

**(Re)making resource frontiers through everyday violence and social movements in the
uplands of mainland Southeast Asia**

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A dissertation submitted to the department of graduate studies in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of doctor of philosophy

Graduate Program in Geography

York University

Toronto, Ontario

December 2022

Abstract

Myanmar, in 2010, began to transition from 48 years of military rule to a quasi-demilitarized and democratized government. This process attracted international attention to the country and increased investments in resource extraction. In this dissertation, I ask how historical relationships and present tensions between an assemblage of actors, resources, and spaces produce resource frontiers in Shan State. To examine how state and non-state military-private partnerships and social movements co-constitute one another and resource frontiers, I developed a research approach using feminist collaborative methods. For three years (2015-2018) I worked with a team to conduct research with civil society organizations (CSOs) and in communities impacted by two sites of resource extraction: Tigyit Coal Mine and Power Plant and Mong Ton Hydropower Project. I argue that in Shan State, as a historical formation, resource frontiers intertwine with violence and capitalist extraction; and, as an unfolding process, they deeply affect everyday lives. To make this argument, I historicize resource frontiers and demonstrate how specific frontier projects dismantle and recreate property systems and nature-society relationships, often while leaving ongoing violence and exclusion in their wake. I highlight the interconnections between frontier-making, fragmented sovereignties, and conflict, while also demonstrating the everyday lived realities of frontiers. In this research, I conceptualize the way that globally-connected and historically-situated resource frontiers shape sovereignty, war, and access for localized frontier actors; and, in turn, how frontier actors remake nature, nation, and global trade. Through my focus of the everyday violence communities experience from resource frontiers and how fragmented sovereignties from an under-explored region (Shan State) interact with an under-explored actor (CSOs), I contribute to an expanded understanding of sovereignties, resource frontiers, and violence.

Dedication

Pittance that it is, this is for my friends and colleagues that have long fought and continue to fight for self-determination and some semblance of human and environmental rights. It is also for those friends and family that have left too soon. To Bruce Kratky, my other father, I finally did it.

Acknowledgements

I am not denying the legitimacy of this research, as Vera Rubin was forced to do when theorizing dark matter. However, no one listed below is in anyway responsible for the words and imaginings in this dissertation. The fault and hubris of that is entirely my own. Nonetheless, many people, especially those who I cannot name, have been instrumental to this dissertation. For that, I would like to say thank you.

First, my supervisors Peter Vandergeest and Robin Roth. I by no means hold the record for longest dissertation or time spent in the program, but your patience and support has been instrumental. Also, a special thanks to Carlotta McAllister. Your guidance and insight has always been appreciated and needed. To Nang Mai and Nang Meo, our collaboration and friendship has been central to this research (and in life). Thank you for your time and patience with me and for having faith that we really could work together in mutually beneficial ways. Many of the more important outcomes of our collaborations have a home outside of this document and are ongoing. However, I hope that this research at least provides a testament to how important our work together has been and will continue to be.

I want to also acknowledge my transnational friends and colleagues. The core framing for this dissertation and pursuit of feminist research design evolved alongside the very fruitful collaboration with the 'What the Feminist?' collective members: Sarah Allen, Hillary Faxon, Jasnea Sarma. You all continue to challenge and inspire me, and I could not have written this dissertation without you. To Dr. Mollie Pepper and our CHID 2019 and 2020 students. You know what you did, and for that I am grateful. Wolfram Dressler, Mary Mostafanezhad, and reviewers of articles that made their way into Chapters 5 and 6, thank you for your clear-sighted comments. I also had the privilege along the way, to be a fellow with some brilliant Burmese, Thai, and Chinese academics and development practitioners. Thank you to my fellow CGIAR fellows for sharing space with me and for our many conversations over cups of tea and great food. Also, a very special thanks to Vanessa Lamb, editor on the book chapter that stemmed from the project, and friend. Thank you for your time in editing my words and for giving me the opportunity to finally see the Nam Khone River. And thanks to Carl Middleton and Kanokwan Manoram, for organizing us fellows, teaching us, and giving us the opportunity to learn alongside each other. I want to also thank the York Geography Department. Alicia Filipowich, you are amazing. Le Vong, Yvonne Yim, Libby Lunstrum, Patricia Woods, Alicia Turner, Philip Kelly. Shout out to my cohort and fellow York folks: Laura Schoenberger, Rae Rosenberg, Dan Evans, Katherine Dennler, Erin Rose, Linda Marroquin-Ponce, Wendy Medina de Loera, and Larissa Bablak. The cups of coffee, beers, and cocktails and the walks and park hang outs cannot be counted, but whether it was in joint work sessions or decompression sessions, the mutual aid was needed and valued.

My long history in the region also means I want to thank my Southeast Asia family. UHDP, P'Wah, P'Meo, Rick Burnette, Khun Bob, Ruth, Me Sakuna, P'Tui, P'Dah. Ajan Tui and Ajan Jamlong. Ajan Dah, A'Pat and our lost friend A'Lap. Wan, P'Singkam. Words cannot express your friendship, support, and offering of respite. We have literally toiled in the mud together and I

would not be who I am without you all and I would not understand the region without all of you. To my North American family. My parents, sister, niece and nephew. Emily and Devin and Roche-a-cri-farms and the Kratkys. Dissertation support springers Kensi, Carson and Annabelle. The yo-yos. Thank you all for tolerating the “abusive marriage” that is a PhD.

It perhaps seems strange that in any act of original scholarship, fiction authors should provide inspiration, but in those moments darkness some writers in particular brought me out and reminded me that I have something to say. Even if they are no longer in this world, their writings gave life to moments of this dissertation and it feels disingenuous to not acknowledge them. In particular, I would have forgotten my own purpose if it were not for John Steinbeck’s crisp voice in *Cannery Row* and George Orwell’s omniscient writings from *Shooting the Elephant* and *1984* (to name a few). As Octavia Butler’s prophetic Lauren of *Parable of the Sower* (2000) states:

All that you touch,
You Change.

All that you Change,
Changes you.

The only lasting truth
Is Change.

So, in the limited ways that I can express toward all those who have changed me, I say

In zome kah

ကျေးဇူးတင်ပါတယ်

အဝီရိယ

Ta-blurk do-mak

Ah bo u ja

Hai moo dtuh

Thank you

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List of Acronyms

AAPP—Association for Assistance for Political Prisoners
AFPFL – Anti-Fascist People’s Freedom League
ALARM—Advancing Life and Regenerating Motherland
BBTCL—Bombay Burmah Trading Corporation Limited
BDA – Burma Defense Army
BGF – Border Guard Forces
BIA—Burma Independence Army
BNA—Burma National Army
BSPP – Burmese Socialist Program Party
CDM – Civil Disobedience Movement
CTGC- Chinese Three Gorge’s Corporation
CPB – Communist Party of Burma
CSO – civil society organization
DGWP—direct global warming potential
EAO – ethnic armed organization
EIA—environmental impact assessment
EGAT—Electricity Generating Authority of Thailand
ERI—Earth Right’s International
FPE—Feminist Political Ecology
GAD—General Administrative Department
GHG—greenhouse gases
GRM—Government of the Republic of Myanmar
IDMC—Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre
IFC—International Finance Corporation
IPCC - Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
KKY – *Ka Kwe Ye*
KMT – Kuomintang (Chinese nationalists)
KNU – Karen National Union
kWh—Kilowatt hour
MATA—Myanmar Alliance for Transparency and Accountability
MCRB—Myanmar Centre for Responsible Business
MIMU – Myanmar Information Management Unity
MMOEP—Myanmar Ministry of Electric Power
MOEE-Ministry of Electricity and Energy
mmBTU—1 million British thermal units
MNDAA – Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army
MOECF – Ministry of Environmental Conservation and Forestry
MONREC – Ministry of Natural Resources and the Environmental Conservation
MTA – Mong Tai Army
NCA—Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement
NDF—National Democratic Front

NGO—non-government organization
NLD—National League for Democracy party
NTFPs—Non-timber forest products
NUG –National Unity Government
OCHA—Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
PDF – People’s Defense Force
PLA—participatory learning activities
PM—particulate matter
PMF—People’s Militia Force
PNA – Pa-Oh National Army
PNLO – Pa-Oh National Liberation Organization
PNO – Pa-Oh National Organization
PYO – Pa-Oh Youth Organization
SAC—State Administrative Council
SAZ – Special Administration Zone
SCR—selective catalytic reduction
SEA—strategic environmental assessment
SHAN—Shan Herald Agency for News
SHRF—Shan Human Rights Foundation
SIA—social impact assessment
SLORC – State Law and Order Restoration Council
SLR—Settlement and Land Records Department
SMEC—Snowy Mountain Engineering Company
SNIA – Shan National Independence Army
SPDC—State Peace and Development Council
SSA – Shan State Army
SSA-S – Shan State Army South (RCSS)
SSA-N – Shan State Army North (SSPP)
SSIA – Shan State Independence Army
SSPFL – Shan State People’s Freedom League
SSPP – Shan State Progress Party
SUA – Shan United Army
SURA – Shan United Revolutionary Army
SWAN—Shan Women’s Action Network
SYCB—Student and Youth Congress of Burma
TBC—The Border Consortium
TNLA—Ta’ang National Liberation Army
UHDP—Upland Holistic Development Project
UNHCR—United Nations Refugee Agency
USDP—Union Solidarity and Development Party
US EIA—U.S. Energy Information Administration
UWSA – United Wa State Army
VOC—volatile organic compound
WKA—Waterkeeper Alliance

Notes on Language and Naming

I could have spent an entire chapter on naming and word choice alone in this dissertation. Indeed, scholars have dedicated articles and book sections to it (see Aung-Thwin & Aung-Thwin, 2012; Lamb, 2019). Instead, I briefly lay out here the reason behind certain choices made in this dissertation. Inevitably, in ten years, I will look back on my choices with regret.

There is variability in the Romanization of words translated from Burmese and Shan into English. I have endeavored to be consistent. For simplicity, I have opted to use the Myanmar government's terminology for names and places at state, regional, and national levels. However, where possible for places inside the political boundaries of Shan State, I use Romanized Shan place names. Below I share the specific rationale behind names important to this dissertation:

Myanmar vs. Burma (and other 1989 place name changes)

In 1989 the Myanmar government changed the name of the country from Burma to Myanmar. However, the name Myanmar is not a new one. In the Burmese language *Myanma Pyi* refers to the country, *Myanma lumyo* to the people, and *Myanma saga* to the language. Some records suggest that variations of *Myanma* have been used to refer to the state or country since the twelfth century (Aung-Thwin & Aung-Thwin, 2012, p. 7). In Burmese, *Bama* is a colloquial form of *Myanma*, and can be used interchangeably to describe the country, people, and language. The British adopted 'Burma' as a name for the country in the nineteenth century during British colonial rule. Many academics, journalist, and activists writing in English have rejected the name change to symbolize a rejection of the Myanmar military regime. This is particularly true for people writing about ethnic nationalities. Many of the ethnic nationality groups in the country, such as the Karen or Kachin, aligned themselves with the British and later Americans against the Myanmar military junta and have therefore rejected adopting the 1989 Burmanization of place-names. However, I write mostly about Shan state and the people and organizations I work with use *Myanma* and *Bama* interchangeably. Therefore, I adopt the official Burmese place-names (with a few noted exceptions, listed below). Additionally, I adopt the American academic usage of 'Burman' to refer to the ethno-linguistic group (aka *Myanma lumyo*) and 'Burmese' to refer to the language and the collectivity of peoples, Burman and non-Burman, living within the contemporary nation-state of Myanmar. I use 'Burma' only when referring to the country during the British Colonial period, or when used in quotations. I use common English spellings for well-known places, including Irrawaddy, Ava, Pagan, Pegu, Mandalay, Arakan.

Myanmar military:

I use 'Myanmar military' to refer to both the Myanmar military as an armed institution and as a government regime which currently refers to itself as the State Administrative Council (SAC), but in the past has included General Ne Win's Revolutionary Council, the Burma Socialist Program Party (BSPP), State Law and Order Council (SLORC), and State Peace and Development Council (SPDC). The military as a government regime is also commonly referred to as the

‘Junta’, which I will also occasionally use. Aside from a 10-year period between 1948-1958, a two year period from 1960-1962, and the 10 year period from 2011-2021, the Myanmar military has acted as both State armed group and State government. Prior to the first coup in 1958, I refer to the Myanmar military as what it was called at the time Burma. Independence Army (BIA), Burmese Defense Army (BDA), Burma National Army (BNA) to signal that it was subservient to a civilian government. Unless used in quotes or in the bibliography, I have not used the oft- invoked term, ‘Tatmadaw’ to refer to the military. Tatmadaw is the institution’s self- titled honorific term, meaning the Royal/Great ‘Tat’ (the army). After the February 2021 coup, many Myanmar citizens, in a citizen-led effort to refuse to refer to the military with its honorific title, prefer to use other terms, such as ‘Sit-tat’ (the ‘War army’), instead of the ‘Tatmadaw.’ In this dissertation, I use ‘Myanmar military’ for consistency with recognition and respect for the citizens plural terms for the military and government. I thank Tharapi Than and Elizabeth Rhoads for insights for this note.

Nam Khone River:

Known as the Nam Khone in Shan language, the Thanlwin in Burmese, and Nu Jian in Mandarin, and more internationally as the Thai name, the Salween, this river travers three international boundaries and has names known by many other people groups (Lamb, 2019). In deference to the localized nature of this research, this paper sticks with the Shan naming for the river, the Nam Khone.

Shan:

Despite that fact that in Shan language, Tai is the appropriate Romanization for Shan ethno-linguistic people group and ‘Shan’ is a Burmese word, for legibility I use Shan to refer to the State and people. Unlike the other ethnic states (Karen, Karenni, or Arakan for example, whose names changes for indigenous language references to Burmese names in 1989, Shan state was before and remained Shan state. Tai, in literature also refers to more specifically the ethno-linguistic grouping of people, which is not restricted to Shan state. Within Myanmar Burmans and many of the other ethnic nationalities, including Shan, do not have family names. I therefore cite authors and reference individuals from Myanmar by their full names.

Ethnic Armed Organizations (EOs):

Many different terms have been used to refer to ethnic armed organizations (EOs), including irregular armed forces, insurgent armies, and armed groups. EOs can include non-state armed forces, state-aligned border forces and militia. Arguments have been made against using EOs as it assumes the ethnic makeup and ethno-national political make-up of the group (Ferguson, 2021). I recognized the difficulties of this, but still choose to use EOs to encapsulate the contested, accommodated, and tolerated sovereignty claims between EOs, Myanmar military, and the Myanmar state.

It’s important to note, that although I do use the commonly accepted phrase ethnic armed organizations to describe the vast majority of the armed group movements in Shan State after 1960, even in this first movement, Num Hsük Han reflected the ethnic diversity of Shanland in their rank and file and were not solely made of up ethnic Shan (Ferguson, 2021, p. 75).

Ethnic Nationality:

How people groups choose to self-identify varies, changes overtime, and reflects individual preference. British colonization left a legacy of a new forms of ethnic racism and ethno-nationalism. Prior to colonization, understandings of race and ethnicity differed. In Burmese the term *lumyo* conveyed a meaning of a “type of person” in relation to their social status or class distinction, not language or ethnicity as it does today. When the British census commissioners surveyed the population of the Province of Burma, they focused on different language groups, tying language to race or tribe and ultimately changing the meaning of *lumyo* (Ferguson, 2021, pp. 44-49; Thant-Myint-U, 2001; Winichakul, 1994, pp. 12-16). Today, Myanmar is divided into seven divisions and seven states. The seven states are named for the major ethnic nationalities: Shan, Kayin (Karen), Kayin (Karenni), Mon, and Rakhine (Arakan). Within the eight major nationality groups of Myanmar (including Burman) are 135 officially recognized subgroups (Ferguson, 2021, p. 22). Academics invariably use ‘ethnic minority’, ‘indigenous’, ‘upland peoples’, etc. to refer to these groups. I adopt ethnic nationality, as a more common convention in referring to non-Burman people from Myanmar. When talking about specific groups, like Shan or Pa-Oh, I then use the name and English spelling as has been communicated to me by the people I work with from those communities. Therefore, I use Dara-ang (known as Tasang in Burmese and Paulang in Thai), Pa-Oh (rather than the more commonly spelled Pa-O), Karen (Kayen in Burmese), and Karenni (Kayah in Burmese).

1. Chapter One: Introduction

On February 1, 2021, I casually scrolled through the news on my phone. Headlines shouting “Military Coup Myanmar” jolted me awake. I launched into a mad dash to communicate with my friends and colleagues in the country. Twitter and Facebook feeds of #WhatsHappeninginMyanmar and #Feb1Coup consumed my next weeks. Work all but halted. Checking lists of arrests and fatalities became a daily ritual. A military coup had deposed Myanmar’s elected leaders (see Map 1.1). Any semblance of the democratization and demilitarization within the country since the purported 2011 transition to civilian rule came to a halt. The Myanmar military breached its own 2008 constitution (“Myanmar: Military coup,” 2021; “Dr. Sasa,” 2021). The military justified the coup through claims of election fraud during the November 2020 elections (Thant Myint-U, 2021), claims which independent election monitoring bodies have delegitimized (Sarma & Kapur, 2021). Within weeks, peaceful demonstrations erupted in all corners of the country and thousands of public servants began participating in the Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM). The coup has left Myanmar’s citizens reeling under the physical, emotional, and psychological impacts of not just the COVID-19 pandemic, but also an increase in civil war and guerrilla warfare extending across urban centers and rural peripheries. By May 5, 2021, People’s Defense Forces (PDFs), began fighting back. Nominally supported by the shadow National Unity Government¹ (NUG), PDFs coordinate with allied ethnic armed organizations (EAOs) to respond to Myanmar military attacks (Strangio, 2021). Since the coup, by August 2022, the Myanmar military has killed more than 2,230 people

¹ The NUG represents the 2020 elected Myanmar government in exile.

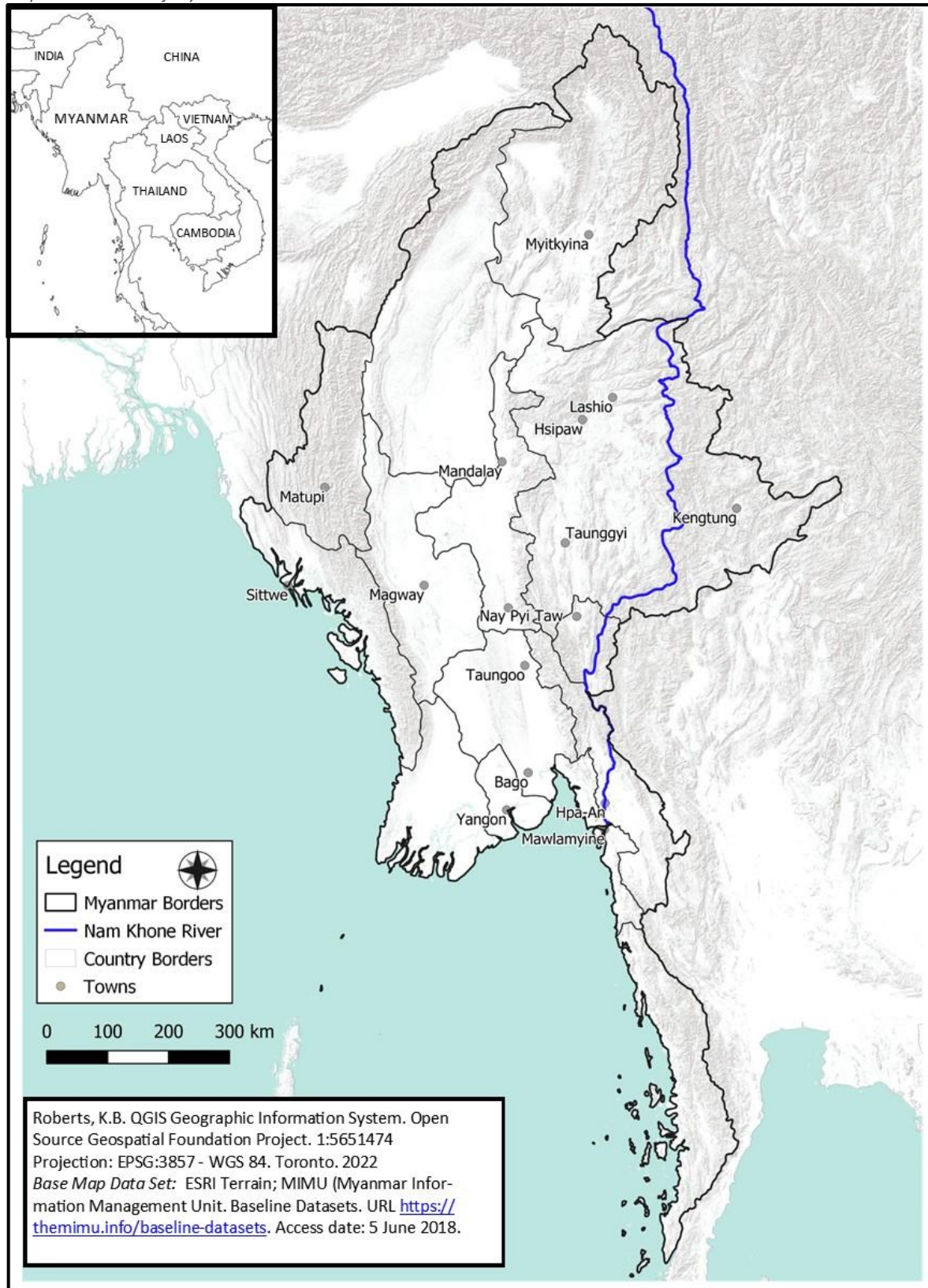
and detained over 15,200 people (Assistance Association for Political Prisoners [AAPP], 2022). Atrocities are being committed around the country, including extrajudicial killings and the destruction of personal property. According to the UNHCR (UNOCH, UNHCR, MIMU, 2022), as of September 5, 2022, due to armed conflict and insecurity since the coup, over 981,000 people have been internally displaced, particularly in the border regions and states. Many activists, politicians, community leaders, and lawyers are in hiding or have fled to neighboring countries. However, in Myanmar's more recent history the 2021 coup and its effects are not novel.

Since independence from Britain in 1948, the military has had a ruling presence in Myanmar. A military caretaker government took control from a civilian government from 1949-50 and a military coup in 1962 led to 49 years of a military dictatorship. Civil wars, economic isolation, displacement, and oppression mark the years of military rule. Ethno-nationalist movements fought against the majority ethnic Burman² military. The State and non-state armed groups relied in part on the extraction and sale of natural resources to fund their operations. In 2011 the country transitioned to a quasi-democratic and quasi-demilitarized system of governance. The Myanmar government forged ceasefire agreements with many armed groups and welcomed international investments, which enabled an increase in natural resource extraction throughout the country. Concurrently, the change from a military dictatorship to democratic governance also increased the ability of national and international social movements to put pressure on the Myanmar government and on companies to adhere to the rule of law in mining, forestry, and energy sectors. The 2021 military coup threatens to

² I adopt the American academic usage of 'Burman' to refer to the ethno-linguistic group (aka *Myanma lmyo*) and 'Burmese' to refer to the language and the collectivity of peoples, Burman and non-Burman, living within the contemporary nation-state of Myanmar.

unravel the gains made in transparency in operations and procedures and destabilize ceasefire agreements made between the various armed groups. Since the coup, international sanctions have pressured some companies to divest and loosen economic ties with the junta (“US adds new,” 2021), while other companies have found new opportunities within the country (Bociaga, 2021). Journalists have reported of an increase in logging and illegal timber trade practices (Cowan, 2021b, 2021c; “Myanmar’s troubled forestry,” 2021). In Tigyit, Shan State, at a resource extraction site important to this dissertation, the *Shan Herald Agency for News* (SHAN) reported on an unlicensed expansion of Tigyit’s open pit coal mine, which occurred amidst the diversion of nationwide protests (“Coal mining,” 2021). Journalists also report concern that the military regime will not listen to the many local and international groups that have called for a suspension of hydropower projects in Myanmar, such as the proposed Mong Ton dam, another site of resource extraction central to *(Re)making Resource Frontiers* (Roney, Kyaw Le Lynn, Bociaga, & Jaffee, 2021).

Map 1.1. Overview of Myanmar and Nam Khone River



This dissertation identifies processes of conflict, displacement, resistance, and resource extraction that occur within resource frontiers in Shan State. I build on Rasmussen and Lund's (2018) special collection on resource frontiers, published in *World Development* and Cons and Eilenberg's (2019) book *Frontier Assemblages: The Emergent Politics of Resource Frontiers in Asia*. I rely on Rasmussen and Lund's (2018) understanding of a resource frontier space as "a zone of destruction of property systems, political structures, social relations, and life-worlds to make way for new ways of resource extraction" (p. 389). Employing Cons and Eilenberg's (2019) analytical lens of a frontier assemblage, which includes the interconnected processes, actors, ecologies, and socio-cultural dynamics that interact to produce places as resource frontiers (p. 2), enables a focus on what happens to resource frontiers when people and ecologies resist, concede, and protest sites of extraction.

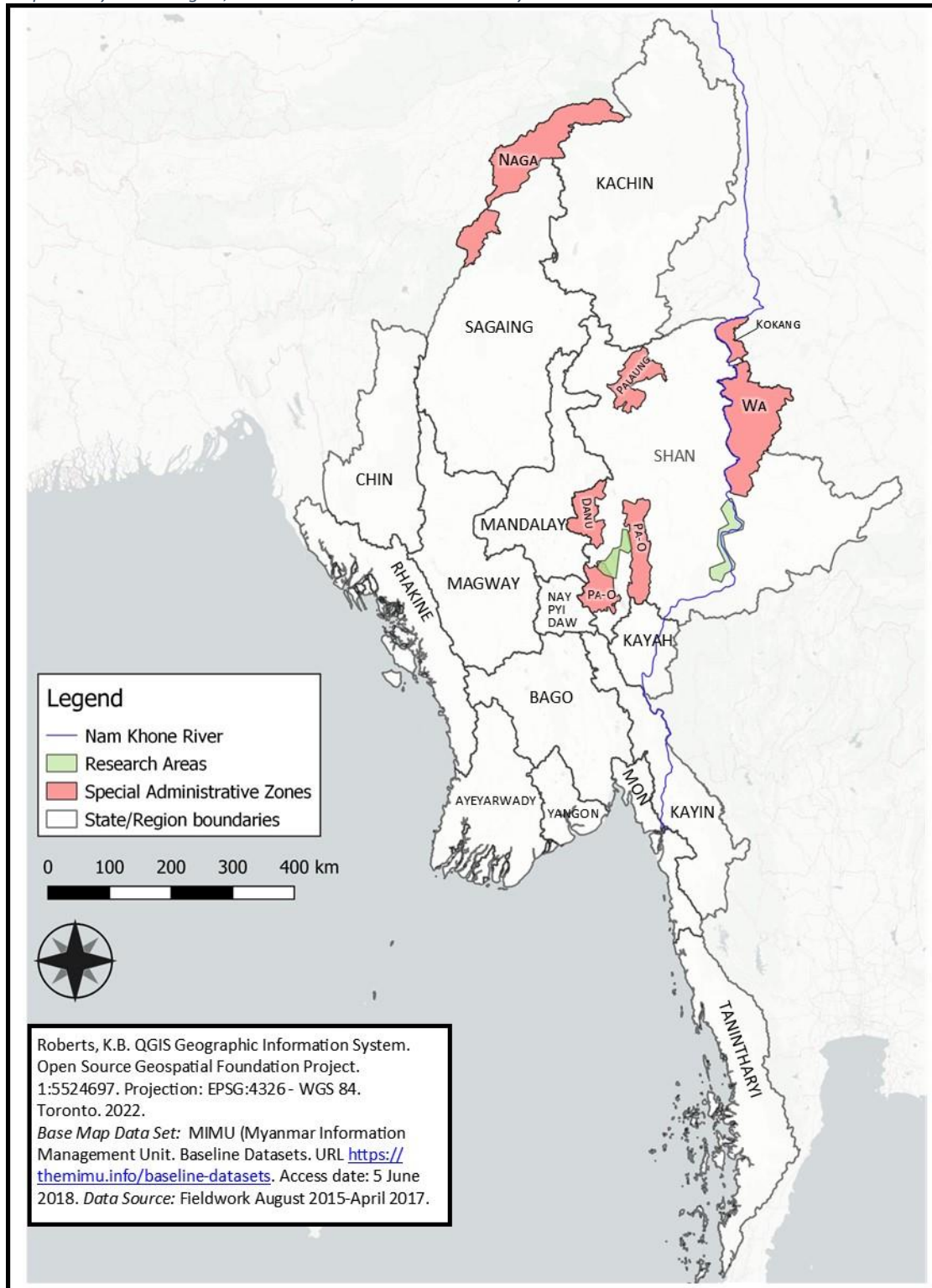
In framing this dissertation through resource frontiers rather than through resource extraction, I emphasize patterns of extraction, state and non-state actors, and processes that destroy previous social and political systems, disregard property and custom, and remake ways of living. I write in conversation with political ecologists in mainland Southeast Asia who have emphasized and dissected the use of land grabs (Hall, 2011; Peluso & Lund, 2011; Schoenberger, Hall, & Vandergeest, 2017; Vandergeest & Peluso, 2006), for the purposes of state-making and capital building (Peluso & Lund, 2011). Extraction sites within frontiers are frequently rendered technical as "for the public good" within development theory discourses (Ferguson, 1995; Li, 2007a; McDonald, Bosshard, & Brewer, 2009; Mitchell, 2002; Scott, 1998; Sneddon, 2015). Neo-extractivism literature has emphasized the role of non-state actors and state-making motivations behind extraction (Burchard & Dietz 2014; Gudynas, 2010). Resource

extraction is a component of and co-constitutes resource frontiers; however, by using the framing of resource frontiers in this dissertation, I can highlight the messy, entangled, friction and interactions that alter the social, political, and legal systems that are remade in resource frontiers.

(Re)making Resource Frontiers is therefore a complement to land grab and extractivism literature. However, from the vantage point of resource frontiers, the land grabs and resource extraction are analyzed as processes within resource frontiers. Resource frontiers attract androcentric assessments: The harsh machinery, the violence of primitive accumulation, and the armed conflict over resource control. By relying on political ecology to analyze resource frontiers, I add the layer of analyzing resource frontiers through lived experiences that pays attention to localized environmental and social costs of resource frontiers. Frontier-making is intimately tied to territorial control and the invention of new resources, processes that repeatedly rework frontier spaces (Cons & Eilenberg, 2019; Peluso, 2018; Rasmussen & Lund, 2018). Yet, as a historical formation, processes of accumulation and territorialization intertwine with violence and capitalist extraction, and as an unfolding process, resource frontiers deeply affect everyday lives. Consequently, I also draw on Tsing's (2003, 2005) argument that resource frontiers are imaginary spaces that are co-constituted through friction, to analyze how frontiers are produced and socially constructed through unequal relationships (see also, Cons & Eilenberg, 2019, p. 394; Rasmussen & Lund 2018; Tsing 2003). In this dissertation I therefore employ resource frontiers as a process that occurs across scales and in space, through material and socially produced interactions between numerous actors and resources (Cons & Eilenberg, 2019; Rasmussen & Lund, 2018). In Myanmar, neighboring states, public and private

corporations, state and non-state militaries, and social movements are (re)making resource frontiers.

Map 1.2. Myanmar Region, State Divisions, and SAZs with Study Areas



1.1 Research Questions

In *(Re)making Resource Frontiers* I ask the overarching question: **How do different interactions between actors and resources remake frontiers in Shan State, Myanmar?** The next few paragraphs explain the importance of this question. Much of the area known today as Shan State (see Map 1.2) is embedded in a historical shatter zone—a space where overlapping territories, translocal trade, and plural authorities have long challenged scholars to rethink traditional conceptions of nation, ethnicity, and sovereignty (Leach, 1960; Scott, 2009; van Schendel, 2002). Implicit in resource frontiers, Shan State’s upland border areas have also long been sites of armed conflict, illicit trade, and capital accumulation among a dizzying array of state and state-like actors (Callahan, 2007; Fiskesjö, 2010; Ong, 2020; Walker, 1999).

Photo 1.1. Teak being transported down the Nam Khone River. Photo Credit: Darrin Magee, 2018.



Multiple empires, colonial powers, state and non-state military groups aggrandize themselves through resource extraction and control (Dean, 2020; Mark, 2016b; Meehan, 2011; Xiaobo, 2018). Teak, once heavily coveted and legislated by colonial British governments (Bryant, 1997; O’Morchoe, 2020), travels across land borders into China, Thailand, and India and leaves on boats bound for Malaysia, Singapore, and Taiwan, as shown in Photo 1.1 (Environmental Impact Agency [EIA], 2019). Where the rivers supply food for thousands, transport teak, and harbor gold, multi-national hydropower projects seek to use Myanmar’s rivers to extract energy to meet the needs of neighboring states, such as Thailand and China (Aung Shin, 2015; Hnin Wut Yee, 2016; Khin Sandar Aye & Khin Khin Htay, 2019; Mar Mar Aye & Swe Swe Win, 2019; Nyein Nyein, 2015; Roberts, 2019).

Shan State’s particular array of resources, strategic territorial location, and fragmented sovereignties provides a powerful case—with added urgency post-coup—of entangled nation- and frontier-making. Within the frontiers, some of Shan State’s resources that kingdoms, imperial powers, and states have coveted for generations include jade, timber, gold, rubies, silver, and opium. Others, such as coal mining, hydropower projects, wildlife trade, and methamphetamines, are more recent arrivals.

New and old resource frontiers often layer atop each other, shaping cumulative landscapes of dispossession. The diverse circulations and iterations of Shan State’s resources, long histories of violence intertwined with nation-building, and recent corresponding spikes in investment and violence provide a particularly rich case to investigate resource frontier processes. In *(Re)making Resource Frontiers*, I focus on the localized histories and everyday violence that follows resource frontiers. As a component of resource frontier processes, I

highlight how social movements and resource extraction projects interact in the wake of violence to remake each other and frontiers. The variegated configurations of the same actors with new resources; new actors with old resources; same places with additional resources; and new places spawn dynamics of resistance, speculation, and extraction, presenting shifting avenues for accumulation and dispossession, thus remaking frontiers.

I rely primarily on political ecology to reflect on what happens to people and ecologies when lived spaces interact with the pushes, lures, violence, and extractions of resource frontiers. In this dissertation, I explore how ‘friction’ and unequal interactions between actors produce and remake resource frontiers. *(Re)making Resource Frontiers* asks how historical relationships and present tensions between actors, resources, and spaces produce resource frontiers in Shan State.

To answer these questions, I ask the following sub-questions:

- How are my methodological choices implicated in shaping the resource frontier?
- How have historical relationships and interactions between actors, sovereignties, resources, and territory produced resource frontiers overtime in Shan State?
- How do resource frontier processes of militarization and resource extraction affect subsistence farmer’s access to the natural resources they depend on for life and livelihood?
- What are the daily and interconnected environmental and life-making effects of living with resource extraction sites?
- How do social movement efforts to restrain, call accountable, and influence resource extraction shape resource frontiers, and in what way do the resource extraction activities within frontiers shape social movements?

In answering these questions *(Re)making Resource Frontiers* advances contemporary scholarship on the relationships between states and non-state territories, social movements, and resource frontiers in an under-studied country and an under-studied region (Faxon, 2021; Kikon, 2019; Lamb et al., 2019; Sarma, 2020; Woods, 2021). I contribute to a growing body of

analysis that demonstrates how specific frontier projects dismantle and recreate social relations, property systems, and nature-society relationships, while leaving ongoing violence and exclusion in their wake (Bluwstein & Lund, 2018; Côte & Korf, 2018; Eilenberg, 2014; Lund, 2011; Peluso, 2018; Peluso & Lund, 2011; Tsing, 2005). Through historicizing resource frontiers in Shan State, I show the interconnected relationships between frontier-making, state-making, and conflict (Ballvé, 2012, 2020; Berman-Arevalo & Ojeda, 2020; Bhagat, 2018; Bhide, 2020; de Leeuw, 2016; Kikon, 2019; Le Billon, 2001; Nixon, 2011; Peluso & Vandergeest, 2011; Piedalue, 2019; Zaragocin, 2019). The arguments in this dissertation help to conceptualize the ways that globally-connected and historically-situated resource frontiers shape sovereignty, war, and access for localized frontier actors; and, in turn, how frontier actors remake nature, nation, and global trade.

1.2 Research Methods

(Re)making Resource Frontiers also contributes to scholarship on knowledge production through my engagement with feminist collaborative methodologies. As I will expand on in Chapter 2, personal politics and travel restrictions motivated the feminist methodological approach used in this research. Regarding travel restrictions, the decades of civil war and conflict between non-state armed groups and the Myanmar military has ramifications for travel on the ground. In the 1960s the junta increased efforts across Myanmar to purge the country of insurgent forces. The Myanmar military divided the country into three zones, colloquially referred to as black, brown, and white zones.³ Much of the research took place in black and

³ The junta created these designations to aid them in strategically clearing the country of EAOs and transforming it to an entirely white zone (Grundy-Warr et al., 1997).

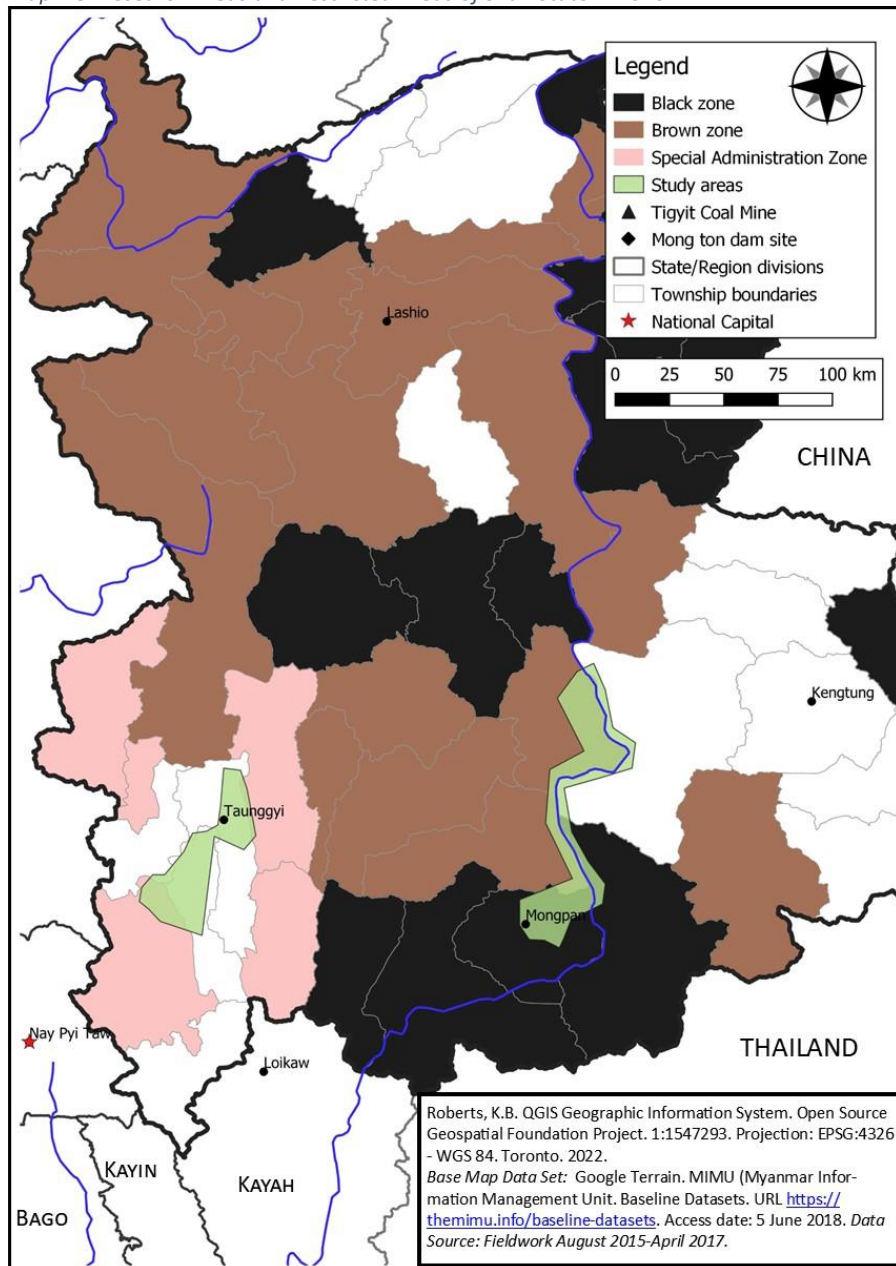
brown zones (see Map 1.3). Black zones represent areas controlled primarily by EAOs⁴. The Myanmar government prohibits travel by people not from that township or village-tract⁵. In brown zones, the Myanmar military and EAOs have overlapping control, often along a countryside/town divide. Travel to those areas requires special permission from the Myanmar government and prohibits overnight stays. White zones, which include most of the major cities and much of the central valley of Myanmar, do not have EAO activity and people can travel freely (Grundy-Warr, Rajah, Elaine, & Ali, 1997).

In tandem with travel restrictions, personal politics also shaped this research. For instance, I could have illicitly traveled into black zones in Shan State. However, for the safety of all research participants, I instead chose to cocreate this research with collaborators who could travel to black and brown zones in Shan State. Before I discuss the conceptual framing for this research, I will first provide an overview of the research methods and sites. Between January 2015 to April 2018 the research team, which included myself and my collaborators, conducted 64 semi-structured interviews and 17 key informant interviews in seven communities and 55 key informant interviews and meetings with civil society organizations (CSOs) and non-government organizations (NGOs). Six of the seven communities are within conflict areas in Myanmar (see Map 1.3). Off-site data collection also included literature reviews on the relevant topics of land and water policies and laws, newspaper articles, and grey documents from State and non-state institutions.

⁴ Many different terms have been used to refer to ethnic armed organizations (EAOs). Irregular armed forces, insurgent armies, armed groups EAOs can include non-state armed forces, state-aligned border forces and militia.

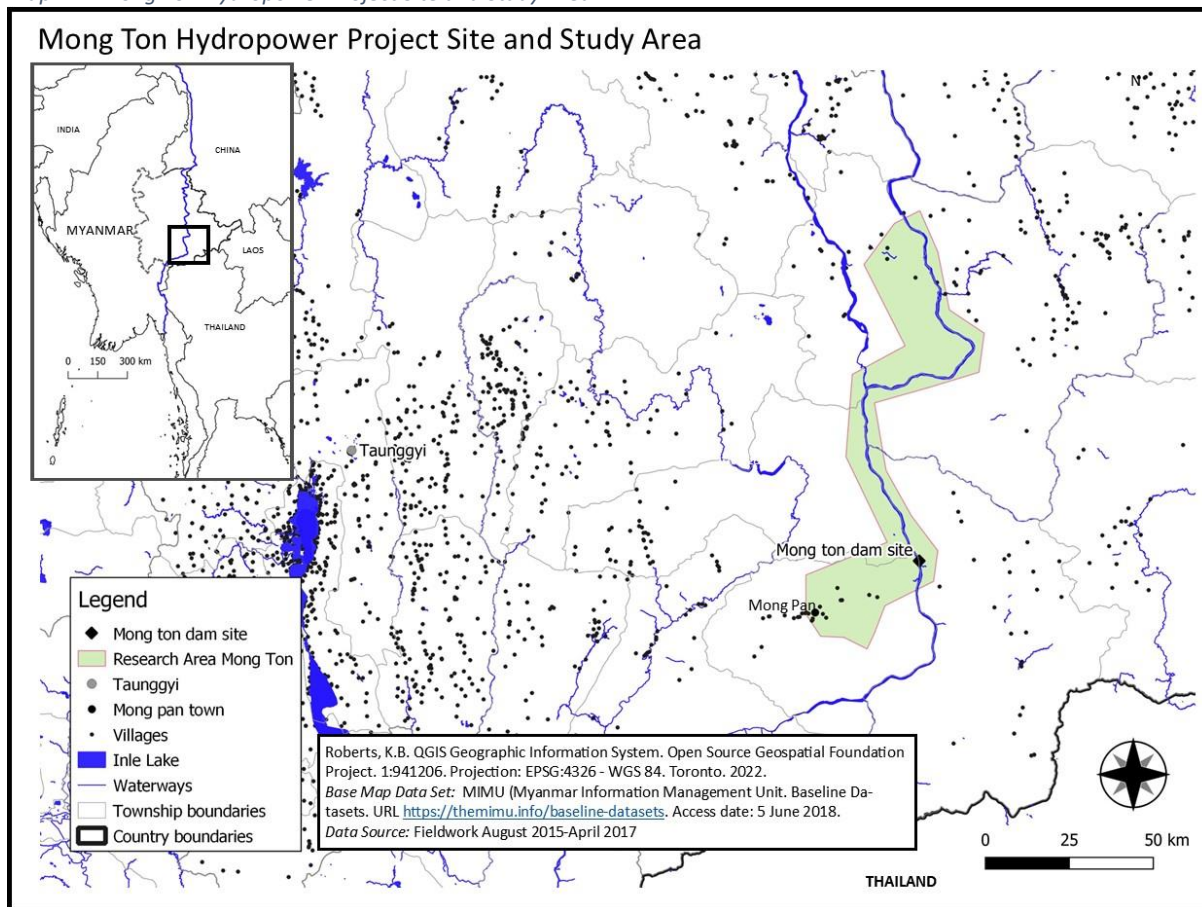
⁵ Administrative sub-divisions in Myanmar include first State or Division. Then district, then township, ward of village tract, then village at the bottom (Roberts, forthcoming)

Map 1.3. Research Areas and Restricted Areas of Shan State in 2016



The research centered on two primary sites of resource extraction in Shan State: the proposed Mong Ton Dam and Tigyit Coal Mine and Coal-Fired Power Plant (see Map 1.4 and Map 1.5). As I expand on in Chapter 4, between 1996-1998, the Myanmar military forcibly relocated nearly 300,000 people in central Shan State. The depopulation of the area cleared the way for new opportunities for accumulation and extraction, including the Mong Ton dam.

Map 1.4. Mong Ton Hydropower Project Site and Study Area



The Mong Ton dam is one of five hydropower projects that have been proposed along the undammed Nam Khone River in Shan State, Myanmar. The Nam Khone River is one of the longest undammed rivers in Southeast Asia (Fawthrop, 2016). Planning for Mong Ton dam began prior to the democratization process in Myanmar, during the military regime in the 1980s and 1990s. On the eve of the 2010 election, the Chinese Three Gorge's Corporation, the Electricity Generating Authority of Thailand (EGAT) and the Myanmar Ministry of Electric Power (MMOEP) signed a transnational agreement over the proposed dam. Formerly known as the Tasang dam, the Mong Ton dam is set to be the largest dam in Southeast Asia, with a reservoir that would

impact an estimated 12,000 to over 120,000 people⁶ (International Rivers, 2012; Salween Watch, 2016; Maung, 2016). As I will discuss in Chapter 6, while the dam has not yet been built, the project has been a catalyst for the creation of some CSOs and the formation of an active “No Dam” resistance movement within Shan State. Additionally, as I discuss in Chapter 4, the dam has already disrupted the lives of people living near the proposed construction site, due to ongoing feasibility studies, logging around the dam site, and “pre-dam” construction projects (see Photo 1.2).

Photo 1.2. Construction at Mong Ton Dam Site on Nam Khone River

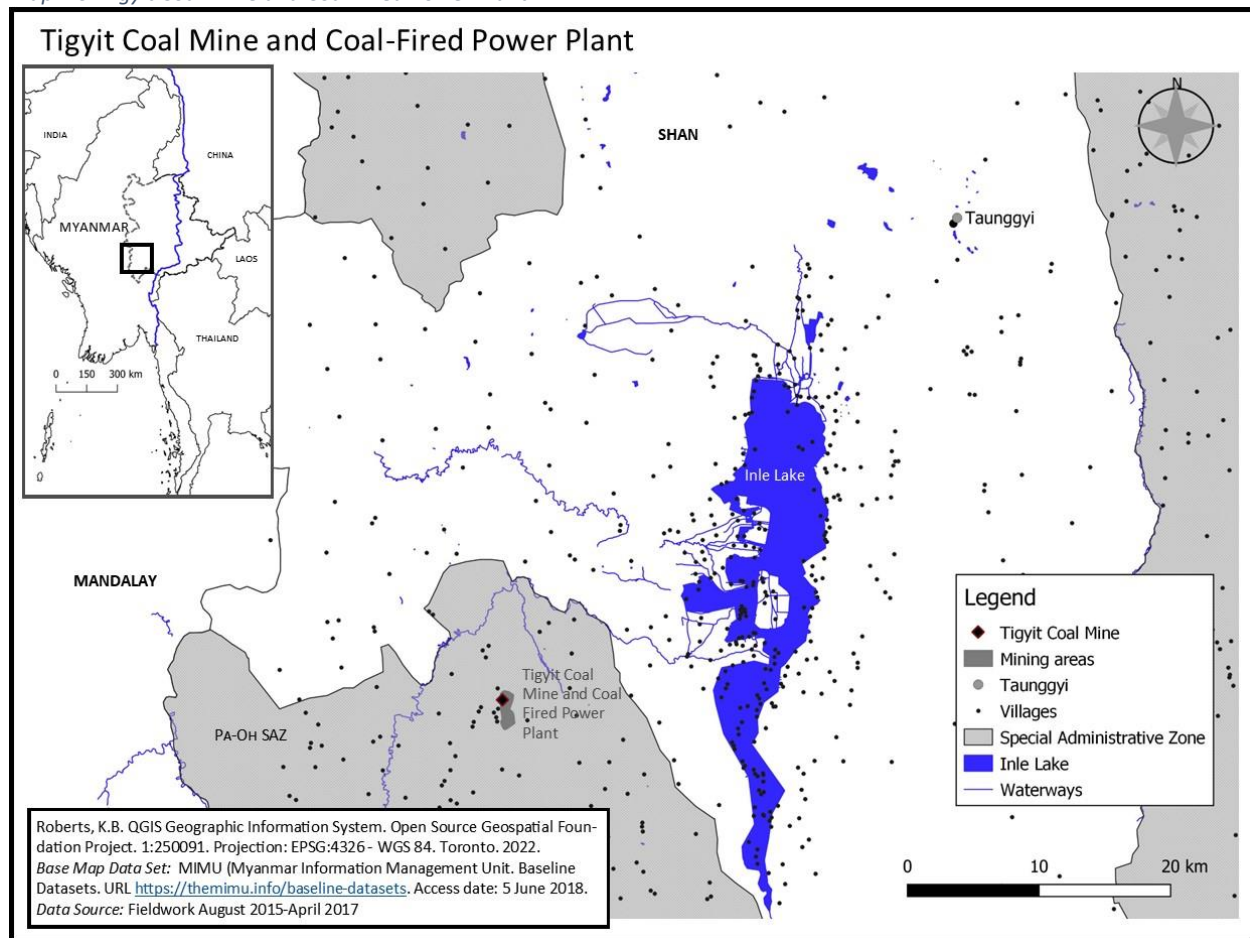


Photo Credit: Research team, 2016

⁶ Discrepancy between these numbers lies in the difference between pro-dam and anti-dam information notices.

Tigyit coal mine and power plant is in Pinlaung Township, within a Pa-Oh Special Administration Zone (SAZ) in Shan State (see Map 1.5). The open pit and underground coal mine is the largest in Myanmar (EJAtlas Southeast Asia Team, n.d.; Students and Youth Congress of Burma, 2018) and produces between 1750-2000 tons of lignite coal daily, much of which supplies the power plant (Pa-Oh Youth Organizataion [PYO], 2011; Kristanavarin & Vrieze, 2015). As discussed in Chapter 5, communities and CSOs connect the mine and power plant to a comprehensive violence that restricts access to education, health, livelihoods, religion, and ecosystem services. Like Mong Ton, Tigyit coal mine has spawned a resistance movement inside Shan State's civil society, bringing CSOs with disparate operational objectives together under a common goal (see Chapter 6).

Map 1.5. Tigyt Coal Mine and Coal-Fired Power Plant



1.3 Re)making Resource Frontiers: Conceptual Overview⁷:

To understand how frontiers come to life in local construction, contestation, and co-production of space and actors, I build on recent scholarship on resource frontiers and a tradition of political ecology. Below, I provide an overview of resource frontiers literature, before explaining specific political ecology literature I use to frame concepts of sovereignty,

⁷ The framing I use around resource frontiers stems from an editorial collaboration with Jasnea Sarma and Hilary Faxon (Sarma, Faxon, & Roberts, 2022). Sarma, Faxon and I assembled a collection that brought together new research from early and mid-career scholars who had spent substantial time conducting fieldwork in and beyond Myanmar over the last decade of the country's self-styled post-authoritarian transition. We settled on the two themes of remaking and living with resource frontiers. Below, I include paraphrased excerpts from the history and literature review sections of the article where I was the primary author.

territorialization, access, and violence to discuss the mechanisms and pathways that produce resource frontiers.

Barney (2009) notes that frontiers are simultaneously a legitimating ideology and a critical conceptual framework. Colonial, religious, and masculinist expansions characterized by looting, commodifying, and converting indigenous populations shape resource frontiers (Anzaldúa, 1987). The ideology of frontiers has been employed in the classic case of Turner's (1996/1920) frontier thesis, in which white, male settlers had the right and duty to tame and order a 'vacant and fallow wilderness' of Native American territories. This ideology has also been used in contemporary framings of Myanmar as a 'golden land' ready and waiting for international investment (Faxon, 2021). I recognize the ways in which Myanmar's frontier status replicates troubling patterns of improvement and nation-building (Li, 2007; Mitchell, 2002; Ferguson, 1994), even as I use frontiers to highlight ongoing violence, enclosure, and erasure during a period (2011-2020) embedded with discourses of peace, democracy, and development.

1.3.1 Political Ecology Framing of Resource Frontiers

I draw on political ecology to examine resource frontiers through the lens of interactions among humans and non-humans—dualistically often called society-nature relations. As a practice, political ecology analyzes forms of access, governance, and control over resources, with an eye towards sustainable and equitable environmental and livelihood practices (Blaikie & Brookfield, 1987; Peluso & Watts, 2001; Robbins, 2004; Zimmerer, 1996). Political ecologists, particularly in Southeast Asia, have emphasized and dissected the use of land grabs to create extractive spaces and reconfigured land tenure arrangements (Hall, 2011; Peluso & Lund 2011;

Schoenberger, Hall, & Vandergeest 2017, Vandergeest & Peluso 2006). Often violent means enable the land grabs (Corbera, Hunsberger, & Vaddhanaphuti, 2017; Le Billon 2000, 2001; Peluso & Watts 2001; Peluso & Vandergeest 2011), for the purposes of state-making, capital building, and ostensibly 'development' (Li, 2007; Mitchel, 2002; Peluso & Lund, 2011). Theories of violent enclosures and environments (Thompson, 1975; Le Billon, 2000, 2001; Peluso & Watts; 2001) as well as territorialization through racialization (Bryant, 1996; Vandergeest, 2003; Sturgeon et al., 2013; Nayak, 2005) help to illuminate Myanmar's particular history of dispossession. Vandergeest (2003, p. 21) describes racialization as the use of ethnic differences for discriminatory practices. This involves essentializing ethnic and national differences (Sturgeon, et al., 2013, p. 55). In Myanmar, a key example of this can be seen in the exclusionary use of the legal concept and militarized enforcement of 'Waste Lands' throughout colonial and post-colonial regimes that categorized lowland agricultural practices, but ignored upland shifting agricultural practices as valid forms of agriculture and instead categorized those spaces as 'waste lands' (Ferguson, 2014).

Local use and dependence on natural resources can both run counter to and support 'state-making' and economic strategic plans (Kikon, 2019). For many, resource frontiers are an urgent and intimate concern that influences their everyday lives. Frontiers in Myanmar thus also invite investigations through the lens of situated knowledge and feminist political ecologies. This dissertation is not a feminist project; however, it does reflect a feminist epistemology. Incorporating a feminist lens into resource frontiers highlights the ways in which geopolitics cross scales and manifest in embodied experience and everyday life (Dowler & Sharp 2001; Hyndman, 2004, 2019; Koopman, 2011; Massaro & Williams, 2013; Sundberg,

2003). I situate resource frontiers in the context of the larger geopolitical, socio-economic, and historic layers in which they take shape. Yet, by employing feminist methodologies to investigate socially constructed nature/society relationships, I show how violence is enacted through daily lived experiences within resource frontiers (Bakker & Bridge, 2006; Castree, 2000; Enns & Sneyd, 2020; Jasanoff, 2004). Resurrección and Elmhirst (2020) write that “a defining feature of feminist political ecology (FPE) is that it interrogates power around knowledge production and the positionality of the knower in a world divided in intersecting ways along lines of gender, class, social status, and age” (p. 42). As I will expand on in Chapter 2, I draw on feminist and postcolonial insights into power, knowledge-production, and intersectionality in how I approached research design (Mohanty, 1988, 2002; Guranai & Vandergeest 2014, Faria & Mollet 2016; Mollet & Faria 2018; Resurrección & Elmhirst, 2020). In doing so, I incorporate insights from feminist political ecologies to show how resource frontier processes occur at multiple scales, including the intimate, the mundane, and the everyday (Dowler & Sharp, 2001; Hyndman, 2004, 2019; Koopman, 2011; Massaro & Williams, 2013; Mollett & Faria, 2018; Williams & Massaro, 2013).

