range of rights governing resources therein, they “were not much concerned with the demarcation of frontiers” (Steinberg 1987, p. 5). For example, the Moken, sea nomads in the Andaman Sea, view territory as ancestral estates, resource nodes and cultural-economic units that are based on kin networks, rather than as spaces with demarcations (Sopher 1977, p. 61). To them, the “inalienable gift of territory is not just an economic resource but more of an affirmation of social relations” (Chou 2013, p. 56, citing

Weiner 1985, p. 210). Moreover, for them, territory and identity cannot be so easily uncoupled from mobility.

Their social relationships of maritoriality ownership and rights are firmly anchored in the seascape via movement rather than that based upon permanent settlements delineated by borders and boundaries. The seascape is perceived as life- and living-spaces not hampered by state-defined borders and boundaries (Chou 2013, pp. 49–50).

Thus, groups living in Myanmar's frontiers have constructed complex, multi-layered and shifting forms of allegiance and identity (Decha Tangseefa 2006; Horstmann 2011*a*; Sharples 2012; Prasert Rangkla 2014; Oh 2012; Ardeth Maung Thawngmung 2012; Grundy-Warr and Dean 2003; Dudley 2001, 2006, 2010; Farzana 2011; Pinkaew Laungaramsri 2006; Amporn Jirattikorn 2008, 2010, 2011) within symbolic worlds that reference international neighbours, border processes, the state, ethno-nationalism, communism, war, displacement, suffering (Horstmann, this volume) and fear (Grundy-Warr and Chin, this volume).

In addition, while often thought of as "ethnic" enclaves, the borders of Myanmar are also populated by a host of diverse peoples with contested and relational identities such as Chinese migrants (Toyota 2003; Chang 2014*b*) and traders (Chang 2013, 2014*a*) on the Chinese border, Burmese "economic" migrants on the Thai border (Arnold and Hewison 2006; Arnold and Pickles 2011; Campbell 2012; Pearson and Kusakabe 2012; Lyttleton 2014, pp. 110–42; Nobpaon Rabibhadana and Hayami 2013; Boutry and Ivanoff 2009; Lee 2007) political dissidents (O'Kane 2005; Amporn Jirattikorn 2008), activists (Simpson 2013, 2014) and sea nomads (Ivanoff 2008).

As these examples demonstrate, those communities living in the border regions construct figured worlds and corresponding boundaries that do not necessarily match those formulated by the state. There is no universal way in which people relate to space, identity and affiliation. For these reasons, we turn to an examination of the distinct historical, geographical, social and political context of Myanmar's border spaces.

MYANMAR'S MOUNTAIN AND MARITIME BORDER REGIONS

Upland, Lowland and Maritime Myanmar

The striking thing about Myanmar is that it is surrounded by a "highland horseshoe that encompasses the Irrawaddy basin on the west, north and

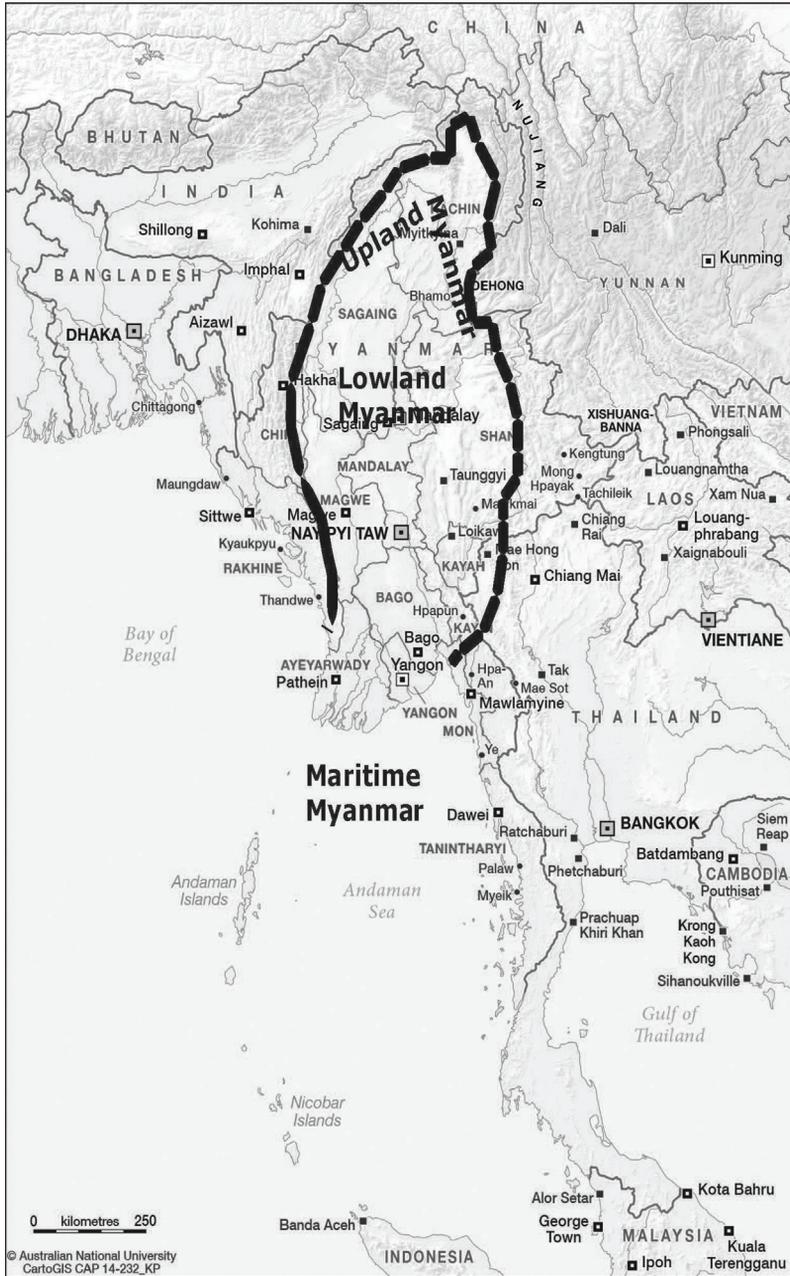
east” (Lieberman 2010, p. 333) (see Figure 1.1). This area is distinguishable from the inner regions of the country by its higher elevation where the highest peak (5,152 metres) is in Kachin state and the lowest (less than 700 metres) is in the two borderland constituencies in Rakhine state, as observed by Nicholas Farrelly (this volume). In this upland belt, altitude combined with distance from Naypyitaw and poor road conditions contribute to the “friction of terrain” (Scott 2009, p. 47) and isolation from the capital of the country.