My research contributes to recent literature about Myanmar that includes an agentive understanding of people’s encounters within the confines of militarized frontier capitalism. These works show how justice and legality (Roberts & Rhoads, 2021), *de facto* agreements (Chambers, 2019; Chang, Tagliacozzo, & Sadan, 2014; Faxon, 2021; Hedström & Olivius 2020; Hong, 2017; Sarma, 2020, 2021), and racialized narratives (Yoni, 2021) can shape what it means to live with resource frontiers. They also show how large-scale timber (Mar Mar Aye & Swe Swe Win, 2019), fisheries (Cherry Aung, 2019), and hydropower (Hnin Wut Yee, 2016) activities

along the Nam Khone River restrict the everyday welfare and livelihoods for people living alongside the industries. New investments into Myanmar's resource frontiers also includes new actors, including transnational corporations and government officials. Inside Myanmar, however, these new actors also include people operating within formal and informal social movements resisting the environmental degradation and diminished socio-economic activities some experience in living with resource frontiers (Aung, 2018; Kiik, 2020). Studies on youth groups, political prisoners, and ethnic organizations have shown how social movements come to play important parts in such resistance (Fink & Simpson, 2018; Suhardiman, Kenney-Lazar, & Meinzen-Dick, 2019).

The actions of actors within social movements play a key role in how resource frontiers are articulated. More recent scholarship on resource frontiers has emphasized that the producers of, and actors in, resource frontiers are not just nation-states, but instead include landscapes, individuals, communities, non-state institutions, and national and transnational corporations (Barney, 2009; Cons & Eilenberg, 2019; Hall, 2012; Lund, 2011; Rasmussen & Lund, 2018; Peluso, 2017). While frequently discussed and categorized as wilderness/wastelands, unruly and uncivilized, and a necessary step for capitalist development, frontiers

are spaces within which a multiplicity of interests and forms of rule accumulate and overlap to produce spaces that are anything but unruly, even if they may fail to cohere to state, corporate, transnational agencies or other sovereigns' logics of legibility, order, and control. (Eilenberg & Cons 2018, p. 15)

Embedded in place-specific ecologies and specific histories; determined by resources with specific mobilities and materialities, local and foreign individuals, civil society, non-government organizations, state and non-state militaries collide to produce resource frontiers (see Sarma, Faxon, & Roberts, 2022). These state, non-state, and non-human actors form complex and

dynamic assemblages (Ballvé, 2020; Barney, 2009; Cons & Eilenberg, 2019; Lund, 2011, Rocheleau, 2015; Tsing, 2005). I build on Cons and Eilenberg's (2019) definition of "frontier assemblage" as a descriptive term and as an analytical device to understand the intertwined processes, actors, and mechanisms that generate specific places as resource frontiers (p. 2). Resource frontiers take shape in processes that occur in the frictions and interactions within the frontier assemblage. In *(Re)making Resource Frontiers* I therefore analyze frontiers as a process that occurs through an assemblage of actors and that is produced through change, friction, and relationship (Barney, 2009; Tsing, 2005). The unequal relationships that flow between the different actors as they accept and resist each other, produce resource frontiers that take place in space (Ballvé, 2012; Cons & Eilenberg, 2019, p. 394; Rasmussen & Lund, 2018; Tsing, 2003).

I utilize resource frontiers to frame the arguments in this dissertation because they draw attention to the historicized and globally-connected nature of resource extraction, while also illuminating the ways in which frontiers remake lives and livelihoods. To discuss the connection between frontier-building capitalist projects and nation-building projects, I rely on framing around sovereignty. Below I describe in greater details concepts from political ecology, including sovereignty, territorialization, access, and violence to show how resource frontier processes are tied to territorial projects.

1.3.2 Sovereignty, territorialization, access, and violence

Within Myanmar, there is a plurality of sovereignties and a hierarchy among them. Shan State's resource frontiers are particularly complex, in part because of the fragmentations of power and sovereignty that have shaped Myanmar and Shan State and have been perpetuated

within the modern nation-state (Dean, 2020; Callahan, 2009; Jones 2014a; Mark, 2016b; Sai Aung Tun, 2009; Xiaobo, 2018). I rely on political ecology, particularly those authors who focus on mainland Southeast Asia, to understand sovereignty. McCreary and Lamb (2014) write about sovereignty from a political ecology perspective, to outline how a sovereign is produced and enacted from below. I recognize sovereignty as the exercise of control over territory and political subjects, which can come from a dispersal of state and state-aligned interests, as well as from non-state entities working in concert with and in conflict with the state (Lund, 2011, p. 887). For Shan State, however, this is an incomplete understanding of sovereignties. For centuries, the uplands of Shan State were divided into Statelets and governed by princes, or *sao hpa*⁸. These *sao hpa* periodically paid tribute to the more powerful lowland kingdoms. During colonialism this system was retained, yet after independence the nascent Myanmar government disbanded the *sao hpa* system and in its place rose state and non-state actors, including the Myanmar military, EAOs, and the Myanmar government. Each of these actors has state-like power. These sovereigns govern through coercion, violence, and policy.

In this dissertation, I use the concept of fragmented sovereignty, to refer not to the fragmentation of a cohesive whole, but rather to a range of institutions competing for control over political subjects across territory (Lund, 2011, p. 887; Mark, 2016b). I also rely on Gazit's (2009) definition of fragmented sovereignty as "multiple, localized, and temporal cores of political power" (p. 84) as this approach recognizes the role of non-state militaries (Davies, 2010) in producing internal territorial-based sovereignty, that is separate from, but still existing

⁸ *Sao hpa* is the Shan word for hereditary chiefs, meaning "Lord of the skies" (Buchanan, 2017, p. 5). I expand on the role of *sao hpa* in Shan State history in Chapter 3.

within, the internationally recognized nation-state of Myanmar (Agnew, 2005, p. 442; Gazit, 2009; Mountz, 2013; Xiaobo, 2018, p. 23). Fragmented sovereignty, as I use it, does not focus on how these institutions reproduce Myanmar's nation-state sovereignty, but rather how they, in and of themselves, are sovereignties that shape resource frontiers. This definition reflects better the history of sovereignty in Shan State and greater Shanland. Resource frontier spaces frequently overlap with conflict over sovereignty (see Ballvé, 2020; Cote & Korf, 2018; Watts, 2018). To better draw out the processes that produce resources frontiers, I therefore historicize how sovereignty has been produced in Shan State. This framing helps me make the arguments in chapters 3 and 4, that fragmented sovereignties, in their divergent claims over control of space and subjects, contribute to the production of resource frontiers.

Through interconnected systems of ethnicity, territorialization, and capitalism as means of control and power, fragmented sovereignties in Shan State form the scaffolding that produces resource frontiers⁹. To analyze the friction that occurs within the frontier assemblage of actors, I rely on a political ecology framing around access and territorialization.

Territorialization involves the active inclusion or exclusion of people through defining a geographical space, defining resource use, and defining the resource users (Corson, 2011; Vandergeest & Peluso, 1995). Within Myanmar, internal territorialization efforts by ethnic majority Burman in upland ethnic minority areas represent a form of internal colonization. Internal colonization frequently masks the racial and cultural processes and the structural effects of capitalism in frontier zones on ethnic minority populations under the guise of “civilizing” missions (Ballvé, 2020, p. 18; Bernauer, 2019; Nixon, 2011, p. 91; Scott, 1998, p. 82;

⁹ In Chapters 5 and 6 I expand on the role of violence and the assemblage of actors in producing resource frontiers.

Ybarra, 2012). Racialized discourses strengthen these territorialization efforts (Anthias & Yuval-Davis, 1992; Faria & Mollet, 2016; Mollet, 2017; Mollet & Faria, 2013; Nayak, 2005; Sturgeon et al., 2013; Vandergeest, 2003). As I will expand on in Chapter 3, a policy of “Burmanization” began in the 1960s, advancing a Burman centered Buddhist nationalist identity, colonizing both land and peoples (Bennett & Faxon, 2020; Cockett, 2015; Dean, 2020; Sarma & Sidaway, 2019, Walton, 2013).

The internal colonization of ethnic minority populations by ethnic majority Burmans affect how people interact with natural resources. I rely on Ribot and Peluso’s (2003) framing of access to understand how the linked processes of territorialization and sovereignty, through militarization and capitalist expansion, shape people’s *de facto* access to resources. Ribot and Peluso (2003) define access as “the ability to benefit from things—including material objects, persons, institutions, and symbols” (p. 153). Defining access as “the ability to derive benefits” from resources enables the effects of territorialization to extend beyond property relations to include social relationships, access to individual species, cultural relationships, and other life and world-making benefits (Bhagat, 2018; Elmhirst, 2011b; Ribot, 1998; Ribot & Peluso, 2003, pp. 153-154; Sturgeon, 2004). The processes and pathways that determine access represent grabs for increased territorialization and for a source of revenue, often at the expense of communities who depend on those resources (Ferguson, 1995; Hengsuwan, 2013; Koubi, Spilker, Bohmelt, & Bernauer, 2014; McCreary & Lamb, 2014; Mitchell, 2002; Peluso & Vandergeest, 2011; Scott, 1998).

Ribot and Peluso’s (2003) framing of access also contributes to my understanding of violence. Le Billon (2001) writes about how violence can be expressed in “the subjugation of the

rights of people to determine the use of their environment and the brutal patterns of resource extraction and predation”(p. 561). In this sense, activities within resource frontiers enact violence not only through armed conflict, but by restricting people’s access to and use of those same spaces (Roberts, 2019). Galtung (1969), in a broad definition, defined violence “as the cause of the difference between the potential and the actual, between what could have been and what is” (p. 68). Resource frontier violence is rooted in the effects and side-effects of dispossession and accumulation that alter socio-ecological relationships and diminish potential life and world-making benefits from natural resources.

In interpreting violence broadly through the schism of what could be and what is, and through the loss in the ability to benefit, I examine, not just the immediate effects of resource extraction projects, but the slow violence the projects produce as well (Nixon, 2011). I use the phrase ‘everyday violence’ to highlight the ways in which resource frontiers take place through points of contact, or ‘friction’, and are experienced in the everyday (Tsing, 2005). Geographers use the phrase ‘everyday violence’ to discuss the spatially connected and day-to-day, embodied aspects of violence as experienced through forced migration (Bhagat, 2018), the politics of global terrorism (Bhide, 2020), colonial legacies (de Leeuw, 2016), and port economies (Jenss, 2020). I contribute to discussions of everyday violence by also drawing on the works of anthropologists (Kikon, 2019), geographers (Berman-Arevalo & Ojeda, 2020; Zaragocin, 2019), and political ecologists (Nixon, 2011) to show how violence is experienced in the spaces and bodies of people living with resource extraction (Berman-Arevalo & Ojeda, 2020; Zaragocin, 2019). Everyday violence incorporates a feminist lens that emphasizes the diverse mechanisms through which violence occurs and the many impacts on day-to-day life.

1.4 Organization of the dissertation

In Chapter 2, “Conducting Research in Collaboration” I outline how I used grounded feminist collaborative methods to distribute agency among the research team. I discuss how my personal politics motivated the research approach and analyze how I co-created research methods with a team of researchers. I explain the research methods used and end the chapter with a discussion on co-created research limitations.

In Chapter 3, “Fragmented Sovereignities and Shanland,” I present a historical analysis of how sovereignities and resource extraction have changed in Shan State from pre-colonial times to 1988. I include a discussion of resource frontier practices over time in relation to uneven fragmented sovereignities in Shan State. I link the processes of territorialization in the historic production of resource frontiers.

Chapter 4, “Displacement, ceasefires, and natural resource access” continues where Chapter 3 stopped, starting with the final military junta regime in 1988 and the effects of military strategy in 1996-1998 that forcibly displaced villagers in the research area. This chapter examines how displacement, environmental degradation, and ceasefire agreements within resource frontiers affect villager’s ability to access natural resources. This chapter draws in part on my chapter “Powers of Access: Impacts on Resource Users and Researchers in Myanmar’s Shan State,” published in *Knowing the Salween River* (Middleton & Lamb, 2019, pp. 205-221) and a chapter “Shifting cultivation creating social-ecological resilience against climate and political uncertainty in Myanmar” to be published in *Farmer Innovations and Best Practices by Shifting Cultivators in Asia-Pacific* (Cairns, M. (Ed.)).

Next, I discuss in Chapter 5, “Everyday violence: Tigyit Coal Mine and Coal-Fired Power plant in Shan State, Myanmar,” how everyday violences stem from the material effects of building and operating resource extraction sites, and the structural impacts of the policies, practices, and neglect that enable their operation. While conceived of as a core chapter in *(Re)making Resource Frontiers*, Chapter 5 was co-written with my research partner Nang Mai, and appears in *Geoforum* (2021, 124, pp. 392-399) as part of a special issue “Violent atmospheres: Political ecologies of livelihoods and crises in Southeast Asia” (Mostafanezhad & Dressler, 2021). This chapter highlights the role of everyday violence in resource extraction and offers a grounded perspective that looks at the daily, accumulating, and interconnected environmental and life-making impacts from extractive industries.

In Chapter 6, “Production and protest: Resource frontiers in south Shan state” I examine how social movements and resource extraction activities co-constitute each other and produce frontiers. I show how social movements are not only created through resource frontier activities, but are essential to the production of resource frontiers. Drawing on interviews and collaborative research, I examine the roles of resource extractors and CSOs in shaping the economies and politics of coal and hydropower. This chapter was conceived as an article for *Geopolitics* and is currently under review.

In the final chapter, chapter 7 “Conclusions and Coups,” I revisit the arguments from the previous chapters and limitations of the research. I end with a reflection on the February 1, 2021 coup and its impact on the research sites and its relevance to the arguments made in *(Re)making Resource Frontiers*.

2 Chapter Two: Conducting Research in Collaboration

I first began working with undocumented migrants from Shan State in 2007. For nearly two years, I lived just 17 km from the Myanmar border in rural northern Thailand, at the small farm agroforestry research center Upland Holistic Development Project (UHDP) (see Map 2.1). UHDP staff worked in material ways, including through setting up water systems, obtaining ID cards for villagers, and mapping community forests; yet all of this work was laden in racialized and gendered politics. In the evenings at the center, I would eat dinner with my colleagues and their families, delighting in the varieties of *nam prik* (spicy paste) to lather on the forest-to-table dishes and listening to the mixture of Thai, Kham Mueang (Northern Thai), Karen, Dara'ang, and Lahu words. I observed the comradery, but also the hierarchy among my friends. In Thailand, ethnic majority Tai have more rights and power than non-Tai, and non-Tai are frequently racialized as backward, primitive, and as forest destroyers (Ayuttacorn, 2019; Wittayapak, 2008). At UHDP, I also observed a subtle power dynamic embedded in racism. While my co-workers experienced discrimination from their northern Tai neighbors, within UHDP, everyday conversations and decisions reflected a racialized hierarchy of power and authority, with Thai-Karen at the top, followed by Thai-Lahu, then Burmese-Lahu, then Ahka, and then Dara'ang. I watched gender discrimination prevent my female Lahu colleague from working within her own Lahu communities, while I, as a white, western educated female, was able to work with alongside all-male committees.

I start with this personal history to highlight my primary motivation for using grounded feminist collaborative methods to design this research. While access challenges and conflict dictated the research parameters, the implications of racial politics drove the approach. My

experiences while working in the uplands of Southeast Asia showed me how gendered and racialized histories shape who produces knowledge. Understanding gendered and racialized modes of past and present knowledge production can help minimize tendencies to reduce people to racialized tropes and can show how history influences and creates identities (Chakrabarty, 2008; Mohanty, 2002).

2.1 Methodology

This chapter's purpose is to illuminate the epistemology behind the research design choices and to then outline the specifics of the research process and the limitations of the choices. I drew on feminist geography and feminist political ecology to design a research approach that acknowledged uneven relationships and enabled some redistribution of power among the research team (Elmhirst, 2011a; Faria & Mollet, 2016; Mollet & Faria, 2013; Nightingale, 2011; Sharp, 2005). Feminist geography actively challenges existing ways of knowing, being, and doing research (Moss, 1993, p. 49) and has long called attention to the gendered and hierarchical nature of space and place-making (Moss & Al-Hindi, 2008), creating an entry point to accommodate and analyze differences of identity among research participants (see e.g., Crenshaw, 1989; Faria & Mollett, 2016; McKittrick & Peake, 2005; Visweswaran, 1997). Feminist political ecology further interrogates how differences of class, ethnicity, ethnic nationalism, and racialized identities shape natural resource struggles across scale (Elmhirst, 2011, Mollet & Faria, 2013, p. 116; Nightingale, 2011). In relation to the resource frontier, this becomes a question of not just how interactions and frictions between differences in society impact the making of the frontier, but how the uneven power between those differences influences knowledge production. Feminist political ecologists Mollet and Faria (2013)

encourage a postcolonial intersectionality to acknowledge not just those differences, but the power of those differences and the histories that construct those differences.

2.1.1 From feminist theory to praxis

Theories and ideas do not exist in a vacuum. The theoretical framing for critical feminist research and the specific methods I sought to utilize evolved alongside collaborations with colleagues Sarah Allen, Jasnea Sarma, and Hilary Faxon, as part of our *What the Feminist?* collective. We first started working together in 2016, to challenge ourselves and other like-minded early career scholars to operationalize the feminist theories we had studied throughout the entire life-cycle¹⁰ of a research project. As a collective, we define critical feminist research as rigorous, theoretically-informed empirical investigations that systematically challenge assumptions of power and agency while creatively experimenting with new questions, designs, methods, and representations, in order to bring forward and amplify conditions that create non-dominant experiences. We see feminist methods as coexisting and working in liaison with other critical methodological traditions, including Marxism, decolonialism, poststructuralism, new historicism, literary criticism, and subaltern standpoints, among others (Bhavnani, Chua, & Collins, 2014; Cho, Crenshaw, & McCall, 2013). A challenge exists, however, in putting these theories to work throughout the research process. We have identified four core feminist concepts and practices that draw on feminist and postcolonial concepts such as

¹⁰ The life-cycle of research conceptualizes research starting with design, to data collection, to analysis to writing, to re-formulating is itself a feminist and generative stance, one that emphasizes active curiosity and ongoing reflection and reciprocity in multiple forms, allowing the researcher to cultivate awareness of their positionality and generate more interesting and accurate insights.

intersectionality, reflexivity, and historicizing (Anthias & Davis 1993; Bhavnani et al., 2014; Gururani, 2002; hooks, 1984; Mohanty, 1988; Radcliffe, 1996; Rocheleau, 2015).

1. Acknowledge and enable co-creation and meaningful collaboration.
2. Situate yourself, your collaborators and your research. This involves historicizing and identifying privileged, gendered, and racialized modes of past and present knowledge production.
3. Cultivate reflexivity at all stages of research.
4. Maintain adaptive and grounded approaches to research design and methods.

Each of these principles, in and of itself, are not exclusively 'feminist,' however, we argue that employing them holistically throughout the entire life-cycle of a research project provides a rough guide to turning feminist theory into practice. I relied on these tenets as a guidepost in my research approach, which I phrase as grounded collaborative feminist methods. Below, I outline how these concepts guided my empirical research project.

First and foremost, I designed this research project to enable collaborations and co-creation. The term 'the field' is a euro-western-centric idea used to downplay, negate, or normalize research collaborations while the researcher assumes power over the researched and local research team (Hyndman, 2001). Co-creation is a form of collaboration that moves beyond the hiring of other humans or acknowledging the positionality of people you speak with. Co-creation involves active and acknowledged 'creating' within the research project and can work toward redistributing agency within research decisions (Berry & Gururani, 2014; Bondi, 2003; Sharp, 2005). This can include collaborators creating and asking interview questions, managing data collection activities, and playing a key role in guiding and leading inquiries for a project (Berry & Gururani, 2014; Caretta, 2015; Nagar, 2002; Smith, 2012).. Feminist collaborative methods helps to remove control of the research project from the hands of one individual and instead partnering with a diversity of individuals and organizations (Faria

& Mollett 2016; Kobayashi & Peake, 1994; Li, 2007; McDonald, 2013; Nagar 2002; Nightingale, 2003; Sharp, 2009). As I demonstrate below, in *(Re)making Resource Frontiers*, I relied on collaboration and co-creation with civil society organizations (CSOs) and local researchers. I use the phrase research partner, rather than research assistant, to convey the level of co-creation in the research. Likewise, I use research team to refer to myself and the research partners.

One significance of collaborations is that without research partners and translators, the hard-to-reach places of Myanmar would have been inaccessible physically, mentally, and emotionally. Yet the intersectionality of identities, and the complexity of how fluid and responsive identities interact with the research topic and subjects, also influences the knowledges obtained (Faria & Mollett, 2016; McDonald, 2013). In relying on collaborations, I sought to find ways to recognize, acknowledge, and when need be, navigate the influence of my research team's divergent identities. Knowledge is mediated through all actors and is influenced by their individual beliefs, assumptions, fears, and preferences, particularly, in places like the polyglot and ethnically diverse Shan State (Caretta, 2015; Turner, 2010). As I will show below in the methods section of this chapter, I relied on research approaches that sought to illuminate a 'triple subjectivity' to understand the position of and interactions between researcher, research partners, and research participants (Caretta, 2015; Turner, 2010).

Reflexivity became a practice I utilized to understand the various subjective positions of the research team in relation to each other, over time. Feminist geography literature has long promoted the importance of reflexivity in research (see Davies et al., 2004; Delamont, 2009; Hawkins, Falconer Al-Hindi, Moss, & Kern, 2016; Moss, 2014; Pratt, 2010). Cultivating reflexivity creates space to read the epistemological tickertape of our various practices (Hartsock, 1987, p.

206), to essentially “see what frames our seeing” (Lather, 1993, p. 676). Bennett (1990) argues that reflexivity can create “an ‘unjamming’ effect in relation to the closed truths of the past, thereby framing up the present for new forms of thought and practice” (p. 277). As will be expanded on below, reflexivity occurred throughout the research process, particularly about the research process, such as with researcher journals and reflexive interviews between research team members.

In collaborating, making space for the divergent subjectivities and positionalities of the research team, and practicing reflexivity, I relied on grounded theory to allow for adaptation and change throughout the research process. Grounded theory incorporates an interactive approach to data analysis through the research process that includes coding data, theoretical sampling, conducting comparative analyses, and integrating the data for theory building (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). As I will show below, the continued process of reflection and collaboration within the research team translated into a continual adjustment of research objectives and methods.

In the rest of this chapter, I demonstrate how I operationalized the critical feminist research tenets of cultivating collaborations, acknowledging subjectivities and positionalities of the research team, maintaining reflectivity, and allowing for adaptivity of research methods. First, I provide an overview of research stages and process, before discussing how research methods were negotiated collaboratively. Next, I will discuss the research sites and specific research tools used. Essentially, the sections below describe how I negotiated (or failed to negotiate) the unequal power relations between researcher and research partners, while still producing empirical research about resource frontiers in Myanmar (Caretta, 2015; Haraway,

1988; Kobayashi & Peake, 1994). After discussing data collection, I expand on the interactive process of data analysis and writing. I end this chapter with a reflection of the limitations of grounded feminist collaborative research methods.

2.2 Methods

I divide my explanation of collaborations into two phases of research: the preliminary MK 31 fellowship research stage and the primary research stage (see Table 2.4 for timeline of research activities). In July of 2015 I became a fellow on the MK 31 Salween River fellowship project: One of 36 fellows. The fellowship, a project focused on the professional development of water governance and regional development practitioners in the Salween River Basin¹¹, required that my research had to focus on the Nam Khone River. As part of the MK 31 fellowship, this research project initially involved a collaboration with two researchers, Wah and Nang Mai, from different Shan CSOs. Between summer 2015 to winter 2016 the research team¹² conducted research focused on two villages that would be impacted by the construction and operations of the Mong Ton Dam.

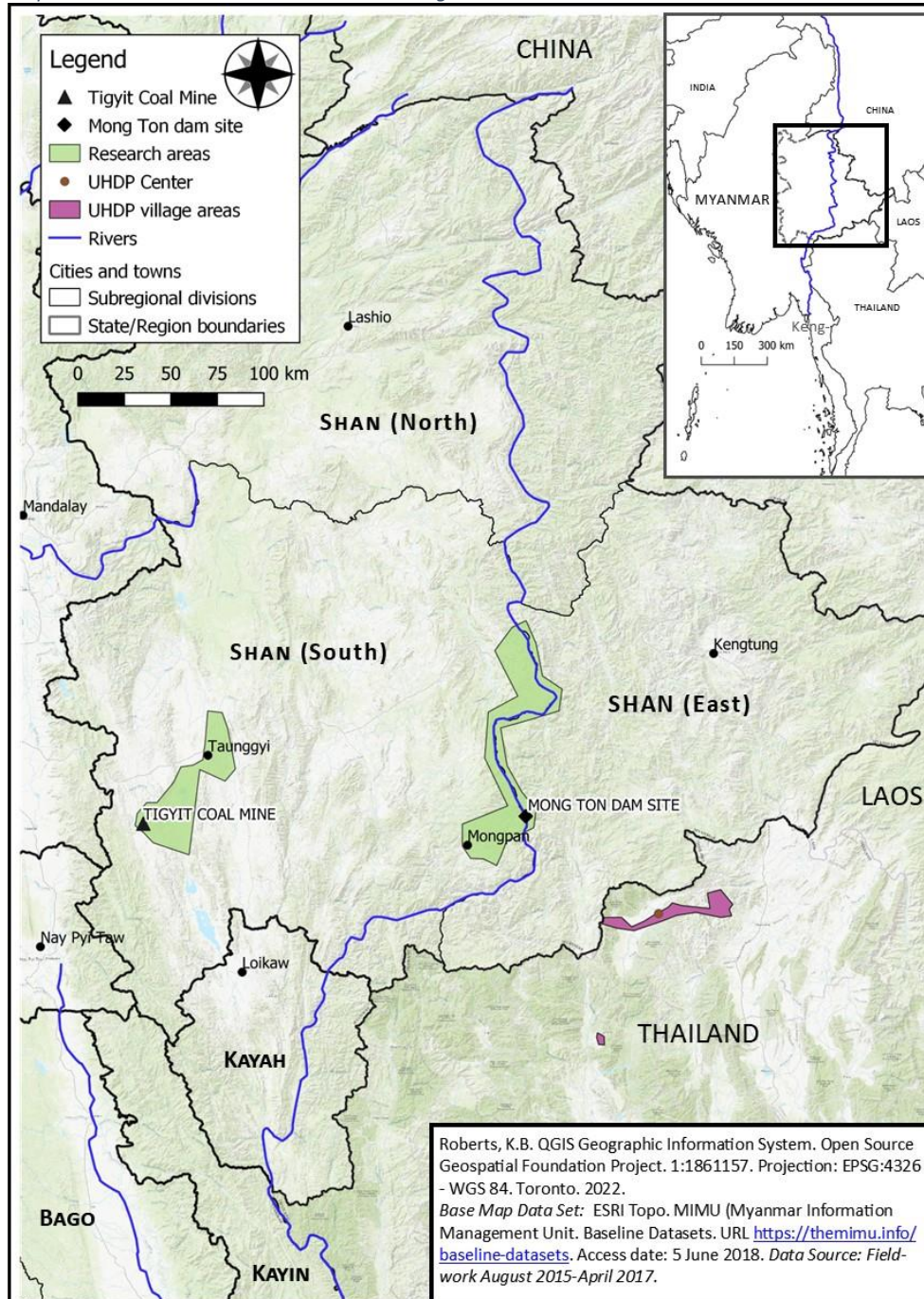
After the preliminary MK 31 stage of research, I worked primarily with Nang Mai and her research assistant, Dao between February 2017 to April 2018. In this primary stage of research, I continued to work in communities that would be impacted by the Mong Ton Dam, but also expanded the research to include CSOs and the impacts of Tigyt Coal Mine and Coal-fired Power Plant (see Map 2.1). These collaborations were central to the research conducted in *(Re)making Resource Frontiers* and evolved from an initial, more structured, collaboration to a

¹¹ A joint project by Australian Aid and the CGIAR Research Program on Water, Land, and Ecosystems (WLE).

¹² When I refer to the research team, depending on the stage of research, I am referring to myself, Wah and her five research assistants, and Nang Mai and her research assistant, Dao.

final, more organic, co-creation of the research project. For safety reasons I cannot share specifics of the research team members or their organizations; however, I can provide a relational overview. Below I discuss the research team members, before explaining the co-creation process of the research.

Map 2.1. Research Areas and Shan State Subregional Divisions



2.2.1 Negotiating the collaborations

In the collaboration between Wah, Nang Mai, and myself, there were similarities and differences in how we related to the research. These differences also produced an uneven power dynamic. I met Nang Mai through a colleague in the MK 31 fellowship program, and I met Wah through a former graduate student from York University. Wah was working as a teacher for her organization and Nang Mai was working as a youth¹³ researcher. I initiated the research project; controlled the funding; am the eldest (by six years); am white; and had the most formal education, with an undergraduate and master's degree. The three of us also worked primarily in English. Each of these factors gave me a higher degree of agency within the research process. I hired Wah to act as my lead researcher¹⁴. Wah had just completed a bachelor's degree in English at a university in Bangkok, Thailand and was three years older than Nang Mai. She also had a firmer command of English than Nang Mai and would help her with translations. These factors enabled Wah to have more agency in the research process than Nang Mai. Nang Mai had completed an undergraduate English degree at a university in Shan State but had not had the opportunity to practice English with a native speaker. As a result, she was initially reluctant to communicate with me directly in English, although this improved throughout our time working together. Both of Nang Mai and Wah's directors had wanted them to work with me, in part, so that they could each gain in research experience. However, unlike Wah who had little previous research experience; Nang Mai had already conducted

¹³ With CSOs in Shan state, youth is typically used to signify people between the ages of 16-25.

¹⁴ A hierarchy I only maintained during preliminary MK 31 research stage.

research on water and dams as part of her work with her organization. Additionally, meetings were held at Nang Mai's organization, which I refer to as CSO 6.

At the same time, Nang Mai and Wah had more control than I did over the data collection process. Nang Mai and Wah are from the townships they worked in; they are both Buddhist, the majority religion of Shan State; and they are both ethnically Shan, the majority population of the State. Moreover, while many languages are spoken in Shan State, Nang Mai and Wah speak the common languages of Shan, Burmese, and Thai fluently, in addition to English. Their organizations also had agency in the research process. Nang Mai's organization represented a wave of CSOs that started after the country's quasi-transition to democracy¹⁵. Transnational ties with non-government organizations (NGOs) working in mainland Southeast Asia connected staff with a broader international network of human and environmental rights advocates. The director of Nang Mai's CSO wanted to give the youth more opportunities to learn and practice research methods, so they suggested that Nang Mai work with me. CSO 6 focuses on raising awareness about proposed hydropower projects along the Nam Khone River. The organization crosses ethnic lines, both in the composition of the staff and in the communities it works in.¹⁶ Conversely, Wah's organization focused primarily on Shan communities. It had alliances with an armed militia, rather than the Myanmar government. Wah's director set the wages, selected the village site, and required that the interviews gather information about baseline demographics and education for research participants and their

¹⁵ This will be discussed further in Chapter 6.

¹⁶ As will be discussed in Chapter 3 and Chapter 6, ethnically diverse CSOs are not common, CSOs in Shan State are frequently aligned along ethno-nationalist and religious boundaries (Fink & Simpson, 2017; Kiik, 2020; Olivius, 2017).

households. Through my funds, Wah hired five of her fellow staffers and Nang Mai hired Dao from her organization.¹⁷ I did not directly interact with their research teams. I never met Wah's field research assistants, as I could not travel to them, and I only briefly met with Nang Mai's assistant.

Shan state is a polyglot state. In the circles I work in, "common languages" would switch between Shan dialects, Thai, English, Pa-Oh, and Burmese in the same conversation. I speak conversational Thai, some Shan, and I have a beginner's command of Burmese. I have limited formal training in Thai. However, because I learned to speak Thai in a polyglot community¹⁸ that spoke Kham Mueang (northern Thai), a near dialect of Shan, I understand more Shan than I can speak. Among the people I interacted with in Shan State, most spoke their own ethnic language first and then Shan. If educated in Myanmar government schools, people also spoke Burmese and some English. Amongst individuals who worked transnationally, English and/or Thai were common languages. As I stated above, Wah, Nang Mai, and I worked predominantly in English, with Thai and Shan used for clarification.

2.2.2 Preliminary MK 31 research: Establishing the initial collaboration

During MK 31 research Nang Mai, Wah, and I designed the research project and methods in a workshop. As I will explain further below, Wah and I did not work together after the preliminary research phase. However, here I include the specifics of that workshop because

¹⁷ On the occasional day when Dao was not available, Nang Mai brought a friend with her, for safety reasons.

¹⁸ Thai was the third language for my colleagues at UHDP. They first spoke their own ethnic languages first (e.g. Lahu, Akha, Kachin, Dara-ang, Karen) and then they spoke Kham Mueang (northern Thai). While they would speak to me directly in Thai, Kham Mueang would be used frequently, as well as Lahu, Karen, or Dara-ang words. I do not officially speak Kham Mueang, but I can understand conversational Kham Mueang. Kham Mueang is more closely related to Shan than Thai is and in forestry and agriculture there are many words in common, which helped me in communicating with my research team. Thai, Kham Mueang, and Shan all part of Tai language family.

it established my working relationship with Nang Mai and formed the foundation for how we co-produced later research. Overall, the workshop allowed for an exchange of the experiences, knowledges, and interests between Nang Mai, Wah, and myself to play a significant role in the design of the research.

The 3-day workshop took place in January of 2016 in Taunggyi, Myanmar (see Appendix A – Collaborative methods 3-day workshop for the workshop agenda). At this initial stage, I controlled the agenda and structured the workshop around breaking down the who, what, when, where, why, and how of the research project. Day one focused on establishing the working relationship between the three of us and understanding our own individual experiences and interests. Day 2 focused on research design specifics and day 3 focused on practicing the methods we had selected.

On day 1, Nang Mai, Wah and I reviewed the types of research we had each done and the training we had received, as well as our current research interests. I introduced the research tools I was familiar with, which included interviews, surveys, participatory learning activities (PLA), group interviews, and participatory mapping. I conducted a practice group interview with Nang Mai and Wah, in which the three of us shared our personal backgrounds, research experiences, interests, and understanding of the potential research sites. After the interview, we did two participatory learning activities, one on the white board and one on the ground to simulate different settings. The first was to determine which research methods we had the most interest in using and the second reflected our opinions of the biggest concerns for villagers. For the learning activities, our number of votes corresponded to the number of categories, which we could weight as we saw fit. The results of these activities did not fully

determine the research methods and interview questions we selected. However, they were a tool used to stimulate conversations across our uneven power dynamics in the research design process.

On Day 2, we focused on the specifics of research design. We started out the day discussing several types of sampling methods, such as probability and non-probability. We then focused on answering the key research objectives that I had previously determined as part of the requirements of my MK 31 fellowship. These objectives included:

1. To identify who controls access to forest and river resources and who uses those resources.
2. To assess what people are accessing, using, and growing in or near forests and rivers.
3. To analyze what is restricting or limiting peoples' access to or use of forest and river resources.

We identified key themes in those questions that met our individual and organizational interests¹⁹ including education, dams, food, health, opium production, military presence, livelihoods, river and forest use, displacement, and economic welfare.

On Day 3, we discussed research ethics, confidentiality, and gaining verbal consent from interviewees. Written consent was not an option based on literacy rates and historic distrust of outsiders. Nang Mai and Wah practiced the survey interviews with volunteers present from CSO 6. After the practice interviews we reworked some of the questions and had further discussions on research techniques. When the workshop was completed, Nang Mai and Wah both had the same research template to use in their respective villages.

¹⁹ For myself this was obligations with the MK 31 fellowship, for Wah this included the educational base-line data her CSO wanted to obtain, and for Nang Mai this included concerns about the Mong Ton Dam.

Included in this research template were a range of tools to “standardize” and increase transparency of the research process, across different sites and with different researchers. During MK31 research all village researchers (including Nang Mai and Wah) wrote daily journals, noting what they did that day, what they learned, what challenges they encountered, and what they observed that they found interesting. These were translated from Shan to English by Wah or Nang Mai. The three of us met again after the research was conducted, which gave me the opportunity to not only read all the translated interviews and journals, but to ask follow-up questions about the research and the research process.

Table 2.1. Research Tools Used

Research Methods	Preliminary MK 31 Research (Jan – Feb 2016)	Primary Research (Feb – Apr 2017)	Primary Research (May ‘17 – Jan 2018)	Primary Research (Jan – Apr 2018)
Survey interviews	X	X	X	
Group Interviews	X	X		
Resource Mapping	X	X		
Participatory Learning Activities	X			
Household inventory	X			
Expert interviews	X	X	X	X
Researcher journals	X	X	X	X
Village agricultural expert Interviews		X	X	
Village history expert interview		X	X	
Land Law Interviews		X		
Market inventory		X		
Reflexive Interviews			X	X

The three of us decided to use key informant interviews, group interviews that included PLA and resource mapping, survey-interviews, and a household inventory (see Table 2.1).

Research questions were determined by the separate and overlapping interests of the research

team and centered on village histories, access to education and health care, agricultural practices, and use of forest and river resources (see Appendix B: Preliminary Research Team Agenda). The semi-structured survey interviewees were selected through a type of non-probability sampling via convenience/snowball sampling. We ascertained which sampling units should be observed based on our judgment of what would be the most useful or representative of the villages (Babbie, 2007, p. 193). From this, we chose to interview an equal number of men and women and to break down the age categories based on family status, i.e. single young adults, married with family, and elderly or widowed (see Table 2.2).

2.2.3 Overview of primary research phase

A full year later, in 2017, I started primary research. Wah and I did not continue to work together in this phase, in part because Wah's full-time job with her organization presented scheduling challenges. Additionally, through the process of conducting the preliminary MK 31 research, Wah and I learned that our individual research interests and those of her organization did not significantly overlap. In this instance, I did not have the sufficient background to change my research focus to education. In contrast, Nang Mai and I had similar research agendas. Moreover, while Nang Mai maintained a relationship with CSO 6 and we still relied on CSO 6 for meeting space, at the time of primary research, Nang Mai was an independent researcher. Nang Mai also continued to hire Dao, a Shan staffer with CSO 6, as a research assistant when she went to the villages. Dao frequently had the necessary contacts and networks to enable her and Nang Mai to access the various research sites. I again rarely worked directly with Dao, due to language barriers and schedules.

Between February 2017 and April 2018 Nang Mai and I built on the work that we had done during the preliminary phase of research (see Table 2.4). In this iteration of the research project, the increased timeline allowed us to reflect on what we had done in the past and adapt and change the research as needed. We restarted our working relationship by discussing what had worked and what had not worked during the preliminary research. I interviewed Nang Mai on her reflections of our past work together, including asking about the interview questions, research methods used, and what was most challenging. At this point Nang Mai and I were still quite shy with each other. In writing the initial research questions and objectives a combination of English, Shan, and Thai were used. Initially, I also gave Nang Mai typed-up notes from our conversations and decisions. She had expressed more confidence in reading English than in speaking, so this helped us to ensure that we understood each other.

Through these interviews and other conversations, Nang Mai took the lead in redefining the primary research question and research objective. She asked, “what is important for local people’s livelihoods and what challenges or threatens that?” and framed the research objective “to evaluate what natural resources are valuable to local people and to determine what challenges they face with access to those natural resources.” Based on this focus, Nang Mai also wrote down core interview questions. At her request, with this grounded understanding of her research objective and core questions, I wrote the questions for survey and key-informant interviews (see Appendix C), which we went through one-by-one to ensure understanding and translation from English to Shan.

2.2.4 Tools for reflection and consistency in the field

Before Nang Mai left to do the first round of interviews, we created guidelines for conducting expert interviews with land law, agriculture and village history experts; market participatory observation; semi-structured interviews; participatory learning activities; and resource maps (see Table 2.1). We also discussed guidelines for creating daily researcher journals and working with research assistants (see Appendix C: Primary Research Guidelines). After the first round of interviews that took place between March and April 2017, Nang Mai and I met again in April 2017 to discuss her findings. During the process, I used what I refer to as a “reflexive interview.” Nang Mai would interview me, and I would interview her in recorded and later transcribed conversations. We used reflexive interviews throughout the research, and while specific questions would change, we would discuss our views on the research process, what we were learning, areas of confusions, and things we thought could be changed or improved. After a few months of working together, these formal reflexive interviews merged into more informal conversations, though still recorded and transcribed. Reflexive interviews enabled me to track throughout the research process our evolving understanding and perspectives.

Using the tools of daily journals, debriefing meetings, and reflexive interviews also allowed Nang Mai and me to make note of things that were and were not working and adapt and change as needed. During primary research Nang Mai and I chose to keep the same general structure to survey interviews, with the addition of village and agricultural key informant interviews (see Appendix C: Primary Research Guidelines). However, as a result of her experiences during preliminary MK 31 research and her first round of interviews in primary

research, we canceled interviews with land law experts, resource mapping, interviews with leaders in Mong Pan township, group interviews, and market surveys (see Table 2.1).

Many of the changes made to the research process reflected Nang Mai's experiences of discomfort for herself or for the research participants. For instance, Nang Mai explained that she found it difficult to create resource maps in the villages because "in the rural areas, local community members cannot draw very well, and it just confuses them." (Nang Mai, reflexive interview, 1 March 2017). Nang Mai also urged us to use a different tactic during interviews with women. Rather than sitting down in a formal interview setting with the interview questions in front of her, she and Dao would participate with a woman's day-to-day activities while conducting the interview through an informal conversation. As she explained:

Sometimes, when interviewing, we can't use papers to read questions and write responses, because they [interviewee] are not comfortable answering and they will speak less. So, we just talk like in a normal conversation, freely. While we talk with them, they are working and cleaning their house, and then we have tea together. Sometimes we are just waiting for them, because they keep their vegetables in their small garden or are working on making the roof. (Nang Mai, researcher journal, 27 January 2018)

Nang Mai felt that women would speak more freely if she and Dao accompanied women in their day-to-day tasks, even if it meant the interview process took more time.

Even if I do not want to drink tea or something, I have to drink with them and talk about their child. And if they have a new baby, play with the baby. It takes a long time. Sometimes we [researchers] will be disappointed if we cannot talk to our point. But we need to be patient to listen to them, even if we sometimes cannot get any answers. (Nang Mai, reflexive interview, 30 April 2017)

Thus, while interviews with men still frequently occurred in a formal interview setting, Nang Mai would, with permission, record an informal conversation with female interviewees. In this process, Nang Mai would rely on her phone to remind herself of the semi-structured survey

interview questions and Dao would take notes. After the conversation with the female interviewee, Nang Mai would listen to the recorded conversation and fill in the responses. This allowed for an interview process where women felt they could speak freely.

2.3 Data collection

In this next section, I will discuss the specifics of the data collection methods that occurred during both the preliminary MK 31 and the primary stages of research. I include an explanation of data collection in villages, with CSOs, and through participatory observation. I end this section with a brief note on translations. To maintain the anonymity of research participants, I name the seven villages involved in this study, Village 1 to 7 and the twelve CSOs, CSO 1 to 12.

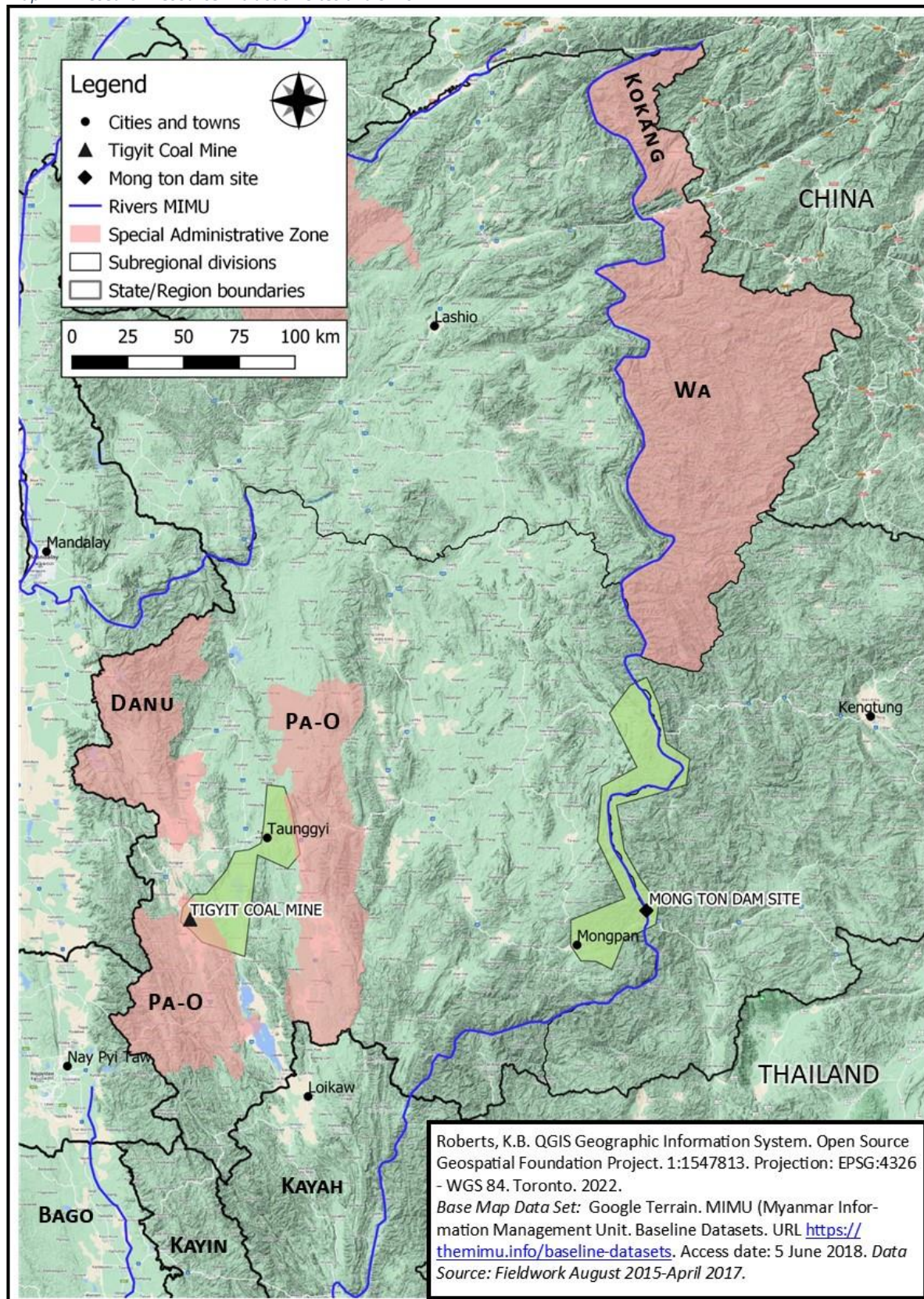
2.3.1 Villages

Research in Villages 1 and 2 took place as part of preliminary MK 31 research in 2016, whereas research in Villages 3-7 took place during the primary research between 2017-2018. Village level research focused on evaluating what natural resources are valuable to local people and determining what challenges they faced in accessing those natural resources. Research near Mong Ton Hydropower Project focused on six villages in South and East Shan State (Villages 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6) and in Mong Pan town. Villages 1 and 2 would be directly impacted by the project through flooding and restrained water flow. Villages 3-6, however, are also within the Nam Khone River Basin, and still rely on the river and its tributaries for water.

Around Tigyt Coal Mine and Power Plant the research focused on CSOs (to be explained below), although one village (Village 7) was also included to provide a baseline for research in a Pa-Oh Special Administrative Zone (SAZ).

Five of the villages are predominately ethnic Shan and Buddhist, one is Pa-Oh and Buddhist, and one is Lisu, with a mix of animist and Christian faith (see Table 2.2). The villages in Mong Pan are at elevations that range from 242m (near riverside) to 791m in the Shan hills (see Map 2.2). Temperatures average between 29.4 C and 35 C (FAO, 2015, p. 4).

Map 2.2. Research Resource Extraction Sites and SAZs



All six villages in Mong Pan rely on and have historically relied on shifting cultivation to support their livelihoods. However, six of the seven have experienced internal displacement because of conflict and civil war within the state. I have kept village names and locations on research maps vague for the security of research participants. Nang Mai, Wah, and I selected villages collaboratively and focused on sites that:

1. include areas where existing forms of governance are being remade either through extensive resource extraction/agricultural production or through conservation
2. are areas that are valued for ecological conservation
3. are home to marginalized people who rely on timber and non-timber forest products for a portion of their life and livelihood
4. are sites where I or my research partners had prior relationships or connections.

Wah led research in Village 1 with five research assistants from her organization. Nang Mai led research in the villages 2-6. Nang Mai and I did research in Village 7 together.

In the preliminary MK 31 research Nang Wah selected Village 1 for two reasons. First, the community would be impacted by the construction of the Mong Ton Dam. Second, her organization had plans to implement education initiatives in this community; therefore, they wanted to gather baseline data about the village through the semi-structured survey interviews. Similarly, Nang Mai selected Village 2 because her organization had already worked there and was continuing to do awareness raising activities with the community about their rights in relation to the dam. Timing of research in villages was based on Nang Mai and Dao's personal schedules, as well as the harvest and planting schedules of the villagers. During primary research Nang Mai selected villages 3-6 because they met our established research parameters. Nang Mai's research assistant, Dao, had connections in Village 3 and 4 that enabled them to set up an initial meeting with the villages' headmen. For Villages 5 and 6, Nang

Mai traveled with a friend and was able to meet with village headmen because her father had connections in those communities. Information from the village interviews helped to answer the research question of how people's access to natural resources was affected by the resource frontier processes of militarization and resource extraction, which I will discuss in Chapter 4.

Table 2.2. Village and interview demographics

	Vil. 1		Vil. 2		Vil. 3		Vil. 4		Vil. 5		Vil. 6		Vil. 7	
Zone at the time of Research	Black		Black		Black		Black		Black		Black		Brown	
Major Ethnic Nationality	Shan		Shan		Shan		Shan		Lisu		Shan		Pa-Oh	
Total village population	116		199		500				409		290		1000	
Total village households	27		60		150		20		68		24			
No. of expert interviews					2		2		1		3		2	
No. of survey interviews	12		12		12		3		7		11		7	
Lead Researcher	Wah		Mai		Mai		Mai		Mai		Mai		Roberts	
Male/Female	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
No. interviews	3	9	6	6	6	6	0	3	4	3	6	5	4	3
No. of single young adults	1	2	2	2	2	2	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	0
No. of married with children	1	6	3	2	2	2	0	2	3	1	2	3	1	3
No. of elderly	1	1	1	2	2	2	0	0	1	1	2	2	2	0

2.3.2 Civil Society Organizations (CSOs)

While Nang Mai was conducting village level research, I met with CSOs, NGOs, and Myanmar university professors. Nang Mai and I also expanded the scope of the research project along the way. By December 2017, research in four of the seven villages had been completed, with plans to work in two more villages. At this time, Nang Mai and I led a training for a youth leadership program run by Nang Mai's former boss. While teaching, we learned from the youth about Tigyt Coal mine. As a result, Nang Mai and her boss arranged for us to meet with CSO leaders in Taunggyi to learn more about Tigyt, as well as other activist work. This led to key informant interviews with individuals from CSOs in Taunggyi (see Table 2.3).

These interviews informed Chapters 5 and 6, answering two of the research questions: What are the daily and interconnected environmental and life-making impacts of living with resource frontier extraction sites, and how do social movements both produce the resource frontier and how are they produced by the resource frontier (see Appendix E for sample CSO interview questions).

Table 2.3. Primary Expert Interviews

CSO #	Date Established	Organizational Focus	Meeting Arranged By	Direct work with Mong Ton	Direct Work with Tigyit
CSO 1	1998	Peace and unity within their own community	Mai		X
CSO 2	1999	Cultural unity and human rights	Mai		X
CSO 3	2002	Education, awareness raising, and community development	Roberts		
CSO 4	2010	Empowering youth	CSO 6		
CSO 5	2013	Increase transparency around resource extraction projects	CSO 6	X	X
CSO 6	2013	Raise awareness and protest the impacts of massive hydropower projects	Roberts	X	
CSO 7	2013	Women's issues	Roberts		
CSO 8	2013	Local waste issues in Taunggyi	CSO 6		
CSO 9	2011-2015	Network around the common concern of hydropower projects along the Nam Khone	CSO 6	X	X
CSO 10	2016	Child labor laws	CSO 6		
CSO 11	2017	Domestic violence	CSO 6		
CSO 12	2017	Social empowerment	CSO 6		

2.3.3 Participant Observation

While the majority of this chapter outlines research specific methods and research sites, other activities informed my understanding of the resource frontier. In addition to key informant interviews and survey interviews, I relied on participant observation. Below I discuss two important activities that I participated in with Nang Mai. Nang Mai translated for me, as

both activities took place primarily in Shan and Burmese. The participant observation activities included co-teaching a research methods training class for Shan, Karen, and Kayah students attending an environmental and human rights leadership school in Taunggyi, and an International Finance Corporation (IFC) meeting.

One of the benefits of employing grounded feminist collaborative methods is that it allowed me to alter and adjust my research questions and sites along the way. One central activity that redirected the course of my research was through a training Nang Mai and I led. In December of 2017, Nang Mai and I taught a two-day research method training course for young adult students attending a two-month long intensive sustainable development leadership program. In our training²⁰ Nang Mai and I relied on Friere's "Pedagogy of the Oppressed" (2000) and theatre forum²¹ (Boal, 1985) to design an interactive class (see Appendix D). This involved breaking the students into three groups and having each group enact the research process starting with research design, 'mock' interviews, and data analysis. At the end, each student group gave presentations discussing their findings, during which I took notes. Two of the groups chose to present on Tigyt Coal Mine and Coal-Fired Power Plant and one of the groups presented on the Mong Ton Dam. As part of their school, the students had spent time near both Tigyt and Mong Ton, learning from community members about the impacts of the resource extraction projects. Some of the students were even from those communities. What Nang Mai and I learned from the students changed the trajectory of the research. The way that

²⁰ I need to credit Linda Marroquin-Ponce here. Together, we had designed an initial version of a theatre forum-based training program as part of a political geography course we took together at York University. Nang Mai also had experience with theatre forum, as part of her own training.

²¹ Theatre forum is a tool that incorporates kinesthetic, visual and auditory learning through live theatre in which the actors (i.e. students) can correct and edit the skit (Boal, 1985; Kaptani & Yuval-Davis, 2008; Morrison, 1991).

the students discussed the everyday impacts of living with resource extraction prompted the research question in this dissertation about the interconnected environmental and life-making effects of resource extraction, which is addressed in Chapter 5.

As I will discuss further in Chapter 6, by invitation, Nang Mai and I also attended a civil society network strategy meeting and a public consultation International Finance Corporation (IFC) meeting that occurred on January 15, 2018. The Myanmar government signed an advisory services agreement with the IFC, which is part of the World Bank Group. Under the agreement, the IFC was to create a nationwide strategic environmental assessment (SEA) for hydropower projects for the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation (MONREC) and the Ministry of Electricity and Energy (MOEE) (IFC, 2017). The IFC claimed that they took a neutral stance between all stakeholders, which included government officials, investors, CSOs, and local communities (Su Myat Mon, 2017). However, the CSOs I had interviewed took issue with the process. For this reason, the CSOs met to strategize about how to make their concerns known before the IFC meeting.

In both meetings, the lines between researchers and activists blurred. While neither Nang Mai nor I officially worked with any of the CSOs at the time of the interviews, multiple people we spoke with identified us as allies. During the strategy meeting, Nang Mai and I listened, but did not actively participate. However, we were given “no-dam” thermoses (see Photo 2.1. Image from IFC Meeting. Photo 2.1) to bring to the IFC meeting and we also traveled with the activists to the IFC meeting. At the IFC meeting the CSO network also included Nang Mai in their text messaging group, which was used to coordinate responses to speakers from the IFC and stakeholders in the energy and hydropower sectors.

Photo 2.1. Image from IFC Meeting. Photo Credit: Research Team, 2017



Data from these meetings related to the IFC informed the broader framing of this dissertation around how interactions and tensions between actors produce resource frontiers, and the more specific questions that I address in Chapter 6 on how CSOs' efforts to restrain, call accountable, and influence resource extraction shape resource frontiers, and how resource extraction activities within frontiers shape the CSOs.

2.3.4 Translations

In six of the seven village sites research was primarily conducted in Shan language (the first language of the researchers). In Village 7, research was conducted in Pa-Oh with use of a

three-way translation from Pa-Oh to Shan to English. Wah and Nang Mai transcribed interviewee responses in Shan and translated those responses to English for my benefit. For Villages 1-2 Nang Wah oversaw the translations and I had the opportunity to ask questions. During the primary research, Nang Mai and I would communicate in English, with Shan or Thai used for clarification. We discussed every interview question and every response. In quotes used from the survey interviews in the villages, I have slightly edited the grammar from what I received. I am confident in the interpretation of the translations that I received from Nang Mai and Nang Wah. In research obtained by proxy, I lose nuances of interviewee emotion and expression; however, as Nang Mai and I wrote survey interviews to obtain quantitative, rather than qualitative information, this is not a significant area of concern.

Regarding CSO interviews, depending on who the interview was with and who was present, the interviews would jump from English to Shan to Burmese. However, the majority of key-informant interviews took place at least partially in English. As I was present and a main driver in these interviews, quotes from these interviews are presented through the primary lens of my interpretation. If the interviewee was speaking in English, I present their quotes verbatim; and if Nang Mai had translated a response for me from Shan, I have lightly edited the grammar. I do not use names, genders, or locations for any interviewees, regardless of permission given, to protect all research participants.

2.4 Data Analysis and Writing

Like data collection, analysis and writing are situated. Cultivating reflexivity in analysis enabled the identification of politically conscious and analytically effective categories. I relied on the transcriptions of “reflexive interviews” and on researcher journals to gain insight into

the different positions of the research team members, including my own. Collaborators' insights on concrete events and contested interpretations catalyzed the analysis process, challenged dominant categories, and clarified nascent arguments. I transcribed, or at times just relistened to, the interviews that I had recorded with Nang Mai. From these conversations, journals, participatory observation, semi-structured survey interviews, and key informant interviews, I created codes using QSR NVivo 11 software. In using a grounded theory approach, these codes evolved overtime and throughout the research process. I created nodes for Mong Ton dam, Tigyt coal mine, and Village level research. Initially I used simple open coding to block out individual questions asked within the semi-structured survey interviews in the villages and key-informant interviews with CSOs and research team members. I relied on axial coding to crosscut concepts that emerged between the nodes and interviews. Broadly, these coded themes related to education, healthcare, governance, forest and river resources used, forest and river access, Mong Ton dam, modes of violence, and Tigyt coal mine and coal fired power plant. A comparative analysis of the themes allowed me to see the interactions between material and discursive conditions that occur through resource frontier processes. For instance, with Tigyt, I cross compared CSO interviews, student presentations, and gray documents to draw out themes of violence that were connected to the operations of the coal mine and power plant and effected water and air quality, health, education, and livelihoods. The comparative analysis process was particularly informative for Chapters 4, 5, and 6.

2.4.1 Co-authorship and collaboration

As I acknowledge in the introduction, sections of *(Re)making Resource Frontiers* are co-authored. Specifically, in Chapter 1, I co-wrote some of the writing on resource frontiers with

Sarma and Faxon. In this chapter, part of the theorization on critical feminist methods was co-written with Sarma, Allen, and Faxon. Lastly, Nang Mai and I co-wrote Chapter 5. Co-authorship creates challenges including managing the logistics of writing, finding the time and space to write, and deciding how to write “together” (Hyndman, 2001).

Sarma, Faxon, Allen and I first started working together on feminist research methods in 2015. We wrote various iterations of an unpublished paper on the life-cycle of feminist research through a series of workshops and video meetings. The in-person co-writing sessions involved pre-workshop reading lists, in-person group brainstorming, and writing assignments. Sarma, Faxon, and I adopted a similar approach for our writing on resource frontiers. Co-writing with Nang Mai has been a different and evolving process, which I will elaborate more on in the limitations section below. Regarding the mechanics of writing, I struggled with time management to find a way to equally co-write with Nang Mai. Aside from a few in-person conversations, this part of the writing process took place largely through shared online documents. For our article “Everyday violence: Tigyit Coal Mine and Coal-Fired Power Plant in Shan State, Myanmar,” published in *Geoforum*, and included in this dissertation as Chapter 5, I primarily wrote the text. The co-authorship for this chapter is based on my collaboration with Nang Mai regarding the conception of the arguments in the chapter. Nang Mai edited drafts of the paper and encouraged a continued focus on the communities themselves and their perspectives.

2.5 Reflections on the limitations of working in collaboration

As shown above, I relied on grounded collaborative feminist research methods, yet it was not without its limitations. Co-creation in research is time consuming, fragile, and largely

an “exercise in communication, trust, and timing” (Hyndman, 2001, p. 265). Broadly speaking, in co-created research, limitations center around the material constraints of time and money and navigating power differentials within the research team and between the team and research participants (Berry & Gurani, 2014, p. 37). As in other conflict areas, within the context of Shan State, ethical considerations over safety, the cost-benefit of the research itself, and the potential risk of perceived alliances between researchers and research participants created further restrictions²² (Campbell, 2017; Cronin-Furman & Lake, 2018; Koopman, 2016; Krause, 2021). Below I start with a discussion of the material limitations on the research process, before I delve into how differences of agenda, identity, and experience between research team members and research participants affected the research.

2.5.1 Material limitations

Material demands of time, money, and safety restricted this collaborative research project. Time and money impact all research projects; however, the number of people involved in this co-created research added to those material limitations. It was complicated to navigate multiple schedules and costly to provide wages and reimbursements for multiple individuals. I paid my research partners and their assistants from a mix of research and personal funds. I should note that, while I did not agree to this request, Nang Mai repeatedly asserted that she did not need anything more than travel reimbursements. Regardless, I could not afford to pay the research team for more than a single trip to a community and for more than three to four days within those communities. Even without financial limitations, time was restricted in

²² Within the context of this dissertation, ethical discussions of research approach scratch the surface. This is an ongoing area of learning and research for the author and will be the subject of future writing projects.

communities due to other professional and personal obligations of research team members and research participants. In the villages, the interview process was time intensive. As Nang Mai explained in a reflexive interview:

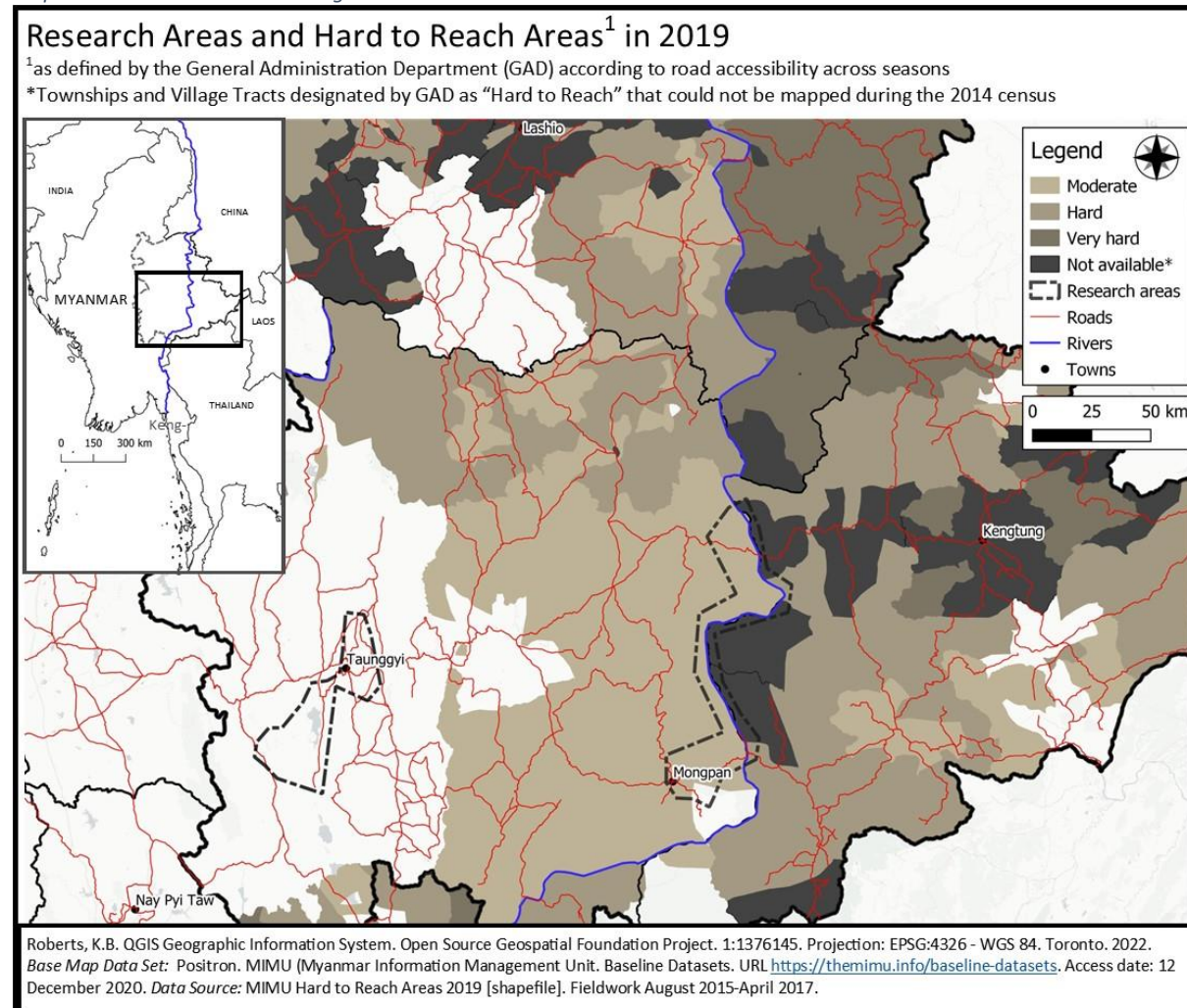
Sometimes when we interview, like for a household, we can take 2 hours or 1.5 hours, but sometimes we take more than that because we can't go directly to our goal or we can't talk with them about what they want to share to us, we need to just listen to them. Sometimes it will take a long time for one person, maybe 3-4 hours. And for some of the agricultural farmers, we have to follow them to the farmland. With one farmer, the first day we make appointment with him to meet at his house, but we wait so long, so we have to follow him to the field to make the interview. (30 April 2017)

Safety concerns also added to the cost and time restrictions for the research. Nang Mai noted in one of her research journals about the difficulty in obtaining interviews: "We always leave from home at 9:00am and return before 6:00pm. The road is not good with dust, and we both are also women" (28 January 2018). Map 2.3 shows how the General Administration Department (GAD) of Myanmar designated much of the research area as hard to access. This designation is based on road quantity and quality and seasonal weather patterns, such as with monsoon rains, which can impede travel. Nang Mai and Dao could not safely travel to the village early enough or stay late enough to talk with villagers before they went to work in their fields. Aspects of this added to the expense of the research, as it was unsafe for Nang Mai to travel to communities as a young single female.

I can't go by myself, there needs to be two people. Often Dao and me. I had one day she where was busy and I called my colleague to go with me. He didn't do the research, he just went with me and made company for me. It is safer to go with another. (Nang Mai, reflexive interview, 30 April 2017)

Material restrictions of time and money for researchers and research participants, and safety concerns, limited the research team's time in a community and ability to co-create the research project at the community level.

Map 2.3. Research Areas and designated 'Hard to Reach Areas' in 2019



2.5.2 Conflicting Researcher Agendas

Conceptually different understandings of main concerns (Sharp, 2005), individually or institutionally conflicting agendas (Johari, 2014), and disagreements over outputs (Nagar, 2002) are all challenges that influenced this research. I first discuss how differences between research

team members shaped the research, before discussing how differences between research team members and research participants affected the research.

Conflicting agendas limited this co-created research project, changing the direction of the research, and shaping outcomes. From the beginning, Nang Mai and Wah had the final say on the selection of villages where the research was conducted and the research methods used. There were compromises in this; however. For instance, Wah's organizational interests focused on health and education, whereas Nang Mai and I were more interested in natural resource use. Questions related to all of our interests did make it into the survey-interviews; yet, Wah and her organization's interests were underrepresented. The interviews did provide Wah and her organization with baseline demographic and community services information on Village 1, which was their primary objective, but they did not expand significantly into questions of education. Tensions and disagreements can also halt research between collaborators (Berry & Gururani, 2014, p. 40). I did not continue working with Nang Wah and her organization. In part, this was also a scheduling issue; however, the main reason neither I, nor Nang Wah and her organization, pushed to navigate those difficulties was our non-overlapping research agendas. While we could have found a middle ground, as stated previously, I did not have the necessary background to adapt myself to their research interests, and they did not have sufficient need to adapt themselves to mine. Wah and I had spent over a year building our relationship, she had accompanied me on trainings through my MK31 fellowship, and I had plans of conducting more research in the SSA controlled territory where she worked. Independently, after my research was completed, Wah has approached me to work together again. Nonetheless, during the

research our inability to find common ground for research agendas limited the research process.

Different agendas affected not just the research design and data collection stages of research, but also analysis and writing. One of the challenges in writing with Nang Mai, was that we were writing for different audiences. While I sought to meet professional requirements, Nang Mai's primary focus was writing in ways that will benefit the communities and organizations that we write about. I should affirm that Nang Mai's focus on promoting environmental and social justice does not counter my personal politics. Nagar (2002) states "—I believe that it is increasingly important for us to produce scholarly analyses that can be accessed, used and critiqued by our audiences in multiple geographical, social and institutional locations" (p. 185). Nang Mai and I have strived to do this; unfortunately, as of yet the written and presented outcomes from this research project remain largely inaccessible to a non-academic audience. Professionally, I felt obligated to generate academic research papers and this dissertation, which have little direct value as a project outcome for the communities and CSOs facing injustices.

One such example is in Chapter 5. I struggled to balance the theoretical requirements of publishing in *Geoforum* and writing in a manner accessible to non-academics. Nang Mai and I are now rewriting this article for publication as a chapter in *Violent Atmospheres: Political Ecologies of Livelihoods and Crises in Southeast Asia*, edited by Dressler and Mostafanezhad. As a chapter with a reduced word count, Nang Mai and I have worked more closely together than we did for the *Geoforum* version of this paper. Through our co-writing sessions we have found a less jargon heavy and a more accessible way of discussing the everyday violence communities

around Tigyt experienced. However, this chapter still targets an academic audience. Although we have shaken off some of the discrepancies in our perceived positions of power in the research design and data collection stages of the research process, in analysis and writing Nang Mai still refers to me as the expert. This makes it more difficult for her to initiate a non-academic writing project with me, such as a blog post or policy brief. My research agenda and time management (or lack thereof) skills have therefor dominated the outcomes from the research.

2.5.3 Different backgrounds

The specific intersections of gender, age, race, body, religion, and ethnicity of research team, conversely restricted and enhanced our ability to gather data and conduct interviews. This, in and of itself, could be a rich area of discussion and analysis. However, within the confines of the scope of this dissertation, the limitations of my own ability to write about it (an ongoing learning process), and the research agenda, the section below highlights key moments in the research process where the different backgrounds of the research team influenced the research process.

People occupy places differently and the intersections of identity intimately connect to location (Berry & Gururani, 2014; Butler, 1993; Longhurst & Zealand, 2005; Nairn, Munro, & Smith, 2005). Affiliations “such as insider/outsider, self/other, young/old, gendered male/female, and upper/lower class have strong implications for social and even theoretical positionings” (Chacko, 2004, p. 53). These different affiliations and identities of association or disassociation influenced how the research team designed the research and how the research took place.

As CSO 6, which both Nang Mai and I had affiliations with, prioritized working across ethnic and religious differences, Nang Mai and I were able to do research in Pa-Oh and Lisu communities. However, the ethnic differences between researchers and participants still created some limitations. After working in Village 5, the Lisu village, Nang Mai shared with me that:

Sometimes we [researchers] are just talking a little, because our culture is not the same. When we are talking with Shan people it is okay, but when we are talking with Lisu, it is like asking “what do you want to say” again and again...and it is quite difficult for me, because some questions are not easy to ask them, such as about the government... they also don’t want to share. (reflexive interview, 10 November 2018)

Despite the disadvantage of not being able to communicate with villagers in their native language of Lisu, most of the villagers could speak Shan and Burmese. However, different religious (Christian vs. Buddhist) and cultural backgrounds made it more challenging for Nang Mai to conduct the interviews.

Affiliations of culture, language, and religion did not, however, always aid Nang Mai and Dao. Although from Mong Pan township, Nang Mai was still faced with barriers in interviews. In the journal entry below, I reflect on a conversation I had with Nang Mai. I had been lamenting the lack of men and leaders interviewed, but she explained to me why it was sometimes difficult for her to get those interviews²³.

The other thing for meeting with Nang Mai today, is that we really are starting to talk more directly about our positions of power and how they influence the research. For example, Nang Mai talked about how if I were to visit Mong Pan, I would be able to interview people and meet with people that she cannot. Especially older man and people in government and in positions of power. When she talked about trying to or thinking about trying to interview the same people,

²³ It should also be noted, that within my network and Nang Mai’s, at the time of research, there were not any men that we knew and trusted who were available to be a part of the research team.

she said that because she is young and from that town people do not think they need to talk to her and that they owe her that respect. (25 December 2017)

Nang Mai's gender and youth put her at a disadvantage when interviewing men in positions of leadership. However, as people occupy multiple positionalities, her education sometimes put her at a disadvantage when interviewing fellow youth. She explained to me in a reflexive interview how youth sometimes found her and Dao intimidating:

The youth we find very difficult to interview because they don't want to share to us or they're ashamed or somethings like that...Sometimes they are afraid, because of their education levels...They worry they cannot answer what we are asking to them. (reflexive interview, 30 April 2017)

In this instance education discrepancies and the strangeness of the interview process limited some respondent's comfort in answering questions, despite the similar age and ethnicity between the interviewees and researchers.

Sometimes villagers also did not want to participate in the research because of their own safety concerns. Dao wrote in one research journal entry:

We face some difficulty about how to get the interview when we request their permissions. When they didn't give us permission, we can't go on our schedule like we plan. We need to move onwards to find another person. Some people are afraid to answer the question, and that's why we can't get all of the answers. (18 March 2017)

In the scenario that Dao describes above, only five interviews were obtained. The remote location of the village, the limited connections between Dao and Nang Mai and community members, and the villages own history of forced relocation by the Myanmar government, inhibited people's willingness to participate in the research.

People occupy complex spaces of identity. As shown above, despite overlaps of shared identity between Nang Mai and Dao and research participants, their gender, youth, and

education at times worked against them. For myself, my perceived access to aid and financial resources, motivated some research participants. For instance, in the one village where Nang Mai and I could travel together, I noted in my research journal:

It started with my research partner (Nang Mai) and I in Village 7. The village headman met us at a café and we chatted briefly. The headman decided where we'd go and he got in the car with us to drive to the first interviewee, which was the headman's little brother. While getting to the car, Nang Mai commented that the headman probably wouldn't have been driving her to interviews (especially since he's headman of 1000 households) if it was just her, but because I was there, he wanted to be the host. The headman was willing to work with me, because I was a foreigner, but Nang Mai stated that it would have been harder for her. (7 February 2018)

My perceived ability to offer aid increased the willingness of people to participate in the research project.

Conversely, in another instance, that same perception limited the research project. Nang Mai and I had planned to include a village that had been relocated due to a hydropower project (not Mong Ton) in the scope of this research. Nang Mai initially drove these efforts, in conversation with CSO 6. After much discussion, however, between Nang Mai and CSO 6 it was decided that even though I was legally allowed to travel to the area, I should not join everyone. I was told that my presence in particular would raise hopes of aid. Although Nang Mai and I had planned to go ahead with the research (without my presence), after many conversations with the village headman, it was decided the benefit of the research did not outweigh the cost. The village headman expressed concern that the presence of a research team, regardless of my presence, would force people to relive their trauma.

The perception of my allyship also complicated the consent I had received from CSOs participating in the research. At the student's graduation, where I was the only person not from

Myanmar present, one person I had interviewed approached me to explain their gratitude that I was an ally and understood the work the CSOs were doing. My 15 years of working with ethnic nationalities from Shan State, the fact that I spoke and understood more in Shan than I did in Burmese, my lack of association with large international NGOs and my direct association with small grassroots CSOs all aided in the perception of my allegiance.

Yet, I was not the only person on the research team whose perceived allegiances impacted the research. Wah's organization was interested in Village 1 because they wanted to establish a working relationship with the community and extend community workers to the village. For instance, when Wah described her organizations relationship with Village 1 she said, "They already knew about my organization and because they know we are from the SSA (7)²⁴ military too, they just take good care of us" (23 February 2016). Nang Wah's organization provides a boarding school for Shan students and much of the rice they use to feed the students comes from rice taxes extracted by SSA (7). Yet, Wah also acknowledged that villagers seemed "afraid of the SSA...the military [SSA (7)] seems to have so much influence on them" (23 February 2016). From Wah's observations, interviewees were reluctant to share with her information that criticized the SSA (7). Although the shared identity of the researchers with SSA (7) enabled their access to the community, it was complicated by unequal power relations between the SSA (7), Wah's organization, and Village 1.

In the case of Village 7 and the village that had been relocated due to the dam, my perceived ability to offer aid complicated ethical questions of the cost of conducting research

²⁴ Village 1 is in territory controlled by the non-integrated militia SSA (7) under the command of the Myanmar military. However, villagers do not interact with the Myanmar military. I expand on this more in Chapter 4.

against the potential gains from that research. With the CSO interviewees, I worried that my perceived alliance also compromised by ability to obtain true informed consent. I never promised results or any specific outcomes, but I know people were willing and sometimes eager to speak with me, because they hoped my work would ultimately help their activist agendas. With Village 1, although consent was always given, it is impossible to disentangle, after the fact, how much Wah's organizations association with the SSA (7) coerced villagers' participation in the research.

2.6 In conclusion

As stated in the methodology section of this chapter, I sought to design research that 1) acknowledges and enables co-creation and meaningful collaboration; 2) historicizes and identifies privileged, gendered, and racialized modes of past and present knowledge production; 3) situates myself, my collaborators, and my research; 4) maintains adaptive and grounded approaches to research design and methods; and 5) cultivates reflexivity at all stages of research. Relying on my years of experience working in and amongst the uneven relationships between ethnic nationalities and race within the uplands of Southeast Asia, I used grounded collaborative feminist research methods to be sensitive and adaptive to those hierarchies. Yet, co-creation in research is an exercise in practice. Grounded feminist collaborative methods allowed me through the research team to conduct empirical research that I could not have legally or safely carried out independently. Grounded feminist collaborative methods also redistributed researcher agency. As the research team is made up of individuals from different backgrounds, with different obligations, different power and privilege, and different research agendas, it both had strengths as a research approach and

weaknesses. In its strengths it allowed researchers to engage in a shared production of knowledge that could evolve organically as the research progressed. People who would have been impossible for me to talk to, or who would have been uncomfortable talking with me, could instead talk with the Shan research team members. Conversely, individuals who did not feel the necessity of speaking to young single Shan females, felt more inclined to speak with me, a white western academic. Yet, those same identities the created openings also produced barriers, as I described above.

Ultimately, grounded feminist collaborative methods is a practice, and an approach. In this iteration, it focused only on the co-creation of research between research team members, rather than alongside research participants. It was applied imperfectly and unevenly throughout the research process from conception to analysis and writing. At the same time the methods approach also forged relationships and connections that are continuing to produce new work and create new projects.

Table 2.4. Dissertation Informing Activities Timeline

			2015				2016				2017				2018				2019				2020			
TASK	START	END	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4
Direct Research Activities	Thailand, Myanmar, Canada, USA																									
Preliminary Research	May '15	Aug '17																								
Start of Primary Research	Feb '17	Mar '17																								
Village Level Research	Mar '17	Jan '18																								
CSO focused research	Jan '18	April '18																								
Data Analysis	May '18	Dec '19																								
Dissertation Writing	May '18	Oct '22																								
Article Writing	May '19	Dec '21																								
WLE Fellowship	Canada, USA, Thailand, Myanmar, Vietnam, Cambodia																									
WLE Fellow Research	Jul '15	Dec '16																								
WLE Mobile Mentorship	Mar '17	Jan '18																								
WLE Book Chapter Writing	Mar '17	Jan '18																								
CHID Thailand Study Abroad	Thailand																									
CHID Thailand 2019	May '18	Mar '19																								
CHID Thailand 2020	May '19	Mar '20																								
Networking and Collaborations	Canada, USA, Thailand, Myanmar, Singapore, Vietnam, Kyrgyzstan																									
Collaborative work with CSO 6	Oct '15	Mar '17																								
WTF collective	Apr '16	Ongoing																								
RF Special Issue	Jul '17	Ongoing																								

3 Chapter Three: Fragmented Sovereignties and Shanland

"In Shan state we have three governments. The army, the government, and the ethnic armed groups" (U Aung, 3 March 2017).

While sitting in a library overlooking the valley below in Taunggyi, U Aung and his Shan colleague complicated my understanding of how power and authority operate. In this statement U Aung referenced the different players that control territory and political subjects in Shan State. The army refers to the Myanmar military, frequently known as the *Tatmadaw*²⁵. The government is the Myanmar government or more specifically the centrally appointed General Administrative Department (GAD), which oversees public administration in the towns and cities under central Myanmar government control²⁶ (Holliday & Su Mon Thazin Aung, 2018). The ethnic armed groups are the numerous ethnic armed organizations (EAOs) in Shan State. These 'governments' exercise their power through force, but also through taxing political subjects, through providing services such as roads and schools, and through controlling access to and use of major natural resources such as gold, timber, coal, and hydropower. This pattern of fragmentation is not the result of only recent political events. Rather, it stems from pre-colonial histories of principalities and states, and from colonial practices of dividing and conquering.

²⁵ I use 'Myanmar military' to refer to the Myanmar military as an armed institution. They are also commonly referred to as the 'Junta'. Unless used in quotes or in the bibliography, I have opted to not use the oft-invoked term, 'Tatmadaw' to refer to the military, as this is the institution's self-titled honorific term, meaning the Royal/Great 'Tat' (the army).

²⁶ Although GAD is administered separately from the Myanmar military, as per the 2008 constitution (Article 232), the commander-in-chief (military) appointed Minister for Home Affairs directs GAD (Holliday & Su Mon Thazin Aung, 2018).

This chapter seeks to answer how the relationships between the frontier assemblage of actors, including sovereignties, resources, and territories, has produced resource frontiers overtime. I explore how changes in property systems and nature-society relationships contribute to frontier-making and state-making endeavors. To answer these questions, I first frame how I use sovereignty and fragmented sovereignty to understand non-singular centers of power that have historically had, and continue to have, authority over territory and political subjects. As a component of the production of resource frontiers, understanding and historicizing the formation of fragmented sovereignty within Shan State illuminates the entangled socio-political and socio-environmental interactions that co-constitute resource frontiers. Following this theorization, I divide the remainder of the chapter into four broadly defined historical periods (pre-colonial, colonial, independence, and military rule) to discuss the relationship between fragmented sovereignties and resource frontiers, as it influences modern-day Shan State.

3.1 Theorization of Sovereignty

Scholars from across a range of disciplines, including sociology, political science, anthropology, and geography, have challenged traditional theorizations of sovereignty²⁷ to move beyond a nation-state perspective that sees sovereignty as the autonomous, unlimited,

²⁷ Krasner (2001, 2004) divides sovereignty into four categories: Interdependence, international legal, Westphalian/Vattelien, and domestic sovereignties. Interdependence references a nation-states ability to “control movement across their borders” (Krasner, 2001, p. 19). Domestic includes the internal structures of states and the ability of those structures to regulate behavior (Krasner, 2001, p. 20). Vattelien, commonly referred to as Westphalian, refers to a state’s autonomy from “external sources of authority” (Krasner, 2001, p. 20). Whereas international legal sovereignty is understood as the mutual recognition as territorially and juridically independent entities (Krasner, 2001, p. 21). With nation-state sovereignty or *de facto* sovereignty understood as including elements of interdependence, international legal, Westphalian/Vattelien, and domestic sovereignties²⁷ (Krasner, 2001, pp. 19-21; Krasner, 2004, p. 87). For this chapter, I am more interested in what Krasner (2001) would refer to as domestic sovereignty, how sovereignty is produced and fragmented at a sub-national level.

and exercised authority over nonoverlapping, juridically defined political subjects and territory (see Adey, 2013; Agnew, 2005, p. 437; Bishara, 2017; Elden, 2006; Jones, 2009a, p. 376; Kauanui, 2017; Kranser, 2001; Lund, 2011; Sidaway, 2003). In this chapter, I draw on political geography and political ecology scholarship to understand how sovereignty is produced through a plurality of state and non-state actors (McCreary & Lamb, 2014; Mountz, 2013). Political ecologist Lund (2011) argues that an actor that can select and enforce collectively binding decisions on members of society has a state-like quality or sovereignty (p. 887). This can include extra-territorial influences, such as global institutions, knowledge networks, diplomatic relations, transnational corporations, capital, and global social movements (Agnew 2005; Berg & Kuusk, 2010; Elden, 2006; Murphy, 2004). Non-state actors can also include intra-territorial institutions such as civil society, non-state armed groups, and national corporations (Davies, 2010; Gazit, 2009; Lund, 2011; Mountz, 2013; Xiaobo, 2018). With this expanded understanding of sovereignty beyond the nation-state, I recognize sovereignty as the exercise of control over territory and political subjects, which can involve a dispersal of state and state-aligned interests, as well as non-state entities working in concert with and in conflict with the state. As I will elaborate on in Chapter 4, the control over resources and political subjects shapes the actors within resource frontiers and influences who can access and use resources within a given territory.

Political ecology critically analyzes multiple objectives, actors, and audiences, integrating a social and biophysical analysis of power relations, at multiple scales (Rocheleau, 2016). This enables an analysis of the constitutive relationship between sovereignty and resource frontiers. Winichakul (1994, p. 17) uses the term “geo-body” to convey modern understandings of the

connections between space and political subject in the formation of nationhood or sovereignty. Territorialization, while occurring through the material classification of space and enforcement of those boundaries, is a socially constructed process intimately intertwined with racialized narratives of political subjects and their connection to place (Castree, 2000; Chatterjee, 1993; Corson, 2011; Vandergeest & Peluso, 1995; Vandergeest, 2003; Watts, 2018). In the uplands of colonial Burma Leach (1960) writes that:

In this region [borderlands of Myanmar, India, and China] the indigenous political systems which existed prior to the phase of European political expansion were not separated from one another by frontiers in the modern sense and they were not sovereign Nation-States. The whole of "Burma" is a frontier region continuously subjected to influences from both India and China and so also the frontiers which separated the petty political units within "Burma" were not clearly defined lines but zones of mutual interest. (pp. 49-50)

Leach's "zones of mutual interest" expose the limitations of the concept of a singular sovereignty in Myanmar. Southeast Asia and Shan State in particular, have been an important region for the development of ideas about the connection between the production of territory and a plurality of sovereignties. Scholars have emphasized the role of non-singular, overlapping sovereignties that extend beyond territorial control in historically influencing the region (see Anderson, 2006; Jones, 2012; Jones, et al., 2017; Leach, 1960; Meehan, 2011, 2015; Sao Saimong Mangrai, 1966; Scott, 2009; Winichakul, 1994; Wittekind, 2018).

Contemporary Myanmar scholars have relied on Lund's (2011) theorization of fragmented sovereignties to investigate the role of informal processes and non-state actors in reproducing State sovereignty (see Mark, 2016b; Woods, 2019a; Xiaobo, 2018). I am following that trend; however, I find it an imperfect conceptualization within south Shan State. Instead, I also utilize on Gazit's (2009) definition of fragmented sovereignty as "multiple, localized, and

temporal cores of political power” (p. 84), Davies’ (2010) acknowledgment that fragmented sovereignty can exist within an internationally recognized sovereign state, and Bishara’s (2017) reminder based on the Palestinian case “to look for multiple forms of sovereignty—of states and non- states—while recognizing the hierarchies among them” (p. 351). My use of fragmented sovereignty thus builds on the work of Lund (2011), Xiaobo (2018), Woods (2019a), Mark (2016b), Gazit (2009), Davies (2010), and Bishara (2017). Fragmented sovereignty, as I use it, recognizes the role of non-state actors in producing nation state-sovereignty. Yet, in this chapter I also emphasize the role of non-state militaries in producing sub-national territorial-based sovereignty, that is separate from, but is articulated through an unequal relationship to the internationally recognized nation-state of Myanmar.

Yet, as Winichakul (1994, p. 17) argued, highlighting the limitations of a single-nation-state in the ethnical plural regions of Southeast Asia does not provide, in and of itself, an agentive link between political subject and space in the production of sovereignty. Sovereignty is not a pre-existing condition, but rather actively produced (Lund, 2011; Lunstrum, 2013; Mark 2016b; McCreary & Lamb, 2014). I draw on political ecologists to show how fragmented sovereignties are produced through relationships and interactions that occur over territory, in bodies, and through discourse (Ballve, 2020; Lunstrum, 2013; McCreary & Lamb, 2014, p. 599). Lunstrum’s (2013) concept of articulated sovereignty is particularly useful as a means of expressing the relational and varied interactions and negotiations that produce sovereignty. In this chapter, I show how sovereignty can be articulated through territorial control (Lund, 2011, p. 888; Ponican & Kigodi, 2015), through force and coercion (Woods, 2019b; Xiaobo, 2018), and through discourse, as is often the case in ethno-national narratives in Myanmar (Agnew, 2005;

Berg & Kuusk, 2010; Jones, 2009a; Kuss, 2002; Lunstrum, 2013; Mountz, 2013; Murphy, 2004).

Fragmented sovereignty is articulated through material processes and through discourse and symbols. It is the tensions, actions, dialogue, policies, practices, conflicts, and acknowledgements that occur inside and outside of territories, that produce fragmented sovereignty. As Lunstrum (2013) states “sovereignty is articulated through these connections” (p. 2); connections and interactions that are unequal, never complete and always shifting (Ballvé, 2012, 2020).

This chapter focuses on how fragmented sovereignty has been articulated through material processes of violence and enclosure that occur in place, and through discourse, policies, and symbols that are enacted beyond territory (Davies, 2010; Lunstrum, 2013). I argue that fragmented sovereignties, in their divergent claims over control of space and subjects, contribute to the production of resource frontiers. Articulated through interconnected systems of ethnicity, territorialization, and capitalism, fragmented sovereignties in Shan State form the scaffolding for the assemblage of actors that co-produce resource frontiers²⁸.

In the remainder of the chapter, I rely on a historical narrative to analyze the relationship between fragmented sovereignties and resource frontiers. In the section below, I start with an overview of the people that populated the pre-colonial Shan states and the upland/lowland dynamics that developed between population centers and kingdoms. I then specifically discuss the overlapping relationship between the many interconnected Shan kingdoms and lowland kingdoms in Myanmar.

3.2 Zomia and Shanland

²⁸ In Chapters 5 and 6 I expand on the role of violence and the assemblage of actors in resource frontiers.

The present Shan State falls within the uplands of the Southeast Asian Massif (see Map 3.1). Stretching across Myanmar, Thailand, Laos, China, Cambodia, and Vietnam, Michaud's (2006) Southeast Asian massif and Van Schendel's (2002) and Scott's (2009) Zomia encompasses some 80 million people and over 200 different people groups. Histories of mobility and shifting cultivation above 500 meters typify these otherwise diverse upland people groups. Zomia studies does not always include Shan, as they have historically been valley dwelling, wet-rice farmers, with language ties to more dominant kingdoms (Leach, 1960; Sai Aung Tun, 2009; Scott, 2009). However, as I will show below, I partially disregard this distinction. The Shan plateau itself is above 500 meters and in addition to wet-rice farming, Shan also practice shifting cultivation.

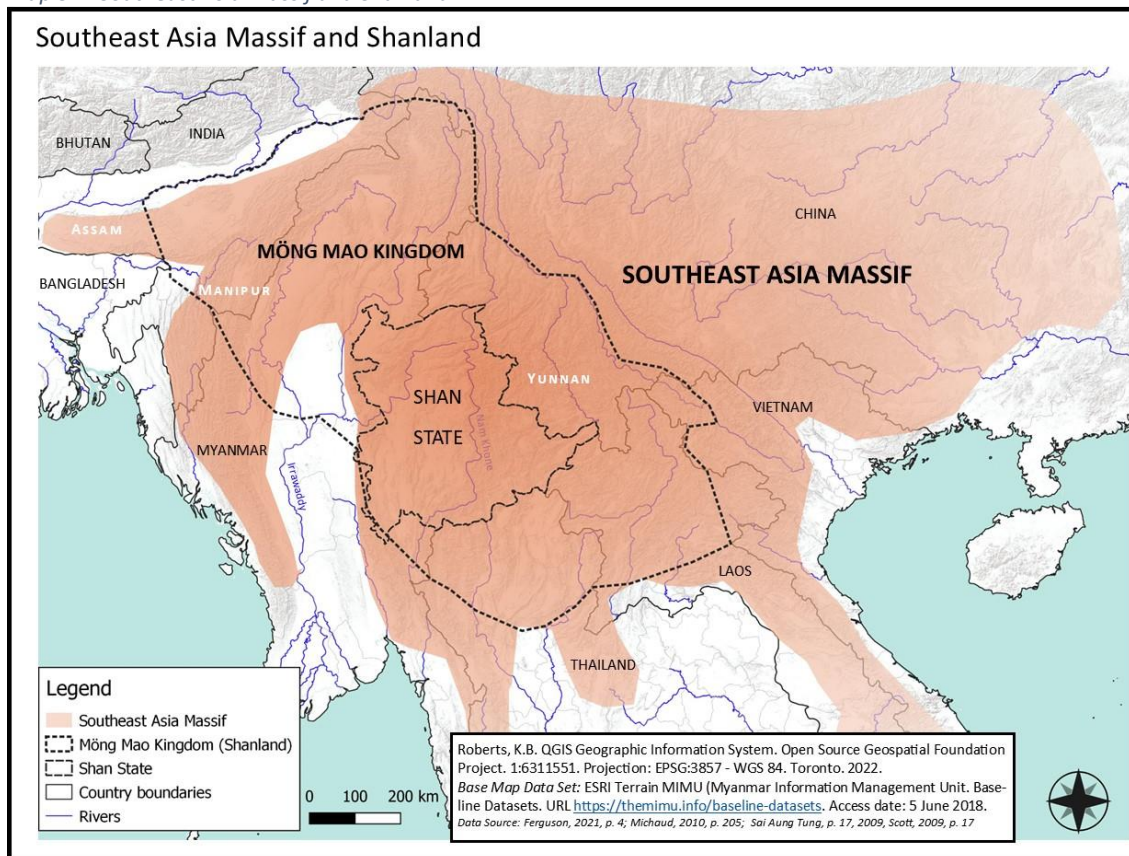
Historically, upland shifting cultivars have challenged settled agrarian states because their subsistence livelihoods, mobile communities, and diversity are hard to govern and difficult to tax (Bryant, 1997; Roberts, K., 2016; Scott, 2009). *Taungya* is the Burmese word for shifting cultivation or swidden agriculture, *taung* for hill and *ya* for cultivation. Shifting cultivation represents a socioecological system in which ecosystems and human society participate in reciprocal feedback activities and are interdependent with each other (Berkes, Colding, & Folke, 2003; Folke et al., 2010; Lin, 2011; Thorlakson & Neufeldt, 2012). Indeed, shifting cultivation is part of a complex agroforestry system, one that is neither agriculture nor forestry, but instead a comprehensive form of landscape management (Fox et al., 2009). Racialized as 'backward' by lowland Burman, traditional livelihood practices such as *taungya* are often painted as destructive. Yet, research indicates that complex agrarian systems, such as shifting cultivation and agroforestry, can build resilience into an ecosystem by increasing biodiversity and

mitigating against drought and flood events (Brookfield, 2015; Dove, 1983, p. 93; Quandt, Neufeldt, & McCabe, 2017).

Scholars have used the term Shanland to refer to spaces where Shan kings (*sao hpa*²⁹) have controlled political subjects and territories (Sai Aung Tun, 2009; Ferguson, 2021). Shan people are part of the Tai ethno-linguistic group, currently spread across what are now Myanmar, southwestern China, Thailand, Laos, Vietnam and Cambodia, and northeastern India (Sai Aung Tun, 2009, p. 3). The history of Shanland reflects the diversity and fragmented alliances of the Southeast Asian Massif. At its height, partially unified as the Möng Mao Kingdom as shown on Map 3.1, Shanland, included some 403 principalities, and extended into what is today Yunnan Province in China, down into the Irrawaddy River valley, west into Manipur and Assam States in India, and east into Thailand (Ferguson, 2021, pp. 4-5). Today, Shan State is the largest state within the internationally recognized nation of Myanmar, covering 60,614 square miles (Ferguson, 2021, p. 10).

²⁹*Sao hpa* is the Shan title for these hereditary chiefs, meaning “Lord of the skies” (Buchanan, 2017, p. 5). It appears in English language in numerous spellings such as Saopha or Sawbawa. I opt for the spelling Ferguson (2021) uses of *sao hpa*, which most closely reflects that of it in Shan language.

Map 3.1. Southeast Asia Massif and Shanland



Note: Please note that boundaries on this map are approximations drawn from the sources cited on the map. Western political boundaries do not reflect on the ground lived realities (Winichakul, 1994).

Historically, the *sao hpa* of Shanland reflect a plurality of sovereignties. Overlapping with each other, and with lowland kingdoms, *sao hpa* articulated their authority through a variety of means including taxation, coercion, practices, and force. As I will discuss below, throughout history, the size and make up of Shanland has expanded and contracted, with *sao hpa* at times having sovereignty over Burman subjects and at times *sao hpa* and their people subject to Burman kings. Sai Aung Tun (2009) describes Shanland around the period of time just before British annexation of the Shan states (1885):

Shanland is a vast area, with many hills of various heights and deep valleys; thick forests with difficult means of communication and transportation. The size of the states and principalities depended on the size of each valley, and a feudal type of administration was the common system everywhere. Each state or principality was under its chief, the *saopha*. They were so divided and never united, but they

enjoyed their autonomous rights from the beginning of history. They insisted on having that right throughout even after they had accepted the Myanmar kings as their traditional or legal sovereigns. The Myanmar kings thus reigned over the Shan people by remote control. The Shan people did not seem to mind much or care much about having the Myanmar kings as their sovereign. They had learned that there were times when Shan chiefs were kings of Myanmar and they gave the same allegiance, with no difference or peculiarity, as to whether the king was Myanmar or Shan. (pp. 171-172)

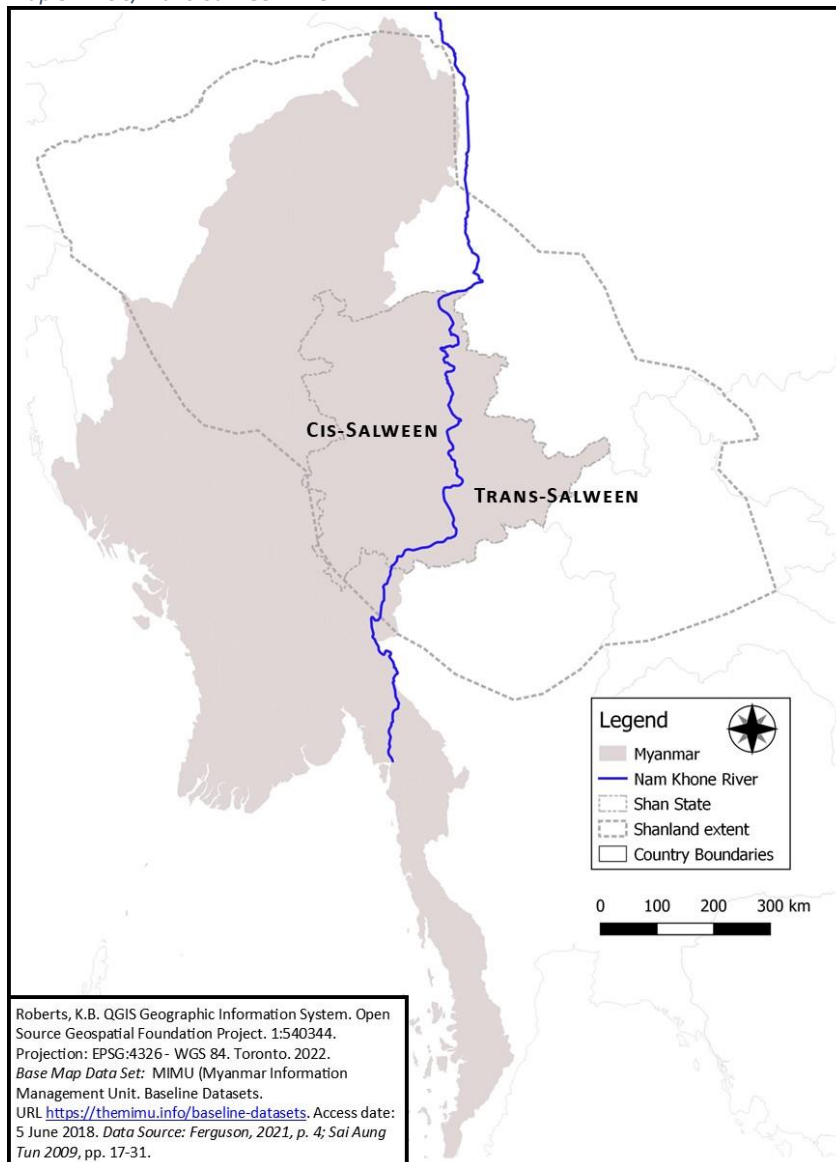
Positioned between kingdoms in Thailand, China, and Myanmar, principalities in Shanland worked in concert with, served as a buffer from, and were in conflict with lowland kingdoms. A modern-day two-dimensional understandings of space and territories is inadequate to describe the relational nature of Shanland tributary relationships (Winichakul, 1994). Lieberman (2003) describes a Shan kingdom as “a loose federation of valleys, each containing anywhere from several hundred to several thousand cultivators, separated from one another by inhospitable terrain, but all acknowledging the suzerainty of the ruler in the largest and most powerful basin” (p. 124). Smaller states paid homage to stronger political centers, while still maintaining a high degree of anonymity (Ferguson, 2021, p. 33; Winichakul, 1994, p. 82). In Shanland, this feudal system was comprised of dozens of polities ruled by chieftains, otherwise known as *sao hpa*, from the most powerful basins (Buchanan, 2017, p. 100; Lieberman, 2003, p. 124). Despite acknowledging the influence of lowland monarchs—and at times multiple kingdoms, simultaneously—the *sao hpa* were responsible for local administration (Buchanan, 2017; Sai Aung Tung, 2009; Scott, 2009; Winichakul, 1994, pp. 81-83). By choosing to affiliate with one or balancing multiple patrons, weaker states “sought to maintain their relative autonomy” (Ferguson, 2021, p. 35).

The topography of the Shan plateau and the relative accessibility or inaccessibility of *sao hpa* kingdoms influenced the tributary relationships with lowland power centers. Prior to the

late 1940s division of Shan State into three parts, North, South, and East (Sai Aung Tun, 2009, p. 342), the Nam Khone River divided the Shan states (see Map 3.2). Shan principalities on the west side of the Nam Khone, the Cis-Salween³⁰, were frequently subordinate to more powerful lowland Burman kingdoms, whereas the Shan principalities on the east side of the Nam Khone, the Trans-Salween, had more political and cultural relationships with lowland centers of power in modern day China, Thailand, and Laos (Sai Aung Tun, 2009, p. 26; Ferguson, 2021, p. 39).

³⁰ Despite my use of the Shan name for the Nam Khone River, historical scholarship on the Shan State use Cis-Salween and Trans-Salween to describe the division within the states (see Ferguson, 2021; Sai Aung Tung, 2009; Scott, 2009).

Map 3.2. *Cis/Trans-Salween River*



Shan migrations occurred possibly as early as the 11th century into what are now considered the Shan hills (Lieberman, 2003, p. 124). While far from conclusive, historians believe that the Tai³¹ people originated in southwestern China, migrated along large rivers and

³¹ Tai is a term that encompasses those who speak a language within the Kra-Dai family. This includes Thai, Lao, Shan, and Lanna (northern Thai) languages (Ferguson, 2021, p. 255) and more specifically for Shan languages, Tai Long in central and southern Shan State, Tai Nü in northern Shan State and the Yunnan border area in China, Tai Khün in eastern Shan State, Tai Khamti in northern Kachin State, Tai Lue in the Sipsongpanna area of Yunnan Province, China; and Tai Yuan and Khun Mueang, in northern Thailand (Murakami, 2009, pp. 82–83 as cited in

tributaries, including the Nam Khone, with a presence in what is now Myanmar as early as the first century AD. By the 13th century, an inscription suggests that the city of Pagan, heart of the lowland Pagan Kingdom and Dynasty (800-1300 AD)³² was an ethnic mosaic that encompassed lowland Shan populations, but also ethnic Burman, Chinese, Wa, Karen, Dara-ang, and other “hill peoples” (Aung-Thwin & Aung-Thwin, 2012, p. 96; Lieberman, 2003, p. 115). A weakening Pagan Dynasty and the 1253 conquest of the Nanzhao kingdom in Yunnan by the Mongol launched a large wave of Tai migrations into the Shan hills (Ferguson, 2021, p. 4; Lieberman, 2003, p. 123; Sai Aung Tun, 2009; Thant Myint-U, 2006). Regarding the populations in the pre-colonial Shan hills, Scott (2009) writes:

Many of the people in the hills were, in all likelihood, valley peoples who long ago had fled state space. Others, however, were "state-making" valley peoples, like many of the Tai, who lost to more powerful states and who scattered or moved together to the hills. Still others...were the shards of valley states: deserting conscripts, rebels, defeated armies, ruined peasants, villagers fleeing epidemics and famine, escaped serfs and slaves, royal pretenders and their entourages, and religious dissidents. It is these peoples disgorged by valley states, together with the constant mixing and reconstitution of hill peoples in their migrations, that make identities in Zomia such a legitimately bewildering puzzle. (p. 144)

Subsequent uprisings in China continued to spur migration. As Scott (2009) states, any large migration can “set off a chain reaction of subsidiary moves impelled by the first” (p. 142). While the 13th century the inscriptions only suggest “hill peoples,” by the late nineteenth century,

Ferguson, 2021, p. 255). According to Ferguson (2021, p. 19), the word “Shan” is adapted from a Burmese spelling and pronunciation of “Siam.” In Shan languages, Shan refer to themselves of Tai; however, because in scholarly works Tai is used to more broadly define the larger ethno-linguist group that also includes Laotian and Thai, I maintain usage of the term Shan.

³² Myanmar’s major kingdoms were as follows: The Pagan Dynasty and Kingdom (800-1300 AD); First Ava Dynasty and Kingdom (1364-1527 AD); Second Pegu / Toungoo Dynasty and Kingdom (1539-1599 AD); Second Ava Dynasty and Kingdom (1597 – 1752); and the Konbaung Dynasty and Kingdom (1752-1886) (Aung-Thwin & Aung-Thwin, 2012, p. 6).

Danu, Indians, Intha, and Pa-Oh groups, in addition to an ethnically diverse upland population including Akha, Kachin, Karen, Kayah, Kokang Chinese, Lahu, Lisu, Padaung, Dara-ang and Wa populated the Shan hills (Buchanan, 2017, p. 100; Ferguson, 2021, p. 12; Lieberman, 2003, p. 115). *Sao hpa* ruled over not just Shan in the valleys, but also the diverse upland populations.

3.3 Pre-Colonial Myanmar and Shanland

At the crossroads of lowland kingdoms in Myanmar, Thailand, and China, the diverse uplands of Shanland intersected with resource frontier processes. Leach (1960) describes the entirety of Burma as a frontier region subjected to pressure from India and China, with “interpenetrating political systems” (p. 50). Sovereignty and resource frontiers interact, overlap, and influence the articulations and processes of each. Within Shan State, these “interpenetrating political systems,” or fragmented sovereignties, formed alongside resource frontiers, with patterns of fragmentation that began during pre-colonial times and continue to influence a post-colonial Shan State. From 1364-1527 the upstream First Ava Dynasty and Kingdom Ava and the downstream First Pegu Dynasty and Kingdom dominated Myanmar (Aung-Thwin & Aung-Thwin, 2012, p. 6). In Myanmar, the upstream agrarian Ava and downstream maritime Pegu kingdoms rarely directly warred with each other. Aung-Thwin and Aung-Thwin (2012) write that:

In Southeast Asian history most inland agrarian states tended *not* to destroy or eliminate coastal and maritime areas. Rather, they exerted their hegemony and control over them, since the maritime regions provided trade revenues, luxury goods, manpower, a market for the interior's products and new knowledge from the outside world. In exchange the inland agrarian world supplied the all-important food staples, particularly rice, forest products such as teak, precious stones (jade, rubies) of the interior and Dry Zone crops (pulses, palm sugar, sesame and so on). (pp. 81-82)

In this upstream-downstream relationship, the uplands and the upland states and principalities played a crucial role. The upland areas, like Shanland, exchanged natural resources like gems, teak, oil, and precious metals, and even new technologies like firearms from China, for lowland rice and other foods. Widespread use of teak for building monasteries and official buildings suggests that there was an already sizable lumber industry during the Kingdom of Pagan (Aung-Thwin & Aung-Thwin, 2012, p. 91) and provides evidence of trade between teak rich areas like the Shan hills and Pagan (Bryant, 1997). Pre-colonial trade and extraction also occurred in the Shan hills for silver, gold, and gems (Scott, 2009, p. 11). The Gazetteer of Upper Burma and the Shan States suggests that ruby mines, salt-wells, iron works, silver mines, and gold washing in the rivers were common industries in pre-colonial Shan State (Scott, 1900, pp. 218-304).

In the early 1500s the First Ava Kingdom weakened from incursions from the north. Shan armies invaded Pagan and in 1527 a Shan *sao hpa* took control of the Court of Ava.³³ From 1527-1553 three separate Shan *sao hpa* governed the Court of Ava, signaling an end to the First Ava Dynasty (1364-1527) in the upstream Irrawaddy valley (Aung-Thwin & Aung-Thwin, 2012, p. 115; Lieberman, 2003, pp. 119-120; Sai Aung Tun, 2009). Many historians refer to those 24 years of Shan *sao hpa* authority as the “Shan Period.” Even Burmese chroniclers included the Shan *sao hpa* in the list of Burmese kings, providing evidence of their contribution to Myanmar’s history (Aung-Thwin & Aung Thwin, 2012, pp. 115-116; Lieberman, 2003; Sai Aung Tun, 2009). However, in 1555 Burman King Bayinnaung conquered Ava and incorporated many

³³ The “Court of Ava” refers to the governments of the First and Second Ava Kingdoms and the Konbaung Kingdom. For the First and Second Ava Kingdoms, the center of government was in the city of Ava, southwest of Mandalay. During these reigns, Myanmar had two lowland kingdoms, that at Ava and downstream at Pegu. During the Konbaung Dynasty, the upstream and downstream polities were unified, however, the center of government was still in Ava. Although it was later moved to Mandalay, the ‘Court of Ava’ is still used to refer to the government during these three separate dynasties.