This highland horseshoe has been identified as part of an upland region known as Zomia (van Schendel 2002, pp. 653–57) and the Southeast Asian massif (McKinnon and Michaud 2000), a transnational area characterized by its elevation, ecological conditions, sparse population, historical isolation, language affinities, religious commonalities, cultural traits, ancient trade networks and marginal position vis-à-vis surrounding states (van Schendel 2002, pp. 653–54).³ Leach (1954), in his work on upland swiddeners, contended that what set people apart in the highland zones had less to do with their language and culture than their framework of political ideas, and this was greatly influenced by the altitude they lived at and hence the hold that the state (and its political and cultural influences) had over them. In fact, he contended that geography may have had more influence over identity in pre-British Burma than language, religion or dress.

This argument was further developed by James Scott (2009) who observed that lowland wet-rice agriculturalists almost always lived in states, also known as padi states, while upland swiddeners lived beyond the reach of these states (see also Renard 1987, pp. 255–71). He argues that the conventional view of highlanders as backward, uncivilized, primitive and barbaric was a construct of the lowland padi kingdom, and that the traits that these adjectives describe are actually distinctive agricultural, religious and social features that hill societies cultivated to escape lowland state authority. Scott’s main contribution is that hill societies cannot be understood as entities separate from valley societies or through the ideology of valley societies. Rather, padi states and their highland counterparts were mutually constitutive.

This argument can also be used to describe the relationship between the lowlands and the sea. As Figure 1.1 illustrates, lowland Myanmar is bounded by the Indian Ocean in the south where a string of islands leading to the island of Sumatra divides the upper part of the ocean into the Bay of Bengal and the Andaman Sea. The body of water belonging to Myanmar is shaped roughly like a wrench. Like the highland horseshoe, the wrench is part of another Zomia, or more precisely a “watery Zomia” (Scott 2009, p. xiv) that stretches from the Indian Ocean to the Pacific Ocean.

FIGURE 1.1
Map of Upland, Lowland and Maritime Myanmar



Source: CartoGIS, College of Asia and the Pacific, The Australian National University.

We are used to thinking of the sea as empty and uninhabited. However, until recently, the Andaman Sea and the other seas in Southeast Asia were inhabited by sea nomads whose mobility was inhibited only by the elements. Of the Moken, whose principal residential and (shell)fishing grounds are located in southern Myanmar and Thailand, Boudier et al. assert that “[s]cattering, dissimulation, adapted technology, the ideology of non-accumulation and living on the fringes of the ‘great’ societies are what make the Moken true Zomians” (2015, p. 105). “Their nomadism is seen as a consequence of their perpetual flight and as a succession of historical accidents. Nomad culture, personified today through the Moken, remains a tuber culture. It is the ‘rice of the Moken’..” (Bourdier et al. 2015, p. 106).

Like mountain Zomia, marine Zomia is defined by its geography (or rather hydrography), ecology, trade networks, mobile practices and transnationalism. Lowlanders have similar perceptions of mountain and marine Zomians, characterizing them as backward, uncivilized and marginal to the lowland state; for example, the Moken have been described as “irresponsible and dominated potential vagabonds” by the Thais and the Burmese (Bourdier et al. 2015, p. 104). Zomians, on the other hand, have viewed the padi states as a cultural force threatening to dominate and change their lifestyle. Mountain swiddeners and marine nomads alike have developed political, social and cultural practices around the fear of slavery, in order to protect their freedom of movement and preserve their distinctive identity.

The perceptions that each group has of the other are in fact the result of a process whereby boundaries are made, reinforced and perpetuated, through spatial, ideological and identity practices. In fact, these boundaries are not as clear-cut or as fixed as we are led to believe. Throughout history, these separate societies have engaged in collaboration and conflict. For example, up to the middle of the twenty-first century, the sea nomads’ mobile lifestyles

were highly valued by the power-holders of the early Malay states of the western Malay region and by the various sultanates that arose in coastal Borneo, the southern Philippines and eastern Indonesia. They were in fact the key players and the building blocks for the sustenance of sedentary communities that developed around the Bay of Bengal (Chou 2013, p. 44, citing Benjamin 1986, p. 16).

Paradoxically, as states emerged, the sea nomads became progressively marginalized by padi states. This example shows that (cultural) boundaries

are nuanced and mutable, a fact that Boutry (this volume) explores in the relationship between the Burman/Bamar and the Moken in the littoral zone.

Armed Conflict, Militarization and Border Development

The physical and social landscapes in the border regions have also been deeply affected by decades of armed conflict and structural violence. Figure 2.3 in Farrelly (this volume) shows the highly contested space in the highland horseshoe: there is a high concentration of militarized zones controlled by various non-state armed groups, pro-government militias and the Burmese Army. These spaces have been, and continue to be, sites of armed conflict, militarization and displacement, and their spatial configuration remains unsettled despite recent ceasefire agreements and current peace negotiations.

The significance of internal boundaries in Myanmar cannot be overstated. Since independence, the country has experienced insurgency from groups of ethnic and other ideological persuasions, among them the Kachin, Karen/Kayin, Karenni/Kayah, Wa, Shan, Chin, Mon, Pa-O (see Gravers and Ytzen 2014, pp. 165–72), the All Burma Students' Democratic Front (ABSDF) and the Communist Party of Burma (CPB). The prevalence of armed conflict (Kramer 2010; Smith 1991; South 2003, 2008; Tin Maung Maung Than 2005), militarization (Fink 2008) and ethno-nationalist sentiment (Gravers 2014; Sadan 2013) has created a border landscape of patchwork military installations littered with landmines and displaced people (Decha Tangseefa 2006, Grundy-Warr 2002; Dudley 2001; Farzana 2011; Jacquet and O'Loughlin 2012; Lang 2002; Hull 2009).