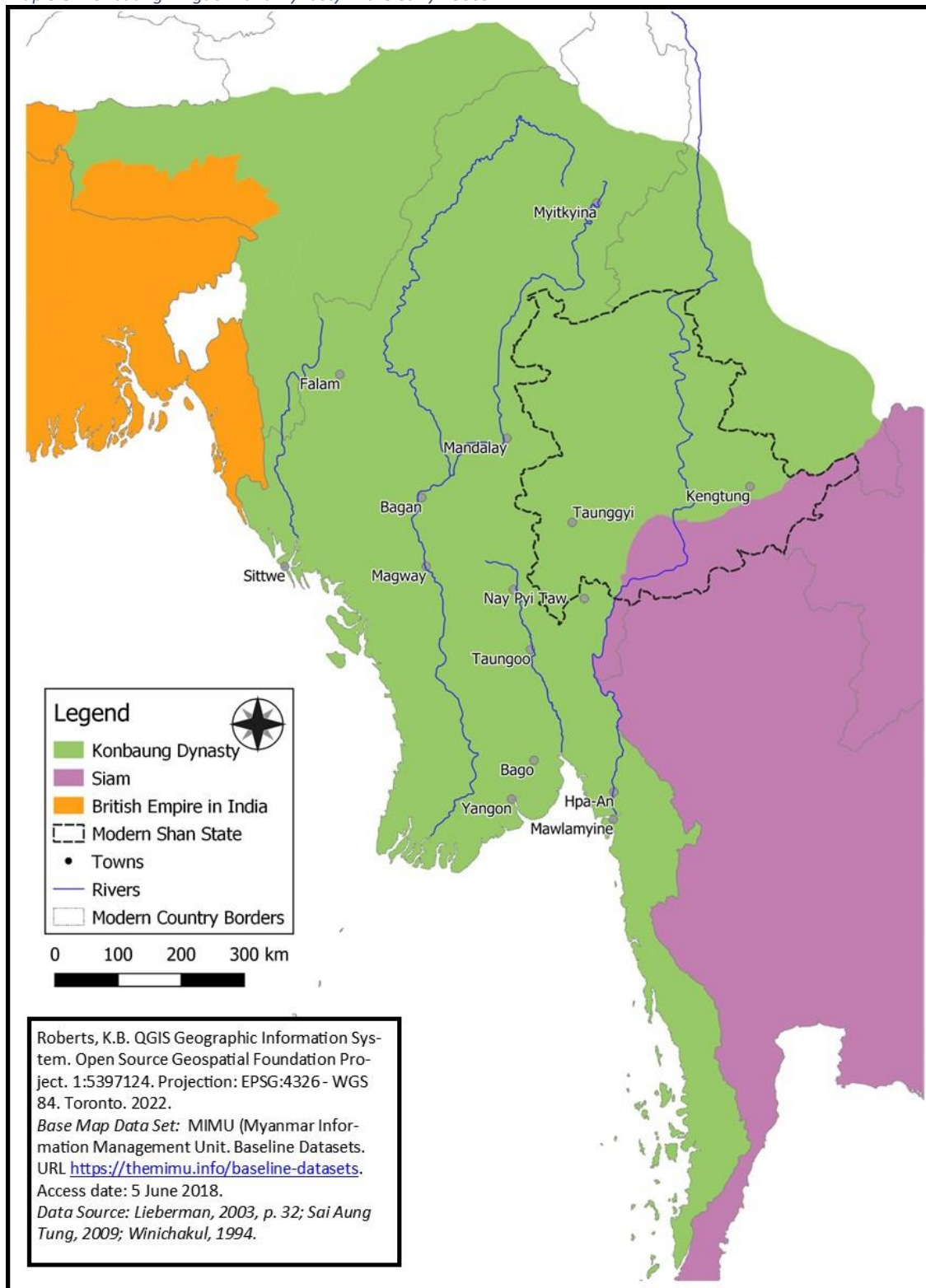
of the Shan states into the Second Ava Dynasty and Kingdom. Father-son historians Michael Aung-Thwin and Maitrii Aung-Thwin (2012) write that the 'Shan period' in Myanmar's history overinflates the significance of Shan rule. However, despite Aung-Thwin and Aung-Thwin's (2012) attempts to downplay the role of Shan in Myanmar's history, even by their own telling, this period of Shan strength and prominence in Upper Burma left some lasting legacies on both Myanmar and Shanland.

The 'Shan Period' and the subsequent conquest by Bayinnaung, marks the end of independent rule by the Shan *sao hpa*. Although the *sao hpa* had maintained a plurality of tributary relationships, these were mutable and constantly shifting in degrees of strength and importance. After 1555, many Shan *sao hpa*, in particular in the Cis-Salween states, became tributary states to the Ava Kingdom and later Konbaung Kingdom (1752-1886), British colonial government (1886-1942, 1945-49), and Japanese authorities (1942-1945). Conquest by Bayinnaung set the precedence in the Shan states of paying tribute to lowland power centers, while also still maintaining autonomy in their own states (Sai Aung Tun, 2009, p. 220). The 'Shan Period' also increased pathways of trade and commerce between the Shan hills and the Irrawaddy valley (Lieberman, 2003, p. 123). The populations living in the Shan hills provided agricultural labor and military reinforcements, and during peacetimes served as a physical barrier blocking northern pathways of invasion (Aung-Thwin & Aung-Thwin, 2012, pp. 125-126). Intermarriages between *sao hpa* elite and Ava royalty also forged political alliances and created offspring who remained members of the court, including future kings (Aung-Thwin & Aung-Thwin, 2012, pp. 126-146; Ferguson, 2021, p. 41; Sai Aung Tun, 2009, p. 114). The Shan period also created an avenue for cultural interaction between Burman and Shan populations

(Lieberman, 2003, p. 131). In the late 1400s, Shan people in the uplands borrowed cultural practices sparingly from lowland communities; however, by the 1800s, Shan had adopted Burman alphabets, dress, and religious practices (Ferguson, 2021, p. 38). Importantly, however, the Shan dominance in the dry zones of the Irrawaddy valley also generated a stigmatized discourse among ethnic Burmans toward Shan, viewing them as “wild and uncivilized” (Lieberman, 2003, pp. 131-132). The influence of this narrative of the Shan’s importance in Myanmar’s history set the stage for secession clause in the pre-independence constitution of 1947 and the subsequent 1962 military coup (Aung-Thwin & Aung-Thwin, 2012, p. 115).

By the Konbaung Dynasty (1752-1886) the unequal positions of power between the Shan *sao hpa* and the Kongbaung Dynasty continued to deepen, articulated through rights to natural resources (see Map 3.3). The Court of Ava retained the rights over the forests and minerals in most of the Shan states (Taylor, 1987, p. 94). The strength and degree of allegiance to lowland Burman sovereignty varied amongst the Shan states: stronger closer to Ava and weaker in the Trans-Salween Shan states. Yet, as U Thant Myint (2001) states: “local rulers accepted or resisted Burmese sovereignty but never lost their autonomy” (p. 24). In areas closer to Ava (Cis-Salween), cultural and political ties between the Shan and Ava courts were strong, whereas in Trans-Salween areas, Konbaung authority was non-existent (Thant Myint-U, 2001, p. 24). During this time, exports from the Court of Ava and the Shan hills, included tea, ivory, pepper, cutch, teak, other timber, lac, and gold and silver (Thant Myint-U, 2001, pp. 47-48).

Map 3.3. Konbaung Kingdom and Dynasty in the early 1800s



Note. The boundaries drawn here represent an approximation. Boundary lines and borders between the Kingdom of Siam, Konbaung Dynasty, and the British Empire were not clearly demarked (Singhal, 1981, p. 30). Cities and town names reflect modern spellings and are used for referencing.

3.4 Imperialism and Colonialism

Alongside the Konbaung Dynasty, European private capitalist endeavors increased. European traders, adventurers, and priests had been a part of Myanmar's history, starting with the Portuguese in the 15th century and including Dutch and Armenians (Aung-Thwin & Aung-Thwin, 2012, pp. 174-175; Thant Myint U, 2001, p. 17). The Court of Ava leased some forests in the Shan states directly to European companies, whereas in others the *sao hpa* still controlled logging activities (Bryant, 1997, pp. 77-84; Scott, 1900, pp. 312-13). As I will show below, the natural resources from Shan states and the ruling *sao hpa* played a crucial role in Myanmar's history, from colonial rule to setting the stage for a military coup in 1962.

Myanmar had, and continues to have, some of the most extensive and high-quality teak reserves in the world (Cockett, 2015, p. 12). In 1998, the total area of *Tectona grandis* (teak) globally was estimated at 69 million acres, with about 41 million acres in Myanmar, representing roughly 60-70% of the world's teak (Brunner, Talbott, & Elkin, 1998; Gy & Tint, n.d.; Colin, 2005, p. 245). Teak's strength, straightness and durability made it desirable for shipbuilding, railway carriages, furniture, houses, and bridges (Bryant, 1997, p. 227). However, teak is also a difficult species to manage. It can take up to 150 years to mature and is only harvestable at 80-year intervals (Bryant, 1997, p. 227; Colin, 2005, p. 234). During British Imperialism, teak was a coveted resource. However, it grows naturally in mixed tropical forests, rarely making up more than 10 to 12 percent of the forested area. Yet, teak grows in unusually dense stands along the Nam Khone River in Shan State, making those areas important global suppliers of teak (Colin, 2005, p. 224; Bryant, 1997, p. 227; International Rivers, 2012; Tewari, 1999).

The British did not begin trading with the Court of Ava until the early 17th century. Initially, they had very little impact in rural interior and hill areas of the country (Aung-Thwin & Aung-Thwin, 2012, pp. 174-175; Thant Myint-U, 2001, p. 17). However, as I show below, by the 19th century British imperialist interests toward the Konbaung Kingdom (1752-1886) increased. Aung-Thwin & Aung-Thwin (2012) suggests that

The acquisition of spices, teak, cotton, coffee, tea and supplying China's potential market through 'the back door' (via Myanmar and Vietnam) were incentives for these two nations [Britain and France] who pursued the 'colonial enterprise' either through trading companies or direct government initiatives. (p. 176)

By the 1800s France and Britain, often initially through private business interests, began colonial projects in Southeast Asia as they vied for control of coveted resources.

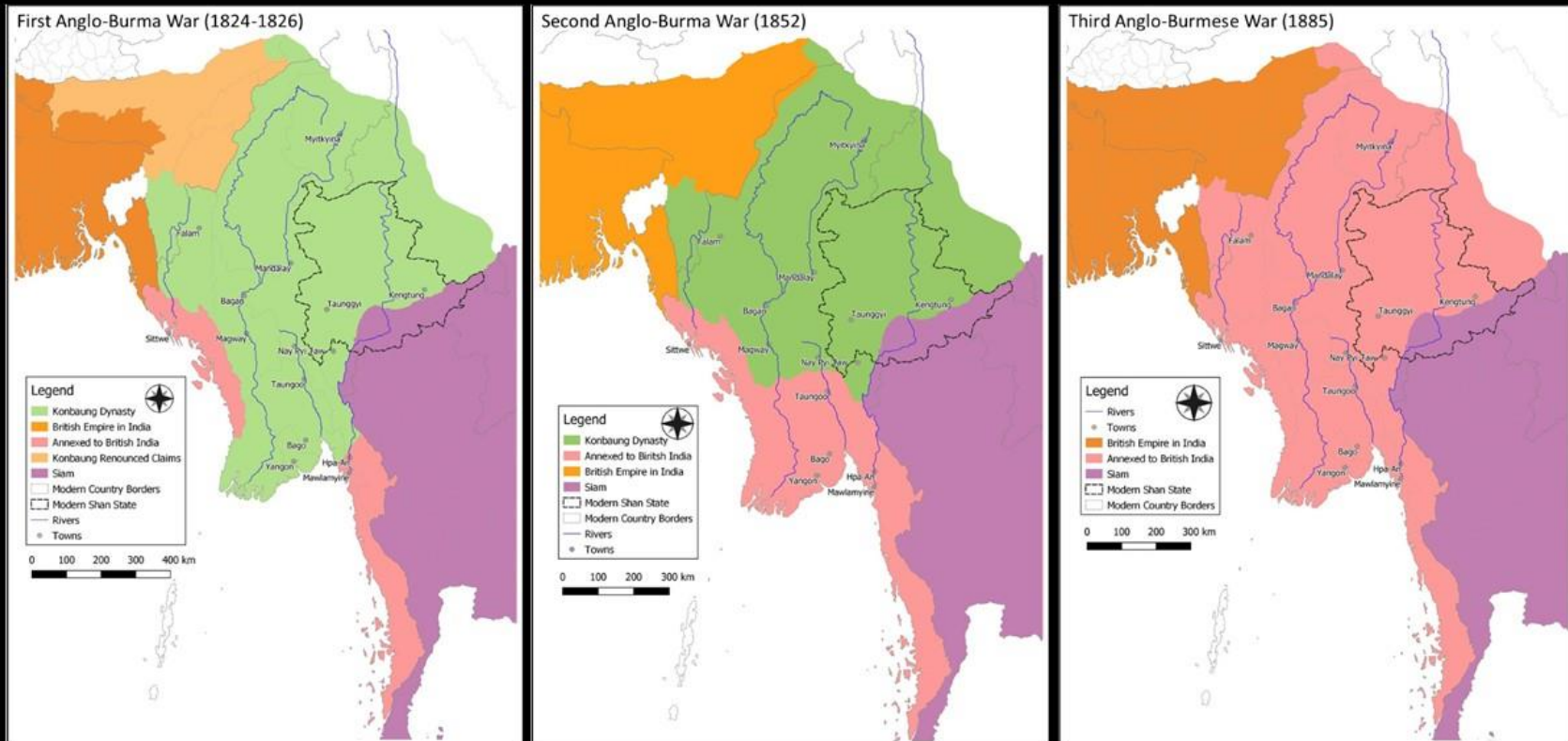
3.4.1 1st Anglo-Burma War (1824-1826)

The British Empire conducted three Anglo-Burmese wars (1824-1826, 1852, and 1885-1886), progressively bringing more territory and natural resources under British dominion (see Map 3.4) and forcing the formalization of the border between Burma and the Kingdom of Siam (Winichakul, 1994). In 1823, motivated by a border dispute in western Myanmar, and conflicting understandings of scientifically fixed boundaries versus traditionally porous ones, British forces, mostly from the East India Trading company, challenged the Court of Ava (Aung-Thwin & Aung-Thwin, 2012, p. 177; Winichakul, 1994). Over the course of two years of fighting and five million pounds later, British forces took Assam, Arakan and Manipur³⁴ and further annexed Tenasserim (Bryant, 1997, p. 22; Thant Myint-U, 2001, p. 18).

³⁴ Assam, Arakan, and Manipur had been incorporated into the Konbaung Dynasty by King Bodawpaya's (1782-1819) armed forces (Singhal, 1981, p. 15). After the first Anglo-Burmese war, under the 1826 Yandabo treaty, King Bodawpaya's predecessor, King Bagyidaw (1819-1837), gave up his claim to those territories (Singhal, 1981, p. 18).

Map 3.4. Map of Anglo-Burmese Wars

Anglo-Burmese Wars and Territory Changes: 1824-1826, 1852, and 1885



Roberts, K.B. QGIS Geographic Information System. Open Source Geospatial Foundation Project. First Anglo-Burma War 1:534077. Second Anglo-Burma War 1: 5289936. Third-Anglo Burmese War 1:5521367. Projection: EPSG:4326 - WGS 84. Toronto. 2022.

Base Map Data Set: MIMU (Myanmar Information Management Unit). Baseline Datasets. URL <https://themimu.info/baseline-datasets>. Access date: 5 June 2018.

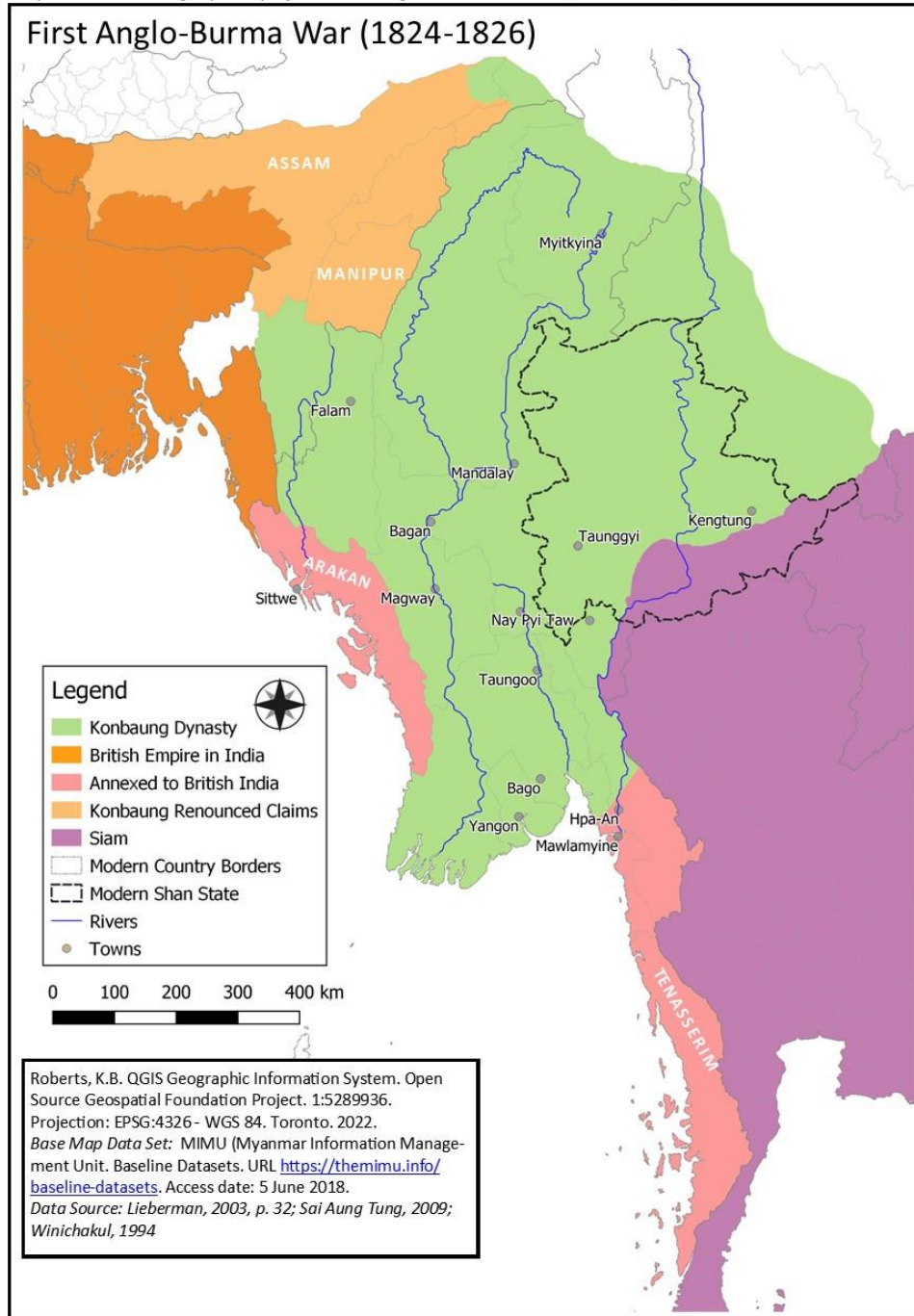
Data Source: Cederlöf, 2009; Lieberman, 2003, p. 32; Sai Aung Tun, 2009; Sao Saimung Mongrai, 1966; Singhal, 1981, p. 30; Winichakul, 1994

Note: The boundaries drawn here represent an approximation. Boundary lines and borders between the Kingdom of Siam, Konbaung Dynasty, and the British Empire were not clearly demarked (Singhal, 1981, p. 30). In practice, the border areas were relational, not geographic. It wasn't until the British empire forced the issue after the third Anglo-Burmese war, that lines between British Burma and the Kingdom of Siam were mapped out (Sai Aung Tun, 2009, pp. 162-168; Sao Saimong Mangrai, 1966; Winichakul, 1994)

After this first war, the annexed regions of Arakan and Tenasserim, referred to as Lower Burma, became a province of the British Empire in India (see **Error! Not a valid bookmark self-**

reference). Lower Burma contributed food exports such as rice, timber, minerals, cotton, and tea exports to the Empire

Map 3.5. Konbaung Dynasty after First Anglo-Burmese War (1824-1826)



Note: Cities and towns shown on the map are for reference and I have used the modern Anglo-spellings, rather than colonial spellings. Boundaries on this map are approximations drawn from the sources cited on the map.

(Aung-Thwin & Aung-Thwin, 2012, p. 206). After the first Anglo-Burmese war of 1824-26, timber merchants controlled the timber trade industry in annexed Lower Burma, which included teak, as well as other species (see Table 3.1). Initially in Tenasserim, the British practiced what Bryant (1997) refers to as a *laissez-faire* form of forestry. Private firms were able to extract teak as they wished; in fact, they were incentivized to extract teak with little concern for the future. Government policy allowed for unfettered private teak extraction and they provided only short-term leases, thereby discouraging any long-term interest in forest management (Bryant 1994a, p. 229). This resulted in the depletion of the slow-maturing teak forests of Tenasserim by the 1850s, causing European firms to seek timber leases with the Konbaung Kingdom and Shan *sao hpa*, which ultimately led to the third and final Anglo-Burmese war (Bryant, 1994b).

Table 3.1. Tree Species of Value in British Burma.

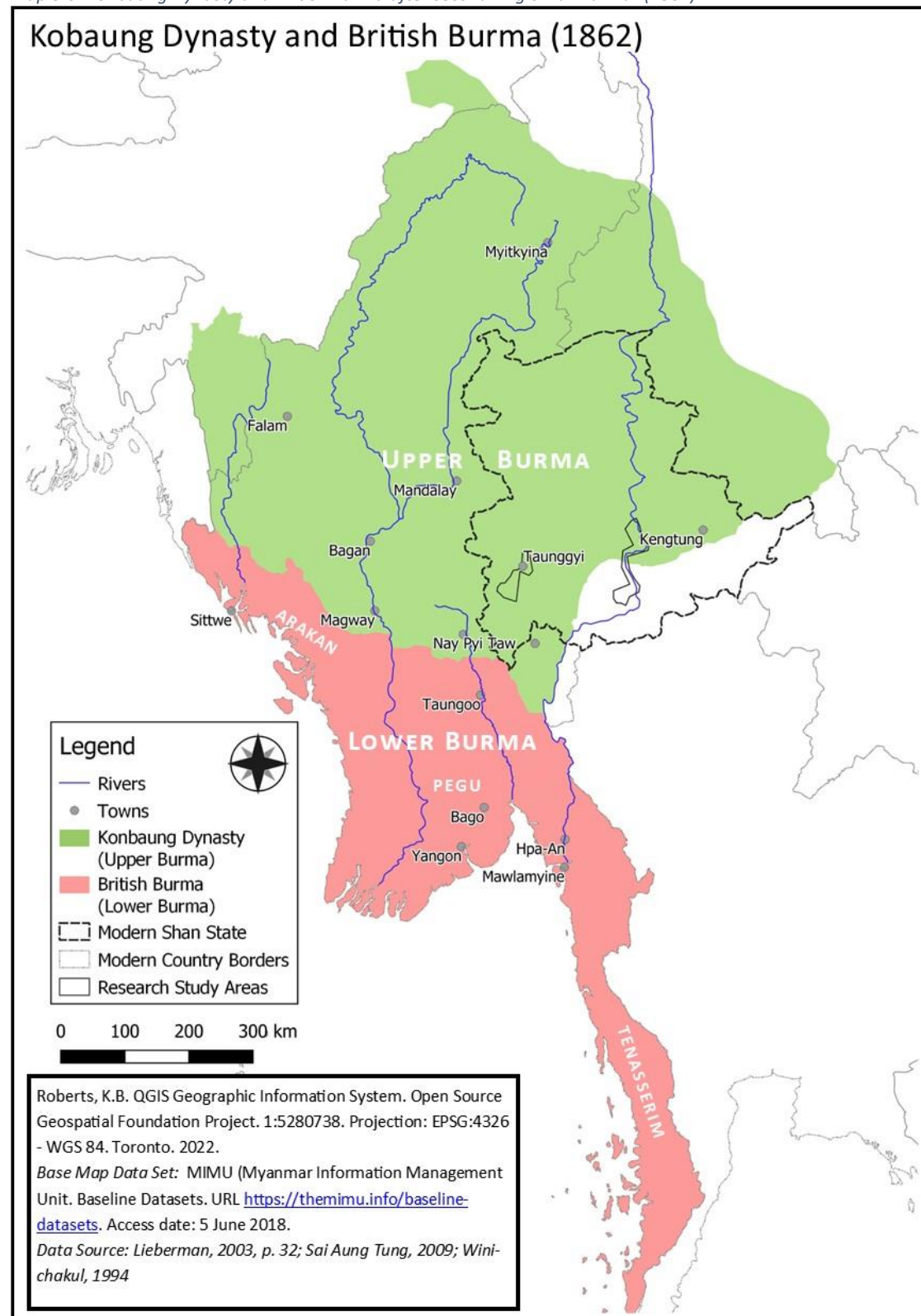
Common/Local Name	Scientific Name	Uses
teak	<i>Tectona grandis</i>	Timber: boats, houses, bridges, etc.
sha tree	<i>Accacia catechu</i>	Cutch for tanning and dyeing
Burmese ironwood (pinkadok)	<i>Xylia dolabriformis</i>	Timber: railway sleepers, bridges, jetties
paduak	<i>Pterocarpus macrocarpus</i>	Timber: Gun-carriage wheels (British)
kanyin	<i>Dipterocarpus spp</i>	Timber: Local housing, carts, boats
thitka	<i>Pentace burmanica</i>	Timber: boats, houses, masts, oars
thitkado	<i>Cedrela tona</i>	Timber: boats, houses, masts, oars
thingan	<i>Hopea adorata</i>	Timber: general, boats
Kanazo	<i>Heritiera fomes</i>	Firewood
Taukkyan	<i>Terminalia tomentosa</i>	firewood
Dahat	<i>Tectona hamiltoniana</i>	firewood
Myaukchaw	<i>Homalium tomentosum</i>	firewood
pyinma	<i>Lagerstroemia flos-reginae</i>	Timber: houses and boats
thitsi	<i>Melanorrhoea usitata</i>	Resin: lacquer

Source: Bryant, R.L. (1997). *The political ecology of forestry in Burma: 1824–1994* (pp. 226-229). Honolulu, HI: University of Hawai'i Press.

3.4.2 2nd Anglo-Burma War (1852)

The second Anglo-Burmese War (1852-1853) resulted in the annexation of Pegu to the British empire (Aung-Thwin & Aung-Thwin, 2012, p. 177) (see Map 3.6). After the second Anglo-Burmese war, Lower Burma included the annexed regions of Arakan, Tassarim, and Pegu; whereas Upper Burma was the remaining Konbaung Dynasty, not under British rule. In Pegu, the British sought control of teak forests and a port to connect Calcutta and Singapore (Bryant, 1997, p. 22). Initially, forestry practices remained the same as they had before the war. However, the *Report on the Teak Forests of the Tenasserim Provinces* by Dr. Falconer documented the disaster of *laissez-faire* forestry in the Tenasserim and the East India Company warned of the social and ecological risks associated with over harvesting (Bryant, 1994c, p. 230). In 1853, the British government declared the newly annexed Pegu's forests as state property, prohibiting unauthorized teak extraction (Bryant, 1997, p. 37). Initially, forestry management in Lower Burma mirrored forestry management in India. Although in some instances forest administration in Lower Burma preceded India in enacting change, such as when Burma established their Forest Department, in 1856, and India followed nearly a decade later in 1865 (Bryant, 1997, p. 53). Dietrich Brandis, director of the newly created Burmese Forest Department (1856), viewed forests in light of their economic value, organizing the Forest Department around the management of hardwood species like teak, for extractive purposes (Bryant, 1994c, 1997). The first forest rules transformed the state's nominal ownership of teak forests into an active right. They included prohibiting the unauthorized felling of teak and limiting access to non-teak timber extraction in teak areas.

Map 3.6. Konbaung Dynasty and British Burma after second Anglo-Burma War (1862)



Note: Cities and towns shown on the map are for reference and I have used the modern Anglo-spellings, rather than colonial spellings. Boundaries on this map are approximations drawn from the sources cited on the map.

Through the annexations from the first and second Anglo-Burmese wars, the Konbaung Dynasty had lost a significant amount of its tax base to the British (Thant-Myint U, 2001, p. 106). Konbaung ruler, King Mindon (1853-1878), sought to increase state revenue through taxing trade, a practice that strained the kingdom's relations with its tributary states and ultimately precipitated the third and final Anglo-Burmese war. Starting in the 1850s, Mindon taxed exports of cotton, timber cutch, wheat, gram, and rubies (Thant-Myint U, 2001, p. 119). Mindon's government also funded expeditions to find new sources for commercially exploitable resources, including lead, coal, copper, rubies, petroleum oil, amber, iron ore, timber forests, and gold (Thant-Myint-U, 2001, p. 120).

The opening of the Suez Canal (1869) invigorated trade and economic activity in Lower Burma, but also in the Konbaung Kingdom. British merchants sought to increase timber, rice, mining, and oil industries (Aung-Thwin & Aung-Thwin, 2012, p. 197). British political and commercial influence were felt throughout the Konbaung Dynasty and in the Shan states. In the Shan states agreements with merchants sometimes bypassed the Court of Ava, despite the fact that many of the *sao hpa* had sworn oaths of allegiance to King Mindon (Thant-Myint U, 2001, p. 109, 126). For the Shan states, teak was a key resource coveted by British business interests. In 1862 Scottish-born William Wallace acquired a logging contract with King Mindon and then in 1863 Wallace founded the Bombay Burmah Trading Corporation Limited (BBTCL) (Bryant, 1997, p. 64). Wallace's BBTCL found itself positioned between colonial British interests and economic interests of the Konbaung Kingdom and would act as a catalyst for the third and final Anglo-Burmese war.

3.4.3 3rd Anglo-Burma War (1885-1886)

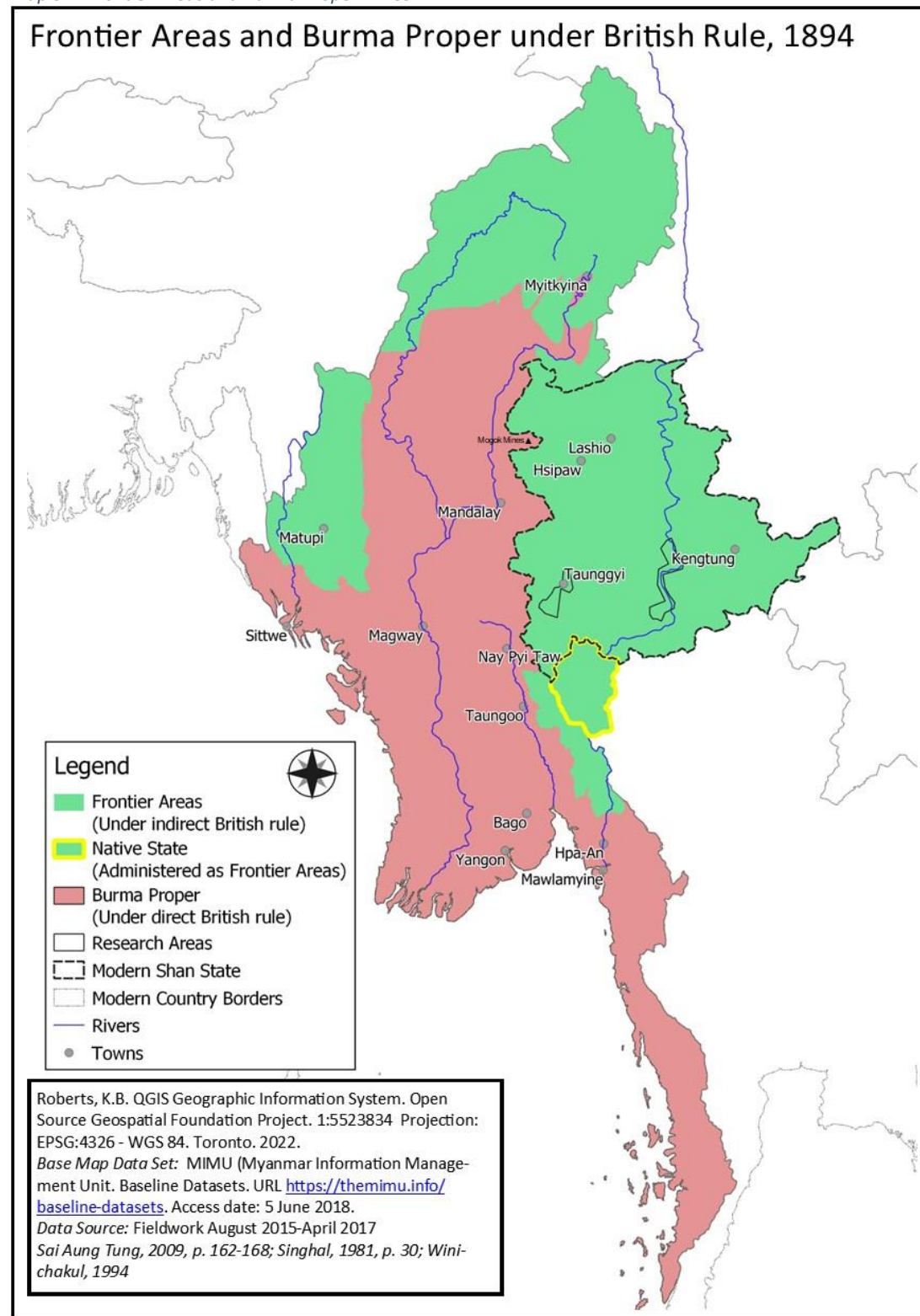
During the early 1880s, Thibaw, the last king of the Konbaung Dynasty (1878-1885), sought to circumnavigate British influence by seeking ties with other European powers, in particular the French, who had already expanded into Indo-China. The Court of Ava, empowered with the prospect of French arms, a bank, new railway links, and increased commercial activities imposed a punitive fine on the BBTCL for underpayment of taxes and royalties on their teak logging activities in the Shan states (Bayne, 2007, p. 124). Wallace's Bombay Burmah Trading Corporation Limited had held leases to work in the teak forests of the Shan states for over twenty years. In 1884, the BBTCL lease was renewed, but Thibaw's government accused the company of using bribes to secure the lease and alleged that the company still owed 15,000,000 rupees (Singhal, 1981, p. 89). Lord Dufferin, the Viceroy in Calcutta was reluctant to engage in another war with the Konbaung Kingdom, rightly predicting that long-term resistance would be costly. However, in November of 1885 Dufferin sent an ultimatum to Thibaw to accept British oversight. When Thibaw rejected this, a British invading force sailed up the Irrawaddy and took control of Mandalay (Aung-Thwin & Aung-Thwin, 2012, p. 189; Bayne, 2007, p. 124; Thant-Myint U, 2001, p. 189).

After the three Anglo-Burmese Wars, spatial patterns of resource extraction shaped the new province's political boundaries and systems of governance. Initially the Province of Burma and its local economies concentrated on trade with British India, aiding the colony's position as a global supplier of raw materials including timber, minerals, cotton, and tea. Administrative policies and systems of governance focused on enabling and increasing commercial enterprises

and attracting outside investment for the development of Burmese industries in rice, transport, oil, mining, and rubber (Aung-Thwin & Aung-Thwin, 2012, p. 206).

The conquest by the British of Mandalay, was nearly bloodless. However, resistance from the Burmese population against colonial oversight continued throughout the following decades of colonial rule. In the 1880s and 1890s, controversies over the timber industry along the Nam Khone River and the results of the third Anglo-Burmese war forced a formal delineation of the boundary between Siam and British Burma, including the Shan states (Sao Saimong Mangrai, 1966; Winichakul, 1994, p. 72). Four of the Shan states had sought protection from the King of Siam in the 1890s after British annexation of the remainder of the Konbaung Kingdom (Sai Aung Tun, 2009, p 152). Although many *sao hpa* had resented the increase in taxes they paid to the Court of Ava and some sought to overthrow Burmese authority when King Mindon died, many also still resisted British rule (Thant-Myint-U, 2001, p. 171). However, between 1887 and 1895 the majority of Shan polities, of which there were roughly 43, were brought under British authority (Ferguson, 2021, p. 41). British proprietary rights set after annexation were based on the claims of the Konbaung monarchs over forests in the Shan states (Bryant, 1997, p. 80). In the Shan states the *sao hpa* did not have *de jure* control over forests, mines, and mineral resources within their states (Taylor, 1987, p. 94). However, the policies in the late 1880s and 1890s also sought to balance the assertion of British control over teak forests without alienating the *sao hpa*.

Map 3.7. Frontier Areas and Burma Proper in 1894



Note: Cities and towns shown on the map are for reference and I have used the modern Anglo-spellings, rather than colonial spellings. Boundaries on this map are approximations drawn from the sources cited on the map.

3.4.4 British Colonial Rule (1886-1942)

The British government changed the previous designations of Upper Burma and Lower Burma to Burma Proper and the Frontier Areas (see Map 3.7). Constituting 40 percent of the land mass of colonial Burma, the Frontier Areas included the Shan states (Smith, 1999, p. 27). The designations of Burma Proper and Frontier Areas signaled a difference in colonial administration, and they also entrenched fragmented administration systems. Unlike in Burma Proper, which they administered directly, the British retained the existing political and state structures at the local level in the Frontier Areas. As long as Shan *sao hpa* acknowledged British authority, the *sao hpa* were permitted to maintain semi-autonomous authority in the Shan states (Ferguson, 2021, p. 42). For many people in the Shan states very little changed when authority switched from Burmese to British, and as before, the greater the distance from a center of power (i.e., British administration centers), the weaker the influence (Aung-Thwin & Aung-Thwin, 2012, p. 196). Therefore, Shan *sao hpa* and political subjects in Cis-Salween areas experienced British authority, whereas those in Trans-Salween areas had little contact with British colonial government.

Although Frontier Areas retained local governance, they were economically neglected in relation to Burma Proper. Ferguson (2021, p. 42) argues that the main motivation for designating the Shan states as Frontier Areas was that it was cheaper for the British to allow the Shan *sao hpa* to continue with their systems of rule and authority. Direct and indirect rule reflected the colonial state's interest and priorities. A few profitable areas in the Shan states, such as the gem mines at Mogok, were annexed into Burma Proper (see Map 3.7). However, with the exception of teak, tea, and a few minerals, British commercial interests viewed much

of the Shan states as a low priority (Aung-Thwin & Aung-Thwin, 2012, pp. 195-196; Ferguson, 2021, p. 42; Smith, 1999, p. 47). The economic disparities created between the Frontier Areas and Burma Proper during colonial rule influenced future conflict in the country. Aung-Thwin and Aung-Thwin (2012) suggest that the combination of the loss of social, political, and religious ties in Burma Proper and the under-development of the Frontier Areas sowed “the seeds of twentieth and twenty-first century separatist movements by various Kachin, Chin, Shan, Mon and Karen communities” (p. 182). The British recognition of the *sao hpa* system reinforced the historic independence of the Shan peoples and their separateness from Burma (Smith, 1999, p. 64).

Colonial rule also changed the relation Shan *sao hpa* had with their political subjects. The power and authority of *sao hpa* over their political subjects—lowland Shan and significant populations of non-Tai groups including Akha, Lahu, Wa, Dara-ang, Pa-Oh, Burman, and Chinese—lessened during colonial rule. By shifting *sao hpa* dependency for power from their subjects to British administrative approval, the ways in which the *sao hpa* operated changed (Ferguson, 2021, pp. 42-43). British administration in Taunggyi also established an elite private school to educate the sons of *sao hpa* in the English language and through Western education. Overtime this separate education system created an ‘old boys’ club mentality among the Shan aristocracy that had not existed before. The distance that grew between the Shan *sao hpa* aristocracy and their political subjects sowed the seeds for an anti-*sao hpa* movement that would take hold in the 1920s. British education entrenched the link between territory, subject, ethnicity, and sovereignty among the Shan elite (Ferguson, 2021, p. 31).

Through colonial administration, over time the *sao hpa* also lost some of their autonomy. The semi-autonomy of the *sao hpa* had become more contentious under Konbaung rulers as the kingdom lost territory and political subjects to the British, thus placing more taxes and demands in its remaining territories and tributaries. British colonialism retained the local rule of the *sao hpa*, but further redefined their relationships to the tributary power. British established administrative towns outside of *sao hpa* rule, including Taunggyi, and they appointed two superintendents for the Shan states, one in the north and one in the south. Overtime, the superintendents gradually increased their supervisory powers to be more in line with those in Burma Proper (Taylor, 1987, p. 94). For instance, in practice, many *sao hpa* retained leases to teak forests in their own states (Bryant, 1997, p. 82). Initially, in 1890, the colonial state introduced a similar annual tax as in pre-colonial times, at 200 rupees per timber elephant. However, just three years later in 1893, the system was modified to an annual fixed assessment per state, with the highest taxes of 10,000 rupees for wealthy states like Keng Tung or Mong Pan, while poorer states paid just 200 rupees (Bryant, 1997, p. 82). Additionally, by the end of the decade the Forestry Department claimed evidence of illegal extraction and overharvesting, thereby seeking to replace *sao hpa* timber leases with European company timber leases and lessening the autonomy of the *sao hpa* (Bryant, 1997, p. 82).

British colonization also left a legacy of new forms of ethnic racism and ethno-nationalism. As stated previously, prior to colonization understandings of race and ethnicity differed. In Burmese the term *lumyo* conveyed a meaning of a “type of person” in relation to their social status or class distinction, not language or ethnicity as it does today. When the British census commissioners first attempted to survey the population of Burma, they assumed

the population could be categorized according to caste as it was in British ruled India. However, the census commissioners soon realized that the concept did not translate in Burma and instead they shifted their focus on different language groups, tying language to race or tribe and ultimately changing the meaning of *lumyo*³⁵ (Ferguson, 2021, pp. 44-49; Winichakul, 1994, pp. 12-16).

European notions of biologically determined race and ethnicity added to the racialized narratives of Shan as backward that had started amongst lowland Burman when Shan peoples invaded the Irrawaddy valley in the 1500s (Aung-Thwin & Aung-Thwin, 2012; Lieberman, 2003, pp. 131-132). During colonialism, these same narratives were used against Shan and other upland shifting cultivators in response to what colonial administrators saw as destructive forestry practices (Bryant, 1997; Bryant, 1994a; Ferguson, 2021, p. 45). In the 1880s, customary forest access by settled agriculturalists was considered a right, yet the 1881 Act strongly distinguished between *taungya*³⁶ and settled agriculturists and restricted the practice of *taungya* (Bryant, 1997, p. 60). The Forestry Department remained critical of unscientific indigenous practices, and although timber traders were reprimanded for wasteful practices, it was the *taungya* shifting cultivators that were condemned for destroying forests (Bryant, 1994a).

³⁵ Today, Myanmar is divided into seven divisions and seven states. The seven states are named for the major ethnic minority *lumyo*: Shan, Kayin (Karen), Kayin (Karen), Mon, and Rakhine (Arakan). Within the eight *lumyo* groups of Myanmar (including ethnic Burman) are then 135 officially recognized subgroups (Ferguson, 2021, p. 22).

³⁶ *Taungya* is the Burmese word for shifting cultivation, *taung* for hill and *ya* for cultivation. *Taungya* “is a type of dry agriculture that combines various techniques – partial forest clearance, shallow cultivation, multiple cropping, and field rotation – to produce food and cash crops” (Bryant, 1994a, p. 226).

3.4.5 Independence movement

The power and authority of the colonial British government over the Shan states peaked in the 1920s, but steadily declined afterwards. It was also during the 1920s that the Burmese population renewed their resistance to British rule, using the language and approach of contemporary anti-fascists and anti-colonial movements occurring around the globe (Smith, 1999, p. 48). Strikes and anti-tax protests occurred during this time with students and Buddhist monks playing a prominent role. In the Shan states, a leftist political movement challenging the rule of the *sao hpa* emerged. The anti-feudal movement was spurred in part by students attending schools in Rangoon and joining factions of the Burmese nationalist movement (Buchanan, 2017, p. 120). However, as discussed above, the colonial policies and practices that disenfranchised the *sao hpa* aristocracy from their political subjects also contributed to the movement (Ferguson, 2021).

In 1936 two student leaders, Aung San and Ko Nu, were expelled from Rangoon University, sparking a major student strike. These students would have a significant role in the later independence movement. In the face of nationalist protests, in 1937 the colonial government separated the Province of Burma from British India and established Burma as a new administrative unit (Buchanan, 2017, p. 103). However, the designation of Burma as a separate colony did little to quell the independence movement. In 1939, a student group founded the Communist Party of Burma (CPB) in Rangoon (Ferguson, 2021, p. 52). It was the most powerful political organization during the 1940s. For three years the CPB was a legal political party. However, for the remaining forty-one years until mutiny in 1989, the CPB

promoted armed insurrections throughout the country, including in Shan State (Ferguson, 2021, p. 67; Lintner, 2019, p. 421).

3.5 Japanese Imperialism, 1942-1948

Adding to the tumult of the 1920s and 1930s was the Japanese imperialist march across Asia, which started with the Japanese invasion of Manchuria in 1931 (Overy, 2022). This caused many Southeast Asian nationalist groups to look toward Japan as a means of separating themselves from European domination (Ferguson, 2021, p. 52). Japanese propaganda and intelligence gathering in Burma established an offensive strategy and system of networks that would enable Japan to drive the British out of Burma and close off the Burma Road³⁷ and access to China (Thant-Myint-U, 2006, pp. 218-219). Japanese ties with Burmese nationalists increased in 1940, when an arrest warrant went out for Aung San, causing him to flee Burma. This small incident has had monumental and lasting impact on the country. Aung San and the nationally mythologized ‘Thirty Comrades’ received military training from the Japanese forces and absorbed Japanese ideology of “one nation, one state, one party, one leader...” (Ba Maw, *Breakthrough in Burma*, p. 127 as cited in Thant-Myint U, 2006, p. 229). In 1941, under Japanese supervision, the Thirty Comrades formed the Burma Independence Army (BIA) and in 1942, alongside Japanese regiments, they overthrew the British and occupied Burma. In Burma, BIA³⁸ ranks swelled with fellow nationalists (Thant-Myint-U, 2006, pp. 230-231). In 1943, the

³⁷ The 360 miles of the Burma Road was completed in December of 1938, starting in Kunming, China and ending in Lashio, Burma. During WWII, British authorities were connected to American aid and thousands of Chinese workers through the Burma Road (Trager, 1971, pp. 5-6).

³⁸ The Japanese formed Burma Army went through three iterations in short order. In general, I refer to all three iterations as the Burma Army. However, for specificity, in 1941 the Burma Independence Army (BIA) was formed (Trager, 1971, p. 16). On July 27, 1942, a dissolved and reduced BIA was formed into the Burma Defense Army (Trager, 1971, p. 11). Following an announcement from the Japanese government of Burma’s independence, on September 16, 1943 the BDA turned into Burma National Army (BNA) (Trager, 1971, p. 154).

Japanese Military Administration decommissioned the majority of the BIA troops and the remaining officers received intensive training, leaving a legacy of methods and tactics and ideologies. The slogan of this redefined army, the Burma Defense Army (BDA), “One Blood, One Voice, One Command” remains the slogan of the Myanmar military today and many of these Japanese trained officers dominated the Myanmar military well into the 1970s (Thant-Myint-U, 2006, p. 233; Trager, 1971, p. 11).

3.5.1 Japanese occupation and fragmentation in the Shan states

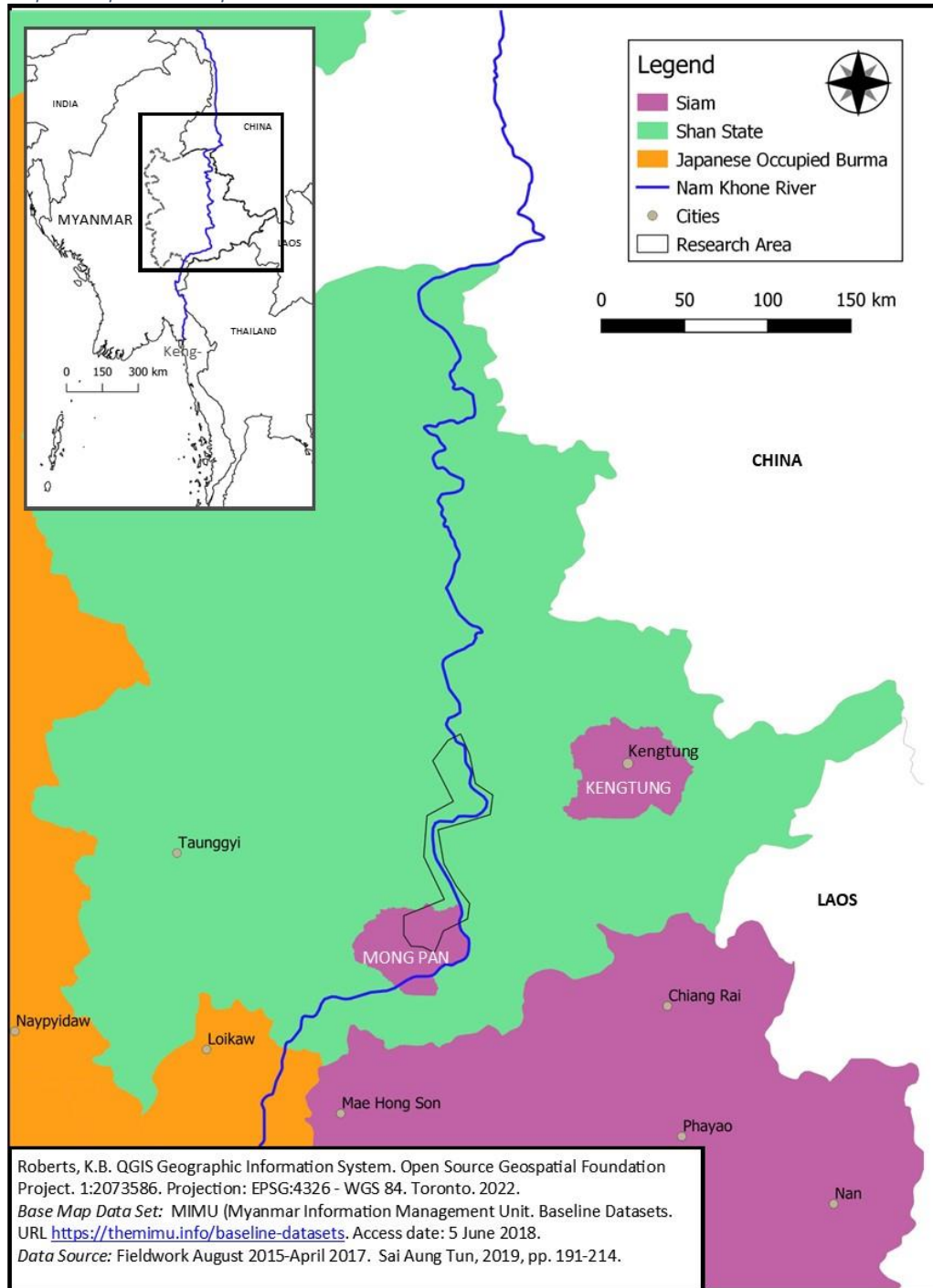
In the summer of 1940, Japan signed a non-aggression treaty with Siam. In December 1941, Siam solidified their military alliance with Japan by declaring war on the Allies (Trager, 1971, p. 5). Joint Japanese and Siamese armed forces fought against Allied forces, which, in the Shan states, included British colonial armies, anti-communist Kuomintang (KMT) forces from China, and Americans (Sai Aung Tun, 2009, pp. 191-195). While the Thirty Comrades were marching with the Japanese, some Shan elite families joined the Allies³⁹. Whereas the Burma Army saw themselves as liberators of Burma, among many in the Shan states the Burma Army was seen as foreign occupiers. The Burma and Japanese armies left a trail of bombings, rape, child abuse, and burned villages (Ferguson, 2021, p. 53).

During occupation of the Shan states, Japanese officials continued the system of *sao hpa* in a quasi-formal role. The Shan States Administrative Office was established in Taunggyi in 1942, with a subordinate Shan Chief’s Council, made up of *sao hpa* (Sai Aung Tun, 2009, p. 197). In 1943 the Japanese-installed Government of Burma’s Minister of Home Affairs oversaw the

³⁹ For instance, Kawn Sön, served as a soldier in the United States Army, was a future leader in the Shan United Revolutionary Army (SURA), a predecessor of the still active Shan State Army-South (SSA-S/RCSS) (Ferguson, 2021, p. 53).

Shan states (Buchanan, 2017, p. 104; Sai Aung Tun, 2009, p. 198). The Japanese Military Administration took direct control over activities such as banking, railroads, and telegraph services (Sai Aung Tun, 2009, p. 546).

Map 3.8. Japanese Occupied Shan State in 1942-1944



Japanese military occupation in Burma also further fragmented the Shan states. Under the same Western ethno-national trends that merged ethnicity with territory, Siamese nationalists saw the Shan states, in particular the Trans-Salween Shan states, as ethnic kin and former vassal states lost to the British (Ferguson, 2021, pp. 46-47, Winichakul, 1994, pp. 134-135). With permission from the Japanese authorities, but not from the *sao pha*, in 1942 the Siamese military occupied the states of Keng Tung and Mong Pan (see Map 3.8). A treaty between Japan and Thailand in 1943 formalized the “reversion” of the Shan states to Thailand (Sai Aung Tun, 2009, pp. 560-562). Buchanan (2017, p. 105) reports that the occupation by the Siamese troops was considered more severe than that of the Japanese, leading to at least two revolts. One took place in Keng Tung led by a Lahu leader and another in Mong Pan led by a Shan leader.

In the Shan states, the legacy of Japanese and Siamese occupation contributed to conflicting responses. Shan leaders distrusted the Burmese nationalist’s vision for a future Union of Burma. However, in particular for Mong Pan and Keng Tung, there was also contempt toward neighboring Siam. As Ferguson (2021) writes “...for some, World War II forced an awakening of the Shan nation” (p. 56).

3.6 British reoccupation and negotiations for independence, 1945-46

By 1944, many of the leaders in the Burma Army who had joined forces with the Japanese to oust the British were beginning to have their doubts. The Thirty Comrades, including Aung San and future military coup leader Ne Win, decided that they owed their loyalty only to Burmese independence and they reached out to the Allies to help drive out the

Japanese. By 1945, Aung San formed an underground resistance movement, the Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League (AFPFL), which would later form the basis of a new, independent Myanmar government (Thant-Myint-U, 2006, p. 238).

In the Shan states, the post-war years of 1945-1948 were a transition period. During this time, the *sao hpa* reasserted their rule, alongside the creation of the Union of Burma (Buchanan, 2017, p. 106). In August of 1945, Japan surrendered the colonial territories back to Britain, including the Siam controlled Shan states of Mong Pan and Keng Tung (Ferguson, 2021, p. 56). This return to colonial status would be short-lived, however, as Burmese and Shan politicians alike began to prepare for independence. Shan leaders organized a conference in March of 1946 with ethnic Chin, Kachin, and Karen leaders. Despite the unequal treatment of Burma Proper and the Frontier Areas during colonial rule and the divisions and violence that occurred during a Burmese nationalist backed Japanese occupation, many of these leaders felt that "political unity between the hill peoples...and the plain people... had become a necessity" (Sai Aung Tun, 2009, p. 207). Therefore, some leaders from the Frontier Areas felt that they needed to align themselves with the Burman majority to achieve full independence (Ferguson, 2021, pp. 56-57; Sai Aung Tun, 2009, p. 207).

In early 1947, Aung San traveled to London to negotiate with the British government over independence (Buchanan, 2017, p. 108). While Aung San was there, despite ongoing negotiations toward a Union of Burma, some Shan *sao hpa* telegrammed the British to make it clear that Aung San did not represent them (Ferguson, 2021, p. 56). Ethnic minority leaders were not present at these meeting and had not yet come to an agreement with Burman leaders

from the Burmese nationalist movement, and therefore expressed concerns that Frontier Area interests were not taken into consideration.

In February of 1947, leaders from Shan, Kachin, Chin, and Burman areas met just after Aung San's negotiations with the British. The meeting, known as the Panglong Conference, took place in Loliem township in south Shan State. The leaders sought to bring about a peaceful solution that addressed the concerns that many of the groups had about autonomy and self-governance (Amnesty International, 1999, p. 3). The resulting Panglong Agreement (1947) included a provision that Frontier Areas, as a part of the Union of Burma, would maintain full autonomy of internal administration, and that the federated Shan states would remain financially autonomous⁴⁰. Members of the AFPFL saw the Shan *sao hpa* as the group most prepared to govern the Shan states and as the group most capable of delaying independence if the Shan and Burmese could not come to an agreement (Ferguson, 2021, p. 57). On 12 February 1947, Aung San and 22 Shan, Chin, and Kachin leaders signed the Panglong agreement, demonstrating their willingness to join the Union of Burma. The Panglong Agreement also gave the British evidence of cooperation from the Frontier Areas (Ferguson, 2021, p. 57; Sai Aung Tun, 2009, pp. 226-234).

In preparation of a transfer of power from the British, after the Panglong Agreement national elections were held to appoint an executive council. Since the 1920s, a schism had grown between the previous unified AFPFL and the CPB. Socialist political parties opted to support the AFPFL (Lintner, 2019, p. 73). As a result, the AFPFL won the majority in the elected

⁴⁰ Several scholars critique the view of the agreement as a representation of multi-ethnic cooperation at the foundation of the Union of Burma (see Sadan, 2013, Yawngkhwe, 2010)

parliament⁴¹. The pro-communist and pro-socialist political parties had united in the Burmese independence movement; however, former allies became enemies in the fight over how to govern an independent Burma (Grundy-Warr et al., 1997, p. 77-78; Lintner, 2019, p. 24).