This space may be described as a giant game of Othello or Reversi where the state has sought to penetrate rebel-held areas, referred to as “black” zones, to transform them into “brown” areas where contestation takes place, thence into government-controlled or “white” zones and to prevent them from turning back into “black” zones (Smith 1991, p. 259). The ground is constantly shifting as territory is seized and allegiances (and names) are changed. Along the southeastern border, the Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA) — now called the Democratic Karen Benevolent Army — split from the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) and became proxies of the Burmese Government. On several occasions, some battalions have rejoined the KNLA or independently fought against the *Tatmadaw* (Myanmar Army) despite the ceasefire agreement.

Armed conflict continues to erupt periodically between the *Tatmadaw* and the Kachin Independence Organization in northern Myanmar, after

a fourteen-year ceasefire was broken in 2011. In early 2015, the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA) in the Kokang Self-Administered Zone in northern Shan state near the Chinese border began a military campaign to claim what they believe to be Kokang land from the *Tatmadaw*.

The mutually constitutive nature of the state and these regions is worth highlighting. The military junta and military-backed Myanmar Government created a narrative of the border regions that characterized them as unruly, backward and ethnic (Lambrecht 2008, p. 153), posing a threat to national security and unity. This imaginary has been upheld and shaped by practices involving territorial control, security discourses and development. For instance, the Burmese state used a multi-pronged strategy to territorialize these conflict-ridden regions: forcing the rank-and-file of the Myanmar Army to live off the land, thereby creating competition with local insurgents for local resources (Jannuzi 1998, p. 203; Karen Human Rights Group, KHRG 2008a), forcibly relocating people to strategic villages, confiscating food, destroying crops, forcing people into portering (KHRG 2006), undertaking “border development” (Lambrecht 2008; KHRG 2007, p. 3) and adapting Colonial Waste Land laws to suit the purposes of the *Tatmadaw* at the local level (Ferguson 2014). The latter has enabled the army to profit from national and international business interests once it was more thoroughly entrenched (Ferguson 2014).

These territorialization and counter-insurgency strategies are institutionalized boundary-making practices which, when viewed at the national scale, have clear socio-spatial consequences.

Geography... plays an important role in creating differential experiences of oppression... the geographical bounded-ness of non-Burman communities in the ethnic states acts to make ethnicity more ascriptive. That is, while non-Burman status might not be immediately apparent in an urban centre in the central heartland, the military has been free to conduct violent campaigns against communities in the ethnic states, knowing that these campaigns will target those most suspect (in its eyes) as citizens (Walton 2013, p. 19).

The insurgent activities of non-state armed groups adds to the precariousness and ambiguity of these regions, resulting in multi-scalar territorialities of “overlapping spaces of dependencies and constellations of power” (Paasi 1999b, p. 86) which are much more pronounced than in the heartlands.

Local communities responded by planting landmines, hiding crops and other objects that the army or non-state armed groups would appropriate,

moving their farms to concealed locations, fleeing into the jungles, to IDP camps and/or across the border, joining insurgent groups, and/or complying with forced relocation while enacting everyday forms of resistance (KHRG 2008*b*, p. 6; KHRG 2009, p. 6). These local contentious practices of fleeing, hiding, dissembling and resisting have produced sentiments, discourses, artefacts, rituals and identities (as elaborated upon by the authors in this volume) that spring from these specific material, affective, economic and political landscapes.

On the Chinese and, particularly, the Thai side of the border, access to better economic opportunities, international NGOs, technologies, knowledge and ideologies, and kin and other networks has provided fertile ground for the development of a civil and political society that references the local political and affective landscape while connected to trans- and international networks. On the Thai-Burmese border, in particular, there is a plethora of organizations and collectives working on human rights, democracy (Oo Sai Thet Naing 2012), humanitarianism (Horstmann 2011*b*, 2015, this volume; Desaine 2011 for the Kachin border), migrant workers' rights (Arnold and Hewison 2006, pp. 171–77), the environment (Simpson 2013, 2014), and (ethno-) nationalism (Rajah 2002) through advocacy, education, health and other activities, some of which involve unauthorized cross-border endeavours.

This non-state sanctioned movement of goods, people and knowledge subverts state power, circumvents state sanctions and challenges state authority. To counter this, the state attempts to regulate existing or emergent mobility practices. However, this control is neither uniform nor standardized. First, within state regulatory frameworks, different sets of regulations are applied to distinct spaces. For example, part of the Myawaddy border next to Thailand is controlled by non-state armed groups working as proxies of the Burmese state (the Democratic Karen Benevolent Army (DKBA) for example) that regulate border movement in ways that differ from their Burman/Bamar counterparts. Second, even within the state apparatus, local officials interpret border controls differently from central headquarters. Other parts of the border are manned by the Karen Nation Union (KNU), a non-stated armed group that has waged war against the Burmese state for decades. In other words, there exist multiple regulatory authorities whose practices are based on state regulations, custom, ideology or religion. Clearly, the borders are intersections of multiple competing authorities (Abraham and van Schendel 2005) whose individual and institutional practices create anxieties for states (Rajaram and Grundy-Warr 2007).