On 19 July 1947, the Executive Council, filling the roll of the interim government and including Karen, Shan, and Muslim leadership, met at the Secretariat Building in downtown Yangon (see Photo 3.1). Armed paramilitaries of political rival U Saw broke into the meeting and assassinated Aung San and six of his cabinet members, including⁴² Sao Hsam Htun, the *sao hpa* of the Shan State of Mong Pan (Lintner, 2019, pp. xiiv-xiv; Thant-Myint-U, 2006, pp. 254-255).

Photo 3.1. Secretariat Building in Yangon, Myanmar. Source: Author, 2015.



⁴¹ Although people from the ethnic states voted, in particular where representatives had participated in the Panglong Agreement, many ethnic Karen and Aung San's political enemies boycotted the 7 April 1947 election (Thant-Myint U, 2006, p. 253).

⁴² The nine people killed that day include Aung San; student leader Thakin Mya; statesman Ba Choe; Muslim school principal and politician Razak; Aung San's elder brother Ba Win; ethnic Karen Mahn Ba Khaing; Shan Sao Sam Htun; deputy secretary of the Ministry of Transport Ohn Maung; and Ko Htwe, Razak's bodyguard. (Lintner, 2019, pp. xiiv-xiv)

The loss of Aung San and many of the top leaders in the country before independence disrupted the delicate balance between uplands and lowlands, and between communists and socialists. Aung San played a pivotal role in organizing anti-colonial and anti-fascist movements prior to WWII and leading the country to independence. For the Shan states, however, Aung San also left behind a cruelly abbreviated legacy of unity between the lowland Burmans and the upland ethnic peoples. Aung San is quoted to have said:

The essential prerequisite is the building of one unified nation. In concrete terms it means we must now bridge all gulfs now existing through British machinations between the major Burmese race and the hill peoples, the Arakanese, the Shans and unite all these peoples into one nation with equal treatment unlike the present system which divides our people into 'backward' and 'administered' sections. (Maung, *Burma and General Ne Win*, p. 291, as cited in Smith, 1999, p. 76)

The Panglong Agreement had sought to build this unified country that Aung San had spoken about and move past the colonial divisions of Frontier Areas and Burma Proper. Many Shan political leaders believed that Aung San's intentions were genuine, as shown in the Panglong Agreement (Ferguson, 2021, p. 57). Aung San was also one of the few Burmese political leaders whom the ethnic minorities trusted. Prior to the assassinations, the Karen National Union (KNU) were in talks with the interim government and Aung San had been talking with CPB leaders about forming a new AFPFL/CPB united front (Lintner, 2019, p. xiv; Smith, 1999, pp. 66 71). After the assassinations, however, the possibility lessened for a peaceful independent Burmese nation that unified the diverse upland and lowland populations and the divergent political views of the socialists and communist.

3.6.1 1947 Secession Clause

U Nu, a Burmese nationalist leader and former student activist with Aung San, was the only council member not present that day in April 1947. The assassinations of his fellow council members left him with the task of overseeing the final independence negotiations and the drafting of a new constitution. The constitution contained many of the of agreements made in Panglong, but not all. Ratified in September of 1947, the constitution granted administrative powers to the hereditary authority of the *sao hpa* and their families (Smith, 1999, pp. 192-193). Additionally, and most significantly for the fate and future of Myanmar, chapter ten of the constitution outlined a “Right of Secession” clause for Shan and Kayah (Karenni) States. Essentially, within ten years from the date the constitution came into effect, Shan and Kayah states had the right to hold a referendum for secession from the Union of Burma (Buchanan, 2017, p. 110). This constitution reaffirmed the *sao hpa* as the lawful leaders of the Shan states with the right to become fully independent in ten years if the people willed it (Ferguson, 2021, pp. 58-59).

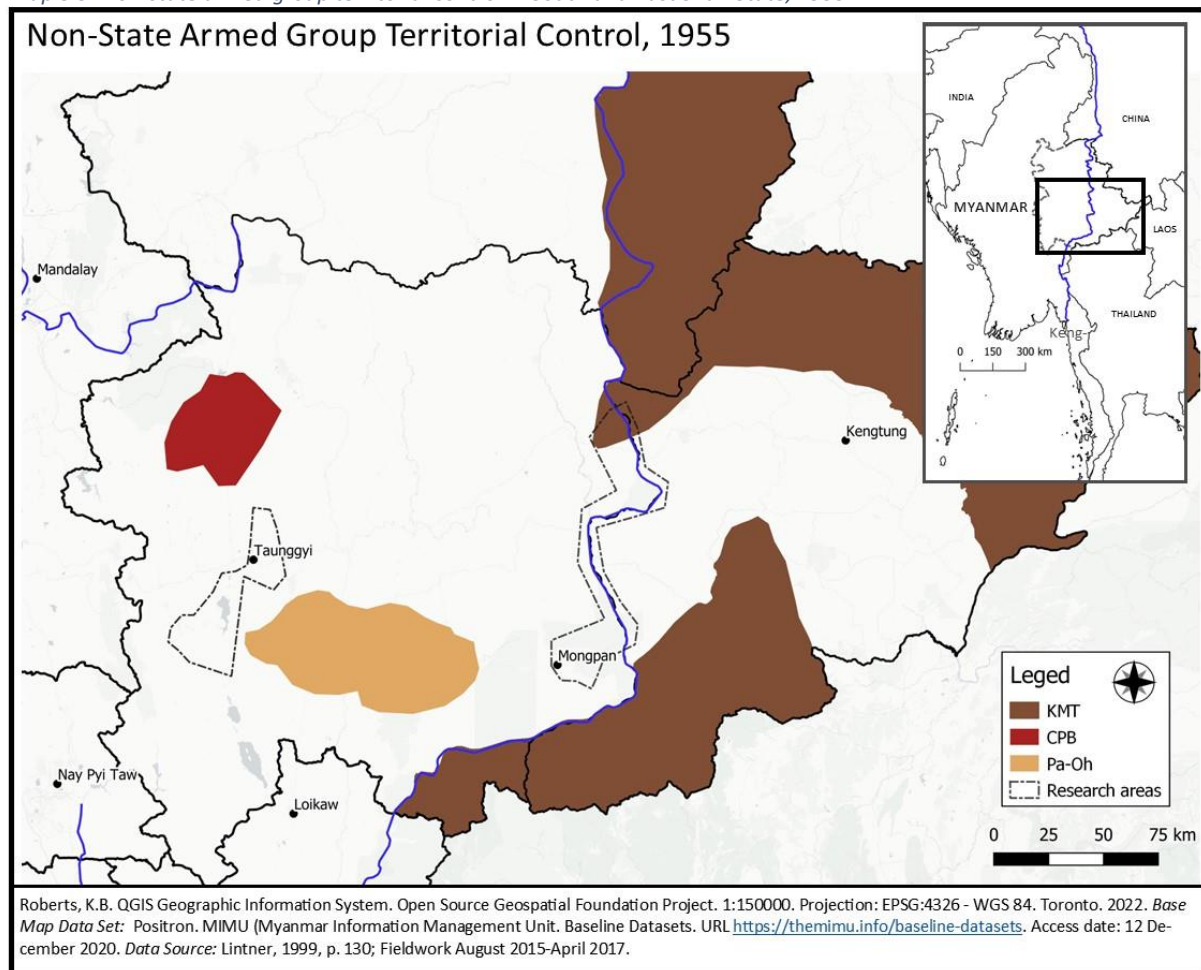
3.7 Independence and the birth of armed resistance movements, 1948-1959

Independence did come on January 4, 1948 at 4:20am with U Nu as prime minister, and ethnic Shan Sao Shwe Thaike as president. The central government included a parliamentary democracy system with upper and lower houses. From 1948 to 1959 the administration in Shan state continued with a retention of the 33 *sao hpa* led states. This gradually merged into a hybrid system where the *sao hpa* governed alongside a central government appointed Shan State administration (Buchanan, 2017, pp. 106-110; Sai Aung Tun, 2009).

However, with the loss of leaders like Aung San, who potentially could have mediated the situation, by mid-1948, the nascently independent nation had already destabilized. Some CPB factions were in open armed rebellion and ethnic minority groups including the Karen, Mon, Pa-Oh, and Karenni were in armed struggles for independence and autonomy (Lintner, 2019, p. xv). In the case of the Pa-Oh rebellion, however, the anti-feudalist movement was directed against the Shan *sao hpa*, rather than the Myanmar government (Buchanan, 2017, p. 120; Lintner, 1999, p. 403). Anti-feudalist movements operated at local and national levels, with the AFPFL and the Shan State-based political party the Shan State Peoples Freedom League (SSPFL) taking the lead in advocating for an end to the feudal authority of the *sao hpa*, which colonialism had preserved (Buchanan, 2017, p. 120; Ferguson, 2021, p. 66).

In addition to internal destabilization, the newly independent nation experienced external threats: threats that would play out in the Shan states. In 1949 Mao Tse-tung's Communist Party was in power in China (Ferguson, 2021, p. 67) and armed anti-communist nationalist Chinese Kuomintang (KMT) troops fled across the southwestern border from Yunnan Province into Shan State, as well as to Taiwan (Ferguson, 2021, p. 67; Lintner, 2019, p. 426). In the borderlands between Shan State, China, and Thailand the KMT worked closely with Taiwanese intelligence, Thai military, and the United States Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). US politicians saw the KMT troops as regionally strategic for containing Maoist China (Xiaobo, 2018, p. 24). Although the KMT started with 5000 mostly Chinese troops, by 1951 they drafted soldiers from Lahu, Wa, Dara-ang, Shan, and Sino-Shan borderland communities (see Map 3.9). By 1953 the KMT had 12,000 troops in Myanmar (Ferguson, 2021, p. 67; Lintner, 2019, p. 99).

Map 3.9. Non-state armed group territorial control in South and East Shan State, 1955



In some instances, KMT units respected local villages, and local traders benefited financially from the presence of the troops. In other instances, stories circulated of KMT units stealing and pillaging from villagers, killing their buffalo, and forcing conscriptions (Sai Aung Tun, 2009, p. 309; Ferguson, 2021, pp. 68-69). Members of the KMT called on historical instances of *Shan sao hpa* paying tribute to Chinese emperors to justify their presence in the state (Ferguson, 2021, pp. 68-69). The Myanmar government saw the KMT incursion as an external invasion and threat to nation-state sovereignty. In 1952 U Nu urged *Shan sao hpa* to expel the KMT, and when this failed to happen the central government sent in troops to engage in armed combat with the KMT (Ferguson, 2021, p. 69). For local villagers, the Myanmar forces became yet another

occupying force in Shan State, committing the same abuses and offenses against them as the KMT. Many civilians found themselves in the crosshairs between the Myanmar military and the KMT (Sai Aung Tun, 2009, p. 307; Ferguson, 2021, p. 69). This situation of being caught between armed groups would become all too familiar in the coming decades for many rural farmers in Shan State.

The civil conflict since independence also impacted the timber industry in the country. Following WWII, the Forestry Department had very limited authority (Bryant, 1994a). The early insurgencies from the anti-feudal movements and the KMT restricting logging efforts. During this time, commercial forestry logging conducted jointly by the Forestry Department and the State Timber Board had to practice ‘forestry on the run,’ moving quickly through active fighting zones, extracting what they could (Bryant, 1997, p. 158).

3.8 1959-1962 Caretaker Government

In the 1950s the armies from the KMT and CPB were fighting with the Myanmar military for control of territory, people, and trade networks. This increased militarization in Shan State had lasting effects for Myanmar. By the late 1950s, the U Nu-led government’s ‘Arms for Democracy’ program, which provided nationwide amnesty for insurgent, had resulted in some of the CPB and insurgents in Shan State surrendering their arms (Buchanan, 2017, p. 131). However, the ‘external threat’ of the KMT and the looming deadline for the secession clause from the 1947 Constitution gave the Myanmar military the excuse to take control of the government. In October 1958, General Ne Win⁴³ seized control and replaced U Nu’s civilian regime and established a ‘military caretaker’ government in Rangoon, that would rule for two

⁴³ One of the “Thirty Comrades” (Thant-Myint-U, 2006, p. 239).

years (Buchanan, 2017, p. 134). The caretaker government aimed to stop the incursions and fighting in the former Frontier Areas of the country and extend administrative control into more of Shan State (Buchanan, 2017, p. 118; Callahan, 2005; Ferguson, 2021, p. 70). U Thant Myint (2006) writes that “the army’s caretaker government...was, by all accounts, the most effective and efficient in modern Burmese history. It was also high-handed and at times brutal” (p. 284).

The military caretaker government sent units into Shan State to clear the region of rebels (i.e., CPB), foreign intruders (i.e., KMT), and potential plotters of secession (Buchanan, 2017, p. 132; Yawngghwe, 2010, p. 7). The military used their caretaker government to restructure the hybrid administration in Shan State. In 1959 the *sao hpa* formally transferred their authority to the Shan State government (Buchanan, 2017, p. 106). To Burmese nationalist leadership, the *sao hpa* system was a threat on several fronts. It was not compatible with their socialist vision for the country, and it impeded the Burman-centric government’s ability to exercise control in Shan state. For the Myanmar military the *sao hpa* system reflected the major security risk of the possible succession of Shan State from Burma (Buchanan, 2017, p. 122). Officially, the 1947 secession clause in the constitution became operative in 1958. Yet, despite the Myanmar military’s fears, Shan State leadership never held a referendum on secession (Buchanan, 2017, p. 113). Instead, in April of 1959, the remaining *sao hpa* ended their over six centuries of feudal authority and signed away their political autonomy to Myanmar authorities in a Renunciation Treaty (Buchanan, 2017, p. 133; Ferguson, 2021, pp. 71-72; Smith, 1999, p. 193). The Shan *sao hpa* were given cash bonuses and pensions collectively amounting to over 25 million kyats (\$523,000 USD in 1959) (Buchanan, 2017, p. 133; Ferguson, 2021, p. 72). For the Pa-Oh leaders who had laid down their arms the year before, this was a successful

conclusion of their ten-year anti-feudalist campaign (Smith, 1999, p. 193). Ne Win's caretaker government operated on a platform of "non-disintegration of the union." With the *sao hpa* resigned from power, Ne Win's government made moves to persuade the new Shan State government to fully relinquish the legal right to secede from the Union (Ferguson, 2021, pp. 71-72; Smith, 1999, p. 193).

The activities by Myanmar officials during the caretaker government spurred a range of responses from within Shan State, including new political movements and armed resistance. With the transfer of *sao hpa* authority the divisive issue of feudalism ended. However, former political rivals joined ranks under an umbrella of common political concerns, including grievances with Myanmar military occupation and the right to secession, and started the Federal Movement (Buchanan, 2017, p. 135; Ferguson, 2021, p. 72; Sai Aung Tun, 2009, pp. 425-481). The Federal Movement received trans-ethnic support, including from Burman leaders, such as Prime Minister U Nu, and ethnic minority leaders outside of Shan State (Buchanan, 2017, p. 136; Sai Aung Tun, 2009, p. 427).

3.8.1 EAOs and ethno-nationalist insurgencies in Shan state

The dissolution of the *sao hpa* system also led to an increase in ethno-nationalist armed movements in Shan State. Since 1948 over three dozen armed organizations have operated in Shan State, from small bands led by strongmen to larger ethno-nationalist operations. Mergers and splits between groups add layers of confusion (Buchanan, 2017, pp. 173-174). Rebellion and insurgency against the Myanmar government and Myanmar military had already started in Karen, Karenni, Mon, and Rahkine territories since independence in 1948. In contrast, Shan State was a signatory to the Panglong Agreement and its leaders had stood by the new

Burmese nation. Many local populations also initially supported the Myanmar military's efforts against the KMT (Smith, 1999, p. 191). However, soon the Myanmar military's abuses against civilian populations and the dissolution of six centuries of social, political, cultural, and religious ties and networks through the *sao hpa* system ran high and spurred an increase in ethno-nationalist armed resistance inside Shan State (Buchanan, 2017, p. 149). The leaders of these new movements had mostly grown up after the end of WWII and reflected a new brand of leadership (Smith, 1999, p. 191). While the scope of this chapter and dissertation is not to go over the details and minutia of insurgency and EAOs movements in Myanmar, or even within Shan State, here I will highlight some of the key movements and moments in Shan State insurgency history as it relates to and affected my research sites⁴⁴.

In November of 1959, an ethnic-Shan-led armed movement against the Myanmar military began (Buchanan, 2017, p. 136; Smith, 1999, pp. 190-191). This first Shan resistance in 1959 began as an underground movement in May of 1958 by a group of 32 young men who called themselves *Num Hsük Han* (Brave Young Warriors) (Ferguson, 2021, p. 62). This first movement is significant in Shan history and politics as it signaled an end to the use of legal and constitutional means (as with Panglong Agreement and the 1947 Constitution) to achieve independence and repossess Shanland. *Num Hsük Han* was the first of many ethno-nationalist armed movements seeking to build a Buddhist-Shan nation-state-building project in the transnational spaces in upland Southeast Asia (Ferguson, 2021, p. 63). Although, even in this first movement, *Num Hsük Han* reflected the ethnic diversity of Shanland in their rank and file

⁴⁴ For more information on insurgencies in Myanmar, a great many others have written extensively about this. See for example Buchanan, 2016, 2017; Callahan, 2005, 2020; Joliffe 2014, 2015; Linter, 2019; Smith, 1999.

and were not solely made of up ethnic Shan (Ferguson, 2021, p. 75). These bands found a rural population willing to defy the Myanmar government through providing arms, recruits, and supplies to the resistance groups: A practice that would later bring the force of the Myanmar military against these civilian populations. Out of the first Shan EAO, break away insurgencies soon formed⁴⁵. From 1959-1961 Shan insurrection spread across the state. Provocation from the KMT invasion, influx of Myanmar military troops, and an anti-feudalist Shan nationalist movement lit the sparks for the rapidly developing insurrection (Smith, 1999, p. 190).

3.9 Military Coup and the 'Burmese Way to Socialism', 1962-1974

The first instance of direct military rule ended in 1960, after General Ne Win relinquished power and U Nu won an election, resuming his post on April 4 (Buchanan, 2017, p. 135). While U Nu's AFPFL party won a decisive victory, his tolerance of separatism among the ethnic states, including the ten-year separatist clause, angered the military (Aung-Thwin & Aung-Thwin, 2012, p. 246). On March 1, 1962 the military again seized power, stopping a Federal Movement seminar, arresting government officials, including Shan leaders and *sao hpa*⁴⁶ in the Shan states (Buchanan, 2017, p. 136; Jolliffe, 2015, p. 15; Sai Aung Tun, 2009). A few days after the coup, a military junta spokesperson confirmed that the issues of federalism

⁴⁵ In March of 1960, one of the largest insurgent factions, the Shan State Independence Army (SSIA), was created. The SSIA was one of over six EAOs and militia groups to merge or be absorbed into the 1964 formed Shan State Army (SSA). It is nearly impossible to fully untangle the splits, divisions, mergers, and mutinies within these EAOs. For instance, in one such example, members of SSIA went on to form the Shan United Revolutionary Army (SURA) in 1969, which merged with the SSA in 1984 (Lintner, 2019, pp. 433-435; Smith, 1999, p. 191). In another break away and entangled relationship with both Num Hsük Han and the SSA, in 1966 Sao Noi (Saw Yanda) formed the Shan National Independence Army (SNIA). SNIA in turn was disarmed by the SSA in 1968 (Lintner, 2019, pp. 443-435).

⁴⁶ While the *sao hpa* system had been disbanded in 1959, many Shan *sao hpa* still held positions of leadership in political organizations and in armed resistance groups (Buchanan, 2017; Ferguson, 2021)

and a concern that Shan leaders were plotting to secede justified the coup (Aung-Thwin & Aung-Thwin, 2012, p. 246; Buchanan, 2017, p. 137; Jolliffe, 2015, p. 15).

Myanmar military leaders saw themselves as defenders of the Union of Burma against outside threats and against internal insurgents and in domestic politics (see Photo 3.2). The Myanmar military officials worried that secession and even federalism for Shan State could attract interference by foreign powers, and effect domestic affairs, as it had already done with the KMT forces supported by the Thai government and the CIA (Aung-Thwin & Aung-Thwin, 2012, p. 246). The long period of military rule that followed the 1962 coup can be broken up into four different phases: General Ne Win's Revolutionary Council (1962-1974), the Burmese Socialist Program Party (BSPP) (1974-1988), the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) (1988-1997), and the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) (1997-2011). In the remainder of this chapter, I discuss the first two periods of Ne Win's military rule as it relates to Shan State. In Chapter 4, I expand on the impacts of the SLORC and SPDC regimes on the study area.

General Ne Win sought to direct the country toward his "Burmese Way to Socialism." He instituted far-reaching economic and political reforms and relied more strongly than he had during the caretaker government on coercive measures and force rather than political engagement (Buchanan, 2017, p. 106; Jolliffe, 2015, p. 15). Ne Win's Revolutionary Council also institutionalized Burmanization policies, seeking to construct "a highly centralized, culturally homogenous Burman state" (Cockett, 2015, p. 76-77). Burmanization policies to impose Burman cultural and education as the national standard reflected the view from the Myanmar military of non-Burman ethnic nationalities as primitive and backwards (Walton, 2013, p. 12).

Photo 3.2. Myanmar military sign in Mandalay that reads “Tatmadaw and the people cooperate and crush all those harming the union.” Photo Credit: Author, 2017



General Ne Win’s Revolutionary Council’s policies also nationalized the economy, giving the military exclusive control of commerce in the country (Ferguson, 2021, p. 75). This policy effectively created a black market. In the decades following the 1962 coup, anywhere from 40 to 80 percent of commerce circulated through the black market (Chang, 2004, p. 487). Taxation of black-market goods—including opium and teak and everyday manufactured items like t-shirts and monosodium glutamate (MSG)—moving through cross-border trade routes allowed non-state armed groups in the periphery of the country to capitalize on the Military government’s nationalization policies (Ferguson, 2021, p. 75).

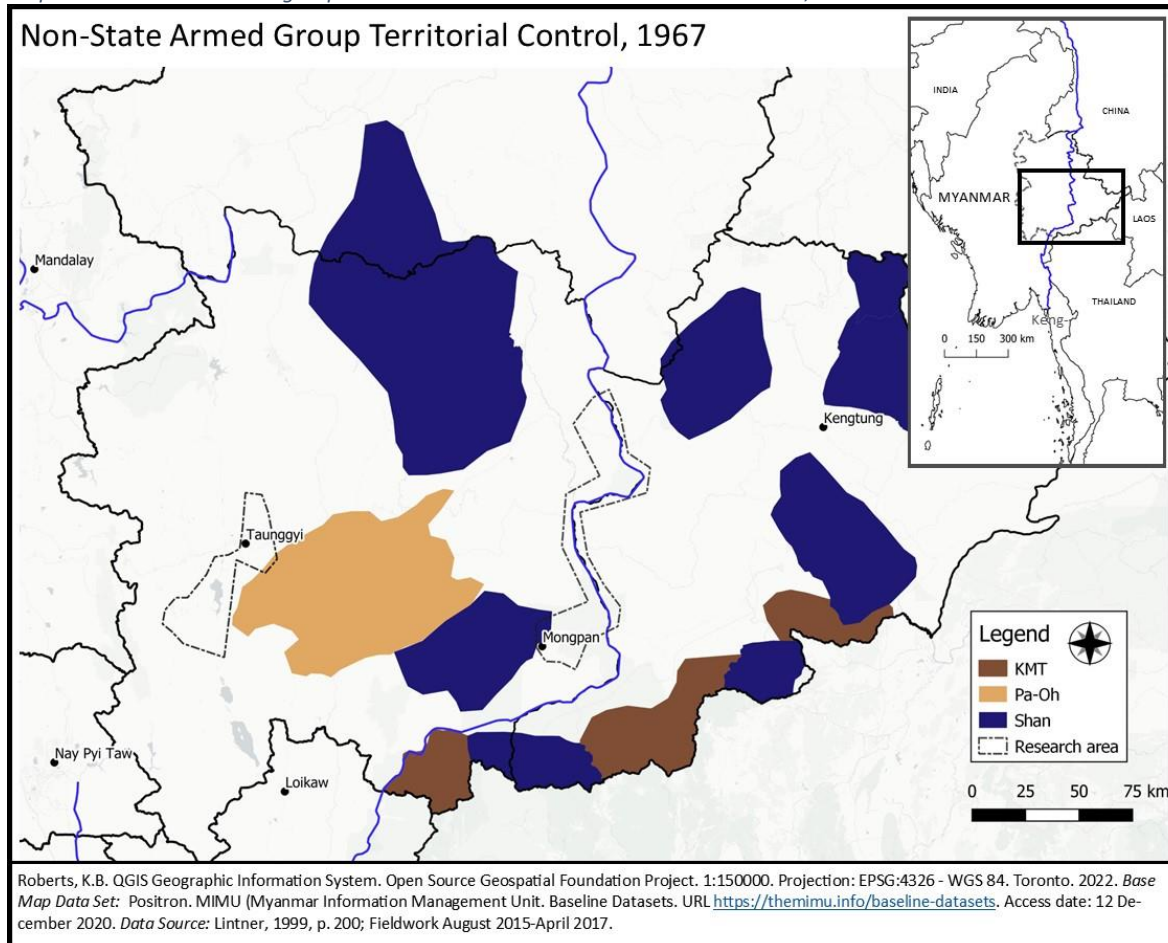
Insurgency movements across Myanmar grew under the military dictatorship. Shan State alone had nearly forty independent armed insurgencies. Although the distinctions blur between the armed groups operating in Shan State during the junta, they can be roughly

categorized as 1) the Myanmar military 2) KMT 3) CPB 4) State separatist or ethnic nationalist, and 5) Myanmar military allied *Ka Kwe Ye* (KKY) “home guard” militias (Ferguson, 2021, p. 77). Some were in competition with each other over territory or lucrative trade routes, whereas others had formed alliances (Ferguson, 2021, p. 77). Cold War geopolitics heavily influenced how these various armed groups supported themselves.

The Myanmar military was only partially funded through administrative government and was often inadequately supplied. They relied on forced labor to porter supplies and goods and used what Ferguson (2021) describes as “coercive ‘taxation’ methods” (p. 77) with civilian populations. The anti-Maoist KMT received support through airlifted supplies from Taiwan, the CIA, the Thai government, and as I will show below, through the opium trade. Forces for the CPB were also involved in the opium trade and received arms from communist ally China. The State separatist and ethno-nationalist armed groups received support from local and national sympathizers, through taxing the black market in territories they controlled, and through the opium trade (Ferguson, 2021, p. 77). At times, these ethno-nationalist armed groups, which included Shan, Pa-Oh, Wa, and Kokang armies would also ally with KMT or CPB forces and at times in conflict with each other. The last category, the *Ka Kwe Ye* (KKY) militias were proxy forces for the Myanmar military, fighting anti-state insurgents. They received arms and training from the Myanmar government (Ferguson, 2021, p. 77). Most of the armed groups mentioned above could use coercion or voluntary means to derive essentials like rice and recruits from local communities. The KKY militia, however, sourced expensive weaponry through resource extraction and black-market trade (Ferguson, 2021, pp. 77-78). The mid-1960s, therefore, saw an increase in armed groups vying for control over lucrative trade routes. Civilian populations

were caught in the crossfire between Myanmar military, KMT, CPB, and Shan separatist conflict (see Map 3.10). Local villagers were also the political subjects that the armed groups relied on for recruitments, labor, and taxes (Ferguson, 2021, pp. 73-76).

Map 3.10. Non-state armed groups territorial control in South and East Shan State, 1967



In the borderlands of Shan State, along the Thai and Chinese borders, an illicit trade in natural resources boomed. The “new” economies and trade routes forged by the various state and non-state armed groups represented a shift in resource frontiers away from locally derived economies (Ferguson, 2021, pp. 77-78). This trade not only established the insurgencies as “resource managers,” but more practically provided funding for the insurgent activities (Wood, 2011). For example, the trade and proliferation of opium in the borderlands demonstrates how

resource frontier activities enabled armed groups to have greater authority over territory and political subjects. Prior to independence, opium had been legally cultivated in the Shan uplands (Lintner, 2006). Taxation on opium had provided income for many *sao hpa* and the sale of opium remained legal into the 1950s in Myanmar (Ferguson, 2021, p. 68). In Shan State, the KMT built up the opium trade. Upland ethnic minorities would still manage the poppy cultivation, but the KMT supervised and taxed the transportation of packaged opium gum into Northern Thailand (Ferguson, 2021, p. 68; Lintner, 2019, p. 426). Opium profits for the KMT enabled black-market weapons purchases (McCoy, 2003, p. 129). The control of opium trafficking also enabled the KMT to territorialize parts of Shan State and have some form of self-governance (Xiaobo, 2018, p. 25). The anti-drug Thai government ignored the drug trafficking passing through its borders, in part, because the KMT maintained an anti-Maoist stance and would fight the Communist Party of Thailand on behalf of the Thai Army (Ferguson, 2021, p. 68).

3.10 The Burma Socialist Program Party, 1974-1988

A nationwide referendum on the adoption of a new constitution and the formalization of one-party rule marked the change from Ne Win's Revolutionary Council government to Burma Socialist Program Party (BSPP) in 1974 (Buchanan, 2017, p. 140). The BSPP regime continued to centralize the administrative functions of the government (Jolliffe, 2015, p. 17). On a sub-national level, the Myanmar government designated the seven 'ethnic' states. In these states, the local administration was placed under the control of "People's Councils," which were set up at state/division, township and village tract levels with military officers in charge, rather than with representatives from local populations (Kyi Pyar Chit Saw & Arnold,

2014, p. 9). While this recognized the large ethnic groups of those states (Shan, Karen (Kayin), Chin, Kachin, Karenni (Kayah), Rhakine, and Mon), it still gave those majority-minority groups little autonomy and it did not grant any local autonomy to the minority ethnic groups living within those states (Jolliffe, 2015, p. 17). The BSPP regime also continued to promote Burmanization and other xenophobic policies against non-Burman populations (Jolliffe, 2015, p. 17). The military employed the counter-insurgency campaign of *pya ley pya*⁴⁷ (Four Cuts) to gain territorial control of strategically and economically important areas. By 1975 the Myanmar government had control of the commercially valuable Pegu forests (Bryant, 1997, p. 165). The 1982 citizenship law then restricted citizenship to people in Myanmar coming from the designated eight⁴⁸ major ethnic nationalities. This law excluded people with Chinese or Indian heritage, despite the number of generations living within the country (Jolliffe, 2015, p. 17).

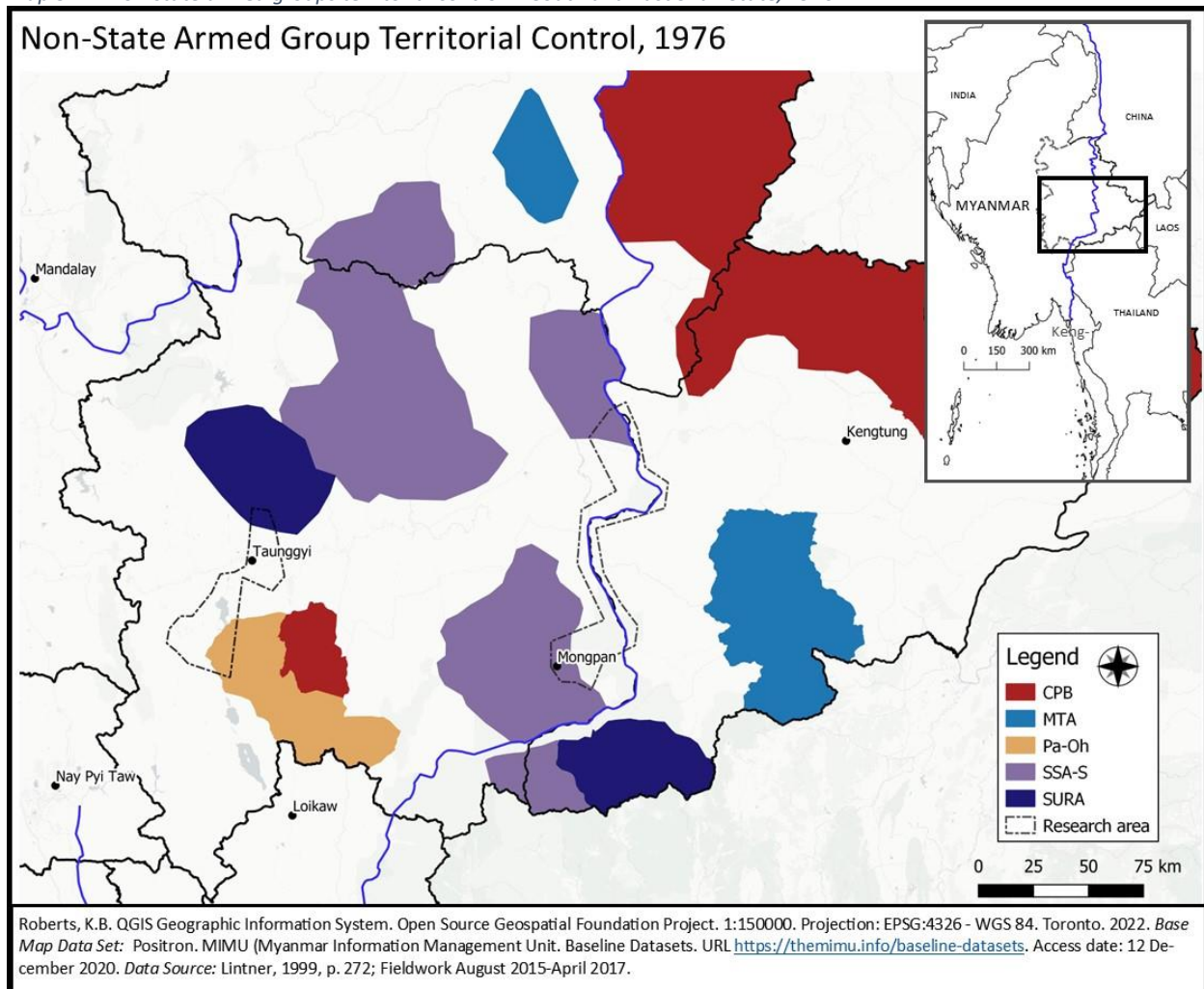
Armed conflicts involving CPB allied forces, CIA and Thai backed KMT troops, the Myanmar military, and state separatists/ethno-nationalist forces continued⁴⁹ (see Map 3.11). The BSPP government also sought to institute economic reforms, in response to the shortcomings from the previous decade's policies (Ferguson, 2014, p. 304). This included the central government adopting poppy eradication policies and campaigns to restrict black-market trade (Buchanan, 2017, p. 152). While these campaigns had negligible impact on the narcotics or black-market trades it did increase conflict for control over territory, people, and trade routes in places like Shan State.

⁴⁷ The Four Cuts includes 'cuts' to the availability of local food, funds, intelligence and recruits for insurgent groups (Bryant, 1997, p. 165). This strategy is discussed in more detail in Chapter 4.

⁴⁸ The eight major ethnic groups include Burman, Shan, Karen, Chin, Kachin, Karenni, Rhakine, and Mon.

⁴⁹ The Myanmar military proxy KKY forces program had been abandoned in 1973, although it would later be replaced with new militias and border guard forces, which are discussed in Chapter 4 (Lintner, 2019, p. 426).

Map 3.11. Non-state armed groups territorial control in South and East Shan State, 1976



3.11 Conclusion

In the remainder of *(Re)making Resource Frontiers* I focus on events that begin where this chapter ends. This chapter started with the importance of Shanland in Myanmar's history. I showed how pre-colonial relationships between the Shan states and *sao hpa* and valley power centers forged early racialized narratives of uplands versus the lowlands, even while natural resource extraction in the Shan hills played important roles in forging trade networks in pre-colonial times. Yet, disputes for control over those same natural resources, like teak, also served as a catalyst for the annexation of Burma into a Province of India, under colonial British

rule. The British through their administrative policies in Burma Proper and the Frontier Areas further exasperated the racialization between ethnic minorities and ethnic majority Burman, codifying a connection between race and sovereignty and territory. While leaders in the Burmese nationalist movement, like Aung San, sought to undo some of the divisive damage colonial rule and Japanese occupation had caused, Myanmar's history as an independent nation is marked from the start by civil wars. The production of sovereignty and the production of resource frontiers are intimately intertwined. Natural resource control motivates and funds contestation over territory and political subjects. In Shan State, resource frontiers are remade in spaces where sovereignty is actively fragmented.

4 Chapter Four: Displacement, ceasefires, and natural resource access

“When talking about the Shan State Army, there are three kinds of people in the group. One is the person who is always dreaming of the royal days, of the sao hpa era. Another is the kind that only thinks about their pocket and uses arms. The third group is the kind that wants to work for the Shan people and Shan State. These are the three kinds of people in the Shan State Army.” (U Aung, 5 January 2018)

In this chapter, I ask how resource frontier processes of militarization and resource extraction affect subsistence farmer’s access to the natural resources they depend on. U Aung’s quotation above demonstrates the diversity of motivations that interact within ethno-nationalist activities. This chapter explores how nation-making and frontier-making projects intertwine with militarized violence at the behest of capitalist extraction. I show the effect of the multiple, overlapping, localized, and temporal cores of political power (i.e., fragmented sovereignties) on the civilian populations ability to benefit from natural resources.

Research on resource use has focused on what shapes access to natural resources, highlighting issues ranging from conflict, state territorialization, market forces, and social differences (Peluso, 1992, 1996; Rocheleau & Edmonds, 1997; Ribot, 1998; Schroeder, 1999). In Southeast Asia, scholars have contributed to understanding the links between violence and access (Hengsuwan, 2013; Koubi et al., 2014; Le Billon, 2001; Peluso & Vandergeest, 2011). Recent work in Myanmar has shown how an increase in capital, as a result of ceasefire agreements, have altered access to natural resource for people in these areas (Bächtold, Bastide, & Lundsgaard-Hansen, 2020; Fitzpatrick, & Harris, 2020; Hunsberger et al., 2017; Maclean, 2010; Woods, 2011, 2021). In Shan State, the arrangements made over territory and resource control made between the Myanmar military, ethnic armed organizations (EAOs), militia and private companies effect peoples’ access to resources.

I draw on political ecology theorizations of access and territorialization to understand the roles of formal and informal governance (Ribot & Peluso, 2003; Sturgeon, 2004) and environmental degradation (Blaikie & Brookfield, 1987; Dove, 1993; Forsyth, 1996; Peluso, 1996; Rocheleau, 1995) in shaping peoples' ability to use natural resources. Territorialization involves the active inclusion or exclusion of people and their access to resources through defining a geographical space, defining resource use, and defining the resource users (Corson, 2011; Vandergeest & Peluso, 1995). Access rights, however, are not only property rights, but also include an ability to derive benefits (Elmhirst, 2011b; Peluso & Lund, 2011; Ribot & Peluso, 2003). Ribot and Peluso (2003) define access "as the ability to benefit from things—including material objects, persons, institutions, and symbols" (p. 153). Access is gained, they argue, not only through property rights, but also through influencing power relations that can also influence the practices of others. Access can be legally sanctioned, locally negotiated, or socially acquiesced. Importantly for Shan State, access can also be species-specific, rather than territorially based (Ribot & Peluso, 2003; Sturgeon, 2004).

To show how resource frontier processes of militarization and resource extraction affect subsistence farmer's access to natural resources I integrate empirical data into a continuation of the historical narrative from Chapter 3. Below, I first explain the research carried out in six villages in Shan State. I then discuss the reconfiguration of territory and sovereignties in Shan State that occurred at the end of the Cold War. During the final military regimes (1989-2011), I show how conflict and ceasefires forcibly displaced hundreds of thousands of people in the research area and generated new avenues for military-private capitalist extraction projects. I analyze the different territorial and natural resource control negotiations made between the

Myanmar government, Myanmar military, and EAOs and how villagers encountered and negotiated those arrangements.

4.1 Methods

This chapter relies on interviews conducted in communities in central Shan State and gray documents to demonstrate the connection between sovereignty, territory, and resource access for people living with resource frontiers in Shan State. Specifically, I draw on 17 key informant and 55 semi-structured survey interviews in six different villages from three different townships collected by the research team (see Table 4.1).

Table 4.1. Village Research: Number of Survey Interviews by Gender and Age Divisions

	Village 1	Village 2	Village 3	Village 4	Village 5	Village 6
Major Ethnic Group	Shan	Shan	Shan	Shan	Lisu	Shan
Total village population	199	116	500		409	290
No. of households	60	27	150	20	68	24
No. of expert interviews	1	1	2	2	1	3
No. of survey interviews	12	12	12	3	7	11

Villagers from all six villages relied primarily on wet-rice cultivation and shifting cultivation to support their livelihoods. Access to natural resources is essential for their lives and livelihood. For swidden agriculturists, including communities in this study, the ‘forest’ is a component of an integrated landscape that provides long-term and short-term benefits and products, including many non-timber forest products (NTFPs) (Roberts, forthcoming) (see Table 4.2 for a list NTFPs with local value). As one interviewee stated, “We use the forest resources every day. Because we have no market, we must go to the forest to find food day by day” (Village 2, interview 13, 3 February 2016).

Table 4.2. Example of NTFPs from the uplands of Thailand and Myanmar.

Common name	Latin name
Rattan	<i>Calamus spp. And Daemonorops jenkinsiana</i>
prickly ash	<i>Zanthoxylum rhetsa</i>
forest vine pepper	<i>Piper interruptum</i>
black sugar palm	<i>Arenga westerhoutii</i>
fan palm	<i>Livistona speciosa</i>
snowflake tree	<i>Trevesia palmata</i>
cluster fig	<i>Ficus racemosa</i>
red shoot fig	<i>Ficus virens</i>
climbing acacia	<i>Acacia pennata</i>
forest pepper	<i>Piper retrofractum</i>
fishtail palm	<i>Caryota mitis</i>
black sugar palm	<i>Arenga westerhoutii</i>
vegetable fern	<i>Diplazium esculentum</i>
leaf pepper	<i>Piper sarmentosum</i>
white thorn rattan	<i>Calamus viminalis</i>
glorybower	<i>Clerodendrum glandulosum</i>
cluster fig	<i>Ficus racemosa</i>
acacia leaves	<i>Acacia pennata</i>
salae fruit	<i>Broussonetia kurzii</i>
ivy gourd leaf shoots	<i>Coccinia grandis</i>
spiny lasia leaves	<i>Lasia spinosa</i>
paper mulberry	<i>Broussonetia papyrifera</i>
broom grass	<i>Thysanolaena latifolia</i>

All six villages are also located in the Nam Khone River Basin and would be impacted by the proposed Mong Ton dam, a mega-dam hydropower project. Village 1 is located roughly 200 kilometers north of the proposed Mong Ton dam site and would be impacted by the flood zone of the reservoir (Salween Watch, 2013). Villages 2-6 are located downstream from the dam site, would be impacted by the change in water flow. Formerly known as the Tasang dam, the Mong Ton dam is set to be the largest dam in Southeast Asia, with a reservoir that would impact an estimated 12,000 to over 120,000 people⁵⁰ (International Rivers 2012; Maung 2016; Salween

⁵⁰ Discrepancy between these numbers lies in the difference between pro-dam and anti-dam information notices.

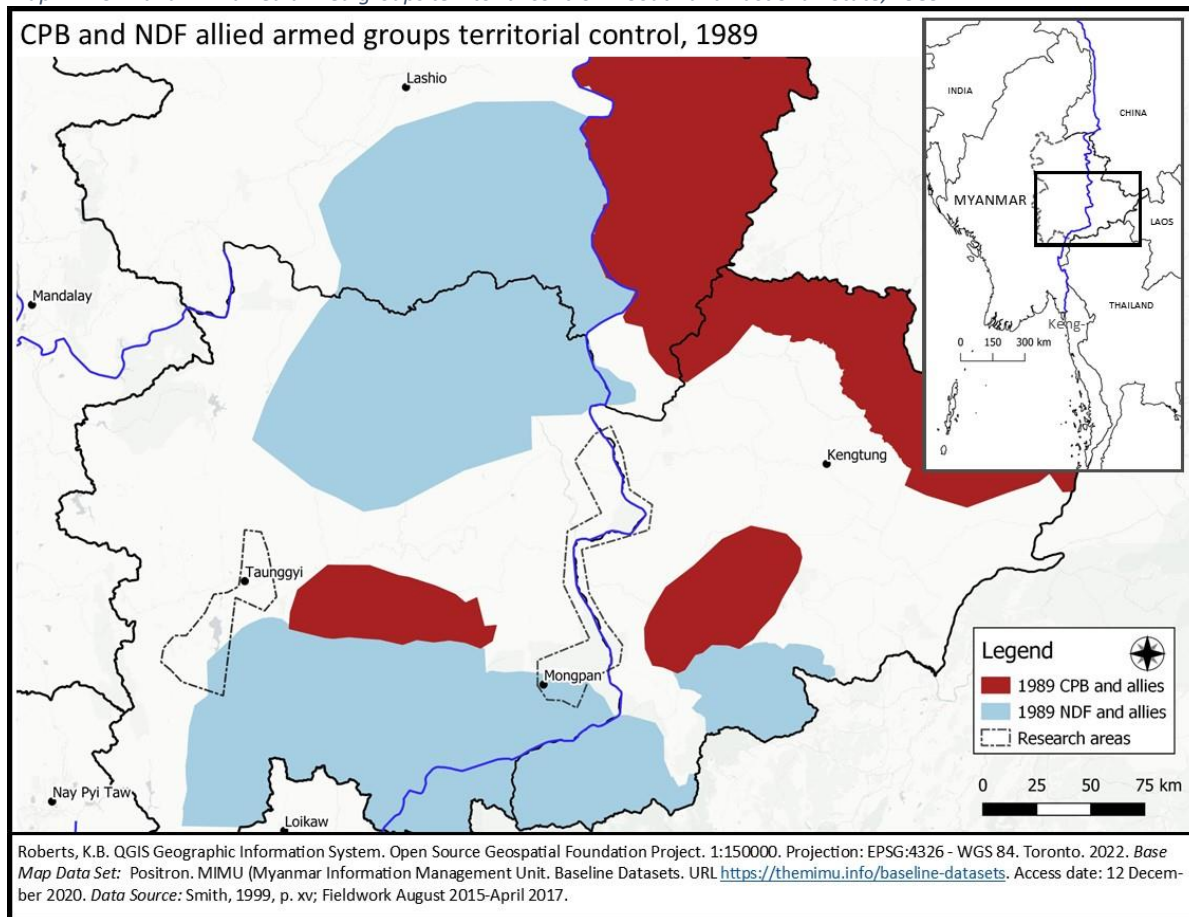
Watch 2016). I have kept village names and locations on research maps vague for the security of research participants.

4.2 Conflict and Ceasefires, 1987-2015

In 1988, after facing economic challenges and increased pressure from disgruntled EAOs, Ne Win's junta all-but collapsed. The the auspicious protests on August 8 in Yangon, which gave the uprising its name, 8888, sought to overthrow the Burmese Socialist Program Party (BSPP) regime (Aung-Thwin & Aung-Thwin, 2012, p. 259). Over a period of three months the Myanmar military killed over 10,000 people, with allegedly 3000 of those civilians killed during the 8888 protests (Smith, 1999, p. 1). The 8888 uprising led to another coup d'état and the implementation of a new military regime, the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) (Jolliffe, 2015). In State controlled areas, SLORC established the General Administration Department (GAD), responsible for town and village administration, land administration, and revenue collection (Jolliffe, 2015, p. 19). With SLORC, land policy shifted from a socialist emphasis on peasant farmers to one of economic growth through market reform that relaxed control of domestic and foreign investment (Jolliffe, 2015; Oberndorf, 2012).

By the late 1980s there were still at least 25 different non-state armed groups in Myanmar, representing over 30,000 troops. By the end of the BSPP regime, most of these groups were allied with either the Communist Party of Burma (CPB) or the National Democratic Front (NDF) (see Map 4.1). The NDF was an alliance of ten ethno-nationalist armies that sought independence through the creation of a federal Union of Burma (Smith, 1999, p. 10), while the CPB sought to transform Myanmar into a communist nation (Lintner, 2019).

Map 4.1. CPB and NDF allied armed groups territorial control in South and East Shan State, 1989



In Shan State, the charismatic Khun Sa⁵¹, commonly known as the Opium King of the Golden Triangle⁵², amalgamated several non-CPB armies in the state to form the Mong Tai Army (MTA) in 1987 (Ferguson, 2021, p. 118; Lintner, 2019, pp. 326-327). At its height, the MTA had over 20,000 soldiers, mostly ethnic Shan, but also Wa, Dara-ang, and Kachin (Ferguson, 2021, p. 118; Lintner, 2019, p. 427). The MTA was a complicated mix of crony capitalists and ethno-nationalist. MTA sponsored Shan schools, promoted Shan language and education within its ranks, and produced Shan language media. Yet, the MTA also forced conscriptions and gathered

⁵¹ The half-Chinese, half-Shan warlord, in 1963 set up a KKY militia under the Myanmar military. After his arrest in 1969, his men set up the Shan United Army (SUA) in alliance with the SSA in 1972 and he rejoined them in 1976.

⁵² The Golden Triangle, named by the United States Drug Enforcement Administration refers to the borderlands where Laos, Thailand, and Myanmar and where black-market and narcotics trade dominate.

supplies from poorer ethnic minority areas. At one point, the MTA controlled many former Chinese Kuomintang (KMT) networks and supplied two-thirds of the world's heroin in the global illicit narcotics trade (Ferguson, 2021, p. 118, pp. 134-135).

In 1989, the CPB disintegrated, ending MTA's main armed group competition in Shan State. While leadership in the CPB was predominantly Burman, most of the 15,000 recruits came from upland Wa, Akha, and Shan communities (Risser, Oum Kher, & Sein Htun, 2003, p. 19; Smith, 1999, p. 29). In 1989, Shan and Wa foot soldiers mutinied against the CPB's leadership and seized its headquarters in northern Shan State (Risser et al., 2003, p. 19). Factions from the CPB joined other ethnic armed groups, including the MTA (Jolliffe, 2015, p. 18).

In Shan State, war, negotiated ceasefires, displacement of local populations and the implementation of resource extraction projects through military force characterized the final decades of the military regime's government. After the CPB mutiny, SLORC began a new policy of pursuing ceasefires with EAOs. Between 1989 to 1996 SLORC negotiated 17 ceasefire agreements (Fink, 2008, p. 448; Lintner, 2019, pp. 432-434). The ceasefire agreements of the 1990s also led to new splits within many of the EAOs (Buchanan, 2017, p. 176).

By 1990, the infamous drug warlord Khun Sa brought many ethnic Shan resistance groups, including the none-signatories from the Shan State Progress Party (SSPP), under his command. This made his Mong Tai army (MTA) the largest and best-equipped armed group in Shan rebellion history (Buchanan, 2017, p. 180). The Myanmar military focused on neutralizing them (Buchanan, 2017, p. 142; Ferguson, 2021, pp. 133-134). In early 1996, to the dismay of

many Shan nationalists, Khun Sa surrendered the MTA to the Myanmar military,⁵³ handing over his troops, weapons, and territories. Khun Sa's surrender in 1996 signaled a shift in players in Shan State and created an opening for the Myanmar military to gain territorial control. However, many of Khun Sa's MTA troops refused to lay down arms and instead merged with other Shan groups, including the Restoration Council of Shan State (RCSS)⁵⁴ (Ferguson, 2021, p. 143). The RCSS was formed from the Shan United Revolutionary Army (SURA), which was a breakaway faction of the MTA. While other groups had signed ceasefires with SLORC, RCSS maintained an active guerilla warfare campaign against the Myanmar military throughout much of Shan State, stretching north up to the Chinese border (Jolliffe, 2014, p. 21). The lack of a complete dissolution of armed resistance after Khun Sa's surrender proved a catalyst for a violent response from SLORC.

4.2.1 Four-cuts in Shan State and IDPs, 1996-1998

The Myanmar military carried out their four-cuts strategy across central Shan state from 1996-1998. In the mid-1960s, the Myanmar military had first instituted the four-cuts strategy as a counterinsurgency campaign (Ferguson, 2021, p. 76; Grundy-Warr & Wong Siew Yin, 2002, p. 101). The strategy borrows from British practices during the Boer War and targets territories suspected of supporting insurgencies, in order to break ties between EAOs and civilians. Specifically, the four cuts are "cut food, cut communications, cut ties, and cut lives" (Amnesty International, 1999; Ferguson, 2021, p. 76). In practice, the scorched earth policy burned civilian farms and villages and forcibly relocated people. In 1996, the Myanmar military started

⁵³ In exchange, Khun Sa received immunity, a promise to not be extradited to the United States to face drug charges, and business concessions (Buchanan, 2017, p. 102; Ferguson, 2021, p. 118).

to use the four-cuts strategy in Shan State to fight the burgeoning armed movements that had filled the power vacuum left by the CPB mutiny of 1989 and the breakup of MTA in 1996. Shan Human Rights Foundation (1998, p. 41) reported that starting in early 1996 the Myanmar military gave the members of 1400 villages in eight townships⁵⁵ in central and southern Shan State just five days to relocate (Ferguson, 2021, pp. 118-119; Grundy-Warr & Wong Siew Yin, 2002, p. 102). The Myanmar military had accused the roughly 300,000 people living in these areas of supporting the EAOs through taxes, contributions of rice, and recruitments. It did not matter to the military whether the villagers did so through their own volition or through coercion (Ferguson, 2021, pp. 118-119).

During interviews in the study area, it was difficult to ask questions directly about conflict and the period from 1996-1998. Out of habit, history, and a fear of reprisals, people were reluctant to speak negatively state or non-state armed groups. As Nang Mai said, “sometimes it is not easy to ask questions that are relevant about the Government or other sensitive cases” (researcher journal, Village 5, January 2018). Villagers indirectly alluded to displacement and conflict. Direct and indirect references by interviewees, as well as secondary sources (Shan Human Rights Foundation [SHRF], 1998; Shan Women’s Action Network [SWAN], 2002) confirm that villagers from villages 1, 3, 4, 5, and 6 were all displaced between 1996-1998 (see Table 4.3). Secondary sources also suggest that villagers from Village 2 were displaced between 1996-1998; however, I cannot confirm based on the available primary data. Before the

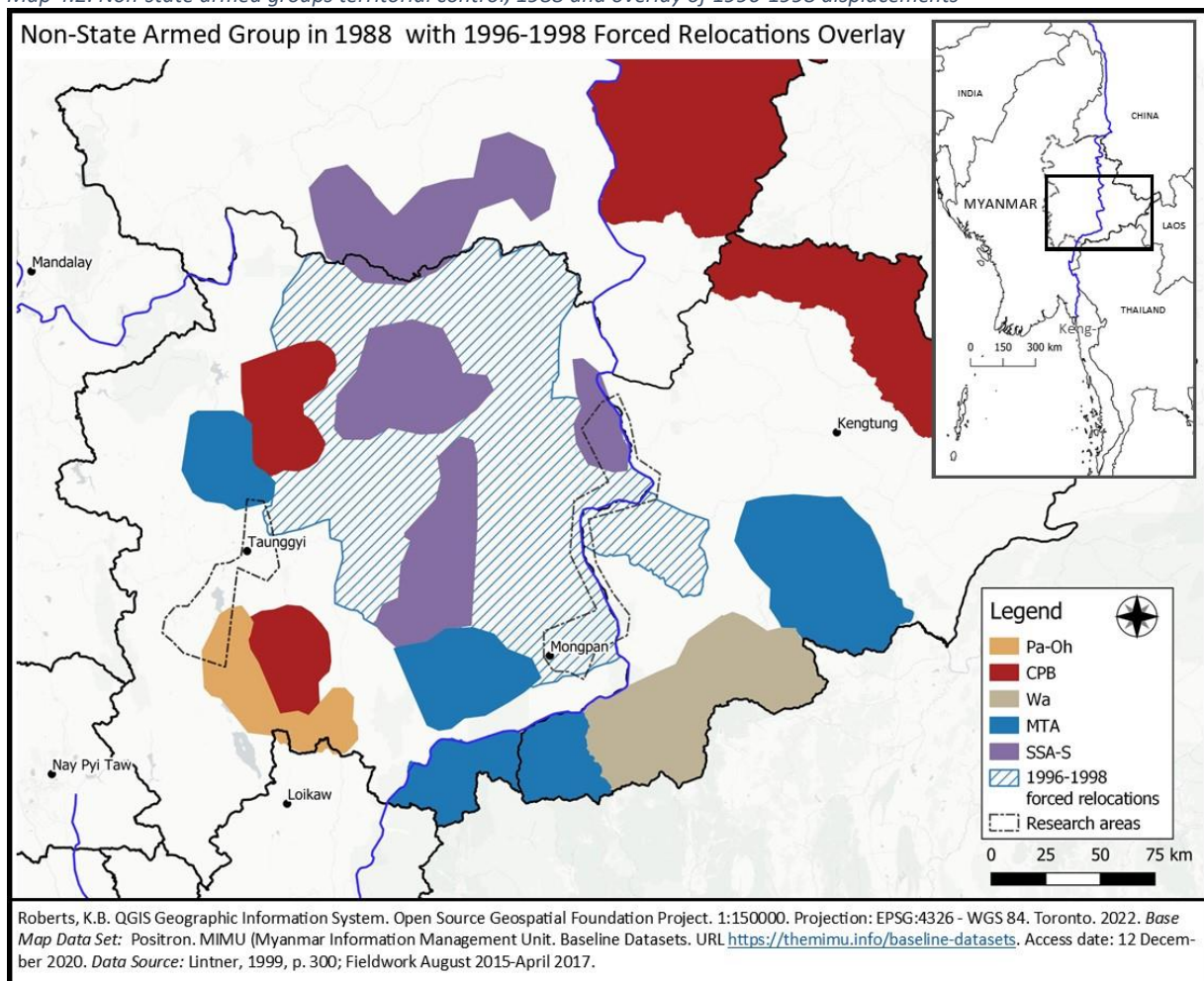
⁵⁵ Lang Kher, Mong Nai, Nam Sang, Lai Kha, Mong Kong, Kun Hing, Ke See, and Mung Su townships (Grundy-Warr & Wong Siew Yin, 2002, p. 102)

1996-1998 scorched earth tactics, villagers were in territory that had been controlled by the Mong Tai Army (MTA) and the RCSS (see Map 4.2).