Ceasefires, Natural Resource Extraction and Special Economic Zones

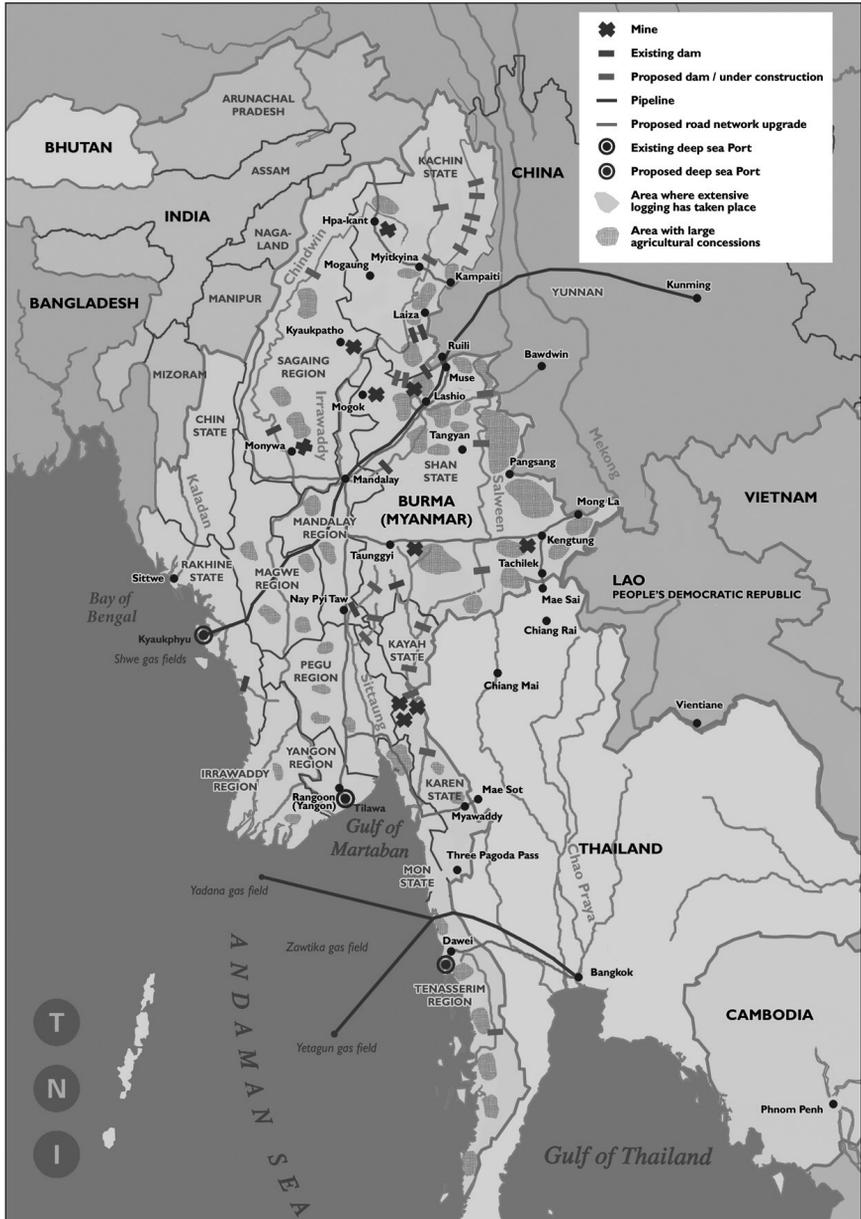
Myanmar is blessed with natural resources, and a large proportion of them are found in the border areas (see Figure 1.2). The seas are replete with natural gas and fish stocks, the rivers meandering through the highlands have been earmarked for hydropower projects, and there are substantial tracts of land being used for logging, mining, agri-business and industry, particularly in the terrestrial border regions. Most of the approved foreign direct investment in Rakhine state on the Bangladeshi border is in oil and gas projects (Transnational Institute, TNI 2013, p. 24), such as the Shwe Gas Project at the Kyaukphyu Special Economic Zone (SEZ).

Ceasefires in the border regions have played a significant role in enabling the state to assert its hegemony over swathes of the highland border areas. It does this by co-opting those non-state armed groups who have agreed to ceasefire agreements. In return for acting as state proxies, these non-state armed groups are permitted to control territory, grant concessions for natural resource extraction and agri-business, and carry out rent-seeking activities.

The state's industrial and commercial plans for these regions may be viewed as a redefinition of space from one of war to one of resource extraction, production (Dean 2002, pp. 131–41; Woods 2011) and governance (Maclean 2007). Besides granting concessions for resource extraction, long-term land use and associated infrastructure, the state also uses special economic zones (SEZ) as a spatio-economic strategy to territorialize the borderlands. At present, three large SEZs are being built at Dawei in Tanintharyi Region, Kyaukphyu in Rakhine state, and at the port of Thilawa just south of Yangon. The first two are located in the borderlands. It is interesting to note that of the seven further SEZs planned, five will be located in ethnic borderlands: Karen/Kayin State (Hpa-an, Myawaddy and Three Pagoda Pass), Shan State and Arakan/Rakhine State. The other two will be situated in Naypyitaw and Mandalay (TNI 2013, p. 29).

With regards to marine resources, Maung Aung Myoe's chapter alerts us to the fact that the hydrocarbon reserves in the Andaman Sea generate the greatest source of external revenue for Myanmar. Combined with revenue from fish stocks, Myanmar's preoccupation with its maritime borders has shifted from securing territory from non-state armed groups to protecting natural resources from external actors. This shows that borders have strategic value in allowing states to lay claim to resources and to exploit the differentials they create, a feature that local residents and groups have long capitalized on.

FIGURE 1.2
Map of Natural Resources in Myanmar's Border Regions



Source: Reproduced with the kind permission of Transnational Institute.

Nevertheless, these benefits are not evenly distributed. New land laws, land seizures, inadequate compensation, the destruction of local livelihoods, economies and the environment from industrial pollution negatively affect certain communities while the state, military conglomerates, local and foreign companies, related state agencies and sometimes non-state armed groups profit in the name of development. The multi-scalar practices of these actors have “simultaneously extended and fragmented the centralised state control of spaces where natural resources are located” (Maclean 2007, p. 249).

These conflicts are not confined to the border areas; the economy of the border regions is in flux like the rest of the country. However, the difference stems from the fact that these industrial projects have only become possible following the new round of ethnic ceasefires. Given new political complexes, the transitional political economy in the border regions, the opening up of the economy to a diversified range of actors, and changes to land laws (Fink 2015), these forms of territorial claims will continue to increase in Myanmar (Ferguson 2014, p. 307). Consequently, new boundaries will be created between the rich and the poor, capitalist owners and the landless, and the powerful and the disenfranchised which “make it necessary for us to rethink the borders in a way that is neither Cartesian nor linear” (Bourdier et al. 2015, p. 20).

ASSYMETRIES AND LOCAL PRACTICE

While the border regions share many similarities, each one possesses unique configurations of ethnic, political, economic, geographical, social and cultural attributes, so that some border areas are more vibrant, volatile or vocal than others. For this reason, studies of local practice are critical to understanding the nuances and complexities therein and the type of forces these regions exert on the fabric of society, economy and politics in Myanmar.

Due to space constraints, this edited volume does not cover all the regions in each of the borders. In particular, the Laotian-Burmese frontier is not included due to a dearth of scholarly research (although see Walker 1999). Moreover, even along one border, there is a host of variables that shape specific locations. The Thai-Burmese border, for instance, is characterized by the sea and the confluence of Malay, Thai and Burmese communities at its southern end, while its more northern sites are influenced by the endeavours of a multiplicity of economic actors and regulatory authorities

in the mountainous, terrestrial and riparian border spaces in Mon, Karen/Kayin, Karenni/Kayah and Shan States.