Table 4.3. Village Research Sovereignties

	Village 1	Village 2	Village 3	Village 4	Village 5	Village 6
Primary sovereign	SSA (7) (Militia)	Myanmar State	Myanmar State	Myanmar State	Myanmar State	Myanmar State
Secondary sovereign	-	RCSS	RCSS	RCSS	RCSS	RCSS
Third armed group presence	-	Lahu militia	-	-	-	-
Major Ethnic Group	Shan	Shan	Shan	Shan	Lisu	Shan

Map 4.2. Non-state armed groups territorial control, 1988 and overlay of 1996-1998 displacements



As evident from the study area, the mid-1990s saw an increase in internally displaced persons (IDPs) across the southern and eastern parts of Shan State (see Map 4.3). Accurate counts of IDPs within Myanmar are difficult to calculate due to limited access to affected areas. However, within the last two decades, the country has seen an estimated 400,000 to 650,000 individuals internally displaced⁵⁶. Between 1996-1998 the Shan Human Rights Foundation determined that 1,506 villages and 56,294 households were displaced in Southern/Eastern Shan State (Amnesty International, 1998). Soldiers evicted villagers by force, prohibiting people from returning to their shifting cultivation and wet-rice fields. To enforce the evictions, often soldiers raided and burned villages and fields and warned that villagers would be shot if they returned (Risser et al., 2003). For villagers in the study area, the forced displacement from severely restricted their ability to practice subsistence farming. One villager explained that during the 1996-1998 implantation of the Four Cuts strategy:

Our livelihoods were not good, because we were not free to go to our farm. The military has a lot of power and were fighting everywhere and often. So, we were scared, and we couldn't work and we couldn't take care of our crops like normal. (Village 3, interview 1, 27 January 2018)

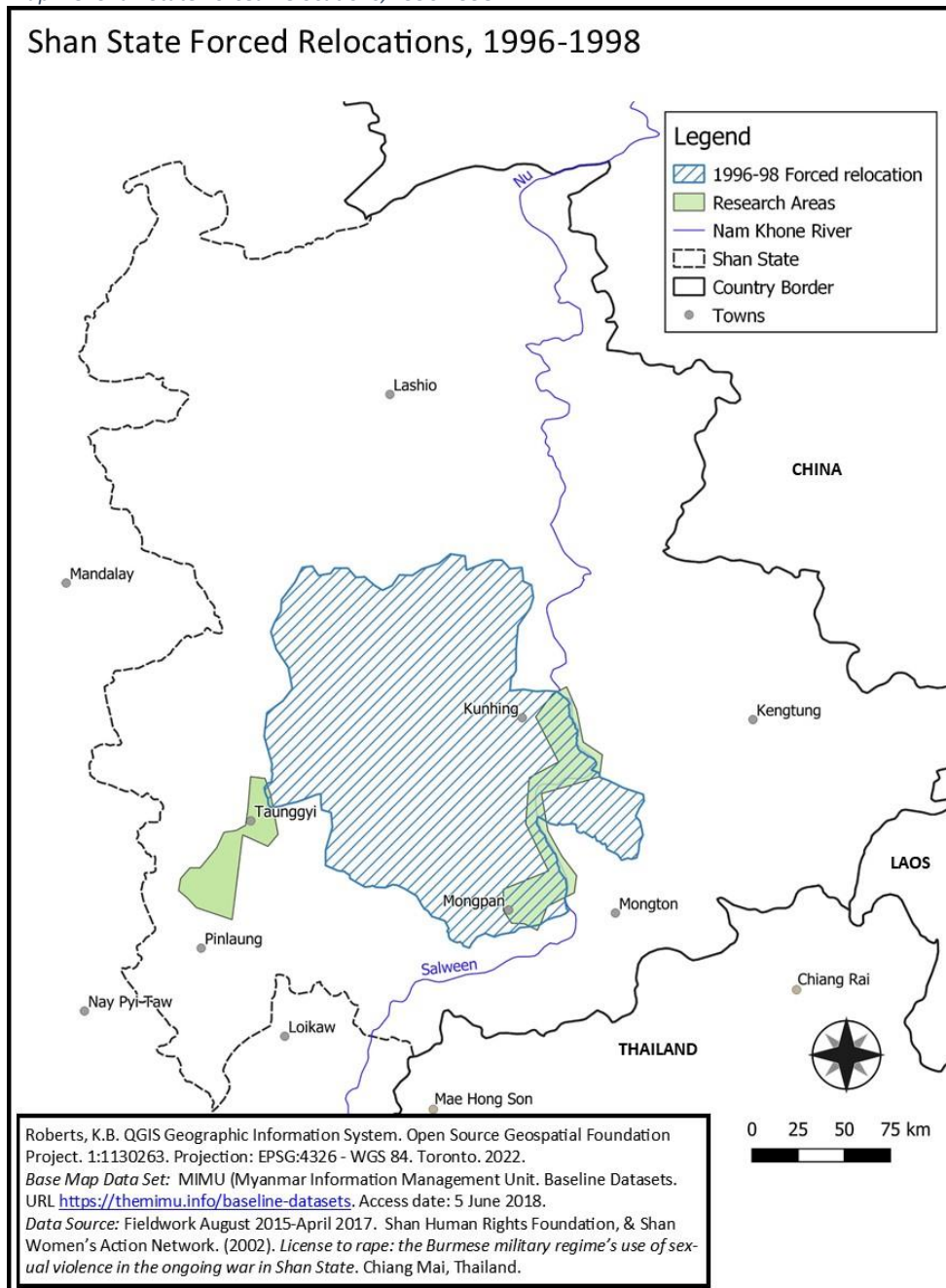
Junta soldiers also used tactics of forced labor, extrajudicial killings, rape⁵⁷, and property theft, including theft of livestock and food supplies, and of portable wealth like gold (Amnesty

⁵⁶ The range in numbers is due to discrepancy between agencies and the hard-to-reach nature of these places. These numbers are collated from these sources (Burmalink; 2015; IDMC, 2017a, 2017b; OCHA, 2014; SHRF, 1998; SWAN, 2002; TBC, 2008, 2012a, 2012b, 2014; UNHCR, 2016). These numbers also do not reflect the near million displaced since the February 1, 2021 coup (see UNOCH et al., 2022)

⁵⁷ Shan Women's Action Network (SWAN) reports one 625 women and girls who were raped by Burman soldiers during this time period. Their report calls rape a weapon of war that the Myanmar military used against the civilian population. 25% of the rapes ended in death and the report (2002) argues that "there appears to be a concerted strategy by the Burmese army troops to rape Shan women as part of their anti-insurgency activities" (p. 1) as the incidents were committed across 52 different battalions. Some of the instances SWAN reported on did occur in some of the villages interviewees in the study area had relocated from. In this research, however, the research team did not ask interviewees to recount the horror and trauma they experienced during this time.

International, 1999, p. 1). The Myanmar military killed hundreds of civilians during this time (Amnesty International, 1999; SHRF, 1998; SWAN, 2002).

Map 4.3. Shan State Forced Relocations, 1996-1998



Civilians were not given any aid for relocation, but were still expected to move to the designated towns that were within the Myanmar military's control. Many reports about IDPs in

Myanmar suggest that the majority could not return to their livelihoods (Grundy-Warr & Wong Siew Yin, 2002; Risser et al., 2003). The lack of aid and support in relocation from the Myanmar military, also meant that for those who moved to the designated towns could not support themselves. As one villager shared, “we had to work as daily workers because we didn’t have any land where we relocated to, and we were not able to work in our farm at that time. We did anything that we could for our survival” (Village 3, interview 4, 19 March 2017).

Additionally, many people experienced multiple displacements after their initial one, with the Myanmar military relocating some people three to four times (Amnesty International, 1999). Some villagers found temporary shelters in forested areas, before finding more stable places to live (Grundy-Warr & Wong Siew Yin, 2002, p. 108). According to Amnesty international (1999, p. 4), roughly 50,000 of the 300,000 IDPs initially hid in the forested areas of Shan State, as seen on Map 4.4. Others followed instructions to move to the locations designated by the junta. An estimated 100,000 people moved to junta-approved areas like Mong Pan township (Amnesty International, 1999, p. 4; Grundy-Warr & Wong Siew Yin, 2002; Risser et al., 2003). Peace and economic security determined where many of the respondents fled after the Four Cuts strategy. One villager described the make-up and conditions of their ‘new’ village:

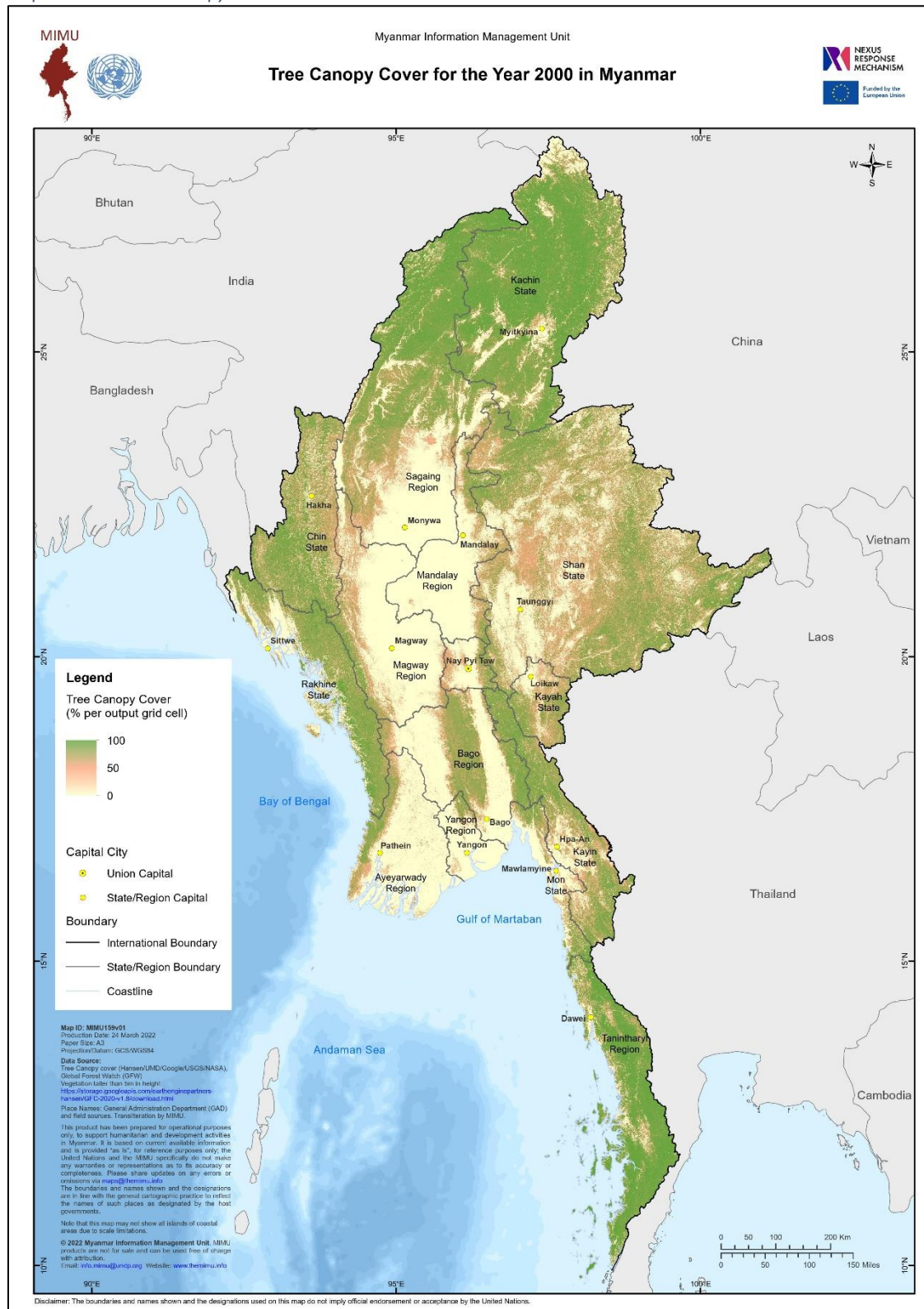
Mong Pan township is suitable for farmers because there is space for taungya [shifting cultivation] and farmlands. Also, there is enough water for use, it’s not rare like in some other places. Some people wanted to escape from the war or fighting so they moved here. (Village 3, Village History Expert, 18 March 2017)

Yet, for some, the livelihoods in places like Mong Pan, were not sufficient and people moved again. Roughly 100,000 people fled to Thailand (Amnesty International, 1999, p. 4). One interviewee from Village 6 explained:

In the past, the situation was not good, and we did not have freedom like now. When the situation [Four Cuts] happened, we moved to a village that was near Mong Pan township. Then we looked around at the situation. There was still conflict. So, then we moved to Mong Pan town. But in Mong Pan, we just lived for a few months, because we didn't have land and couldn't do anything. So, we decided to go to Thailand for work. (Village 6, village history expert, 25 January 2018)

For displaced villagers who remained in Shan State, shifting cultivation provided an important tool for livelihood resilience. In fact, many village respondents said they either established new shifting cultivation fields immediately after forced relocation or were able to return to shifting cultivation within a few years. Of the 16 interviewees who discussed displacement, only three mentioned difficulty or delay in practicing shifting cultivation. While many farmers regarded lowland wet-rice farming as more lucrative than shifting cultivation, most of the IDPs could not afford to rent or buy the minimal area of wet-rice fields available in the Mong Pan township area. One villager explained, “doing shifting cultivation is very important for us. If we can't practice shifting cultivation, how can we find the way to support our livelihoods? So, I have to do it, although we are tired of it” (Village 1, interview 8, 20 March 2018). In other words, shifting cultivation allowed people to farm wherever they could find vacant land (*vis-é-vis* customary land practices). While neither financially lucrative nor easy, individuals could continue to support themselves and their families in circumstances with few other livelihood options available. As one respondent stated, “I think shifting cultivation is so important, because we have done it and we have survived” (Village 3, interview 1, 27 January 2018).

Map 4.4. Tree cover canopy in 2000.



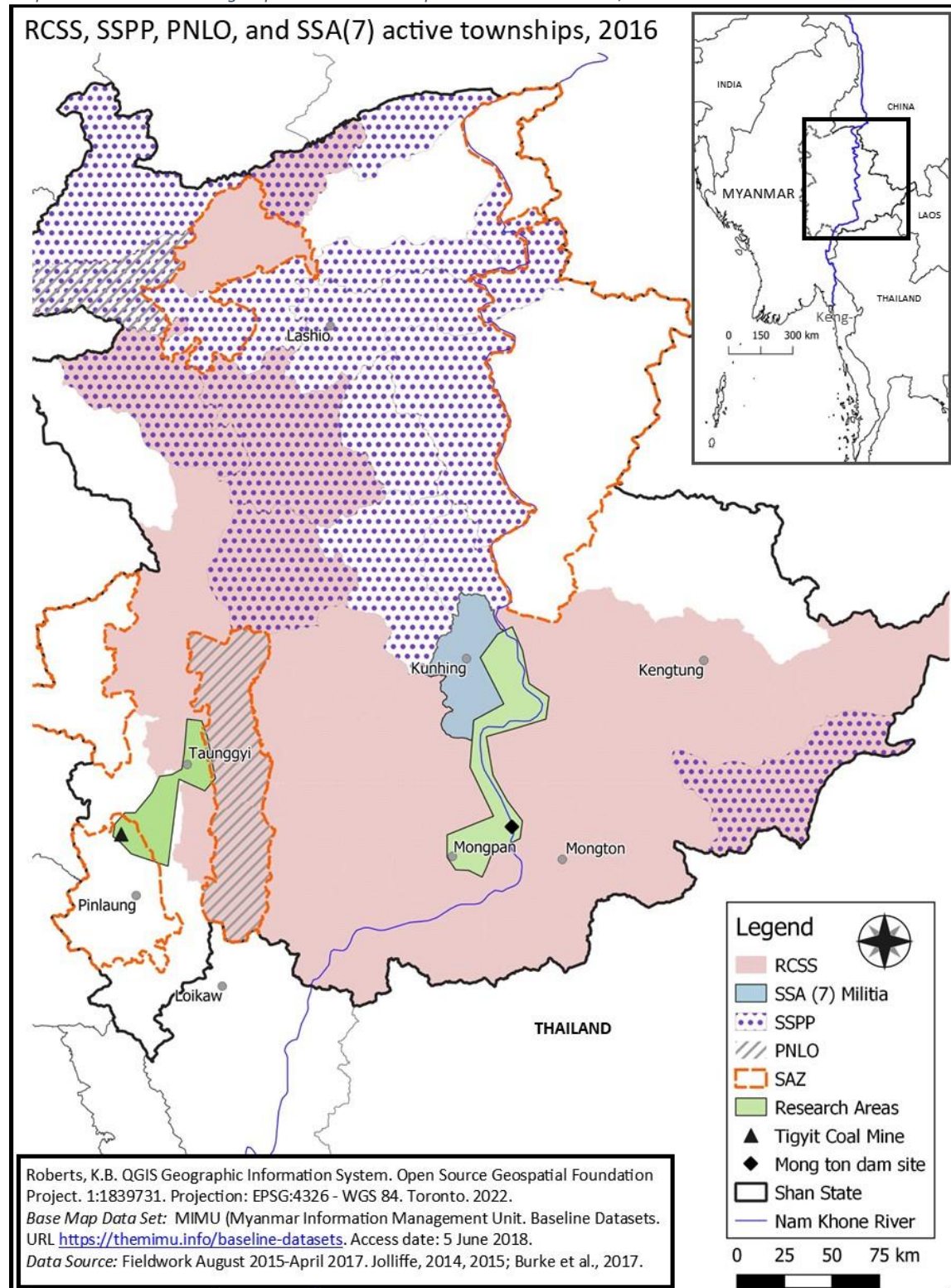
Source: Myanmar Information Management Unit (Cartographer). (2022). Tree cover canopy for the year 2000 in Myanmar [Map].

In summary, the forced relocations of 1996-1998 changed where people lived and changed livelihood opportunities and practices. The Myanmar military succeeded in depopulating EAO controlled areas and shrinking EAO controlled territory. Yet, the Four Cuts strategy also paradoxically increased support from the communities for the armed groups (Jolliffe, 2015, p. 16). The remainder of this chapter discusses the ramifications of this reconfiguration of sovereignties and territories on resource user access. Below, I briefly discuss final years of the military regime and the ceasefire and economic policies of the 2011-2016 U Thein Sein government and the 2016-2020 National League for Democracy (NLD) government. Afterward, I show how the changes in Myanmar's government, ceasefire policies, and the continue fragmentation of sovereignties altered villagers access to natural resources.

4.2.2 Quasi-demilitarization and democratization of Myanmar (2010-2020)

In 2010 Myanmar held its first election since 1990 and began to transition from 48 years of military rule. A project of demilitarization and democratization began with the election of U Thein Sein (2011–2016) and continued with the National League for Democracy's (NLD) 2015 electoral victory. The policy of forging ceasefire agreements with non-state armed groups aided in securing outside investments and joint ventures, including bilateral agreements between Myanmar and China. During this quasi-democratic period relief came from international sanctions, such as with the USA lifting sanctions in 2012 and new economic opportunities developed within the country. Foreign investment further increased in 2015, when Nobel Peace laureate, and daughter of national hero Aung San, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy (NLD) party swept the nation's elections, winning an absolute majority in parliament (Holmes, 2015).

Map 4.5. Non-state armed groups active at township level in research areas, 2016



Note: Shading in the maps reflects EAO presence, by township in South and East Shan State. It does not mean that EAOs are in control of the entire township. Rather, they have an active presence.

U Thein Sein's government initiated bilateral ceasefire agreements with multiple EAOs. The three EAOs active in the study area include the Restoration Council of Shan State (RCSS), the Shan State Progressive Party (SSPP)⁵⁸, and the Pa-Oh National Organization (PNO) (see Map 4.5). In 1991 the PNO signed a ceasefire agreement with SLORC. Between 2011-2013 the SSPP, and RCSS signed state and union level ceasefire agreements. In October of 2015, prior to the 2015 national elections, the RCSS and Pa-Oh National Liberation Organization (PNLO) signed onto the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA). The SSPP did not sign onto the NCA (Myanmar Peace Monitor, 2019). The NCA was a multilateral ceasefire agreement. Eight EAOs signed the NCA; however, seven, who had had previous bilateral ceasefire agreements with the Myanmar military, were not signatories (Buchanan, 2016, p. 21).

4.3 Resource frontiers and navigating access

The ceasefire agreements between insurgent groups and the government did not dissolve the EAOs, nor did it end conflict entirely between the state and non-state armed forces. Instead, the ceasefires forged the start of new arrangements over territory, natural resources, and political subjects (Environmental Investigation Agency, 2015; Simpson, 2013, p. 133; Woods, 2011). For the accelerated resource extraction that occurred in Shan State in the 1990s, Woods (2011) describes the process of negotiation over the control of natural resources between the Myanmar military and the EAOs as 'ceasefire capitalism'. Through signed ceasefires, former enemies and combatants become business partners in state and non-state

⁵⁸ Confusingly, the RCSS and the SSPP both refer to themselves as the Shan State Army (SSA). As one respondent explained: "In Shan State there are two Shan armies. The SSPP and the RCSS...we call both SSA. SSPP's background is from the communist party. RCSS was on the nationalist [NDF] side. Sometimes when we say SSA, it can be either one" (U Aung, 5 January 2018). The SSPP is also referred to as the Shan State Army-North (SSA-N) and RCSS as the Shan State Army South (SSA-S).

military-private alliances. Opium production (Meehan, 2021), teak extraction (Khin Sandar Aye & Khin Htay, 2019), jade mining, gold mining, and agri-business expansion expanded through informal arrangements between military state and non-state actors (Roberts, J. 2016; San Thein et.al., 2018; Woods, 2019b). As I explain further in Chapter 6, at Mong Ton Dam, feasibility studies for the project first began in 1981, but accelerated in the late 1990s after much of the area was depopulated and new ceasefire agreements had been reached (Risser et al., 2003; Salween Watch, 2004). At Tigyt, exploration for coal began in 1989, but after the 1991 agreement between the PNO and SLORC, plans were made for the construction of the power plant (Aung Shin, 2016; Chan Mya Htwe, 2018; PYO, 2011, p. 7). As mentioned above, starting in the early 1990s, the ceasefire agreements changed the resource extraction landscape.

Companies with connections to the Tatmadaw or EAOs were well positioned to obtain commercial concessions and generate significant wealth from mining, timber, plantations, and other businesses. Cynicism grew over ceasefires, which appeared to offer economic benefits to the leaders of the military and former armed groups while the wider population gained little, and political concessions were never seriously considered. (Burke, Williams, Barron, Jolliffe, & Carr, 2017, p. 16)

These military-private partners enabled activities that have resulted in environmental degradation, which has further restricted villagers' resource access. Although interview respondents were not able to identify specific dates and company names, their narrative indicated that the private-military and private-public partnerships that led to the proposed Mong Ton dam site (Kramer & Woods, 2014) also enabled logging of the forests and mining for gold within the river (Village 2, group interview, 3 February 2016).

The renegotiations of armed group military-private partnerships resulted in the leasing of access to natural resources (Meehan, 2015; Woods, 2011) through what Jolliffe (2015, p.1)

categorizes as hostile claims, accommodated claims, and tolerated claims. Very few of these territorial claims have delineated boundaries and formal documentation, yet the nature of the claims does affect how people experience and negotiate access to natural resources. In some cases, as with hostile claims, state or non-state militaries use force to seize and maintain access to a territory (Jolliffe, 2015). In EAO controlled areas, this involves armed groups exercising *de facto* control of territory, trade routes, resources, and political subjects. Ceasefire agreements have created tolerated claims spaces where informal agreements over access and resource control exist between Myanmar security forces and EAOs. Accommodated claims involve open cooperation between EAOs and the state for access (Jolliffe, 2015, p. 1). I explain the categories of claims Jolliffe (2015) uses, because they are helpful in framing the end result of how sub-national level of control is exerted or negotiated between EAOs and the Myanmar military. However, in the study area, not all of the villages fell neatly into those three categories. What I discuss below is how villagers lived with and experienced access between 2010-2016.

4.3.1 Militia Territory: When “on paper” doesn’t reflect the lived experience

Before the 2010 election, the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) regime sought to transform EAOs that had signed ceasefire agreements with SLORC in the late 1980s and early 1990s into militias under their command. Buchanan (2016) defines a militia in Myanmar as:

A body of armed fighters, often representing specific ethnic, religious, tribal, clan, or other communal groups or political parties. Militias may serve the government directly or indirectly, operate independently to combat other militias or insurgent groups, pursue criminal activity, or support an insurgency. (p. 2)

Between 1989 to 2010, fifteen ceasefire groups became militias (Buchanan, 2016, p. 20).

Militias⁵⁹ in Myanmar reference a broad range of armed groups and can refer to groups that support either the Myanmar military or EAOs. They have a long history in the country, as with the *Ka Kwe Ye* (KKY) militia discussed in Chapter 3. Relevant for this chapter are Myanmar military non-integrated militias. These militias are technically under Myanmar military command; however, they are not integrated with the military. Unlike other forms of militias⁶⁰, non-integrated militias do not have consistent systems of rank, are not required to attend military training programs, do not have to operate full time or at a specific size, and do not receive salaries from the Myanmar military (Buchanan, 2016, p. 26). For the Myanmar military, these militia serve the role of working in areas with limited Myanmar government authority and with insurgent activities, very much like their predecessors the KKY did (Buchanan, 2016, p. 9).

In 1989, SSPP troops signed a ceasefire agreement with SLORC, which granted SSPP administration over a Special Region 3, encompassing large parts of five townships in Shan State (Jolliffe, 2014, p. 21, Jolliffe, 2015, p. 18). In this agreement, the SSPP remained armed and in opposition to government sovereignty in their region (Jolliffe, 2014, p. 13). However, pressure from the Myanmar military in 2010 to transform into a border guard force led to a resumption of fighting between both sides. However, this also led to a split in the SSPP.

Brigades 3 and 7 (SSA (3) and (SSA (7)) chose to form militias. These non-integrated militias are part of the People's Militia Force (PMF), a name that signals their alignment with the Myanmar

⁵⁹ Militias can also refer to armed or unarmed groups. The variability in militias in size, history, function, command structure, sources of revenue, and strength is significant and beyond the scope of this chapter. See Buchanan (2016) for a more thorough discussion of militias and their place in Myanmar's history, military and sub-national conflict.

⁶⁰ Such as Border Guard Forces (BGFs) or Myanmar military-integrated militias.

military. They also have administrative structures and governance systems separate from the Myanmar military. While SSA (3) and SSA (7) are under the command of the Myanmar military, the remaining SSPP troops resumed fighting with the Myanmar military. Despite their pro-government position, SSA (3) and SSA (7) also maintained a political alliance with the SSPP (Buchanan, 2016, p. 20; Jolliffe, 2015, p. 77).

Officially, Village 1 is in territory controlled by the non-integrated militia SSA (7) under the command of the Myanmar military. However, it was not until after research was completed and I was verifying information through secondary sources that I realized that Village 1 was not in hostile, SSPP controlled territory, but rather was controlled by a militia. The way in which it was described to the research team indicated that around village 1, Shan State Army, battalion 7 (SSA (7)) provided public services, not the Myanmar government or Myanmar military. In fact, none of the interviewees mentioned the Myanmar government or military. Any reference to outside control or government was mediated through the SSA. Buchanan (2016) writes that “not much information is available about militias in Myanmar, and the systems of militias operated by the Tatmadaw and EAOs are not well understood” (p. 1). Below I explain how I did not understand the Myanmar military and government’s authoritarian role in Village 1 , in part, because of how non-integrated militias operated.

For local populations, militias offer protection and security, usually in exchange for support. One significant component of non-integrated militias is that they must finance themselves. Militias generate revenue through a range of activities, including taxation, businesses, and illicit activities. Taxes can be collected at checkpoints, through cross-border trade, or at the household level, including through goods such as rice or with cash. In the past,

the SSA (7) levied a 20% rice tax on the village; however, the militia now considers the village too small and no longer extract a tax (group interview, 18 February 2016). As with the Myanmar military and EAOs, militias also expand their ranks through recruitment, sometimes voluntary and sometimes through forced conscription (Buchanan, 2016, p. 31). In Village 1, SSA (7) also conscripted soldiers (group interview, 18 February 2016).

Buchanan (2016) also reports that militias have received natural resource concessions from the government for logging, gold mining, and agrobusiness projects. In Shan State, some also traffic and tax illegal narcotics, including opiates and methamphetamines (p. 31). In Village 1, SSA (7) hires workers to support their opium production fields (group interview, 18 February 2016).

A lesser understood aspect of militias is their role in community development and public services (Buchanan, 2016, pp. 32-33). For Village 1, this is an important aspect of their relationship with SSA (7). Around Village 1, the SSA (7) constructed the roads and built a water tank in the village for cleaner drinking water. In the early 2010s, the SSA (7) also paid two Shan teachers who taught for in the community for nearly two years. Moreover, if villagers are extremely ill, they will travel roughly 50 km to reach the SSA's health clinic, not a Myanmar government clinic (group interview, 18 February 2016).

Regarding natural resources, SSA (7) controls access to commercial resources like timber forestry product and gold. Villagers in Village 1 did not feel restricted in their ability to access NTFPs and timber from the forest. However, they did express an inability to continue the practice of artisanal gold panning along the riverbank (see Photo 4.1). Villagers panned for gold along the Nam Khone riverbank to sell in a neighboring town's market.

Photo 4.1. Artisanal panning for gold tools, on the banks of the Nam Khone River. Photo Credit: Research Team, 2015



This enabled villagers to have the money to purchase items like cooking oil and salt (personal communication, Nang Wah, 23 February 2016). However, according to interviews the SSA (7) formed a partnership with a Chinese-based company⁶¹. Through this non-state military-private partnership, the company used machinery to dig gold from the bottom of the Nam Khone River (see Photo 4.2). This diminished villager's ability to find gold. As the headman described in Village 1, "A few [3-4] years ago there was a Chinese company digging gold from the river along the village, allowed by the military [SSA (7)]. Recently there is no company near the village, because the gold is gone" (interview 13, 18 February 2016). All of the interviewees discussed the difficulty they had in panning for gold along the river since that time.

⁶¹ As a militia, this partnership is theoretically made with permission from the Myanmar military.

Photo 4.2. Commercial mining for gold on the Nam Khone River. Photo Credit: Research Team, 2017.



4.3.2 Tolerated claims: Where public service providers and natural resource controllers differ

Multiple governance actors operate simultaneously in south Shan state (Joliffe, 2015).

Villages 2-6 experience a more complicated fragmentation than Village 1. Whereas Village 1 is in a territory controlled and governed by SSA (7), Villages 2-6 are in areas more directly control by a combination of the Myanmar government (GAD), the Myanmar military, private-public and private-military partnerships, militias, and RCSS. Joliffe (2015) describes tolerated claims as situations where ceasefire conditions had resulted in the Myanmar military informally allowing, or not contesting, an EAOs access to territory and resources and their administration of local populations. When asked about who controls the village, an interviewee from Village 5 explained:

The main group responsible for security and everything in the village is the local Shan government. Then we also have the Burmese military and Shan Armed group. Now they mostly just stay on their own and they don't bother the village. (Village 5, village history expert, 4 April 2017)

Local villagers have to navigate this system of overlapping sovereignties. Villages 2-6 were in areas where GAD provided social services such as schools, roads, health clinics, and in some instances electricity. For example, Villages 2-6 receive public services through the Myanmar government, including electricity—according to interviewees insufficient and mostly solar—road access, health care, and education. Only Villages 2 and 5 have a school in their villages and only Villages 2 and 3 have direct access to a health care facility, but all can travel to health centers and schools that run by the Myanmar government. One interviewee from Village 6 explained how the situation, since force relocations, had improved for himself, in part because of government support:

For me, I was living away from here for 19 years and I decided to come back. Right now, the situation is better, and the Government and other people are supporting us...As you see now, we have solar electricity, water tanks and water pipes to connect to our houses. Right now, the Government is also providing funds to the temple that we have almost finished and we have the project where they will help build houses for 10 households soon. (Village 6, village history expert, 25 January 2018)

Despite this government support, villagers still have to negotiate with local EAO officials. The same respondent explained how community members have to work with both the Myanmar government and the EAOs:

We work together among our community and other villages. Then we also work with Government officials when they visit our community or we have to meet with them at their place. We also work with the EAOs, because they are responsible for some areas and we have to discuss with them. (Village 6, Village History Expert, 25 January 2018)

In tolerated claims, the EAOs and GAD sometimes have to tolerate each other's claims or risk the other group interfering with their ability to benefit. Interviewees from CSO 3 described the informal agreements in relation to resource extraction to me as such:

The EAO is the main persons who allow [the extraction]. If they didn't allow, they won't get the money, so they are main actor...but the EAO and *Tatmadaw* [Myanmar military] are working together in reality. They have somebody inside as a broker or something. (key informant interview, 5 January 2018)

This same interviewee went on to explain that the logic for tolerated claims is that the armed groups and the Myanmar military think "If you are doing, we will shut down all things, so we both [have to be] involved" (key informant interview, 5 January 2018). In other words, if they did not tolerate the other's claim, neither would be able to run business without interference.

An example of a tolerated claims influencing resource access is with logging. The RCSS controls commercial forestry around Villages 3-6. RCSS leaders gave for Burmese company, with financial backing from a Chinese company, to log the forests. In a different instance, the Myanmar military gave land to a Shan community-based organization that focuses on the promotion of Shan culture and language. However, the Shan organization had to receive permission from the RCSS to log the forests. An interviewee explained how "that is why they [Shan organization] can log a lot of trees...And they have the land, so now they are building a very big office. They got the revenue [for the office] by selling the teak trees" (key informant interview, 3 February 2018). These agreements and arrangements between the Myanmar military, EAOs, private companies, and organizations are informal and without legally binding contracts. As the same interviewee explained, the process:

It is not transparent. It is a conspiracy between them [RCSS and Myanmar military]. They get the money and they share the money. And unless you get permission from them [RCSS], even the military or government do not go inside

the forest to log. Because most of the forest is occupied by the armed group...everyone knows this, but no one dares to talk about it. (key informant interview, 3 February 2018)

Essentially, despite the Myanmar government's *de jure* control of the forests, in informally negotiated tolerated claims near the study area, the RCSS controls where and what companies can log near these communities. Villagers must negotiate with the RCSS to cut down a tree in a forested area controlled by the RCSS. One villager explained:

People are not allowed to cut trees upstream, or really anywhere. If they really need to cut down a tree, they have to inform local leaders. Later the village headman, village committee, and the armed groups [RCSS] that control the area will decide if it's allowed. (Village 6, agricultural expert interview, Village 6, 27 January 2018)

Although the RCSS does not always restrict access to nearby forest resources for local villagers, villagers can still experience a loss of access. For instance, villagers in Village 4 reported that:

If the forest and river are nearby our village, we do have access to them and can control them on our own. Our local community gets the benefit of the forest and river supporting our livelihoods. But there are changes to the water because, even though people don't log near our place, they do upstream. So we are affected by water shortages. (Village 4, village history expert, 1 April 2017)

An exception to the RCSS's control of the forests, however, involves Village 2. Near the Mong Ton dam site Myanmar military-private partners have heavily logged along the Nam Khone River. Within Southeast Asia, studies have documented the use of coercion and displacement to make way for development projects, including hydropower (see McCaskill & Kampe, 1997; Grundy-Warr & Wong Siew Yin, 2002, p. 96). According to Salween Watch (2013), the four-cuts strategy, and the subsequent displacement of over 300,000 people from central Shan State between 1996-1998, enabled Myanmar military-private partnerships to do large scale teak logging and cleared the way the Mong Ton dam.

According to the village headman, at the time of the research, the Myanmar military control the area around the dam and provide safety for the Chinese companies constructing the dam (see Photo 4.3). As the headman described “The Burmese military don’t stay in the village, but they do control it” (3 February 2016). The companies involved in the Mong Ton dam have hired the Myanmar military to provide security and control access, who sub-contract with a local Lahu militia⁶² (Village 2, group interview, 3 February 2016).⁶³ A 20-mile radius around, the dam has been effectively cordoned off by both these armed groups (Samarkand, 2015).

According to a group interview, the Myanmar military and Lahu militia did not directly control where villagers could travel. People expressed that they could move about as freely as they could before the area was cordoned off. However, the Myanmar military and Lahu militia do discourage them from traveling to certain places (Village 2, 3 February 2016). Women in particular expressed concerns over sexual assault by construction works and military personnel (personal communication, January 2018). While Village 2 did not report any conflict between themselves and the military or militia; 83% of interviewees in Village 2 discussed access limitations they experienced because of the Mong Ton dam. As one interviewee stated “If we are near the dam on the river, we can’t go further because it’s limited by the Burmese military. Also, the Burmese military have limited where we can go into the forest near the Chinese’s project” (Village 2, interviewee 1, 4 February 2016).

⁶² The Lahu militia is one of 12 EAOs that signed a ceasefire agreement with the Myanmar military that aligned themselves with the Myanmar military and been transformed into border guard forces and eight into people’s militia force. Similar to the KKY that were disbanded in 1973, border guard forces and militia serve as proxy forces for the Myanmar military.

⁶³ For example, the Mong Ton dam is based on agreements signed by the Myanmar Parliament with the Chinese Three Gorge’s Corporation, the Electricity Generating Authority of Thailand (EGAT) and the Burmese Ministry of Electric Power, with the Australian Snowy Mountain Engineering Company (SMEC) consulting on the construction of the dams (Salween Watch, 2013).

Photo 4.3. Construction at Mong Ton Dam Site. Photo Credit: Research Team, 2016



However, this control is a temporal one that varies over time. When the company staff were present, villagers only travelled into the forest between 9:00am and 5:00pm, because in the dark they did not feel safe in the forest (Nang Mai, 23 February 2016). During the time of the interviews, the hydropower construction workers were not present around the dam. Therefore, individuals from Village 2 said that they felt freer to go into the forest and fish along the river (Nang Mai, 23 February 2016). Yet, certain pressures remained. The Lahu militia, when not employed by the company, resided near the top of the mountain above Village 2, but were still seen as having influence locally (Village 2, interview 13, 3 February 2016).

Seventy-five percent of interviewees from Village 2 also reported a negative change in the last ten years to forest and river ecosystem services. Of those who discussed a perceived change to the surrounding watershed, all mentioned the narrowing and drying of the river, and 78% mentioned forest loss, both of which the interviewees attributed to logging around the dam construction site.

Some villagers also mentioned the difficulties they now experienced in hunting. “The noise from cutting down the trees frightens the wildlife and causes them to run away from the village” (Village 2, interviewee 7, 3 February 2016). Essentially, even with *de facto* access to forest and river resources, upstream logging activities forged through military-private partnerships still can affect people’s ability to benefit from natural resources. As villagers summarized during a group interview, Village 2 residents perceive negative changes to their surrounding environment:

The Nam Khone River is narrower now and the water is not like before. The water level is lower, there is not enough for agriculture, and it is harder to catch big fish. The wildlife is also not like before: it is harder to hunt and there are fewer trees. This makes the weather hot. The forest and river are very important for our households and the next generation. The river is also important for our culture and tradition. (Village 2, group interview, 3 February 2016)

The river also provided gold for Village 2. As in Village 1, Village 2 had historically relied on gold panned from the Nam Khone River, but since the Mong Ton dam area has been cordoned off, private companies have come in to use equipment to mine for gold from the riverbed. While in Village 1 gold mining extraction was negotiated between the militia and a private company, in Village 2, this was negotiated between the Myanmar military and private companies (interviewee 10, 4 February 2016). The end result is the same, however. As one individual described:

There is less gold left than usual. We could collect more before the Chinese people went to dig gold at the floor of the river. They used large machines and took most of the gold. Now, we can only collect one or two pieces. However, we have to find gold for our lives to exist. (Village 2, interviewee 2, 18 February 2016)

This reduction of gold in the banks of the river, because of a private-military partnership, reflects a shift in villager's ability to derive benefits from river resources. As subsistence farmers, villagers did not grow cash crops and got very little earnings from selling NTFPs; therefore, gold was essential for them to have the money to purchase goods like salt and oil in town. With this increased challenge in finding gold, villagers expressed a difficulty in purchasing household items. This military controlled large scale extraction of gold in the river, resulted in a degradation of resources that limited local community member's ability to benefit from those same resources.

In tolerated claims, villagers need to navigate opaque agreements between the Myanmar military, private companies, and EAOs to negotiate for access to natural resources like gold or timber. Lowered water levels, increased disturbances in hunting territories, and increased deforestation from military-private logging and gold mining, are also examples of a restricted ability to derive benefits from resources.

4.3.3 Special Administration Zones and Accommodated claims

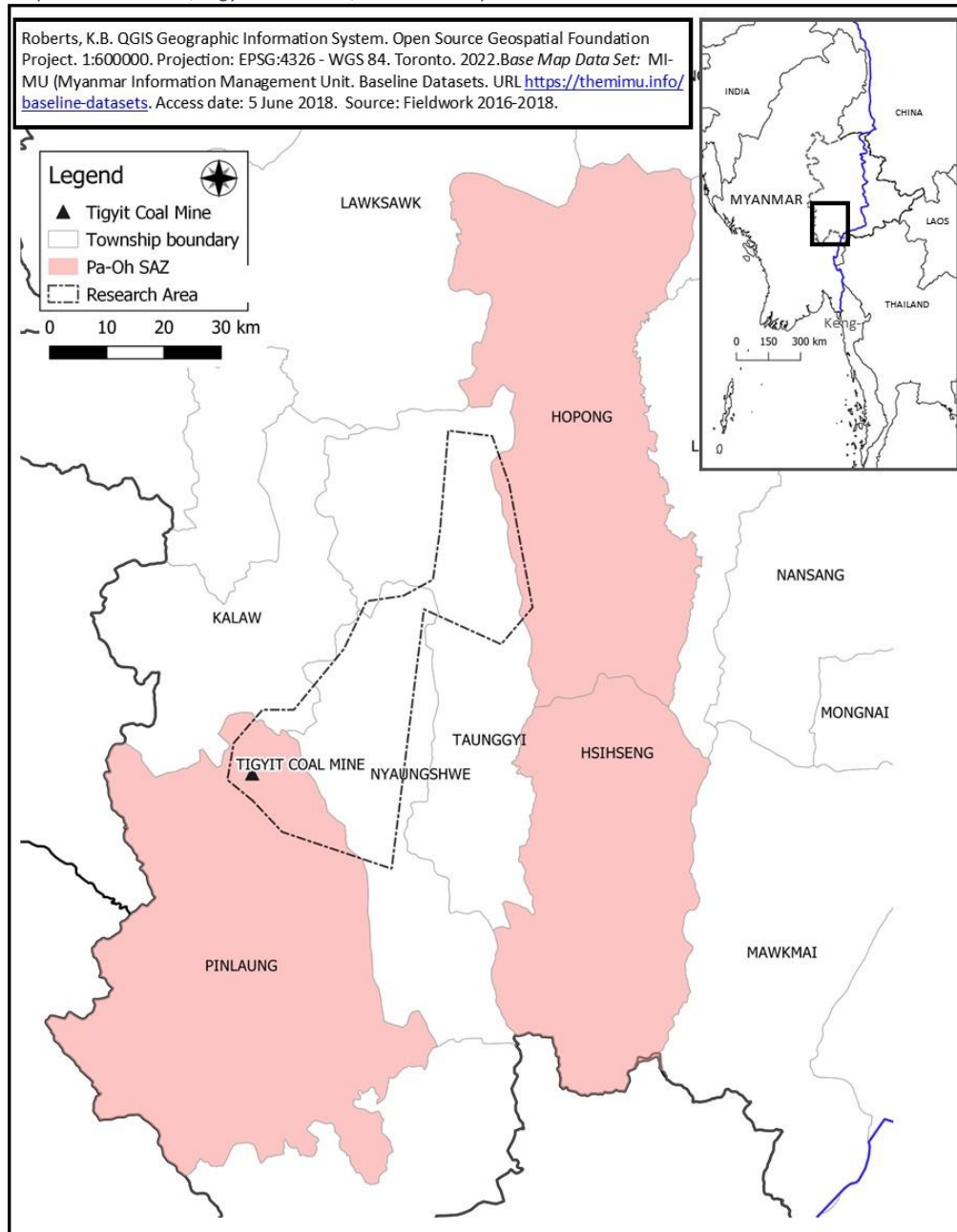
Another form of negotiated claim between state and non-state entities is accommodated claims, where EAOs openly cooperate with State for access (Jolliffe, 2015, p. 1). In 1991 the Pa-Oh National Organization (PNO) signed a peace treaty with SLORC. The PNO disarmed and transitioned into a political party and formed the Pa-Oh National Army (PNA) as its people's militia force (PMF). The PNO was granted administrative control over State Special

Region 6, which later became the Pa-Oh Special Administrative Zone (SAZ) shown in Map 1.2 (Jolliffe, 2015, p. 18). The Pa-Oh SAZ includes the non-contiguous townships of Hopong, Hsihseng and Pinlaung (where Tigyt Coal Mine is located) in south Shan State (Baver, Jonveaux, Pushkar, Lila, & Shinjiyasui, 2013; Jolliffe, 2015). As a registered political party, the PNO won all seats in the Pa-Oh SAZ, which enables the PNO to officially work with the Myanmar government (Jolliffe, 2015, p. ix).

The Pa-Oh SAZ is a form of an accommodated claim. As a SAZ, the Pa-Oh legislative body, comprised entirely of civilian PNO officials. The PNO government can pass legislation regarding urban and rural projects, infrastructure, public health, markets, development, fire prevention, pasture maintenance, and forest and natural environment preservation and conservation (in accordance with Union law). However, the centralized General Administration Department (GAD), undermines these sub-national governments and SAZs by granting them only limited authority (Jolliffe, 2015, p. 3). For example, Pa-Oh SAZ administration does not have authority or autonomy over security, education, and natural resource management and Myanmar national government performs land management related functions (Baver et al., 2013; Jolliffe, 2015, p. 37). According to my interviews, there is some leeway in what this can look like, especially regarding agricultural products. But with regard to national government development projects, the Pa-Oh governing body has little sway (interview 10, 5 January 2018). While the PNO's administrative control of the SAZ remains largely nominal, it does provide an official platform for PNO officials to appeal to local interests, as well as a means to independently organize cultural and religious community events (Jolliffe, 2015, p. 64). Indeed, in contrast to other SAZs, the Pa-Oh SAZ enjoys a stable and somewhat reciprocal relationship

with the State government (Jolliffe, 2015, p. 34). In this space of multiple governance actors, the Pa-Oh SAZ authority is enhanced through the separate and large Pa-Oh National army, which places pressure on the PNO council to ensure that Pa-Oh interests are being met (Baver et al., 2013; Jolliffe, 2015, p. 34).

Map 4.6. Pa-Oh SAZ, Tigyt Coal Mine, and Township Divisions



Regarding Tigyt coal mine and power plant, although it is located within the Pa-Oh SAZ, the PNO government does not have jurisdiction over the power plant and mine. Instead, governance and management of the mine stems from a series of negotiations between the previous Military Government, U Thein Sein's government, and the companies involved in construction and operations for the mine and power plant. The next chapter goes into more depth on the impact of environmental degradation for communities living near and around Tigyt Coal Mine and Coal Fired Power Plant. For this chapter it is sufficient to observe that the decreased ability to benefit from farming, education, clean air, clean water, and good health all constitute a loss in access as a result of these resource extraction activities.

4.4 Conclusions

This chapter explored how villagers in south Shan State have lived with displacement, armed conflict, and resource extraction in the 1990s. A new military government (junta) took the reins in 1988, sweeping away socialist rhetoric and initiating agreements with many EAOs. Ceasefires in the 1990s and 2000s created new sovereignty arrangements over territory, natural resources, and political subjects. Ceasefires ushered in an era of accelerated resource extraction. Meanwhile, some armed groups, such as the PNO disbanded in favor of obtaining an SAZ, while others formed state-aligned militias (Buchanan, 2016; Dean, 2020). However, many of the ceasefire attempts remained non-inclusive of a majority of the ethnic players, and were thus unsuccessful (Tønnesson, Min Zaw, & Lynn Aung, 2021).

In the study area, frontier-making and nation-making militarized activities by state and non-state armed forces reconfigured how villagers in the study area could access natural resources. Informally and formally negotiated claims between armed groups and the Myanmar

military increased resource extraction activities in the study area. This research finds that villagers then had to navigate their access to natural resources through the hostile, accommodated, or tolerated claims agreements that existed between the armed groups and the Myanmar military. The impact of these claims on resource access for villagers is not universally negative, however, restricted access through force or coercion and from environmental degradation does occur. Ultimately, villagers in the study area do not have self-determination over their own access to natural resources.

5 Chapter Five: Everyday violence: Tigyt Coal Mine and Coal-Fired Power Plant in Shan State, Myanmar

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The chapter appears in *Geoforum* as part of the special issue “Violent atmospheres: Political ecologies of livelihoods and crises in Southeast Asia” edited by Wolfram Dressler and Mary Mostafanezhad. It appears below with lightly edited for grammar.

Roberts, K. B., & Mai. (2021). Everyday violence: Tigyt coal mine and coal-fired power plant in Shan State, Myanmar. *Geoforum*, 124, 392–399.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.geoforum.2021.03.002>

Received 17 October 2019; Received in revised form 9 March 2021; Accepted 10 March 2021

Available online 28 April 2021

Geoforum Credit Author

Roberts: Conceptualization, Methodology, Validation, Formal analysis, Investigation, data curation, Writing – Original Draft, Writing – Review and Editing, Supervision, Project Administration, Funding Acquisition

Nang Mai: Conceptualization, Methodology, Validation, Formal analysis, Investigation, Writing, Review and Editing, Supervision, Project Administration

5.1 Introduction

On a cool December morning, students in the mountainous city of Taunggyi, Myanmar bundled themselves up in sweaters and scarves. Nervous energy pervaded the room as they waited to give group presentations. After four weeks of coursework, field trips, and lectures, these young adults prepared to share their own experiences with extractive industries. As the morning fog began to dissipate, we heard stories of violence. The students connected the operations of Tigyt Coal Mine and Coal-Fired Power Plant, in Shan State, to a comprehensive everyday harm on women, education, health, livelihoods, religion, and ecosystem services. These youth explained how violence occurs not just through physical acts of conflict and warfare, but also through slow acts of negligence and cumulative acts of environmental degradation, thereby eroding access to everyday aspects of life-making. They explained how environmental degradation is a human rights violation, and they asked us, Roberts and Mai, to share their insights and experiences of this everyday violence.

Resource extraction sites are violent. This violence operates in slow and fast ways, with long term cumulative effects (Li, 2010; Nixon, 2011; Zaragocin, 2019). This violence also subjugates peoples' ability to determine their own use of the resources around them (Le Billon, 2001) and inhibits their ability to access and benefit from forms of life and world-making (Galtung, 1969; Ribot & Peluso, 2003). Literature on resource frontiers discusses the strategic use of force, coercion, law, discourse, neglect, political economic relations, institutions, and systemic histories to establish access and rights (Cons & Eilenberg, 2019; Le Billon, 2001; Rasmussen & Lund, 2018; Ribot & Peluso, 2003). However, less attention is given to how violence manifests in the everyday. In our political ecology-lensed intervention on resource

extraction violence we call attention to the lived, mundane, and embodied aspects of resource extraction (Jenns, 2020; Kikon, 2019), while also highlighting how this violence shapes space three-dimensionally (Elden, 2013). This everyday violence occurs through systemic, institutional, legal, historic, and discursive structural pathways and from the physical byproducts⁶⁴ of building and operating resource extraction projects.

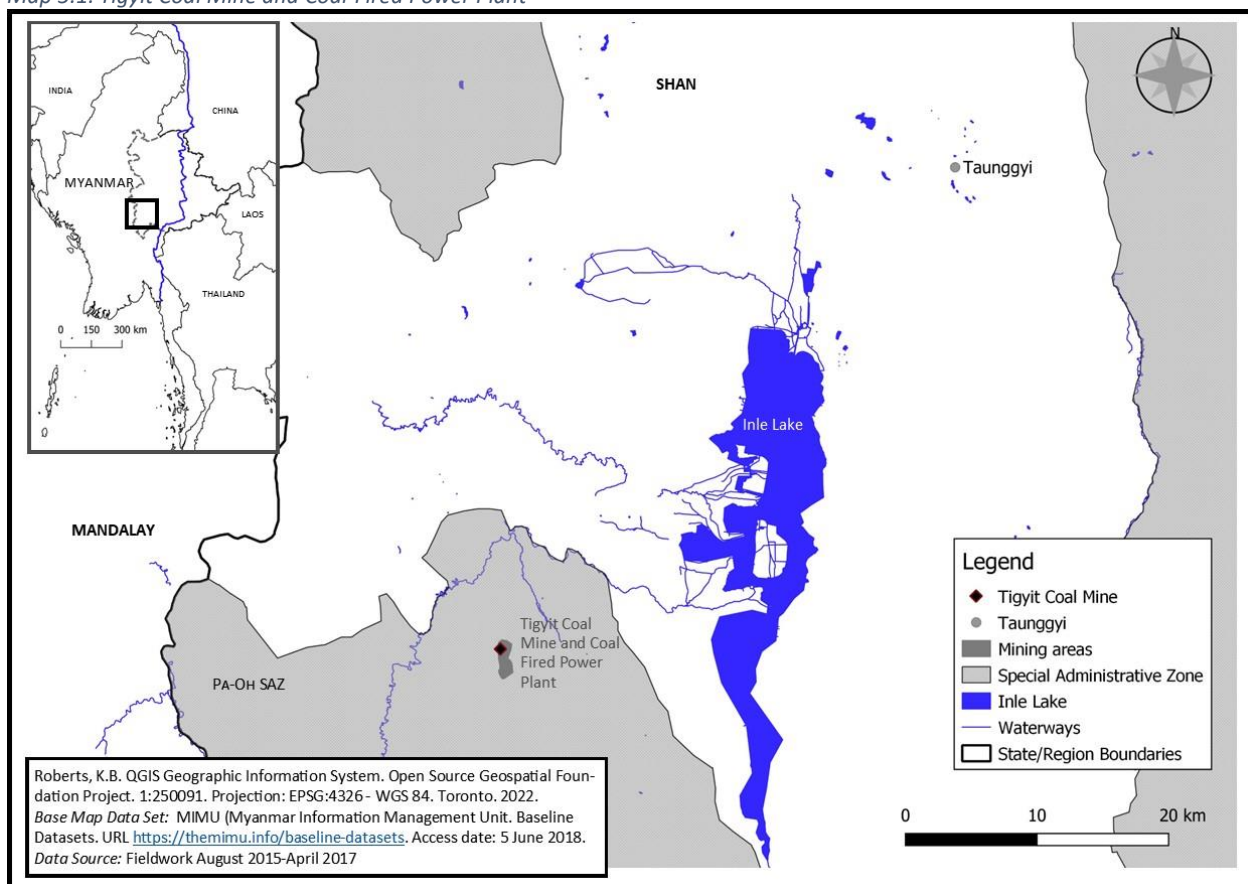
In an era of growing concerns over the impacts of global environmental change and its uneven geographies, not only does research on greenhouse gases (GHG) and industrial inputs to GHGs matter, but also on how those industries take shape at the local level and how they manifest in the everyday. Industries like coal disrupt the land, bleed into the waterways, leach vegetation, fill the air, and sicken bodies. Despite the known hazards of coal mining and operating a coal-fired power plant, coal's low cost as a fuel is a significant aspect of its appeal (Thurber, 2019). Criticism of violent means of land appropriation, negative health impacts through production, and a contribution to environmental degradation has long plagued extractive industries (Bunker & Ciccantell, 2005; Hecht & Cockburn, 1989; McDonald, Bosshard, & Brewer, 2009). This article expands on those critique to offer a grounded perspective that looks at the effects of coal production in the tightly interwoven everyday of nature and society. These effects span time and space, limiting people's ability to manage their lives. We argue, as the students argued, that the binary that so often separates nature and society is a fabrication (Cronon, 1996). Everyday violence impacts the whole of a person's life, affecting their present and future. In this article, the violence we discuss results from the physical byproducts of

⁶⁴ By byproducts, we are referring the material externalities and the side-effects of building and operating a coal mine and power plant.

building and operating a coal mine and coal-fired power plant and the structural impacts of the policies and practices that enable its operation.

To understand everyday violence, we first draw on theorizations of violence within geography and political ecology, before explaining our research methods. We then discuss the history of contested territories and governance within Myanmar that shape Tigyit and provide a brief background on the mine and power plant. A section on Tigyit and its byproducts then shows how everyday violence, through material and structural pathways, is perpetuated in the operations of the mine and power plant.

Map 5.1. Tigyit Coal Mine and Coal-Fired Power Plant



5.2 Everyday Violence of resource extraction

In their 2011 report “Poison Clouds,” the Pa-Oh Youth Organization

(PYO) warns:

If the Tigyit coal mine continues to go ahead, nearly 12,000 people living within five miles of the mine and workers will face health problems and breathing difficulties similar to the Mae Moh communities of northern Thailand. Villagers losing their traditional livelihoods and farmlands day by day will become impoverished and displaced. Polluted water from the coal mine flowing into Balu Creek will contaminate Burma's cherished Inle Lake. (p. 47)

The term violence, particularly in Myanmar, frequently conjures up images of bodily harm and armed conflict. Indeed, decades of civil war between various configurations of ethnic armed organizations (EAOs) and the Myanmar military (*Tatmadaw*) have resulted in deaths, extrajudicial killings, forced labor, rape, and injuries (Jolliffe, 2015; SHRF, 1998; SWAN, 2002). While they did not specifically use the Burmese or Shan equivalent of the term 'violence', the students and interviewees described to us a different kind of violence: One that does not discern between environment and bodies, between terrestrial and atmospheric spaces, or between slow and fast timeframes. This violence inhibits all aspects of life and worldmaking.

We include in our definition below of everyday violence a broad discussion of what violence is, who perpetuates violence, and how violence is operationalized. In this discussion, we highlight the conceptualizations of resource extraction harm by grassroots organizations and activists, in order to contribute to political ecologies of violence (Bohle & Fünfgeld, 2007; Peluso, 2008; Peluso & Watts, 2001), while grounding violence in its lived material impacts. Conceptualizations of everyday violence highlight unseen and underreported consequences of physical and structural violence (Berman Arevalo & Ojeda, 2020; Bhagat, 2018; Bhide, 2020; Jenss, 2020; Piedalue, 2019)⁶⁵. Geographies of resource frontiers emphasize land, resources,

⁶⁵ Much of what we refer to as everyday violence includes Nixon's (2011) "slow violence." However, Nang Mai and

access, and territories as the means through which violence operates (Burchardt & Dietz, 2014; Cons & Eilenberg, 2019; Le Billon, 2001; Rasmussen & Lund, 2018). Grounded with an understanding of the constitutive power of resource frontiers, we make a critical intervention on resource frontier violence and its spatial dimensions. We include an analysis of how frontier violence travels through waterways, airways, terrestrial, and the subterranean (Elden, 2013).

Resource frontiers are viewed as spaces where previous systems of property, governance, and socio-economic relations are destroyed, in favor of new systems (Rasmussen & Lund, 2018, p. 389). This destruction is predicated on the process of primitive accumulation, an ongoing process in which, according to Karl Marx, “conquest, enslavement, robbery, murder, briefly force, play the great part” (1992, p. 359). Enclosures and territorialization are pivotal to the formation of frontiers (Corson, 2011; Goldstein, 2013; Thompson, 1975). They represent grabs for increased resources, displays of power and ‘national development’, and a source of revenue, often in ignorance of or at the expense of communities whose livelihoods depend on those resources (Corson, 2011; Ferguson, 1995; Hengsuwan, 2013; Koubi et al., 2014; Peluso & Vandergeest, 2011; Scott, 1998; Woods, 2011). Resource frontier violence unevenly impacts not only local communities, but specifically women and children (de Leeuw, 2016; Lamb, Schoenberger, Middleton, & Un, 2017; Zaragocin, 2019). Yet, despite the uneven impacts, the literature on extractivist violence rarely focuses on how this violence is manifested in the everyday (Berman-Arevalo & Ojeda, 2020, p. 1589; Springer & Le Billon, 2016).

I elected to build on geographers’ use of the phrase everyday violence (see Berman Arevalo & Ojeda, 2020; Bhagat, 2018, Bhide, 2020; de Leeuw, 2016; Jenns, 2020) by incorporating Nixon’s (2011) slow violence, and also Kikon’s (2019) discussions of the embodied aspects of living with resource frontiers, and Zaragocin’s (2019) concept of slow death. We felt that the phrase “everyday violence” encompassed how the students described violence to us, as stemming from a loss of access to education, livelihood, health, religion, and environmental services.

Le Billon (2001) describes violence as “the subjugation of the rights of people to determine the use of their environment and the brutal patterns of resource extraction and predation” (p. 561). In this sense, activities within resource frontiers enact violence not only through using armed conflict for resource control, but also in restricting people’s access to and use of those same spaces (Roberts, 2019). Access, however, is not limited to property rights and land. Ribot and Peluso (2003, p. 153) define access as “the ability to benefit from things—including material objects, persons, institutions, and symbols.” We elaborate on Le Billon’s (2001) definition of violence to include this view of violence as a suppression of the ability to derive benefits from things. As the students described it to us and as we see it, resource frontier violence is rooted in dispossession, accumulation and the material byproducts of resource extraction. Yet, this violence also flows through interconnected webs of life-making to create a schism in “what could have been and what is” (Galtung, 1969, p. 68).

We follow the pattern of political ecologists in looking for causes of violence in the conditions under which some actors are able to “exploit other people and environments for limited gain at collective cost” (Robbins, 2012, p. 20; see also Blake & Barney, 2018). Additionally, we utilize a localized lens that focuses on civil society and communities that live near Tigyit to investigate socially constructed nature/society relationships (Castree, 2000; Enns & Sneyd, 2020; Jasanoff, 2004), bringing attention to the physical movement of coal mining and coal-fired power plant byproducts (Le Billon & Duffy, 2018). In this, we ask if the biophysical properties of coal influence the harmful outputs that can result from coal mining and coal-fired power plants.

These material outputs of coal and its contributions to resource extraction violence, often take place slowly, over time. Nixon (2011) calls attention to the non-spectacle and less explosive acts of environmental violence. “By slow violence I mean a violence that occurs gradually and out of sight, a violence of delayed destruction that is dispersed across time and space, an attritional violence that is typically not viewed as violence at all” (p.2). Slow violence, like deforestation, accumulation of GHGs, and biomagnification of pollutants in bodies occurs, not in a moment of crisis, but over years and decades (Nixon, 2011) and affects humans and non-humans alike (Enns & Sneyd, 2020). Nixon’s framing of slow violence focuses mostly on environmental degradation, and yet extractivist violence is also slow violence in how it connects waterways, airways, landscapes, ecosystem services, sovereign territories, communities, homes, and bodies (Berman-Arevalo & Ojeda, 2020, p. 1585; de Leeuw, p. 15, 2016; Tsing, 2005). These interwoven violent ramifications are often built on colonial legacies and historical practices (de Leeuw, 2016; Davies, 2019) and are marked by moments of neglect. Foucault’s concept of (2003/1997) ‘letting die’, describes not only a media blitz or moment of spectacle, but “a stealthy violence that consigns large numbers of people to lead short and limited lives” (Li, 2010, p. 67). However, despite appearances of neglect, many actors have opportunities to avert policies and practices that neglect life (Tyner & Rice, 2016, p. 48-49). Zaragocin (2019) connects slow death—a racialized, gendered, and colonial violence of action and neglect—to cumulative territorial encroachment. This territorial encroachment, which can occur under the auspices of resource extraction activities, lead to the slow erasure of life and life-making. We build into Nixon’s (2011) definition of slow violence the concepts of “letting die” and Zaragocin’s (2019) “slow death” to emphasize the pervasive, sustained, and historic

nature of environmental degradation and human rights abuses as they take place in the spaces and bodies of displaced populations.

The pathways of violence are vast and many (see Davies, 2019, p. 4-5). In Galtung's typology of violence (1969), violence occurs through personal interactions, where an actor commits the violence, or through structural means where no actor directly commits the violence. It can be observable or latent, it can be intended or unintended and it can have physical consequences. It can impact physical, symbolic, cultural and emotional spaces (Galtung, 1990; Peluso & Watts, 2001, p. 26). However, for descriptive purposes we categorize these pathways broadly into structural and material themes. Structural pathways, here, refer to the systemic, institutional, legal, licit, political economic, historic, and discursive relations and strategies that enable, enforce, and promote resource extraction activities (Bhide, 2020; de Leeuw, 2016; Fluri & Piedalue, 2017; Galtung, 1969, 1990; Peluso & Watts, 2001). Material pathways, then, refer to the physical properties, infrastructure, and byproducts of coal, coal mining, and coal power plant production (Enns & Sneyd, 2020; Nixon, 2011; Robbins, 2012; Watts, 2013).

We define everyday violence associated with resource extraction as a loss in benefits derived from previous and potential systems of life-making, enacted through material and structural pathways, with everyday material consequences. This critical intervention into the violence of resource extraction draws attention to the unevenly experienced impact of that violence and makes visible everyday forms of violence caused by extractive industries, like the Tigyt coal mine and power plant within southern Shan State.

5.3 Methods

Research for this paper took place between December 2017 and March 2018 in Taunggyi, Myanmar. We met the students, mentioned at the start of this paper, in December of 2017, while teaching a two-day research methods training course. The students, aged between 20 and 25, were two-thirds of the way through a two-month long intensive sustainable development leadership program. At the time of the training, Roberts and Mai had worked together as research partners for two years. Mai is from the region and conducts research with local and regional organizations on issues of environmental and human rights and Roberts is from North America and has worked, since 2007, with similar organizations along the borderlands of Myanmar and Thailand.

Although we had previously worked together researching resource extraction, it was the students who were the first to teach us about Tigyt. Inspired by their knowledge and concerns, we then sought to learn more about Tigyt and the lived experience of communities near the coal mine and power plant. Research for this paper included participant observation and presentations by the students, as well as interviews with 11 local civil society organizations (CSOs). Interviews took place in Shan, Burmese, or English. Mai translated and interpreted for interviews in Burmese and Shan. In all instances of interviews and participant observation, including student presentations, we received informed consent. However, for individual names, including Mai, and the CSOs, we use pseudonyms and a numbering system to protect identities. Despite a 'democratization' and 'demilitarization' processes in Myanmar that began in 2011,

the country remains precarious for many activists and human rights organizations (Suhardiman, Rutherford, & Bright, 2017).⁶⁶

In addition to participant observation and interviews, data collection included an extensive literature review of relevant topics including land, investment, mining, environmental and water policies and laws, pending and present, as well as state and non-state reports and publications. Interviews and reports were coded using QSR NVivo 11 software. Codes were developed based on discussions between Mai and Roberts and the themes that developed during the research process.

Our research methods approach falls under the umbrella of grounded feminist collaborative methods. Grounded feminist collaborative methods rely on grounded theory, which allows for an inductive research approach that evolves as research progresses (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). It also uses feminist and postcolonial research approaches that call for research methods that cultivate and enable meaningful collaborations that are adaptive and stay grounded, that situate the researchers, collaborators, and research itself in historical systems of power, and that cultivate reflexivity at all stages of the research (Faria & Mollett, 2016; Mohanty, 1988; Sharp, 2005; Smith, 2012). Feminist collaborative methods move beyond the mere act of hiring assistants and instead involve active and acknowledged ‘creating’ within the research project (Berry & Gururani, 2014; Caretta, 2015; Nagar, 2002). Within our research partnership Roberts had the funding and paid Nang Mai for her time and labor. However, we strove to invert the traditional researcher and research assistant power dynamic. Nang Mai

⁶⁶ As evidence by the February 1, 2021 military coup and the subsequent imprisonment of political rivals and activists in the country by the Burmese military.

chose the broader research question and research objectives and together we decided on research methods and questions. Nang Mai more frequently decided which organizations and individuals we met with. We designed the methods training for the students together, building on our individual experiences as teachers and as students. Moreover, after interviews, we also would talk about what we had learned. We recorded these reflexive interviews to keep a critical gaze on our separate interpretations of the same information. In this we relied on an analysis of the ‘triple subjectivity’ of inward reflexivity, and outward reflection to understand the position of and interactions between researcher, research assistant, and research participants (Caretta, 2015; Turner, 2010). From these recorded and transcribed conversations came the focus of this paper on everyday violence. As a result of our conversations, and the weighing of our different professional commitments, we decided that Roberts would write the majority of the text for this paper, while Nang Mai kept her focus on the local community’s experiences and human rights abuses faced due to the coal mine and power plant.

5.4 Everyday violence at Tigyt

5.4.1 Governance Structures of Tigyt

The everyday violence discussed below is embedded in the colonial and racialized histories of Myanmar. Everyday violence at Tigyt does not occur without the structures in place, or lack thereof, that enable that violence. These structures stem from policies, governance practices, and laws that perpetuate the dispossession of people from land and that enable harm to ecosystems. This section briefly highlights relevant aspects of the history of governance of Shan State that contribute to the political and legal situation surrounding Tigyt. Conflict, fueled in part by competition over natural resources and political subjects, has

inhibited coherent and cohesive rule throughout Myanmar, particularly across rural and mountainous regions in the non-Burman areas of the country (Bryant, 1997; Callahan, 2009; Sai Aung Tun, 2009). Since independence from Britain on January 4, 1948, territorial disputes in Myanmar continue to feed civil wars, producing fragmented sovereignties and multiple governance actors throughout the country, including Shan State (Callahan, 2007; 2009; Jolliffe, 2015; Jones, 2014a; Mark, 2016b; Meehan, 2015; Woods, 2019a). These fragmented sovereignties include those of the Myanmar government (Union Government), the Myanmar military (Tatmadaw), as well as dozens of ethnic armed organizations (EAOs), some of whom had ceasefire agreements and some of whom who were still engaged in active conflict⁶⁷ at the time of research.

The Tigyt Coal Mine and Coal-Fired Power Plant are within the boundaries of a Pa-Oh Special Administrative Zone (SAZ), discussed in the previous chapter. Pa-Oh ethnic organizations remain critical to the history and governance of the space. The Pa-Oh National Organization (PNO) has its roots in the first Pa-Oh nationalist armed movement that began in 1949 and is among one of the oldest armed groups within Myanmar (Jolliffe, 2015, p. 61). On April 11, 1991, the PNO was given State Special Region 6 territory in their ceasefire agreement (Jolliffe, 2015, p. 19). The Pa-Oh legislative body that governs the SAZ is comprised entirely of PNO officials. The PNO government can pass legislation regarding urban and rural projects, infrastructure, public health, markets, development, fire prevention, pasture maintenance, and forest and natural environment preservation and conservation, provided that the legislation is

⁶⁷ Within Myanmar, however, a ceasefire doesn't guarantee as ceasefire, as the increase in armed conflict in Kachin, Kayin, and Shan areas with signed ceasefires demonstrate (KiiK, 2020).

still in accordance with Myanmar national law. However, the national General Administration Department (GAD), also undermines these subnational governments and SAZs by limiting their authority (Jolliffe, 2015, p. 3). The Pa-Oh SAZ does not have governance authority or autonomy over security, education, and natural resource management, and the Union government performs land management related functions (Baver et al., 2013; Jolliffe, p. 37, 2015).

According to interviews, there is some leeway regarding agricultural products; however, with respect to Union government development projects like Tigyt, the Pa-Oh governing body cannot halt operations (interview 10, 5 January 2018). Instead, governance and management of the mine stems from a series of negotiations between the previous Military Government, U Thein Sein's government, and the companies involved in construction and operations for the mine and power plant.

5.4.2 Tigyt coal mine and power plant project overview

At Tigyt, local and foreign individuals, civil society, nongovernment organizations, state and non-state militaries interact with nationalist, development, capitalist, and activist interests. The Myanmar Electric Power Enterprise began building the Tigyt Coal-Fired Power Plant in 2001. In 2005, the Chinese state-owned China National Heavy Machinery Corporation along with local Myanmar companies, Eden Group and Shan Yoma Nagar, started operations of the power plant (Aung Shin, 2016; Kristanavarin & Vrieze, 2015). Tigyt coal mine is the largest coal mine in Myanmar (EJAtlas Southeast Asia Team, n.d.; Students and Youth Congress of Burma, 2018). The open cast mine and underground tunnels produce between 1750 and 2000 tons of lignite coal daily, much of which supplies the power plant (PYO, 2011; Kristanavarin & Vrieze, 2015). Officially, the power plant has two 60 megawatt (MW) burners with a capacity for 120

MW (Aung Shin, 2016); however, the plant does not perform at full capacity (Ye Mon, 2016).

According to a *Myanmar Times* report in 2018, the plant currently generates 80 MW of power due to limitations in the consistency of the quality of coal used (Htoo Thant, 2018).

In 2014, amid public pressure, President U Thein Sein's administration closed Tigyit power plant ("Public skips," 2017). The city of Taunggyi has a small, but active network of CSOs that often work together to resist human rights abuses. According to one report, in response to complaints about the impacts on the surrounding environment from waste generated by the plant, the Ministry of Electricity and Energy (MOEE) issued a waste management request to the plant operators. When the plant operators ignored the request, the plant was forced to close (Chan Mya Htwe, 2018). In 2015, during U Thein Sein's government, the Myanmar Investment Commission, issued a tender to operate the power plant (Aung Shin, 2016; Students and Youth Congress of Burma, 2018). The Chinese company Wuxi Hua Guang Electric Power Energy won and was granted a 22-year license to recommence operations, after Wuxi Hua Guang pledged to upgrade the plant and conduct the required waste management procedures (Chan Mya Htwe, 2018). Wuxi Hua Guang began upgrading the plant in 2016 (Kyi Kyi Sway, 2016a; "Public skips," 2017).

The Student and Youth Congress of Burma (SYCB) suggest in a press briefing that repairs finished in 2017 and test operations continued through May of 2018 (2018). In May, an operations trial period began (Htoo Thant, 2018). Under the National League for Democracy (NLD) government, Government authorities and company officials informed residents that the plant would reopen soon. In July of 2018, the Shan State Ministry of Electricity and Energy stated that the coal-fired power plant would continue running after it received approval from

the President's office (Htoo Thant, 2018). U Khin Maung Win, the managing director of the Electric Power Generation Enterprise, told *The Myanmar Times* that Wuxi Hua Guang had adhered to strict National Environmental Quality Guidelines and World Bank standards in servicing and maintaining the plant (Htoo Thant, 2018). However, a member of Myanmar Alliance for Transparency and Accountability (MATA) also told *The Myanmar Times*, in December 2018, that the plant has still not completed an environmental impact assessment (EIA), which it is required to do by law (Chan Mya Htwe, 2018).

5.4.3 Tigyt and its byproducts

Since the mine's inception, its operations have had impacts on religious sites, livelihoods, and ecosystem services. Part of the everyday violence that results from the mine and power plant arise from the biophysical properties of coal itself. The Tigyt coal reserves that supply the power plant are younger, closer to the surface, and more frequently mined through open cast mining (also known as open pit mining). To access this coal economically, the State forced the relocation of some households and confiscated farmland (PYO, 2011). In September of 2001, the Myanmar Military regime's Vice-Senior General Maung Aye instructed local military to confiscate over 100 acres of local farmland (PYO, 2011, p. 23). Since that time, over 500 acres of farmland in Tigyt, Taung Pola, Pyin Thar, Lai Khar, and Bar Min Kone villages were confiscated for open cast mining. In addition, reports suggest that at the time, with support from local authorities, Shan Yoma Nagar and Shwe Than Lwin companies pressured farmers into selling their land at a reduced price (PYO, 2011). Relocation of affected villagers occurred during the rainy season, with a refusal of a request to postpone relocation, and with no assistance or resettlement program in place and with minimal compensation (PYO, 2011, p. 28).

Residents stated that they received, at most, 150,000 kyats (\$150 USD) per house in compensation, with smaller households receiving less. Moreover, while the company promised clinics, a library, and schools, as of 2018, those promises were not fulfilled (interview 4, 13 January 2018; PYO, 2011). As a result of forced displacement during a hazardous time of year, with little assistance, residents faced an acute form of violence, which perpetuated the daily loss of income and livelihood access.

This violence builds on the legacy of economic reforms and resulting changes to land tenure and access in Myanmar following the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) military regime change. Despite nominal protections for farmland, the 1988 land policy introduced by the SLORC military regime shifted from a socialist emphasis on peasant farmers to one of economic growth through market reform, relaxing control of domestic and foreign investment. In 2012, U Thein Sein's Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) government introduced a series of laws that further defined the process of land acquisition by individuals and investors. The 2012 Farmland Law (UN-Habitat, 2012) offers land tenure security through a land use certificate and registration system, which is not universally in place in the Shan state (Kattelus, Rahaman, & Varis, 2014, p. 90; Oberndorf, 2012, p. 8). While the Settlement and Land Records Department (SLR) conducted some land surveys, dispossessed villagers around Tigyt did not have land documents. The limited expansion of the land certificate system created a system where villagers could lose access to their land and resources with little to no legal recourse. Moreover, even when smallholder farmers do have land leases, the farmland law often allows bigger businesses to acquire their land (Oberndorf, 2012, pp. 8–9). Articles 28–29 of the farmland law suggest that the state can expropriate

farmland for projects considered to benefit “the national interest,” although there is ambiguity in the law on whether mining activities are considered “for the national interest” (Myanmar Centre for Responsible Business [MCRB], 2018).

In addition to these impacts of dispossession and forced relocation, the process of extracting coal also has consequences for important religious and cultural practices and beliefs. In 2002, heavy machinery bulldozed brush and trees and removed top layers of soil to access the coal underneath. Workers also used dynamite to create an open pit in the ground. The blasts had residual shocks that cracked buildings in Tigyt village and damaged several religious pagodas (PYO, 2011; Chan Mya Htwe, 2018). This not only had economic costs, but also important cultural ramifications. In interviews with PYO, villagers talked about how they believed that the coal project was upsetting local spirits:

When the pagoda collapsed, a fight between villagers and company workers almost broke out. Most villagers were so angry, some were crying. We always celebrate our traditional festival at the pagoda and many people join; it’s a time for a reunion among relatives. Now we have nowhere to hold the festival. One monk said we should rebuild the pagoda but now the land is not strong enough to support it (Interview #10) (PYO, 2011).

This destruction of the pagoda led to a loss of everyday religious practices. Residents continue to fear land collapses at religious sites, as well as agricultural fields (PYO, 2011, p. 35).

The operations of the coal mine and coal-fired power plant also affect water quantity and quality. The processing requirements of coal mining, particularly in water scarce areas, frequently result in a disruption to the watershed (Thurber, 2019, p. 57). Seasonally, water shortages in southern Shan State during the dry season (February – April) are common. However, according to one organization, villagers complain that the water they rely on has dried up (interview 3, 13 January 2018). Regarding wastewater, in 2015, when Wuxi Hua Guang

was granted a 22-year licenses by U Thein Sein's government, the company pledged to upgrade the plant and follow waste management procedures (Chan Mya Htwe, 2018). Yet, water from the factory still discharges into a nearby river, and the process of digging for coal in the open pit mine continues to further disrupt local water sources (interview 6, 14 January 2018). At Tigyt, waste from the mine and power plant flow into Inle Lake, a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve since 2015 and an important tourist site, via Tigyt creek and Balu creek (PYO, 2011, p 42). The Waterkeeper Alliance (WKA) analyzed a report dated April 6, 2018 provided by Advancing Life and Regenerating Motherland (ALARM) and a second report dated April 5, 2018 from the Analysis Department of the Government of the Republic of Myanmar (GRM) on water and soil samples collected in and around the village of Tigyt. The water analysis provided in the reports sampled water for 12 heavy metals and other major pollutants. Around Tigyt, samples from 13 different sites were shown to have high levels of heavy metals like selenium, cadmium, and lead, as well as arsenic. Two samples contained arsenic concentrations that were five times the WHO guidelines for safe drinking water (Earth Right's International et al., 2018b). These impacts on water quality and quantity from the Tigyt coal mine and power plant are in clear violation of the 2018 Myanmar Mining Rules. Under the 2018 rules, mining projects are not allowed to deprive any persons of access to the water they are accustomed (Mining Rule 153) and they are not supposed to pollute surface or groundwater.

The 2015 Law Amending the Myanmar Mines Law of 1994 is the country's main legislation governing the mining sector within Myanmar. Under this amendment, mining projects are supposed to adhere to the 2012 Environmental Conservation Law and 2015 environmental impact assessment (EIA) procedure. While Article 13e states that permit holders

must “ensure not to harm to the socioeconomic of local people and to minimize the environmental damages and reserve a fund for annual environmental conservation” (Valentis Resources, 2016), there is still an inconsistency surrounding the requirements for conducting an EIA within the mining rules (MCRB, 2018). Yet, as CSO reports and interviews indicate, it is evident that harm to the socioeconomic wellbeing of local people has occurred. This lack of enforcement of policy and protection of local communities’ access to sufficient water quality perpetuates the everyday violence people face from the operations of the coal mine and power plant.

The mining of and burning of coal also generate byproducts that pollute airways. The stage that coal is at in the process of transformation from swamp to peat bogs to coal (through heat, burial, and pressure) determines the type of coal, which not only influences how that coal is mined, but also the amount of GHG emissions, and the type of air and water pollutants (Thurber, 2019). The lignite and sub-bituminous coals found at Tigiyit coal mine are considered brown coals or ‘soft coals’. The soft coals have lower carbon content and have higher amounts of hydrogen and oxygen. These ‘dirtier’ coals have a low heat value, are less efficient to transport, and reduce the thermal efficiency of the steam boilers that use these coals (Thurber, 2019, p. 18).

Coal-fired power plants can release a range of air pollutants, including fly ash and other volatile organic compounds (VOCs), Sulphur dioxide (SO₂), oxides of nitrogen (NO_x), and other particulate matter, which scientists have connected to a range of health conditions from respiratory problems, stroke, and heart conditions to cancers (Earth Rights International et al., 2018a). As the most carbon-rich fossil fuel, coal also emits a high level of CO₂; between 93 and

104 kg CO₂ per mmBTU, with subbituminous coal at 97.17 and lignite at 97.72 kg CO₂ per mmBTU. In comparison, motor gasoline releases 71.26 and natural gas releases 53.06 kg CO₂ per mmBTU (US EIA, 2011). Coal produces nearly 30 percent of global emissions, making coal power plants a significant contributor to global environmental change (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change [IPCC], 2014; Thurber, 2019). In addition to CO₂, mining and burning coal emits other atmospheric pollutants, including methane (CH₄) and N₂O. Not all greenhouse gases are alike. While CO₂ is a significant pollutant of coal, it is not the most potent in relation to direct global warming potential (DGWP) refers to a GHG's warming potential in relation to CO₂, which has a DGWP of 1. Importantly, N₂O and CH₄, two pollutants of coal mining and burning, have significantly higher DGWP than CO₂; N₂O has a DGWP of 298 and CH₄ of 25 (IPCC, 2014).

Climate change can contribute to current and ongoing violence for people near Tigyt; however, the power plant also has other air pollutants that cause immediate and accumulating harm on everyday life. A 2018 assessment of the 24-hour concentrations of NO₂, SO₂, particulate matter (PM) 2.5, and PM 10 found that PM 2.5 levels in the sample area were three to four times higher than guidelines for a 24-hour period, and PM 10 levels were more than two times as high. SO₂ levels were 12–15 times higher than the guidelines, and NO₂ levels also surpassed the 24-hour period guidelines. All of these pollutants, measured around Tigyt, exceeded levels commonly found in China and the US, and surpassed Myanmar's national guidelines (Earth Right's International et al., 2018a). Some of these pollutants, such as fine particulate matter (PM_{2.5}), ozone (O₃), SO₂ and NO_x can be reduced by using flue gas desulfurization and selective catalytic reduction of nitrogen oxides (SCR). However, in a

contribution to everyday violence through neglect, the Tigyit Coal-Fired Power Plant does not use these techniques (Earth Rights International et al., 2018a, p. 6).

Coal-fired power plants also emit coal ash, also known as fly ash. This ash is a byproduct of the combustion process, which is released through a smokestack into the atmosphere (PYO, 2011, p. 13). Elevated levels of ash are associated with less energy production and more residue and harmful pollutants (Thurber, 2019, p. 18). Depending on the source of the coal, fly ash usually contains heavy metals and toxins such as arsenic, lead, mercury, and cadmium, among many others (Earth Right's International et al., 2018b), which can result in immediate and cumulative health impacts. Reports suggest that over the past ten years, communities around Tigyit have suffered from increased rates of health problems, including high blood pressure, headaches, premature and underweight births, rashes, and other skin problems (Students and Youth Congress of Burma, 2018). According to the PYO report "Poison Clouds," roughly 50 percent of the nearby population suffer from skin rashes (PYO, 2011, p. 37). Moreover, as is common with extractive industries, these effects have a disproportionate impact on minority populations and women (Chan Mya Htwe, 2018; Hnin Wut Yee, 2016). According to an interviewee, before the power plant was operational, in the villages within five miles of Tigyit, roughly three women would have a miscarriage each year. Yet, in 2017, about 130 women had miscarriages (interview 6, 14 January 2018). This interviewee also reported that children as young as three or four years old suffered from high blood pressures and then many women and children had skin conditions from the pollutants from the coal-fired power plant (interview 6, 14 January 2018). In an anonymous interview in a Students and Youth Congress of Burma report (2018), one respondent shared, "I am very worried about the impacts of coal on the

health of pregnant women, children, youth, and old people. Life expectancy will be reduced.”

The students, in their group presentations, also stressed this disproportionate impact on women and children from the coal mine and power plant.

The effects of pollutants, however, are not limited to health. Residents also talked about a decrease in income. Before the Tigyit mine and power plant, the students claimed that 60 percent of household incomes within Pinlaung township were derived from growing corn; however, now just 20 percent of family incomes comes from corn. International and national markets and a drop in the price of corn from 2000/kilo to 750/kilo contributed to this loss of income; however, residents also see the decrease in income as a result of the fly ash and pollution from the coal fired power plant. Farmers have told CSO organizers that “crops from their farmlands are not of a high quality anymore, and because of this they cannot generate income from the crops and cannot get the market price for the crops” (interview 3, 13 January 2018). An everyday violence emerges as the fly ash lands on the leaves of the vegetables, desiccating the plants and eroding livelihoods (interview 6, 14 January 2018). According to PYO:

When farmers tried to complain to the company about their cabbages being destroyed, the company sent a Captain from the Burma Army to talk to the villagers. He told them: ‘Pesticides get stuck on the vegetable skins and you wash and eat them anyway. In the same way you can wash away the coal dust covering your cabbages and it is no problem’. (PYO, 2011, p. 38)

This disregard for the concerns of the villagers further perpetuates an everyday loss of access to livelihoods, health, and cultural traditions. This decrease in income also makes it more difficult for families to pay for their children to attend school. Those children who can still attend school face other barriers to access created by the mine. During the rainy season fly ash on the roads makes it dangerous for students to walk to school:

Some of the children, when they go to school, need to cross the coal mine and it's really difficult for them. In the rainy season the fly ash, when mixed with water, gets really slippery. So, some of the children go to school in the early morning, but when they arrive there, they've already fallen, and they get dirty and they don't want to go to the school anymore. Sometimes, they also cannot be on time at the school, because the trucks carrying the coal to the power plant are big trucks and they make it unsafe for the children to cross the road. (interview 6, 14 January 2018)

For these communities, pollution from the coal-fired power plant and the operations of the mine challenge their immediate livelihoods, but also harm the future life and livelihoods of their children through increased health risks and decreased access to education.

Laws do exist in Myanmar that offer protection for communities, including the Protection of the Rights of Ethnic Nationalities 2015 legislation. This law requires that ethnic nationalities receive “complete and precise” information about extractive industry projects and other business activities in their area before project implementation so that negotiations between groups and the Government/companies can take place (Art. 5). Yet, enforcement of these laws, as well as environmental laws, remains patchy (MCRB, 2018).

According to one activist:

If you look at the government situation right now, we consider that they are not aware, and do not understand the law anymore. Because if you look at Tigyit...mostly the projects should do the EIA first and they can run the project, but right now they are running the project first and then doing the EIA at the same time. It is so different from the procedure they have right now. (interview 1, 13 January 2018)

Residents accuse local officials of breaking their promises about shutting down the power plant.

According to U Soe Soe Zaw, secretary of the Shan State government, tests run in October of 2016 were conducted for review purposes only and did not signal a pending restart of the plant (Kyi Kyi Sway, 2016a). Secretary U Soe Soe Zaw stated that the tests were to assess the effects

of the plant on the environment and that reopening of the plant hinged on the test results (Ye Mon, 2016). Nevertheless, Shan, Danu, Pa-Oh, and Dara-ang people from around the Tigyt area protested the potential reopening of the plant (“Public skips,” 2017). In an interview with *The Myanmar Times*, villager U Sein Thaung expressed frustration over the lack of transparency around the tests and reopening of the coal-fired plant:

The company should have told us they were going to run tests, but they don’t care about us. And the Shan State government told us they wouldn’t allow the plant to reopen if we objected. It looks like they broke their promise. (Ye Mon, 2016)

Despite its location within a Pa-Oh SAZ, the Union government maintains control over Tigyt coal mine and power plant. Laws and policies that promote a Burmanization⁶⁸ practice then enact a form of violence against the communities around Tigyt through subjugating their voices and limiting their access to good health, livelihood, and education.

Although officials assert that the tests and running of the plant are for review purposes only and not an official restarting of the plant (Kyi Kyi Sway, 2016a; Ye Mon, 2016) residents believe that the plant was fully operational in 2018 and are angered by this apparent lack of following procedure. One CSO employee who works near Tigyt explained:

Right now [Wuxi Hua Guang] has the permission from the government to run the power plant and to do the EIA for one year for tests. So the local people are really angry. ‘Why do they test the local people like this? To run the EIA, do we need to die for it? We are people, not animals’. (interview 6, 14 January 2018)

Laws and policies such as the 2006 Conservation of Water Resources and Rivers Law, or the 2014 Environmental Conservation Rules and 2015 Environmental Quality Guidelines, should

⁶⁸ Burmanization refers to a form of ethnic Burman colonization on the nonethnic Burman populations within Myanmar. Ne Win’s military government institutionalized Burmanization policies, seeking to construct “a highly centralized, culturally homogenous Burman state” (Cockett, 2015, p. 76-77).

protect communities from the more harmful effects of a nearby project (Kattelus et al., 2014, p. 90; Myo Nyunt, 2008; Urban et al., 2013; Ministry of Environmental Conservation and Forestry Myanmar, 2014). Yet, many of those laws outright favor national development over local needs, further perpetuating systemic pathways of violence.

5.5 Conclusion

Everyday violence from Tigyt Coal Mine and Coal-Fired Power Plant results in the loss of ability to derive benefits from previous and potential systems of life-making. This everyday violence contributes to global climate change, as well as regional air and water pollution. This is an everyday violence that restricts access to clean and safe drinking water and water for agriculture and livestock. This is an everyday violence that began during the inception of the mine, with explosions that destroyed important cultural and religious sites, inhibiting people's ability to freely practice their beliefs. Impacts from the coal mine and power plant are not always direct, as is the case for the children's education. It is not because schools have been torn down, but rather because of the difficulty that the coal mine and fly ash create for the students in arriving to school; in the difficulty students' families have in managing livelihoods; and in the difficulty students face from health problems caused by pollutants from the power plant. In the case of education, the mine and the power plant are restricting students' access to school, causing a slow erasure of life and life-making for the student's immediate and future lives.

Everyday violence manifests in a myriad of ways. As Springer (2011) states, violence is an unfolding process, not just a moment in time (p. 91). It can occur through traumatic events like the dispossession of people from their lands or negligence in enforcing policies and laws or

through the accumulative effects of ill health. As the students argued, this is a violence that does not distinguish between health, environment, education, and livelihood. It occurs in the everyday. This everyday violence is grounded in the physical properties and demands of coal itself, and it flows through the airways, waterways, and terrestrial spaces. It bleeds onto people's everyday lives and their futures. The enforcement of protections through the rule of law or the application of technologies to limit pollutants could have minimized the violence caused by this plant. Unfortunately, there is nothing exceptional about this coal project and the harm it has caused; yet, within a country with fragmented sovereignties and with unenforced laws and policies, the unnecessary everydayness of the violence it perpetuates stands out. As Galtung (1969) and Tyner and Rice (2016) suggest in their definitions of violence, the operations of and byproducts of Tigyit coal mine and power plant are violent, because they are not inevitable.

6 Chapter Six: Production and protest: Resource frontiers in south Shan State

6.1 Introduction

Furtively sitting in an open-air tea shop in Taunggyi, Myanmar, my research partner Nang Mai and I interviewed a dozen people working with civil society organizations (CSOs). After an invitation to join from a few of our interviewees, Nang Mai and I found ourselves one afternoon sitting in that same, now mostly empty, tea shop, sipping *lahpet yay*, a Burmese milk tea, from thermoses stamped with a 'No Dam: Save the Thanlwin' logo. After the gathering swelled to around 16 people, CSO representatives started to organize ways to oppose the latest proposals in the International Finance Corporation's (IFC) nationwide strategic environmental assessment for hydropower projects in Myanmar. For days, the people at this meeting had been telling me about the history of their organizations, many of which focused on human rights abuses like domestic violence or focused on raising awareness for cultural heritage and language. Yet here at this meeting, I listened as they expanded, altered, or paused their organization's core mission to collaboratively address an overlapping potential threat to their State, but not necessarily their communities: natural resource extraction.

This chapter⁶⁹ explores how the tensions and interactions between resource frontier actors contribute to the production of resource frontiers. In this, I analyze frontiers through the lens of civil society organizations (CSOs) to ask how efforts by social movement to restrain, call accountable, and influence resource extraction shape resource frontiers, and in what way do

⁶⁹ This chapter is a paper that has been submitted to *Geopolitics* and is currently in revisions. I have altered wording to fit the dissertation and have added a few key sentences to connect it to the dissertation as a whole.

the resource extraction activities shape social movements. Thinking about civil society as a productive component of, rather than a reaction to, resource frontiers, illuminates the generative interactions and agency that occurs between actors.

I focus my analysis on the interactions between and interventions by CSOs and resource extractors, as components of resource frontiers. Resource frontiers redefine systems of commerce, political structures, social relations, property systems, and ecologies to make way for new forms of extraction and accumulation (Peluso & Lund, 2011). Rasmussen and Lund (2018) argue that resource frontiers are produced through interactions and frictions between the frontier assemblage. Cons and Eilenberg (2019) use the concept of frontier assemblage as both a descriptive and analytic and define the assemblage as “the intertwined materialities, actors, cultural logics, spatial dynamics, ecologies, and political economic processes that produce particular places as resource frontiers” (p. 2). Embedded in place-specific ecologies and specific histories, and determined by resources with specific mobilities and materialities, local and foreign individuals, civil society, non-government organizations, state and non-state militaries interact to produce resource frontiers (see Sarma, Faxon, & Roberts, 2021).

Resource frontiers are sites of change and friction (Barney, 2009; Tsing, 2005). Cons and Eilenberg (2019, p. 12) argue that the relationship between resources and frontiers are co-constituted. To paraphrase Pickering’s (1995) statement “the world makes us in one and same process as we make the world;” frontier assemblages make themselves in one and the same process as they make resource frontiers. I look at how resource frontiers are produced through the frictions and unequal interactions that occur within the frontier assemblage (Ballvé, 2012; Cons & Eilenberg, 2019, p. 394; Rasmussen & Lund, 2018; Tsing, 2003) and I investigate how

those interventions, specifically between civil society and resource extraction corporations, co-constitute each other.

My analysis on the interactions within the frontier assemblage contribute to literature on Myanmar that highlights the role of civil society in governance (Hedström & Olivius, 2020; Olivius, 2019; Pepper, 2018) and in resource extraction projects (Foran et al., 2017; Kiik, 2020; Kirchherr, Charles, & Walton, 2017; Kirchherr, 2018; Middleton, Scott, & Lamb, 2019; Middleton & Gotz, 2020; Simpson, 2013; Suhardiman et al., 2017; Suhardiman & Middleton, 2020; Yeophantong, 2020; Zerrouk, 2013). I build on these works and place an emphasis on local, rather than national or transnational organizations, to consider resistance not as a reaction to resource frontiers, but as a critical components of resource frontiers.

I foreground this analysis by situating the researchers and the research methodologies as a component in the process of producing knowledge about resource frontiers. I next provide a historic overview of the relationship between political changes in Myanmar and civil society. What follows is a parallel discussion of how the resource extraction sites and the CSOs developed alongside each other through three time periods. First, the military Junta under the State Law and Restoration Council (SLORC) and the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) (1988-2011). Second, the civilian-military government under former General U Thein Sein (2011-2016), and third, the democratic-civilian government under Aung Sang Suu Kyi (2016-2021). These three periods highlight key shifts in governance and policy changes within Myanmar and mirror the ways in which CSO organizers described their own experience of change.

6.2 Methods

I use a critical gaze on resource frontiers to cast a situated net of analysis that highlights the relationship between local social movements and resource frontiers (Caretta, 2015; Smith, 2012; Sharp, 2005; Turner, 2010, see Roberts, 2019). Specifically, important aspects of this analysis are my position, that of my research partner Nang Mai,⁷⁰ and our place within the CSO networks. This research took place in south Shan state. I spent 19 non-consecutive months in the region between May 2015 – April 2018. Broadly, 64 semi-structured survey interviews and 17 key informant interviews in eight communities, 55 key informant interviews and meetings with CSOs and nongovernment organizations (NGOs), and 26 participant observation events inform the conceptual framing of resource frontiers for this paper. Due to the safety concerns of my research partners, I did not seek out interviews with ethnic armed organizations (EAOs) or Myanmar government authorities. The resource extraction sites of Mong Ton and Tigyit were selected because the CSOs prioritized these as sites of resistance and because they represented the largest proposed hydropower project and active coal mine in Myanmar. Off-site data collection also included a literature review on the relevant land and water policies and laws, newspaper articles, and grey documents from State and non-state agencies and institutions. I omit individual and organizational names and identifying factors, such as ethnicity, from all references for security purposes⁷¹.

⁷⁰ Due to a need for anonymity, Nang Mai is a pseudonym.

⁷¹ Despite the supposed democratization and demilitarization of the country, speaking out against human rights abuses and environmental degradation is still a risk within Myanmar. Additionally, due to the nature of the CSO network in south Shan State, it would be difficult to name those groups that did give permission to use their names, without inadvertently identifying those who did not give permission.

The specific analysis discussed below centers on 12 of the CSOs in south Shan State who I name CSO 1 to 12, to maintain their anonymity. These CSOs are distinct organizations with varying agendas and made up of diverse individuals. Nang Mai and I relied on our networks to arrange meetings with CSO staff. Eleven of the 12 CSOs started with individuals from the communities they worked in and the CSOs varied in size from one person to over a dozen people on staff. The one national CSO included in this study has an important role in the CSO network in south Shan state, and while it has a broader reach in the country, it still retains regional staff. Eleven of the 12 CSOs identified themselves as part of a CSO network that works together on actions relating to the Mong Ton Dam and Tigyit Coal Mine. While one CSO, CSO 3, held themselves separately from the network, they still attended some of the same network activities and would periodically join in some of the same efforts, hence their inclusion in this paper.

By invitation, Nang Mai and I also attended the civil society network strategy meeting before the IFC meeting, as well as the IFC meeting with the network. In this instance the lines between researchers and activists blurred. While neither Nang Mai nor I officially worked with any of the CSOs at the time of the interviews, multiple people we spoke with identified us as allies and the network included Mai in their messaging group during the IFC meeting. I primarily conducted the CSO interviews, but Nang Mai would also ask questions. In these unstructured interviews, questions for CSOs centered on the organization's histories, experiences working in Shan State, and major current projects of concern. The latter led to our interest in the two resource extraction projects that I focus on in this paper. Nang Mai and I debriefed after the interviews to discuss our separate interpretations in a recorded conversation, which I later

transcribed and analyzed. The interviews were in English, Shan, and Burmese. When needed Nang Mai would translate between Shan or Burmese and English.

Table 6.1. CSO organizational focus corresponding with timeline

Government	CSO #	Established	Organizational Focus
SLORC & SPDC	CSO 1	1998	Peace and unity within their community
	CSO 2	1999	Cultural unity and human rights
	CSO 3	2002	Education, awareness raising, and community development
U Thein Sein	CSO 4	2010	Empowering youth
	CSO 5	2013	Increase transparency around resource extraction projects
	CSO 6	2013	Raise awareness and protest the impacts of massive hydropower projects
	CSO 7	2013	Women's issues
	CSO 8	2013	Local waste issues in Taunggyi
	CSO 9	2011-2015	Network around the common concern of hydropower projects along the Nam Khone
NLD	CSO 10	2016	Child labor laws
	CSO 11	2017	Domestic violence
	CSO 12	2017	Social empowerment

In this chapter, I focus on two sites of resource extraction and CSOs in south Shan State through three periods of national government as I show in Table 6.1. Tigyit Coal Mine and Coal-Fired Power Plant is the site of the largest and first open-pit and underground coal mine in Myanmar (Kristanavarin & Vrieze, 2015; PYO, 2011). The Mong Ton Hydropower project is the proposed site for what would be the largest mega-dam in mainland Southeast Asia, on the currently un-dammed Nam Khone River (also known as Salween⁷² River) (“Activist protest,” 2016; Middleton, Lamb, & Saw Win, 2019). The released plans suggest that the dam would be a 7000-megawatt project, with a crest height of 241m, and a 641 square kilometer reservoir

⁷² Known as the Nam Khone in Shan language, the Thanlwin in Burmese, and Nu Jian in Mandarin, and more internationally as the Thai name, the Salween, this river traverses three international boundaries and has names known by many other people groups (Lamb 2019). In deference to the localized nature of this research, this paper sticks with the Shan naming for the river, the Nam Khone.

extending 380 km upstream, with estimated costs of \$6-8 billion USD (International Rivers, 2012; Kramer & Woods, 2014; Lun Min Maung, 2016; Salween Watch, 2016). Threats from both the Tigyt and Mong Ton projects, which include forced displacement, increased air and water pollution, decreased livelihood opportunities, increased presence of armed militia, and heightened stress and anxiety over future impacts (Roberts & Mai, 2021), prompted an organized effort from communities and community aligned CSOs to protest these projects. Disagreements have subsequently ensued among Myanmar government officials, foreign investors, ethnic nationalities, and civil society over who can access and derive benefits from resource frontiers.

6.3 Overview of civil society actors in Myanmar

Resource frontiers in Myanmar emerge from the previous layers of actors and resources, with new actors and resources. Few fully recede, but new actors, new resources, new modes of extraction, and new forms of governance, build on previous layers⁷³ (Sarma, Faxon, & Roberts, 2021). Disputes that started after independence from Britain in 1948, but accelerated with the 1962 military coup, continue to feed civil wars, producing fragmented sovereignties and multiple governance actors throughout the country vying for control over territory, political subjects, and trade routes⁷⁴ (Callahan, 2009; Jolliffe, 2015; Jones, 2014b; Mark, 2016a; Meehan, 2015; Woods 2019a). After facing economic challenges and increased pressure from disgruntled EAOs (often seeking autonomy or federalism), the 1962 military junta all-but collapsed. Momentous uprisings and public protest in 1988, led to a second coup d'état

⁷³ I discuss the theory behind resource frontiers in more detail in Chapter 1.

⁷⁴ See Chapters 3 and 4 for more information regarding fragmented sovereignties.

and the implementation of a new military regime, the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) (Jolliffe, 2015). The 1988 uprisings also led to a resurgence of civil society actors. Many new independent community-based organizations formed in the decade after the protests, focusing on the education, health, and social welfare of the civilian population (Fink & Simpson, 2017, p. 259). As long as the organizations remained ostensibly apolitical, these organizations could address the gaps in the Military regime's public services and carry out development related work (Fink & Simpson, 2017, p. 259).

During the final years of military rule (1988-2011) CSOs and other community-based organizations, at great personal risk, filled the knowledge gap in documenting human rights abuses in the country and in meeting community needs (Lamb et al., 2019; Saw John Bright, 2019; Simpson, 2013; see also PYO, 2011; SHRF, 1998; SWAN, 2002). Many of these CSOs in Shan State have transboundary connections with CSOs and allies in Thailand. Starting in the 1990s, some of these CSOs were formed by exiled activists. Chiang Mai, Thailand, became a haven for exiled activists who had been blacklisted by Myanmar's junta and prevented from returning. Often supported by foreign donors, these often ethnic-based organizations were able to cross at unofficial border crossings and to continue the important work of documenting state and non-state military abuses against the civilian population. They also were able to provide community services such as health care and community aid. As part of a Shan State CSOs and activist diaspora, these organizations also raised awareness about women's rights and human rights, and about the threat to both of these posed by environmental degradation caused by unregulated resource extraction (Fink & Simpson, 2017, p. 260; Lamb et al., 2019, Morton & Baird, 2019; Olivius, 2019; Simpson, 2013; Yeophantong, 2020).

In 2010, the country made a turn toward democracy and held elections. During this quasi-democratized and demilitarized period of civilian government rule (2011-2021) international investment for resource extraction increased. A 2012 rule removed 2000 names from a blacklist of activists maintained by the government, enabling many of the CSOs based outside of the country to travel more freely within Myanmar and to connect with other CSOs. While still risky, many existing and new CSOs increased public protests around issues such as land rights, and even seeking to mobilize public opinion and engage with the government over laws and policies (Fink & Simpson, 2017, pp. 260-261).

6.4 Subversion and suppression: SLORC and SPDC (1988-2011).

The final years of the military regime's government were characterized in Shan State by the repression of local populations, the implementation of resource extraction projects through military force, and the subversive activities of civil society. After the establishment of the State Law and Restoration Council (SLORC)⁷⁵ in 1988, foreign investment incentives and ceasefire agreements between EAOs and SLORC increased the number of transnational energy projects, such as with Tigyt coal mine and power plant and the Mong Ton dam (Environmental Investigation Agency, 2015; Simpson 2013, p. 133).

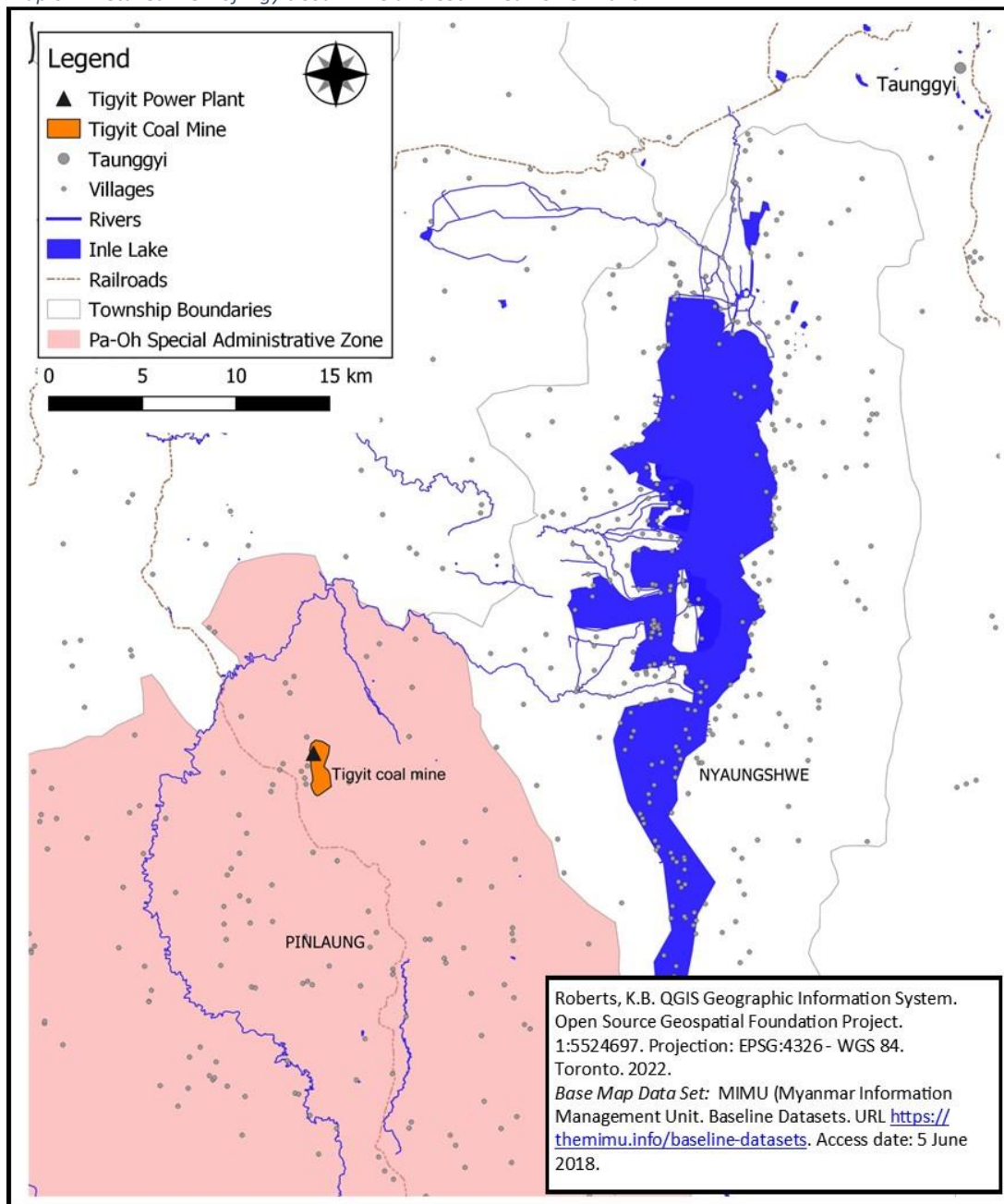
In the case of the Mong Ton Dam, exploration began near the end of the Cold War. In 1981 the Japanese company Nippon Koei began its first feasibility study for the dam (Risser et al., 2003; Salween Watch, 2004). At Mong Ton, the project is expected to export 90 percent of its roughly 7000 megawatts of electricity to Thailand and China (Aung Shin, 2015; Fawthrop,

⁷⁵ Renamed the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) in 1997.

2016; “Political instability,” 2015; Nyein Nyein, 2015). The end of the Cold War changed the political makeup of the EAOs in Shan State and expanded opportunities for resource extraction. Factions from dismantled Communist Party of Burma (CPB) joined ethnic armed groups, seeking to secure autonomy (Jolliffe, 2015, p. 18). As a result of this shift in armed actors, in 1989, SLORC sought out ceasefires with many EAOs.

At Tigyt, exploration for coal began in 1989 and then on April 11, 1991, a ceasefire agreement was reached between the Pa-Oh National Organization (PNO) armed group and SLORC. The PNO disarmed and became a political organization and were given State Special Region 6 territory as part of the ceasefire agreement (Aung Shin, 2016; Chan Mya Htwe, 2018; PYO, 2011, p.7). This self-administered zone includes most of Pinlaung Township where Tigyt is located (Jolliffe, 2015, p. 19) (see Map 6.1). Despite the nominal designation of self-administered, this grants SAZ elected authorities very little authority over natural resources (Roberts & Mai, 2021).