Given the profusion of factors, I limit my observations about the diversity found along the borders and in the border regions to two features: the presence of armed conflict and the gravitational pull of next-door neighbours.

At first glance, it appears that the non-state armed ethnic groups operating from the border areas have similar goals and grievances. However, they behave differently from one another, depending on their geographical location, moral tenets, ideological concerns, size and access to resources. Not all groups are fighting for independence/autonomy or ethno-nationalist reasons; some (particularly those in Shan State) have access to more resources through the trade in drugs and gems; others operate from Myanmar's borders but engage in warfare in neighbouring countries (Gravers and Ytzen 2014, pp. 165–72).

These groups are also placed in different administrative categories by the state, which in turn has implications for their involvement in the national reconciliation process. The complexity of this process is beyond the scope of this introduction, suffice to say that this has made the peace negotiations between the non-state armed groups and Naypyitaw a labyrinthine and monolithic endeavour involving many armed groups and requiring unilateral agreements. In addition, the diversity of interests and bargaining power has made the “nationwide” ceasefire agreement a misnomer. First, not all groups are involved in the negotiations and second, only slightly more than half of the fifteen involved in peace negotiations signed the agreement in 2015. Notably, some of the groups which refused to sign are based along the Chinese border (the Kachin Independence Army, the Wa State Army and the Shan State Army-North) and have the largest militias in the country.

Interestingly, the littoral region is unusual in that there has been no armed conflict along ethnic lines. Instead, patron-client relationships and exogamous marriage (see Boutry, this volume) between Burman/Bamar and the Moken have been instrumental in integrating these two communities socially, culturally and economically. This serves as a useful reminder that scholarship on Myanmar and its borders may be understood in ways that go beyond armed conflict and ethnicity.

The second feature I consider is the relationship that the border regions have with neighbouring countries. While all border communities gravitate towards the countries next door, the extent to which they may gain access

to resources on the other side of the border varies. For instance, there is more international aid available in and through Thailand than in the other neighbouring countries. Also, China and Thailand are economically better off than Bangladesh and Laos, and therefore able to provide better economic opportunities and infrastructure. Moreover, the nature and strength of relationships forged at the borders differ. Some groups, such as the Kachin, have had much success in deepening and exploiting kin and other networks on the other side of the border. The Chin, on the other hand, face various forms of discrimination from the Mizo, a kin group, in bordering Mizoram, India. As Son and Singh (this volume) describe, the Young Mizo Association (YMA) has constructed Mizo hegemonic space as one upheld by Christian tenets and that is free from alcohol. The YMA carries out collective local practices of discrimination, and in doing so, it “create[s] cultural forms as means to gain some limited control over their own construction” (Holland and Lave 2009, p. 20). Over time, the production and reproduction of mediated practices of discrimination produce, institutionalize, and disperse a sociohistoric discourse, one in which the Chin are portrayed as immoral bootleggers and rapists. This example highlights the complexities of local contentious practices of boundary- and identity-making which coincide with the state border.

The uneven access to resources on the other side of the border means that migrants and the displaced are better able to acquire aid, insert themselves into local, transnational and international networks, and develop counter-hegemonic movements in some borders rather than others. This becomes clear when we compare the chapters on the Thai border (Grundy-Warr and Chin, Horstmann, Oh, Decha Tangseefa) with those on the Indian and Bangladeshi ones (Son and Singh, Bjornberg, Farzana). It would seem that migrants are more likely to move to the eastern rather than the western borders in search of sanctuary, solidarity and employment, if they have the means to do so.

At the macro level, the diplomatic and economic relationship that Myanmar has with neighbouring countries plays a role in the weight that Myanmar places on individual border regions. India, China and Thailand have substantial political clout with Myanmar and the two latter countries dominate Myanmar’s external trade. Myanmar is more likely to settle border disputes, skirmishes and migration issues expediently with these partners than it would with Bangladesh and Laos, its less economically successful and powerful neighbours.

Given these disparities, I posit that, combined, the borderlands pull the country in different directions and at different speeds. This may result in uneven and asymmetrical development, which would have real implications

for the country as a whole. I argue that how this unfolds is revealed by examining local practices — which is the main focus of this book.

STRUCTURE OF THE BOOK

As a whole, this book is consciously comparative despite the fact that not all the papers are. There have been few attempts to assemble studies on Myanmar's borders in a holistic manner and to understand how borders interact with one another, although see Boutry (2011), TNI (2013), Dean (2007, 2011), Grundy-Warr (2002), Grundy-Warr and Dean (2003). Thus, the aim is to examine the patterns, trends, anomalies and contradictions emerging in the different border areas so as to obtain insights and pose questions about their relationship with the hinterlands and about these frontiers.

These trends are discerned through an examination of the range of socio-spatial practices and formations employed by various local actors. As there are more studies on practices related to the control of physical space — using territorialization strategies such as warfare, landmines, land laws, sedentarization and enclosures, infrastructure, industrial, extractive and productive projects — this book includes social practices which reside in other spheres. The four practices — territorial claims, social organization, mobility, and identity construction (through individual and institutionalized forms) — are taken up in Sections II to VI. Section I of the book sets out the context of Myanmar's mountain and maritime border spaces. As the reader will notice, the book is structured so that the analysis may be grounded in social practices rather than geography. Nevertheless, there is some overlap between the two.

I. Overview of Myanmar's Mountain and Maritime Borderscapes

This section serves as an introduction to Myanmar's border regions. Nicholas Farrelly's chapter begins by setting out the four ways in which the borderland constituencies are different from the heartlands: isolation from the rest of Myanmar, strong links to neighbouring countries, mountainous terrain and the main origin of Myanmar's diaspora. Having laid out the context of the borderlands, he combines data on voting behaviour in the 2010 general elections with that on conflict and military deployments and cartographic representation in the border constituencies to "clarify ideas of marginality, contestability, belonging and dissent in the new electoral system" (Farrelly, Chapter 2 in this volume). According to Farrelly, whether electoral sovereignty can be established in Myanmar depends very much on the borderlands. These regions — home bases of the major ethnic

resistance movements — have persistently pursued autonomy or disavowed national political institutions, have had partial involvement in the electoral process, and have experienced major obstacles to integration into the national project. Clearly, rather than being peripheral, the transactions, negotiations and contestations that occur in the border regions are central to our understanding of Myanmar's social, economic and political landscape.

Scholarship on borders and boundaries in Myanmar, like elsewhere, tends to focus on the terrestrial borders; less research has been conducted on riparian and maritime borders. Maung Aung Myoe's chapter aims to partially address this gap. He begins by providing us with an overview of the maritime disputes between Myanmar, Thailand, Bangladesh and India. Some maritime boundary disputes with Thailand and India have been resolved but those with Bangladesh remain delimited. Besides state level disputes over maritime boundaries, there is an emerging politics of resource (hydrocarbon and fish stocks) control between central and local/regional governments, for the first time in Myanmar at least since 1962. The chapter describes the challenges posed by domestic contenders and foreign entities to the Myanmar state's authority over and management of the maritime frontier, highlighting the many actors involved in contesting and transgressing Myanmar's water boundaries and the land-based techniques and ideologies the state uses to territorialize the marine.

II. Territorial Claims and Imagined Boundaries

The three essays in this section show how, in the minds of the Burmese, belonging is undeniably tied to the notion of territory and hegemony, whether this relates to the Burman, people who have been designated *kala* (people from the West (South Asia) or foreigner) or the Rohingya. Too often, discussions about Burmese nationals of South Asian descent are reduced to religion and/or ethnicity. Thus, this approach gives us a broader way of perceiving and situating notions of belonging, their associated practices and their intimate ties with imagined territories. This in turn leads us to consider what we mean by borders and borderlands — not just the normative institutions and physical spaces that have been designated by the state, but the imagined and cognitive boundaries that exist in the collective consciousness.

Maxime Boutry begins his chapter by questioning the assumption that sectarian violence in Myanmar is about the threat that Islam poses to Buddhism. Instead, he hypothesizes that Myanmar's Muslims are perceived as a threat to Burman/Bamar *and* Arakanese/Rakhine hegemonies on what they consider their respective territories. This leads him to consider

Burmanization, identity and territory so as to analyse how Burman/Bamar hegemony has manifested in the borderlands and to what extent. Interestingly, the Burman/Bamar along the Tenasserim maritime border are “both Zomians in flight from the oppressive centre (having found greater freedom of practice in conquering a pioneer front) and vectors for the Burmanization of local traditions and practices” (Bourdier et al. 2015, p. 21). Boutry shows how these Burman/Bamar have integrated with the Moken, so that the Burmanization process has been adapted and reformulated by patron-client relationships and exogamy, “leading to a blurring of state-formulated racial and ethnic categories” (ibid.). The uniqueness of Boutry’s work is that, instead of focusing on ethnic minorities, he looks to the practices surrounding Burman/Bamar identity and Burmanization to unpack the complex dialectics of borderscapes, identity and imagined territories — something that has received little attention in the literature on Myanmar.

Turning to the western border of Myanmar, Alexandra de Mersan poses insightful questions about what rituals say vis-à-vis current social and political circumstances in Rakhine State. This is particularly salient, given the periodic outbreaks of sectarian violence between Buddhists and Muslims since 2012. Her work shows how Burman/Bamar and Rakhine hegemony, enacted in spirit (*nat*) rituals, is spatially located since spirits are ethnically represented and territorially bound. Variations in rituals, and the decline in invitations to and (non) appearance of *kala* spirits signal the changing orientations and perceptions of the Rakhine, particularly in relation to the ‘other’. Alexandra de Mersan’s research on spirits (*nats*) in this section draws upon Bénédicte Brac de la Perrière’s observation that the Burmese kings of old, in making a *nat* a cultural hero tied to a specific region,

territorialised the link of the *nats* to the communities that depend on them. In doing so, the Burmese kings changed the very nature of the ties of identity in these communities: probably quite diverse before their Burmesization, community identity seems now to be defined as a form of local particularism, limited to a defined territory that is part of a national expanse... In fact, the essence of this policy has consisted in using the *nats* alone to fuse, on the local level, autochthony and sovereignty (Brac de la Perrière 1996, p. 58).

These rituals are social practices that provide us with a window into collective cognitive maps of territory, hegemony and belonging in the figured worlds that exist in Rakhine State. They reiterate the constant (re)production of the link between discursive, normative and spatial boundaries.

Anders Bjornberg's chapter on the Rohingya underlines the way in which territory is ingrained in notions of belonging at a different scale. He describes how both Myanmar and Bangladesh view the Rohingya as an aberration who have to be excised from the territory of the nation state. Arguing that the Rohingya pose an ideological and symbolic threat to "contemporary constructions of nationalism" (Chapter 6 in this volume) instead of a military one in both countries, Bjornberg provides examples of how both nations seek to reconfigure the historicity and identity of the Rohingya in ways which deny their political and cultural claims to citizenship. The Rohingya, in their movement across state-defined borders, their place-making and their narratives (see Farzana, this volume) are creating spaces that challenge Bangladesh and Myanmar's notion of nation, territory and boundaries, creating a subaltern critique of the territoriality-identity-belonging trinity.

III. Social Organization and Border Economies

This section examines the organized activities of refugees, migrants and humanitarian actors (these groups are not mutually exclusive) which reconfigure notions of jurisdiction and legitimacy, undermining the spatial boundaries and sovereignty of the Myanmar Government. Both chapters demonstrate how the Thai-Burmese border landscape — in its tangible and intangible forms — is shaped by borderlanders' organized proactive and defensive responses to shifting power structures and alliances of the state, non-state armed groups and corporations through practices that have created and reside in the humanitarian and education spheres. Sturgeon calls this "landscape plasticity," "[a] combined spatial and temporal knowledge," which "gives [borderlanders] a certain resilience in negotiating with state agents..." (2011, p. 25).

The multiple and overlapping domains of power and the multi-scalar activities of diverse actors have transformed this space into a tumultuous, turbulent and troubled landscape. Political repression in Myanmar, the lack of public social welfare, the existence of a war economy, and the dominance of a neoliberal capitalist economy on the Thai side of the border, has produced a humanitarian economy and an economy of intimacy (Lyttleton 2014, pp. 110–42) that strive to mitigate the insecurity, deprivation, ambiguity and precariousness that prevails in this region.

Alexander Horstmann's chapter is a detailed study of the emergence and spread of the humanitarian economy on the Thai-Burmese border. Steeped in notions of Karen/Kayin nationalism, culture and suffering, this industry has enabled the Karen/Kayin (and Karenni/Kayah) to establish a niche in

providing alternative underground support in health care, education and social welfare in an effort to counter or mitigate the effects of political and socio-economic disparities in the region. This has, in turn, shaped the economy, infrastructure and materiality of the border.

Su-Ann Oh expands on the humanitarian economy by contrasting its institutions and cultural norms with those of the neoliberal capitalist economy that prevails on the Thai side of the border. By analysing the schooling, training and employment of Burmese migrants on the Thai border, she reveals the values, social practices and institutional affiliations of the humanitarian economy, and demonstrates how they contrast with those of the neoliberal capitalist one. She concludes with foreboding: as the political shifts in Myanmar herald the flight of donor funding to Myanmar and away from the border, those who are left in the humanitarian economy become even more vulnerable to the vagaries of donor fatigue and fancies.

IV. Mobile Practices and Moving Borders

The mobility of people, goods and ideas highlights the way in which border actors negotiate various regulatory authorities, thereby reconfiguring power relations ingrained in normalized spatial arrangements. The mobile practices described in these chapters invite us to observe networks and technologies that transcend the physical moorings of the territorial border and to consider its spatial, social, affective and virtual dimensions, showcasing the diversity of mobile practices at different sites on the Chinese Thai border. The authors demonstrate how actors negotiate various authorities, thus providing insights into the power relations amongst these parties. This is often manifested in the form of border performances (Coplan 2012) and games (Andreas 2009) where state actors, local authorities and local communities exploit, negotiate or circumvent local and central regulations to further their own interests.

Karin Dean contends that in order to better problematize the contentious politics of the Kachin, one has to take into account networks that span “space, scales and positionalities” (Chapter 9 in this volume) including Internet-based communication technology. By focusing on the hyper-movement of information about the Kachin conflict across the Internet, she posits that Kachin mobilities, including the movement of information, are part of a continuity of flows across space and time and best conceptualized as capabilities that have been produced collectively for different purposes. In this way, Dean draws our attention to the way in which mobilities, framed as capabilities, construct meaning and connect the Kachin in contentious politics.

To a certain extent, this is akin to Bowen's identification of mobility and "Islam as a transnational public space". "[T]ransnational Islam creates and implies the existence and legitimacy of a global public space of normative reference and debate, and that this public space cannot be reduced to a dimension of migration or of transnational religious movements" (Bowen 2004, p. 880). What Dean describes applies to other Myanmar-related contentious politics (ethnic such as the Karen/Kayin or ideological such as the National League for Democracy) and exemplifies the tension between the Burmese political regime and Myanmar-related "communities that recognise and act according to cultural notions that transcend the categories of the territorial state" (Kalir et al. 2012, p. 13).

Jianxiong Ma and Chunzhao Ma's chapter forms the historical backdrop to Dean's work by describing how mule caravans tapped into extensive networks across local political structures and different cultural systems, acting as a mechanism for mobility and social networking across the Chinese Empire and the Burmese kingdom. In their highly detailed account of the social structure and operations of mule caravans, they weave local politics, social boundaries, patronage, cross-border networking, cultural practices and long-distance travel into a fascinating account of the circulation of people, mules, goods and capital. Since the border began where their networks ended, one can say that the travels and networks of the humble mule caravans played a role in shaping the frontier between China and Burma. These cyclical journeys that took place up until recently also provide an example of alternative conceptions and practices of mobility that mapped space through kin networks, patronage, and resource units. In addition, these trading practices constituted a transnational popular realm that enjoyed an informal oppositional power (based on economic rather than political force) against "national" states while incorporating various state agencies (Chang 2009, pp. 566–67). "In consequence, the interacting force embraced different scales (local, regional, national, and transnational) of geopolitical and geosocial entities" (Chang 2009, p. 568).

V. Identity Construction and the Politics of Belonging

The fifth section of the book examines the way that stateless, displaced and migrant communities fashion identity and belonging to counter state discourses and hegemonic Burman/Bamar identity. It also considers how neighbouring country communities define these communities. The chapters draw our attention to the discursive, cultural, contextual and moral ways in which identity and the politics of belonging are enacted and performed

in relation to Myanmar's borders and borderlands and the figured worlds that these represent.

All four chapters deal explicitly with how displaced people of ethnic origin (Karen/Kayin, Rohingya, Shan and Karenni/Kayah) construct their identity and belonging through the idea of "home", envisaged through (others') memory, imagination and the affective landscape. As Liisa Malkki writes

...now, more than perhaps ever before, people are chronically mobile and routinely displaced, and invent homes and homelands in the absence of territorial, national bases — not in situ, but through memories of, and claims on, places that they can, or will, no longer corporeally inhabit (Malkki 1992, p. 24).

The importance of possessing and expressing cultural identity and belonging in Myanmar cannot be overstated. Although the cultural scripts produced are effectively the weapons of the weak, these communities feel the necessity to create and express them regardless. This is because political and social life is heavily ethnicized in Myanmar, and the establishment and codification of a cultural identity often marks the difference between survival and extinction.

Decha Tangseefa focuses on meaning-making surrounding the creation of songs by young Karen/Kayin refugee camp residents. He asserts that "music is used as a discursive fabric", woven from a variety of discourses — "nation, home, homeland, religion, natural beauty of their homeland, mother, family and friendship" (Chapter 11 in this volume) — to enable young refugees to maintain a way of life that is no longer possible. Indeed, the performance of these songs serves the purpose of reaffirming and re-imagining identity and belonging. It also provides the means by which the intangible and invisible may be expressed and shared, even if they are not heard, acknowledged or understood beyond the camps.

This is also the case for the Rohingya, as described in Farzana's chapter. The Rohingya living in camps in eastern Bangladesh use drawings, songs and narratives to legitimize their claims of belonging in the face of state resistance and opposition. They have also invoked notions of "desh" (homeland) and historical origins in Rakhine State rather than territorial warfare in recent years to assert these claims.

Indeed, as Newman and Paasi wrote, the construction of an identity narrative is itself a political action (1998, p. 195). In this way, the Rohingya (and the Karen/Kayin) use locally produced cultural artefacts to counter external actors' constructions of them, enacting a (cultural) politics of

belonging that repudiates state and external discourses (as detailed in Bornberg, this volume).

These sentiments are echoed in Amporn Jirattikorn's chapter on the Shan who live in Chiang Mai, Thailand. Jirattikorn uses the cultural politics of belonging to situate their ambivalence towards "home" and return within the wider framework of current social, economic and cultural circumstances in Myanmar. The upshot of it is that many Shan migrants find themselves in a state of residential limbo: they do not feel a sense of cultural belonging to their homeland and border hometowns, nor do they have permanent and legitimate claims to stay in Thailand.

In their chapter, Carl Grundy-Warr and Chin Wei Jun argue that the process by which the borders are becoming incorporated into the country's political economic transformation have to be in the forefront of discussions of the everyday lives of borderlanders and, in their particular study, displaced Karenni/Kayah's prospects for return. Commercial and industrial disputes (as opposed to military conflict in the past) in the Thai-Burmese borderland has led to land and resource dispossession, making Karenni/Kayah refugees wary about returning. Although there appears to be some optimism for a decent life on the Karenni/Kayah border, the fear, mistrust and suspicion that has emerged from militarization, business interests and displacement underscore the unequal political and economic power that dominates this landscape. The Karenni refugees' ideas about return, which encompasses home and belonging, are intimately tied to the local context and its affective landscape.

VI. Institutionalized Identity and Border Practices

This final section considers the everyday politics of identity and belonging through institutionalized practices at the Indian and Chinese borders respectively. Together, these two papers remind us that micro-level perceptions shape border processes and formations and that we cannot take for granted the nature of these perceptions, since they are embedded in wider economic and political circumstances in both countries.

In describing the institutionalization of xenophobia towards the Chin by the Mizo on the Indian side of the border, Bianca Son and N. William Singh draw our attention to the way in which external actors play a role in the politics of belonging. The Young Mizo Association (YMA) in Mizoram on the Indian side of the border, configures economic, political, moral and discursive space through social practices that undermine the position of the Chin in Mizoram society, and which relegate them to an inferior position in the Mizo world. The paradox between self-proclaimed kinship

and institutionalized discrimination provides a fascinating look into the production of cultural boundaries that serve to reproduce state borders.

In contrast, Takahiro Kojima's chapter on the local ritual and healing practices of a non-state sanctioned Buddhist sect on the Chinese border highlights the intermingling of the spiritual, the material and the national. Despite the state's attempts to institutionalize a particular form of Buddhism (in both Myanmar and China), certain Buddhist sects and their practices continue to operate and maintain their spiritual legitimacy on the Chinese-Burmese border. Chinese villagers invite Burmese monks and "layreaders" (*holu*) of the same sect to move to their villages to take up residence in vacant village temples. This has created an amalgamation of spiritual and cultural practices which Chinese villagers view as meaningful, potent and appropriate. Here, state borders are ignored in the sacred realm but exploited in the mundane: Burmese monks and layreaders are willing to move across the border because the Chinese economy is doing much better than the Burmese one, enabling them to collect more alms and improve their standard of living.

The chapters in this and the previous section ask us to consider the ways in which sociocultural and moral constructions of identity and everyday practices by individuals and in institutions are used to build legitimacy and credibility in creating belonging and exclusion.

CONCLUSION

This edited volume presents Myanmar's border spaces as entities that share geographical and political histories, instead of as discrete, disparate units attached to a national border. While these geographical features are not the sole determining characteristic of these domains, they alert us to the fact that mountain and maritime Myanmar have more in common with each other than with the lowlands, particularly in regard to their relationship with the state and to their connections with international neighbours. Moreover, examining the boundaries — geographical and constructed — of these regions provides us an entrée into the figured worlds located therein: how they are given meaning and shape, and how they vie for dominance in the social order. The elaboration of this continuous contentious process brings us closer to an understanding of the relationship between Myanmar's border domains and its heartlands.

The other objective of this book is to reflect on our perceptions of the sea so as to provide alternative ideas of what a border is and how it shapes national concerns. This requires us to consider maritime frontiers as more

than spaces to be territorialized, exploited or secured. Human endeavours on the sea are stymied or facilitated by waves, tides, winds, currents and the stars, engendering means of travel, forms of navigation, belief systems and lifestyles that are vastly dissimilar from those on land. By paying attention to these nuances, we can begin to work towards a richer and more refined conceptualization of territory/maritoriality, borders/boundaries, identity and belonging/life worlds, which would provide us with a better framework for studying Myanmar's borders.

Notes

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2. The Myanmar military began systematically applying the 'Four Cuts' in the Irrawaddy Delta against Karen/Kayin and Communist insurgents in the late 1960s. This strategy, aimed at eliminating sources of food, finance, recruits and intelligence for insurgent groups from their families and local villagers (Smith 1991, p. 259), enabled the state to penetrate rebel-held areas and to push the insurgents from the Delta and Bago Yoma into the more remote border areas. As a result, the territory that insurgent armies controlled shrank and became centred on relatively well-defined territories. In the case of the KNU, this region bordered Thailand. At this point, the Myanmar Army realized that the Four Cuts strategy was futile. However, the Four Cuts campaign was re-instated along the border areas (Kachin State, Shan State, Karenni State, Karen State, Mon State and Tenasserim Division) in early 2011 following a resurgence of armed conflict by ethnic ceasefire groups who resisted joining the Border Guard Force (Wai Moe 2011).
3. Zomia is a term coined by Willem van Schendel to designate a place in highland Asia that exists as a political and historical entity distinct from the usual divisions of Asia: Central, South, East, and Southeast. There is some debate over the exact geographical span of Zomia and of these Asian highlands. Van Schendel has extended Zomia from the western Himalayan Range through the Tibetan Plateau and all the way to the lower end of the peninsular Southeast Asian highlands to include southern Qinghai and Xinjiang within China, and a portion of Central Asia, encompassing the highlands of Pakistan, Afghanistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan. James Scott's definition of Zomia is closer to that of the Southeast Asian mainland massif and refers to places whose altitude is above 300 metres (Michaud 2010).

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