Map 6.1. Detailed View of Tigyt Coal Mine and Coal-Fired Power Plant



When ceasefire agreements could not be reached, SLORC and the later SPDC regimes sought to suppress the many conflicts. Starting in 1988, the Burmese regime increased the number of battalions present in Shan state and in 1996 the Myanmar military first implemented their four-cuts strategy throughout a 7000 square mile area of south and east Shan State. The Myanmar military, since the 1960s, had used the Four Cuts strategy to separate EAOs from

potential sites of food, funds, recruits, and intelligence (Grundy-Warr et al., 2002, p. 101).

Soldiers evicted villagers, prohibiting them from returning to their homes and agricultural fields, by raiding and burning villages and threatening to shoot villagers if they returned (Risser et al., 2003; SHRF, 1998). Between 1996-1998 in Shan state, soldiers evicted over 1400 villages and displaced over 300,000 people⁷⁶. Battalions used rape and forced labor, sometimes against the same individual, as tools of war (Salween Watch, 2004; SWAN, 2002). People fleeing from this violence found temporary shelters in forested areas, while other fled to neighboring Thailand or relocated to cities approved by and under the control of the Myanmar military (Grundy-Warr et al., 2002; Roberts, forthcoming).

The forced relocations displaced an estimated 60,000 people from the flood zone of the Mong Ton dam (Salween Watch, 2004; SHRF 1998). Hundreds of villages also lost river and forest access when the Myanmar military cordoned off the area around the dam site (Gray, 2015). Indeed, after the forced relocations of 1996-1998, the militarization around the dam site increased. This process is what local leaders and activists have referred to as a pattern of "damming at gunpoint" (Karen Rivers Watch, 2004) where the military uses the expansion of army camps, roads, facilities, and helicopter pads to forcefully depopulate an area, without compensation (Gray, 2015). In 1996 the townships adjacent to the Mong Ton dam site held only ten Myanmar military battalions, but by 2006 this number increased to 30 battalions (Sapawa, 2006, p. 9).

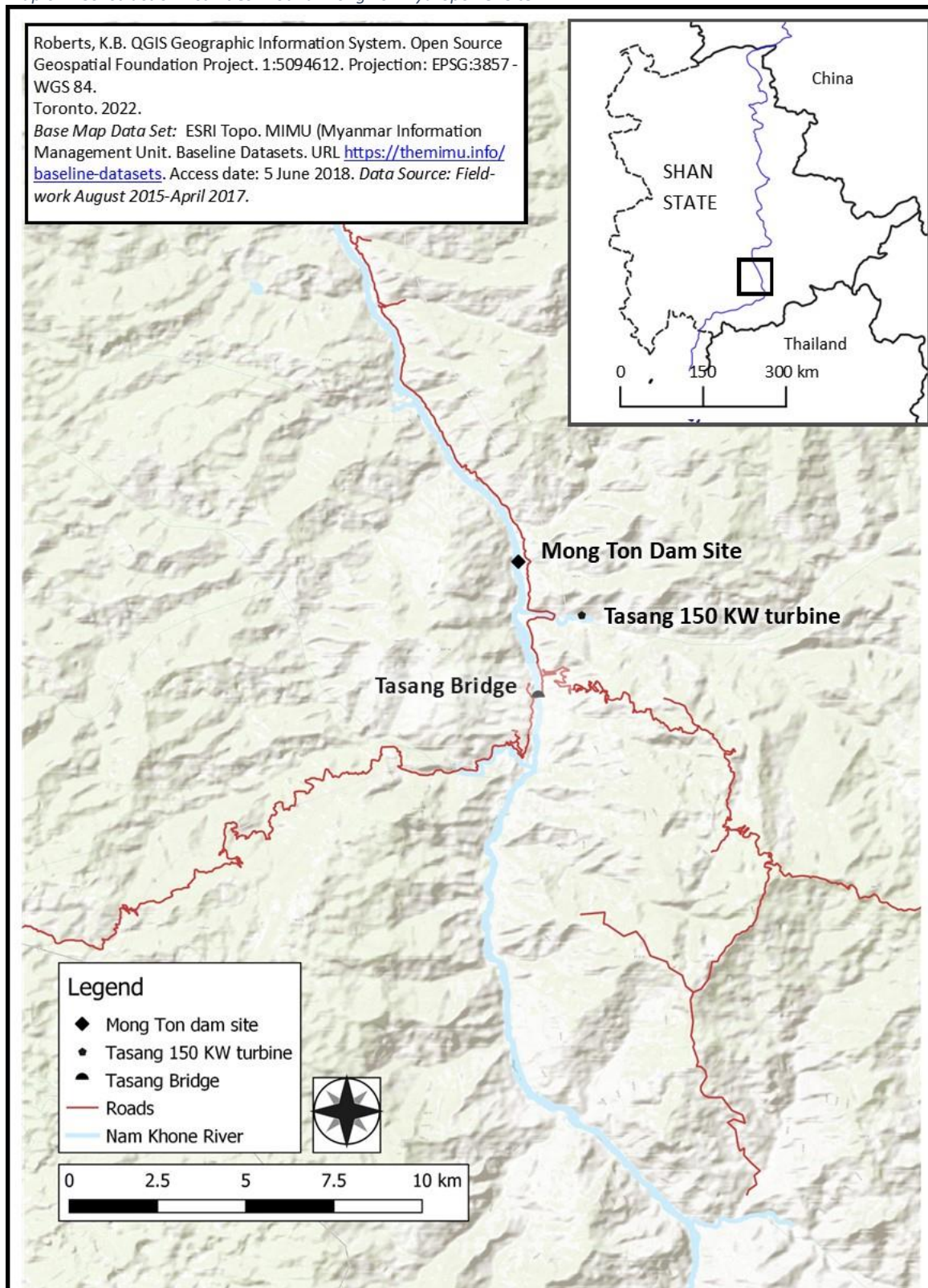
Enabled by militarization of the area, transnational feasibility studies and agreements increased and pre-dam construction projects began for the Mong Ton dam. In 1998, Thailand's

⁷⁶ The forced relocations from 1996-1998 are covered in more detail in Chapter 4.

GMS Power Company and Myanmar's Economic Corporation conducted a study (Salween Watch, 2004, p. 46) and in 1999 the German company Lahmeyer International conducted a pre-feasibility study. This was followed by feasibility study conducted by the Electric Power Development Corporation (EPDC) of Japan (Salween Watch, 2004, p. 46). After the feasibility studies, agreements were made between SLORC and Thai companies. By December of 2002, the Bangkok-based real estate and infrastructure development company MDX signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with SLORC to further develop the Mong Ton dam (Salween Watch, 2004, p. 46; Sapawa, 2006). On the same day that the MoU was signed, MDX signed a contract with Thai Sawat Company to build a 13-kilometer road from the Tasang bridge up to the dam site (Salween Watch, 2004, p. 46). After the completion of the Tasang bridge in 1999 and the road in 2004, in 2005 MDX built a 150 kilowatt hydropower turbine on the river Mae Kok, a tributary of the Nam Khone, to provide power during dam construction⁷⁷ (Sapawa, 2006, p. 5) (see Map 6.2). Logging around the Nam Khone River by ceasefire EAO groups and companies with ties to the SPDC regime also increased during this time (Sapawa, 2006, p. 17).

⁷⁷ The Tasang dam was established in 2005 by the Thai MDX group of companies. During the group interview villagers discussed how the Thai company held public consultation and FPIC before they built the dam and did receive approval. Additionally, the Thai company hired local villagers for labor and purchased food from the villagers. However, since the dam has been built, villagers say that fishing has become more difficult and there is an increase in erosion in three acres of paddy fields (Group Interview, 3 February 2016). The Chinese companies in charge of the Mong Ton dam have even less interaction with villagers. Although the Lahu military, hired by the Chinese, buy some food products from the villagers, the Chinese companies have not contributed to the local economy. As one villager stated "I don't want or need this [Mong Ton] project. For a small hydropower project like Tasang, hydropower that is already finished, they didn't give us the electricity. If the big dam, we will get more negative impact than benefit "(Village 2, 13 February 2016).

Map 6.2. Construction Activities Around Mong Ton Hydropower Site



Through reducing the population around the Mong Ton dam, signing a ceasefire in 1991 with the PNO, and establishing a Pa-Oh SAZ, the Myanmar military regime used force and negotiation to pave the way for further resource extraction. In Tigyt in 2001, the Myanmar Military regime's Vice-Senior General Maung Aye selected the site for the power plant, and the local Myanmar military were instructed to confiscate over 100 acres of farm land for the open pit and underground coal mines (Aung Shin, 2016; Chan Mya Htwe, 2018; PYO, 2011, p.7). The coal-fired power plant, built by Myanmar Electric Power Enterprise, was approved in 2002 (Aung Shin, 2016; Chan Mya Htwe, 2018; PYO, 2011, p. 7). Mining began in 2002. This mine, with open cast and underground tunnels, produces between 1750-2000 tons of lignite coal daily, making it the largest coal mine in Myanmar (Kristanavarin & Vrieze, 2015; PYO, 2011). The combined project of the mine and power plant covers roughly 500 acres, but is considered to be continually expanding (EJAtlas Southeast Asia Team n.d.; PYO, 2011; Students & Youth Congress of Burma, 2018). In 2005, Chinese state-owned China National Heavy Machinery Corporation along with local Myanmar companies, Eden Group and Shan Yoma Nagar, started operations at the Tigyt Power Plant (Aung Shin, 2016; Kristanavarin & Vrieze, 2015).

Catalyzed by the massive displacement, many CSOs became crucial in both responding to the needs of those displaced and in documenting what was happening in Myanmar (Lamb et al., 2019). The massive displacement of not only Shan, but also Pa-Oh, Lahu, Dara-ang, and Lisu populations, encouraged the expansion of civil society and community-based programs. CSOs based in Thailand were staffed by people who had fled or had been blacklisted by the Myanmar regime continued (Lamb et al., 2019). At great personal risk they documented and reported on human rights abuses in Myanmar (SHRF, 1998; SWAN, 2002). Reports from CSOs such as *Fatally*

flawed (2001), *Salween under threat* (2004), *Damming at Gunpoint* (2004), and *Warning sings* (2006) were published at this time, raising awareness of the human rights abuses and environmental threats associated with the proposed dam projects along the Nam Khone River. The leaders of CSO 1 established their organization in 1998, seeking to address issues of peace and unity within their community. The following year, in 1999, CSO 2 started with similar goals of cultural unity and human rights. In 2002, CSO 3 was established with the goal of education, awareness raising, and community development. These organizations could not challenge or protest military government sanctioned activities, yet, as one leader described to me, “we often did the work of the government, because the government couldn’t, so we were the substitute for them” (CSO 3, interviewee 1, January 5, 2018). CSOs could not yet oppose resource extraction outwardly, but instead focused on community development that would not threaten the military government’s authority. As one individual explained, “when we started our organization, we had to have a low profile” (CSO 3, interviewee 2, March 3, 2017).

During these last years of the military regime (1988-2011) the Myanmar military used force to increase their territorial control in Shan State, while the military government signed ceasefires. Access to resources had to be negotiated through the military. As one activist stated:

The last ten years was under the military control, so at that time, there was strong conflict between the Burmese military and the ethnic armed groups, and it was not easy to access the natural resources (CSO 5, interviewee 1, January 13, 2018).

International investment and development projects mattered more to the Myanmar military than local population’s homes and livelihoods. During this period of time, the CSOs were not created in direct response to the Mong Ton dam or Tigyit Coal Mine and Coal-Fired Power

Plant, but rather in response to the resource frontier expansionist activities of militarization and capitalist expansion. At Tigyit, ceasefire agreements and the creation of the Pa-Oh SAZ forged peace between the PNO and SLORC. The ceasefire allowed for the establishment of the coal mine and construction and operations of the coal-fired power plant. Militarization was used to depopulate the area around the Mong Ton dam site, which enabled transnational agreements, construction projects, and logging. Transnational CSOs, particularly in Thailand, raised awareness of human rights abuses happening within Shan state, while in-country CSOs aided their communities through local development projects and education campaigns.

6.5 Protest and postponement: Civilian-military government under U Thein Sein (2011-2016)

In 2010, Myanmar held its first election since 1990. Despite the major pro-democracy party, the National League for Democracy (NLD), boycotting this election, it was a significant step⁷⁸ toward demilitarization and democratization in the country (Pedersen, 2011). The nation did see changes after U Thein Sein (former military general) was inaugurated as president in 2011. Relief from international sanctions, such as the USA lifting sanctions in 2012, then increased economic development opportunities within the country. CSOs called for more transparency, greater consultation, and insisted that these resource extraction projects should not start until there was peace (Maclean, 2014). The Myanmar military continued to use force to maintain authority around Mong Ton and Tigyit. However, the civilian-military government, in implementing the two projects, had to defer some power to an increasingly unified and vocal

⁷⁸ This is held with a caveat, however, as, according to the 2008 constitution, 25% of seats parliament are to be held by the military and the constitution cannot be changed without a greater than 75% majority.

civil society network that brought attention to the lack of public participation in decision-making around the resource extraction projects.

During U Thein Sein's government laws were implanted that prioritized resource extraction projects. For example, U Thein Sein's National Energy Plan set the goal that coal should supply about a third of the country's rapidly expanding energy supply by 2030 (Aung Shin, 2016). In 2012, a series of laws further defined the process of land acquisition by individuals and investors, prioritizing investor needs over local resource users. Article 2 of the 2012 Vacant, Fallow, and Virgin Land Management Law (VFV) defined vacant and fallow as any "land which was cultivated by the tenant before, and then that land was abandoned by the tenant for any reason, not only the State designated land but also for agriculture or livestock breeding purposes" (Oberndorf, 2012, p. 9). This law allowed citizens, private sector investors, government entities, and NGOs to apply to lease lands, increasing resource extraction opportunities (Kattelus et al., 2014, p. 90; Oberndorf, 2012, p. 2). The 2012 Environmental Conservation Law does little to influence local and foreign business activities toward more sound environmental practices, as its fines are minimal in comparison to the scale of the projects that violate the law. The 2012 Foreign Investment Law provides guidelines for foreign investors to lease private land for an initial 30-year investment term, and it allows investors to establish businesses without local partners (Asian Development Bank, 2012; Robinson, 2012; Kattelus et al., 2014, p. 90). Taken together, these laws created an environment that prioritized resource extraction for commercial gains over customary resource use and environmental conservation.

The 2012 laws allowed for the rules that governed natural resource extraction projects to be clearer than they had been during the SLORC and SPDC regime. According to one CSO leader:

If we look at extraction under the U Thein Sein, it is more controlled. He uses the 2008 constitution and there is more transparency. There is also more chance to do this and that kind of access [for local resource users]. But there is also more and more extraction of the natural resources. (CSO 5, interviewee 1, January 13, 2018)

However, as U Thein Sein's government sought to increase international investment, new CSOs formed to protest, raise awareness, and hold accountable the resource extraction projects happening in country (Kiik, 2020, Lamb, et al., 2019, Yeophantong, 2020). In 2010, CSO 4 started with a focus on empowering youth. CSO 5 and 6 both formed in 2013, one to address a lack of transparency around resource extraction projects and another to specifically raise awareness for and protest the impacts of massive hydropower projects on local communities. CSO 9 also formed during this period. CSO 9 works to network and connect these and the previously mentioned disparate organizations around the common concern of the hydropower projects along the Nam Khone, including CSO 1, 2, and 3. CSO 7 formed in 2013 to work specifically with women and CSO 8 formed to address local waste issues in Taunggyi. These last two CSOs did not have operational goals that focused on resource extraction. All of the CSOs⁷⁹ in this study expressed an ability to talk openly about human rights and to criticize the government, which they could not do during the Military regime.

⁷⁹ Again, this research took place prior to the 2021 military coup. The CSOs can no longer openly promote human and environmental rights or criticize the government.

During U Thein Sein's government, efforts to build the Mong Ton dam continued, as did the militarization around the dam site. On the eve of the elections, in November of 2010, an MoU was signed between the Chinese Three Gorge's Corporation (CTGC), the Electricity Generating Authority of Thailand (EGAT) and the Myanmar Ministry of Electric Power about Mong Ton dam ("Asian countries," 2015; Carlisle, 2015). In 2013, a Chinese consultant company submitted a feasibility study to the Ministry of Electric Power of Myanmar for the Mong Ton Hydropower project ("Asian countries," 2015). As a result of the policies of the SLORC and SPDC, the area around the dam site had already been cordoned off by the military; however, during this civilian-military government clashes continued. In July and August of 2015, the United Wa State Army (UWSA) and the Restoration Council of Shan State (RCSS) armed groups fought with the Myanmar military near the dam site ("Salween dam studies," 2016). In October, the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) was signed between eight EAOs and the Myanmar military, including the RCSS (Buchanan, 2016, p. 21). Yet even after the ceasefire was signed, fighting continued around the Mong Ton dam site. In the fall of 2015, Shan Sapawa Environmental Organization reported some 9000 Myanmar military troops surrounding the site (Gray, 2015).

In response to the continued armed conflict around the dam site, protests from civil society increased during this time, affecting the hydropower project. The civil society groups, which included some from this study, argued that proceeding with the Mong Ton would jeopardize the peace process between EAOs and the Myanmar government (Hein Ko So, 2016). Partially in response to the increased civil society movement around the dam, in 2014, Ministry of Electricity and Energy (MOEE) and Ministry of Natural Resources and the Environmental

Conservation (MONREC) hired Australian Snowy Mountain Engineering Company (SMEC) to consult on the environmental impact assessment (EIA) and social impact assessment (SIA) for Mong Ton dam (“Asian countries,” 2015). Yet, SMEC, found their attempts to hold meetings and consultations with villagers disrupted or canceled due to protests (Hein Ko Soe, 2016). Protesters also argued that those public consultation meetings did not actually consult or properly seek consent from those communities who would be most impacted by the dam. Instead, organizers of these meetings downplayed the negative impacts of the dam and made false promises about improved electricity for local communities (Nang Shining, 2016; Roberts, 2019; “Salween dam studies,” 2016). An annual protest on International Day of Action for Rivers, March 14, first began in Myanmar in 2005 (Simpson, 2013, p. 141). However, by 2015, the CSO that had been protesting the Mong Ton dam started specific events that focused on the Nam Khone River (“Burmese environmentalist,” 2017). Amidst protests, SMEC canceled further public consultations in May of 2015. In June 2015, 16 CSOs released a public statement protesting SMEC (Nyein Nyein, 2015; “What is it about No,” 2015). In August of that same year organizers gathered 23,717 signatures, alerting SMEC of their opposition to dams on the Nam Khone River (“Shan representatives,” 2015).

Pressure from CSO organized protests constrained the progress of developing the Mong Ton dam. Additionally, pressure from CSOs began to redefine the scope of Tigyt Coal Mine and Coal-Fired Power Plant. As one activist explained about the power plant, “Tigyt ran for many years, but during 2012 lots of CSO groups opposed the project and were active, so the project was postponed for a few years” (CSO 9, interviewee 1, 13 January 2018). By this point, communities living near the power plant and coal mine had begun to feel the effects. Reports

highlighting the harm done to health and livelihoods from air, water, and noise pollution

pitched public outrage to a heightened state (PYO, 2011). As one organization shared:

Tigyit coal mine and power plant does not meet with international standards, it is really low. Now, one of the villages is next to that power plant so when you go there, at night you cannot sleep, because the sound from the power plant is really noisy. And in the winter season a lot of the fly ash lands on their vegetable and also their home and when they grow their vegetable the leaves of their vegetables start drying. Also, when they dig the coal, they dig it really deep and...the water from the factory is discharging to that river... And another area, the water that the local people are using dries up. (CSO 9, interviewee 1, 13 January 2018)

Communities suffered from the results of the material byproducts of living next to the coal mine and power plant, and they urged civil society to bring these issues to the attention of U Thein Sein's government. At this time, one newspaper report stated that although the MOEE had issued a waste management request to the plant operators, the operators ignored the request (Chan Mya Htwe, 2018). In 2014, amid this public backlash and protest, President U Thein Sein's administration closed the Tigyit power plant ("Public skips," 2017). One activist concluded:

The impact is from air pollution and other emissions from this project. The community is affected from things like miscarriages and children delivered with disabilities. The crops from their farmland is not high quality and they cannot generate income from this and get market prices anymore. Lots of CSOs here are active and oppose this project and raise their voice, so at this time U Thein Sein postponed this project for awhile (CSO 9, interviewee 1, 13 January 2018).

In 2015, the Myanmar Investment Commission issued a tender to operate the power plant (Aung Shin, 2016; Students and Youth Congress of Burma, 2018) and the Chinese company Wuxi Hua Guang Electric Power Energy was granted a 22-year license to recommence operations, pending upgrades (Chan Mya Htwe, 2018). Effectively, CSO protest and activism,

pressured U Thein Sein's government to change the parameters of the Tigyit Coal Mine and Coal-Fired Power Plant.

Around both resource extraction sites, CSOs have been active in documenting and recording inadequacies of the projects and the ways in which they did not adhere to Myanmar laws and international standards. As stated by one CSO leader:

In Shan State, we have many problems and every CSO is trying to address these problems for the community and support the communities in as many ways as we can. And the government doesn't care and they don't look at the problems of the communities. So what can we do? (CSO 5, interviewee 1, 13 January 2018)

Through CSO efforts to call for transparency and accountability, Tigyit Coal-Fired Power Plant operations were halted and management was given to a new company. Meanwhile, during U Thein Sein's government, the Mong Ton hydropower dam continued to struggle to progress as protests raised the international awareness of the project. During this period of civilian-military rule, CSOs were created in direct response to resource frontier extraction projects. Efforts by those CSOs to restrain and call accountable the extraction projects then altered the progression of those projects.

6.6 Networking and negligence under the NLD (2016-2020)

The 2015 elections saw a shift in power. The NLD party ran and won by a large margin and in March of 2016, Htin Kyaw was sworn in as president and Daw Aung San Suu Kyi was appointed State Counselor. Aung San Suu Kyi became the de facto head of State, despite the 2008 constitution that barred her from becoming president. The NLD government's relationship with the Myanmar military was less comfortable than U Thein Sein's government had been, yet the NLD government still prioritized national development over local needs.

As you see, since Aung Sang Suu Kyi and NLD are the ones who are responsible for Myanmar, they just think about the income and development they can get from the natural resources and are calling for investors to come and invest in our country a lot...So our point of view is that they want to develop for the country, but they are increasing the problem for the community. (CSO 5, interviewee 1, 13 January 2018)

During the NLD government, CSOs gained strength through networking; however, the NLD government continued to put national development ahead of human and environmental rights.

Wuxi Hua Guang began upgrading and running tests on the Tigyt Coal-Fired Power Plant in 2016 (Kyi Kyi Sway, 2016a; "Public skips," 2017). According to the secretary of the Shan state government, U Soe Soe Zaw, the tests that were ran in October of 2016 were conducted for review purposes only and did not signal a pending restart of the plant (Kyi Kyi Sway, 2016a). However, Shan, Danu, Pa-Oh, and Dara-ang people from nearby the Tigyt area protested the potential reopening of the plant (Kyi Kyi Sway, 2016b; "Public skips," 2017). CSOs involved in the resistance effort have protested the legality of running the power plant without an EIA assessment having been conducted first. One activist suggested that the government's lack of understanding of the laws contributed to the problem:

If you look at the government situation right now, we consider they are not aware, and do not understand the law anymore. Because if you look at Tigyt, they already run the factory; they said that by running the factory we are doing the EIA, but they are not following the EIA procedure. (CSO 5, interviewee 1, 13 January 2018)

The CSOs in this study that started during the NLD period did not focus primarily on resource extraction. CSO 10 was established in 2016 and CSOs 11 and 12 started in 2017. CSO 10 focused on child labor laws, CSO 11 on domestic violence, and CSO 12 on social empowerment. Unlike the CSOs that formed during U Thein Sein's government, these CSOs did not work specifically on issues related to Tigyt or Mong Ton. What did change, however, was

that when an issue would arise, the CSOs would network with other organizations to address the problem. Taunggyi has over 30 active CSOs, but according to one leader:

The organizations that we are closely working with are around 20 organizations. With these CSOs in Taunggyi, we combine and we inform each other. If we have something happen [for our communities], we send the notice to the other CSOs and we are working actively together. (CSO 11, interviewee 1, 12 January 2018)

For example, if an environmental case or a women's issue was brought to the attention of a CSO, that CSO would lead the discussion in the network's social media group chats to coordinate the efforts to address that problem. One organization described the rationale for their involvement in environmental issues as the following:

For our organization we did not focus on the environment, but we work on women's issues and children's issues. But in the Tigyt case, lots of women and children are suffering. They do not have chance to, and they do not have right to participate in EIA process, or in meetings, or whatever. But they need to participate because they suffer more than the other groups. (CSO 2, interviewee 2, 12 January 2018)

Even though CSOs 7, 8, and 10, 11, and 12 were not created to address resource extraction issues, as challenges related to living in resource frontiers began to confront their communities, the need to participate in resistance efforts and network with other CSOs increased. Resource frontier activities influenced CSO activities and agendas.

This brings the paper back to the International Finance Corporation (IFC) strategy planning meeting in the teashop, where the CSOs joined together to address the issue of hydropower development in Myanmar. In 2016, amidst protests against SMEC, MONREC and MOEE collaborated with the IFC to begin work on a nationwide Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) (Kean, 2019). The IFC is part of the World Bank Group and the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) was designed to support high-level policy. The SEA examined

environmental and social issues for the proposed dams from a landscape and basin level approach, rather than as individual projects (Su Myat Mon, 2017). The IFC (2017) in their assessment of the potential for hydropower development across Myanmar, claimed a neutral position between the stakeholders and asserted that they speak with all interested parties, including the government, investors, CSOs, and local communities. Yet, according to one CSO leader:

In 2015, IFC came to Taunggyi to conduct the meeting about the Mong Ton Dam project. Maybe more than 15 CSOs reject this project now, because we show the evidence for how it will hurt the peace process and then will be harmful to the communities...But now the IFC have had two public consultations already ...where during the discussion the community rejects this project, but they (IFC) don't put it on their report and then they don't put in on their website. (CSO 9, interviewee 1, 13 January 2018)

At the tea shop, 11 of the 12 CSOs discussed above, in addition to individuals representing groups that I did not have the opportunity to speak with, had gathered together to protest the exclusion of their and their community's voices and opinions in the final IFC report. One leader explained the CSOs network strategy as threefold:

In important cases we try to respond in three ways. We try to change the government. It is not easy...And for the law, we also want to try, but even though we approach to the parliament member who handles the ministry involved, it cannot work anymore. So, what I know is the community voice and people power. If we are strong enough, we can protect the law and we can oppose everything. That is the main thing, the ones who have power can listen and anything can change. So, this is the situation right now, the community and CSOs have to push the government to consider their needs. (CSO 5, interviewee 1, 13 January 2018)

On the morning of the IFC meeting, January 15, 2018, over a dozen people, including Nang Mai and I, piled into the back of a truck, all carrying "No-Dam" thermoses. Despite separate focuses on environment, women, children, or legal issues, all present at this meeting

had a single “No-Dam” message and a message that the rights and voices of the local communities needed to be heard and included. At the meeting, this network of CSOs gave speeches and use a group chat messaging platform to coordinate response to the IFC speakers. The meeting involved some debates and defensive positioning on the part of the IFC. After the meeting, news outlets reported on the displeasure and frustration of the CSOs over the IFC process (Mann, 2018; “Shan’s angered,” 2018).

Amidst protests against the IFC process and SMEC, the Ministry of Electric Power hired Stucky SA, an engineering consulting firm from Switzerland that specializes in hydropower, to review the previously submitted feasibility study from a third-party perspective (Aung Shin, 2015). CSOs viewed this as a partial success. While it did not halt or cancel the dam, it did change the project. For example, Stucky SA reviewed the plans for the project and recommended that the flooding area was too wide and expressed concerns about the social impact. Although multiple reports have suggested that the dam will be redesigned from a single mega-dam to two cascade dams, no official statements had been released at the time of writing (Lamb & Middleton, 2019, p. 34; Lian, Kong, Chen, & Qiao, 2019; Lun Min Mang, 2016). Mr. He, a public relations representative for the project, said they might lower the height to 133m and reduce the dam 3000 megawatts of power (personal communication, 27 January 2018).

Pressure from CSOs continued to hold accountable the hydropower projects (Julian, Charles, & Walton, 2017). However, the NLD government signaled in 2018 that they prioritized moving forward with the project, disregarding local community and CSO concerns. By May, work continued at the Mong Ton dam project site, with security forces restricting the movement of villagers (Tan Hui Yee, 2018). In November of 2018 the IFC released their final

report, warning that the plans for large dams across the country would significantly alter hydrologic, sediment transport, and geomorphic functioning of the main stems of the Ayeyarwady (Irrawaddy) and the Nam Khone rivers (Fawthrop, 2019; IFC, 2017; Kean, 2019). Yet, despite the proposed reduction in scope, Aung San Suu Kyi's government made no indication of halting the dam project (Deetes, 2016). While similar to the report submitted online six months previously, in the final IFC report the MOEE logo had been removed (Kean, 2019). Journalists report that there is growing pressure for the Myanmar government to adhere to previously signed MoUs (Fawthrop, 2019; Lindsay, 2020). U Win Khain, the energy minister reported in July of 2018 that the MOEE was preparing a new hydropower policy and working on a white paper that would incorporate the SEA (Fawthrop, 2019; Kean, 2019). *Frontier* reported that multiple sources confirmed that China's National Energy Commission was providing technical support on the white paper (Kean, 2019). Environmental activists worry that this signals a rejection of many of IFC findings (Fawthrop, 2019).

During the NLD government, resource extraction projects continued to move ahead, often neglecting community concerns. However, the government faced a greater resistance from a networked civil society. CSOs without a primary focus on resource extraction joined with other CSOs to protest these activities. Resistance from civil society regarding Tigyt continued and pressure from civil society at Mong Ton dam altered the EIA/SIA and SEA consultation processes. As stated in an Earth Right's International (ERI) report (2018) this pressure from civil society has "invoked new sets of governance practices at multiple levels" (Lamb et al. 2019, p. 115).

6.7 Conclusion

This article outlines the relationship between civil society activism and resource frontier activities. Throughout the three periods of SLORC/SPDC (1988-2011), U Thein Sein's government (2011-2016), and the NLD government (2016-2020), activities related to Mong Ton Dam and Tigyit Coal Mine and Coal-Fired Power Plant persisted. During those same periods CSOs subversively documented human rights abuses (1988-2011), protested resource extraction projects (2011-2016), and networked to strengthen civil society responses of human and environmental injustices (2016-2020).

I argued that as a part of the frontier assemblage, CSOs shape and are shaped by resource frontiers. Frontier assemblages “are characterized by multiple interventions seeking to order land, people, and nature that unfold in ways that are often indeterminate, both for those who live within these spaces and for those who seek to govern them” (Cons & Eilenberg, 2019, p. 15). Civil society movements challenged resource extraction activities, influencing the operations, public consultation procedures, and scope and scale of the projects. The CSOs shaped resource frontier processes by contributing to pressure that forced the temporary closure of the Tigyit Coal-Fired Power Plant, and the transfer of operation rights to a new company. With the Mong Ton hydropower project, discourse around “No Dam” activism remained high and pressure from CSO activities contributed to cutting the scale of the dam by half. Conversely, these resource extraction projects also influenced the CSOs. Regardless of their diverse mission statements, all of the CSOs discussed here protested these sites of resource extraction. CSOs whose mission statements focused on issues related to health, education, or woman's issues became involved in conducting research, leading training, raising

awareness, and collaborating against natural resource extraction. The rationale for networking expressed by some of the CSO groups is that “it might not be our issue, but we are stronger together” (personal communication, January 15, 2020). Ultimately, this chapter demonstrated how the friction and unequal interactions between resource extraction sites and social movements contributed to the production of resource frontiers.

7 Chapter Seven: Conclusions and Coups

On a cool January evening in 2018, having lost my way along the winding side streets of Taunggyi, I walked in late to a graduation ceremony. The students, on stage, had left their rural ethnic minority communities in Shan, Kayah, and Kayin states and gathered in Taunggyi for a two-month intensive leadership and sustainable development training program. Nearly one hundred people from Shan civil society had gathered to celebrate with the students. After I passed out certificates with the other teachers, the students began their prepared portion of the ceremony. They shared a slideshow and video they have created to show the negative impacts of resource extraction in their communities. The interaction between local communities, social movements and extractive industries is one that is both geopolitical and highly local and highly personal.

Silence descended in the room as the students turned off the lights. Kneeling onstage and lighting the candles one-by-one, the students introduced themselves. In emotionally charged explanations and amidst tears, many shared that although it had been hard to leave their homes, they now felt like family. They had united in their shared experiences of living with resource frontiers. The youth spoke about how much they had learned, and they reminded each other that they would now have to be strong to fight for their communities. Afterwards, the audience of mostly civil society leaders had the opportunity to talk. They encouraged the youth, many of whom could not attend school beyond grade 4, not to think of themselves as uneducated, stating that the uneducated are those who have gone to school but do not use it. A few of the leaders also cautioned about how human rights work in communities required sacrifices.

Some moments capture a snapshot of a greater story and at this graduation ceremony the dispersed threads of my research merged into one poignant evening. People I had interviewed, people I had not realized knew each other, surrounded me. At this ceremony, civil society leaders celebrated the youth and stood with them in their trauma and grief, and with them in their hope and determination to fight the negative impacts of living with resource frontiers. I use this encounter to capture the overlapping processes of dispossession, extraction, and exclusion that produce resource frontiers. In this one evening I witnessed the cause and effect, the push and pull, and the generative and destructive interactions that unfold in resource frontiers. Students left their homes, to receiving training in how to resist and hold accountable the violent extraction projects that have harmed their communities. At the ceremony they were surrounded by a network of civil society activists, who by design or by default, worked to enact social and environmental justice for communities living with resource frontiers.

7.1 Summary of findings

In *(Re)making Resource Frontiers* I explored how the uneven interactions between actors in the frontier assemblage remade resource frontiers in Shan State. As the story above suggests, in Shan state, the interactions between the assemblage of resource frontier actors; individuals, communities, investors, corporations, fragmented sovereigns, and local and international social movements generated frictions of competing interests. Colonial racialized histories between lowland Burman and upland groups such as Shan, Pa-Oh, and Lisu painted upland groups as primitive and backwards. Laws and policies criminalized traditional practices like shifting cultivation and devalue how ethnic nationalities utilize and rely on natural

resources. Instead, the laws favored pseudo-national development projects (see Li, 2007) and increasing the wealth for actors in state-non-state and military-private partnerships.

When I started this project, I wanted to understand how historical relationships and present tensions between actors, resources, and spaces produce resource frontiers in Shan State. I did not address all aspects and ramifications for how the varied and unequal interactions, or frictions, within the resource frontier assemblage produce frontiers. Instead, I focused on villagers living near key resource extraction sites and the CSOs protesting the human and environmental abuses from those sites. I discussed resource frontier processes and the continued racial and unequal fragmented sovereignties that govern in Shan State. I argued that the fragmented sovereignties, through their partnerships and conflict form the foundation for contemporary resource frontiers.

I parsed my primary research question by first asking about the connection between resource frontiers, sovereignty, and racialization and how they altered overtime. Precolonial upland and lowland powers traded natural resources. Imperial and colonial powers coveted the teak forests of the Shan hills and gold of the Nam Khone River. Post-colonial governments and competing ethnic armed organizations (EAOs) relied on these resources to fund their military activities. In a post-cold war era, these same entities reconfigured into organizations with agendas that could target international markets. Resource frontier activities of resource extraction through the contradictory combination of militarization and ceasefires enabled different sovereignties to increase their control over political subjects and territory.

Next, I asked about the effect of the frontier processes of militarization and extraction on the civilian populations' access to natural resources. Resource frontiers dismantle existing

systems of property, politics, society, and life-worlds through the processes that transform natural resources into capitalist industries (Rasmussen & Lund, 2018, p. 389; Prasse-Freeman, 2021). In Chapter 4, I showed how the militarized acts of forcibly relocating civilian populations altered people's relationship to ability to practice their traditional forms of livelihoods. Villagers living with resource frontiers must negotiate their access to natural resources in spaces where complicated state and non-state military-private partnerships and conflicts compete for control of resources (Bhagat, 2018; Ribot & Peluso, 2003; Elmhirst, 2011b; Ribot, 1998; Sturgeon, 2004).

Building on the loss of access to natural resources that people experienced through resource frontier activities, I wanted to understand the daily and interconnected life-making effects of living with resource frontiers. As I argue in Chapter 5, communities living with frontiers experience an everyday violence through the loss of access to natural resources, livelihoods, welfare, education, ecosystem services, and cultural practices. I argued that this loss in the ability to derive benefits is a form of violence, which takes shape in fast immediate acts and cumulatively, slowly, overtime and lived out in the everyday (Berman-Arevalo & Ojeda, 2020; Bhagat, 2018; Bhide, 2020; Kikon, 2019; Le Billon, 2001; Nixon, 2011; Piedalue, 2019; Zaragocin, 2019).

In Chapter 6, I asked how the everyday violence experienced in resource frontiers produces social movements and how those social movements shape resource frontiers. An important friction in the frontier assemblage in Myanmar is generated by civil society (Hedström & Olivius, 2020; Fink & Simpson, 2018, Lamb et al., 2019; Lebel, Lebel, Singphonphrai, Duangsuwan, & Zhou, 2019; Pepper, 2018; Saw Yan Naing, 2016; Williams &

Massaro, 2013). I argued that the interactions between CSOs and resource extraction projects are transformative and generative, contributing to the production of resource frontiers. As I demonstrated, the CSOs are changed by resource frontiers, but their actions of protest and resistance also alter the scope and scale of resource frontier projects.

Finally, I wanted to understand the role of the researcher and research process in producing knowledge about resource frontiers (Gibson-Graham, 1994; Mollett, 2017; Sundberg, 2003). As part of a wave of research since Myanmar's opening to international researchers, I acknowledge that *(Re)making Resource Frontiers* itself exemplifies a knowledge-production frontier (Gururani & Vandergeest, 2014; Roberts, 2019). This research rush also reshaped knowledge and power in Myanmar society, sometimes in ways that replicate colonial power dynamics, such as when foreign scholars or development workers 'train,' 'build capacity' or simply fail to acknowledge Myanmar collaborators. In Chapter 2, I discuss how I approached the research using feminist collaborative methodologies (Caretta, 2015; Sharp, 2005; Turner, 2010). Grounded feminist collaborative methods enabled a redistribution of agency amongst the research team, albeit imperfectly (Chacko, 2004; Coddington, 2017; Faria & Mollett, 2016). Collaborative methods were particularly salient for research conducted in a conflict zone (see Campbell, 2017; Cronin-Furman & Lake, 2018; Koopman, 2016; Krause, 2021).

7.1.1 I contribute

(Re)making Resource Frontiers advances contemporary scholarship on the relationships between states/non-state territories, social movements, and resource frontiers in an understudied region (Faxon, 2021; Kikon, 2019; Lamb et al., 2019; Sarma, 2020; Woods, 2021). The research increases an understanding of sovereignty and power by focusing on how, within Shan

State, fragmented sovereignties and social movements co-constitute and (re)shape resource frontiers (Mark, 2016b; Woods, 2019a; Xioabo, 2018). I made three primary contributions to literature on resource frontiers, political ecology of violence, and research methods in this dissertation. **First**, I developed an approach for conducting research in conflict zones through a feminist political ecology framing (Elmhirst, 2021a; Faria & Mollet, 2016; Harcourt & Nelson, 2015; Rocheleau & Roth, 2007; Rocheleau, 2016; Mollet & Faria, 2013; Nightingale, 2003). In this, I used feminist collaborative methods to conduct research by-proxy with dispersed agency among the research team, throughout the research process (Caretta, 2015; Coddington, 2017; Sharp, 2005; Turner, 2010). **Second**, through historicizing resource frontiers and viewing them in the everyday, I contribute to a growing body of analysis on everyday and slow violence (Berman-Arevalo & Ojeda, 2020; Bhagat, 2018; Bhide, 2020; de Leeuw, 2016; Kikon, 2019; Le Billon, 2001; Nixon, 2011; Piedalue, 2019; Zaragocin, 2019). I demonstrated how specific frontier projects dismantle and recreate social relations, property systems and nature-society relationships through violent processes (Campbell, 2019; Corbera et al., 2017; Chatty & Colchester, 2002; Kikon, 2019; Le Billon, 2001; Lamb et al., 2017; Peluso & Watts, 2001; Nixon, 2011; Woods, 2020). Through my analysis of resource frontiers in Shan state, I show the interconnected relations between frontier-making, state-making, and conflict (Ballvé, 2012, 2020; Peluso & Vandergeest, 2011). **Third**, the arguments in this dissertation help to conceptualize the ways that globally-connected and historically-situated resource frontiers shape sovereignty, war, and access in localized frontier actors; and, in turn, how frontier actors themselves remake nature, nation, and global trade (Ballvé, 2020; Cons & Eilenberg, 2019;

Kikon, 2019; Lund, 2011; Peluso, 2018; Peluso & Lund, 2011; Rasmussen & Lund, 2018; Sarma et al., 2022).

7.2 Limitations and Next Steps

Including in *(Re)making Resource Frontiers* local articulations of resource booms in everyday lives is just one small step to highlight and align myself with emic critique and collective action. Solidarity and activist research pursues the goal of increasing social and environmental justice around the world (Aiken et al., 2014; Davis & Craven, 2011; Koopman, 2008). It is my hope that this dissertation provides a partial, academic perspective on resource frontiers that contributes to emergent and vibrant work by local researchers, activists, journalists and development workers. Yet, as with any research project, there are limitations to this study and no project is ever complete.

As I stated above, I do not write about all the interactions that take place within resource frontiers. By placing the emphasis on resource frontiers, rather than resource extraction, I chose to investigate and highlight the many relationships, interactions, and processes that produce frontiers. However, it would be impossible to write about all of the interactions. I deemphasize territorialization and land grabs in favour of emphasizing the place of those processes in producing sovereignty and resource frontiers. Access generated through relationships and the research methods meant that I chose to highlight those interactions that occur with CSOs. However, I could have interviewed a wider selection of actors included in the frontier assemblage. This includes EAO officials, Myanmar government officials, and national and international non-government organizations (NGOs). Ample literature on Myanmar does address these middle and macro-level actors of resource frontiers (see Buchanan, 2016;

Environmental Investigation Agency, 2015; 2019; Jolliffe, 2015; Lintner, 2019; Woods, 2019a); however, it is a limitation of this study.

(Re)making Resource Frontiers, while representing significant portion of my work during the past seven years has also left me with many threads of inquiry that I have not been able to fully pursue. One such thread is a paper I am already writing with Nang Mai that focuses specifically on ethical collaborative research methods in conflict zones. For future research projects, Nang Mai and I have discussed this as one area that she is particularly keen to fix. She argues (and I agree) that a community-based research approach, particularly in communities facing recent traumas, is necessary. In this dissertation, I co-created the research with activists, researchers, and CSOs; however, I did not have the time or money to enable a community-based research approach.

I also think there are more valuable lines of inquiry on the relationship between frontiers, sovereignty, ethnicity, territory, and the ethno-national movements in Myanmar. Literature on Myanmar does discuss ethno-nationalism (see Dean, 2020, Gravers, 2015; Kiik, 2020; Olivius, 2017, 2019; Sharples, 2017), and I do pursue lines of inquiry in Chapters 3 and 4 on the relationship between ethnicity, sovereignty, and territory in the resource frontiers. However, I think a more focused analysis is needed and I would like to specifically explore this at the research sites.

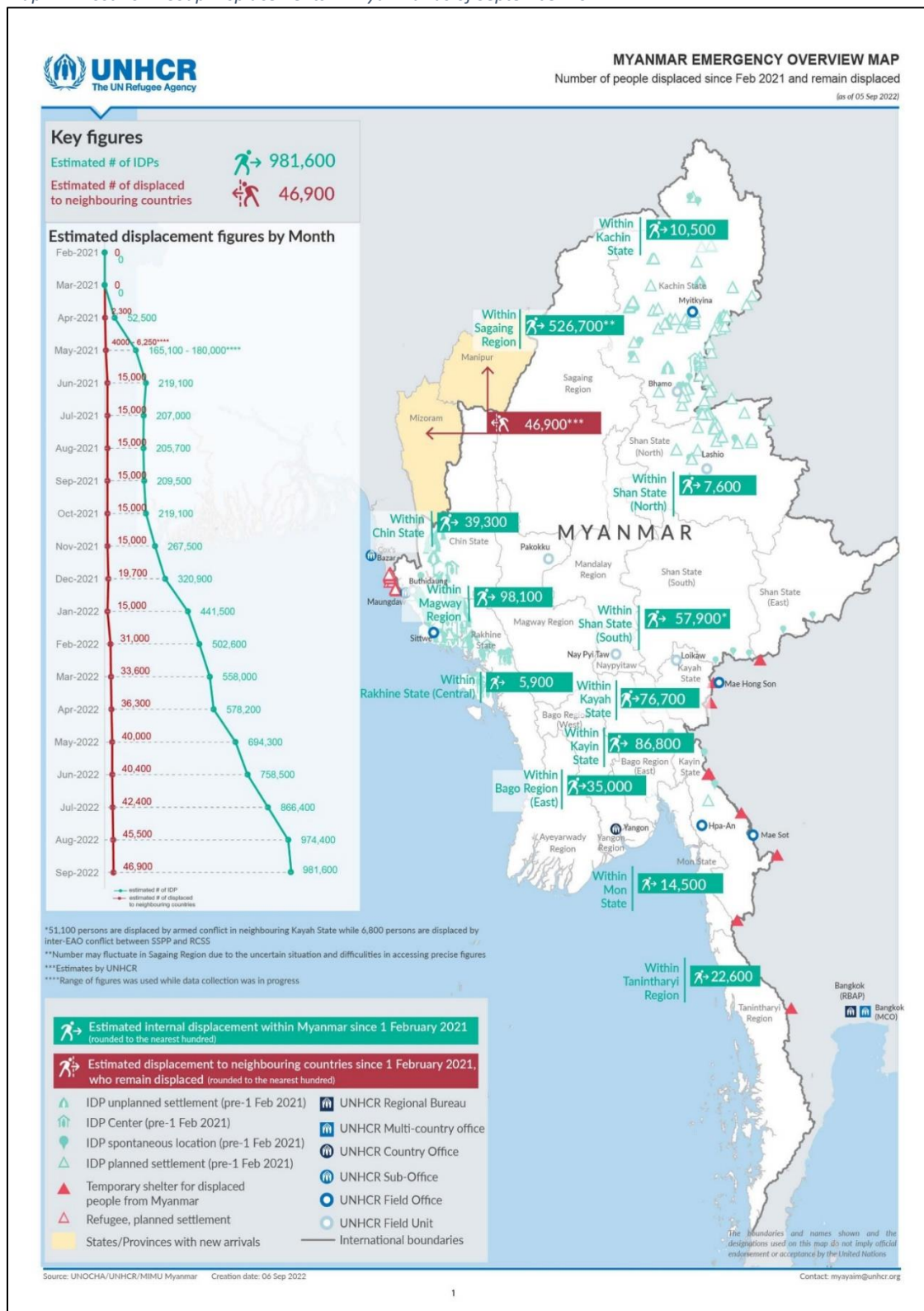
7.3 Coups and Conclusions

The majority of this dissertation has focused on violence that stems from the activities of resource frontiers, as well specific moments in Myanmar's history. The 2021 military coup represents another moment of acute violence that will likely lead to an increase in everyday

violences. No such future lines of inquiry are possible at present. Finishing this dissertation, while the very dynamics I write about and caution about are proving true, has been a challenging process. Since February 1, 2021 resource frontiers are again being remade. For instance, since the coup, Hong Kong based VPower group has declined to renew contracts for power stations ("Hong Kong's VPower," 2021) within the country and an Australian based company has divested from a lead, silver, and zinc mine in north Shan state ("Australian company," 2021). International sanctions have pressured companies to divest from the junta ("US adds new," 2021). Yet resource extraction has also increased in some spaces. Journalists have reported on growing concerns over an increase in environmental degradation as a result of the coup (Cowan, 2021a; "Gem industry," 2021; Nachemson, 2021), including an increase in logging and illegal timber trade practices (Cowan, 2021b, 2021c; "Myanmar's troubled forestry," 2021). Evidence of increased degradation is already occurring in an increase in rare earth extractions ("Illegal rare earth," 2021) and at Tigyit where the *Shan Herald Agency for News* (SHAN) reported in March of 2021 ("Coal mining") an unlicensed expansion of Tigyit's open pit coal mine. Overlapping processes of dispossession, extraction, and exclusion that produce resource frontiers continue after the coup. The difference is that CSOs have lost the protection of 'quasi-democracy' to publicly organize. Instead CSOs workers find themselves targeted by the military junta. Some individuals involved in this research have been arrested or gone into hiding. Four political activists were sentenced to death by the junta in July of 2022, the first executions in over three decades (Paddock, 2022). The coup has also spawned a massive wave of new displacements, with over one million people displaced (UNOCH et al., 2022). In Shan State, over 65,000 people have been internally displaced and the *Shan Human*

Rights Foundation reported on forced relocations in Mong Pan township, similar to the 1996-1998 surge in central Shan State (“Nightmare,” 2021). In April of 2021, Myanmar military militias clashed with RCSS troops in the research study area around Mong Ton Dam. Reports suggest that the militia have stolen personal property and used villagers as human shields and for forced labor (“Forced labour,” 2021).

Map 7.1. Post 2021 Coup Displacements in Myanmar as of September 2022.



Source: UNOCH, UNHCR, MIMU Myanmar (Cartographer). (2022). Myanmar Emergency Overview Map 5 September 2022 [Map].

Resistance against the junta started with the non-violent civil disobedience movement (CDM) just days after the coup (Aye Min Thant & Yan Aung, 2021). Since May 2021, however, People's Defense Forces (PDFs) have been added to the ranks of armed insurgence in the country (Strangio, 2021). The PDFs are nominally supported by the shadow, National Unity Government (NUG). However, the NUG has little control over the PDFs. Some PDFs have bought arms and received training from EAO groups. In addition to the formation of PDFs, as a result of the coup, EAOs have also increased their forced conscriptions in EAO territories (personal communication, 8 July 2022).

As shown throughout this dissertation, socio-economic, geopolitical, and cultural factors contribute to resource extraction activities. However, dispossession, conflict, negligence, negotiations, laws, and social movements also co-constitute resource frontiers, even, and perhaps especially, during a military coup. In *(Re)making Resource Frontiers* I wrote about the interactions of territorialization, sovereignty, and resource control in producing frontiers. Through the 2021 coup, resource frontiers are again being remade. Over the last five years in Shan State, fighting had already increased between ceasefire and non-ceasefire EAO groups. Restoration Council of Shan State (RCSS) troops were accused by the allied Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA) and the Shan State Progress Party (SSPP) troops of expanding its territory northward, resulting in violent clashes (Sai Wansai, 2022). Now RCSS, despite early hopes and talks with NUG, are meeting with the military government seeking ceasefire negotiations again (Wansai, 2022). As ethnically rooted conflict increases in Shan State resource frontiers are again being remade.

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Appendix A – Collaborative methods 3-day workshop

Jan 6-8 Agenda

Day 1 – Assess what we know

9:00am – 4:00pm (10:30 Tea Break; 12:30 Lunch; 2:30 Tea break)

9:00am

Introduction (language, position)

- Co-produced
- Access and use of forest and river resources (but can change)
- Method to my madness (we will “practice” various research methods)
- Tape record / ethics / etc.
- What types of research have you had training in before?
- What types of research have you conducted before?
- Logistics: timesheets / receipts or expenses / etc. (submit on last day)

9:30am

Focus Group: What Hom, Kein, and I know? (use paper, white board, etc). (tape record, intro confidentiality?)

*Explain focus groups?

*explain that there will be questions both about the communities and spaces you work in and about the topic of the research project

Categories: personal; communities; research project (also need to get at what they want to research?). Practice these questions with RAs.

Engagement

1. Where are you from?
2. What language(s) do you speak?
3. What ethnic group?
4. What religion?
5. How old are you?
6. What position in your household do you have? (find a better way to ask!)
7. What level of education / where did you go to school?
8. What organization do you work for? Why did you want to work there?
9. Please provide a job description.
10. What parts of your job do you like the most and the least?
11. What are you hoping to get out of this workshop?
12. What do you want to learn for professional development while working on this project?

Exploration Question

1. From your job / personal experience, what do you think are people’s biggest concerns about the Salween river?
2. What are your biggest concerns?
3. What questions do you want to ask?

4. Do people rely on river and forest products for their livelihoods or to supplement their livelihoods?
5. What river and forest products are available in markets?
6. Is the current conflict north of Khun Heing impacting these concerns, if so how?
7. Who is controlling access to forest and river resources along the Salween? (What organizations, government officials, corporations?)
8. How are people currently accessing these resources? And what if any is blocking / preventing access?
9. Are people organizing to maintain access? If so how?
10. What is the level of literacy / education for the community's you conduct research in?
11. What are the main languages?
12. What are the main occupations?
13. What are the challenges of access / conducting research?
14. What difficulties arise in asking questions of people? Are villagers comfortable talking with you?
15. Men vs. women participation?
16. Age range?

Exit Questions:

1. Is there anything else you would like to say or ask about this research project?
2. Is there anything else you would like to say about the communities you work in?
3. Is there anything else you would like to say about the Salween River?

11:00am

Design Focus Group Questions:

- Engagement Questions
- Exploration Questions
 - o Insert PAR activity with concerns over river/forest (explain PAR)
 - Include dam, land concessions, politics, insurgent armed groups, education
- Exit Questions

1:00pm

Focus groups with youth (designed by Hom, Kein, and Myself) 6-12 youth

3:00 – 4:00

Wrap up:

Key themes?

What do we think is important to pursue?

4:00 – 5:00pm

Me- wrap up and prep for next day

Day 2- Research Design Plan

9:00am

Broad Questions / Focus Lock Down

What?

Lock down broad research questions:

Go through question matrix.

Where? (where are we going to conduct research?)

Who? (who is going to be talked to?)

Institutions?

Villagers?

Market places?

Male / Female?

Ethnicities?

Age groups?

11:00am

Why? (just to make sure we're on track)

How?

(safety concerns)

Research questions / methods / survey?

12:30

Design Research Questions / Surveys / PLA, etc.

Day 3- Test Research Methods

9:00am | Practice interviews with youth

11:00am | **Corrections?**

- Reflection, are we asking what we need to ask?
- What's missing?
- What's inappropriate to ask?

12:30pm | **End of Workshop Wrap Up**

Timeline / February Wrap up sessions

Common spaces participation?

February wrap up sessions / Timeline

How are we going to assess the information (language barriers?)

What outputs do they want for personal, professional, etc?

Payments (time sheets, etc.)

Wrap up:

Common spaces participation?

February wrap up sessions / Time line

How are we going to assess the information (language barriers?)

What outputs do they want for personal, professional, etc?

Payments (time sheets, etc.)

Appendix B: Preliminary Research Team Agenda

February 23, 2016

Set Agenda (audio record)

- Basics, what dates, how did it go, who was with you and for how long
- General impressions of what worked, what didn't
- What did you enjoy, what would you want to do again?
- Outcomes, ideas? Where to go?

Key Informant Interviews

Group Interviews

Resource maps and PLAs

Survey Interviews

General impressions, journals, pictures, etc.

Expenses, payments, ect.

Village Research Overview:

Your Job as Researcher: BE CURIOUS and always ask WHY? (and always feel free to message me questions)

Be transparent:

Make sure that everyone you talk to know why you're there and get their permission to interview them. We will be confidential, not sharing names or even the name of the village? Never tape record someone without their permission.

What to say:

I am from _____. This is part of a bigger research project with 12 other projects along the Salween /Thanlwin river basin. There are many dams proposed to be built along the river, but not much is understood about the importance of the river and its resources in the region by policy makers. These research projects want to get a clearer picture of conditions along the Thanlwin River Basin and communities living near and around the river. If we don't know how river and forest resources are important to people we can even begin to protect those resources and rights. I cannot say that this project will be able to make a difference, but it is a starting place.

Take Detailed Notes when talking to people:

Always write down:

Researcher Name:

Date

Time

Setting

Location

Information about the person you are interviewing

Permission:

Takes detailed notes in Shan (or whatever language you're more comfortable in). Be sure to get specifics. If people say they cannot go into the forest because of the Chinese, why? What company? If people say they get many things from the forest like bamboo, what species (in the local language)?

At the end of the day:

Write in a journal (English or Shan) your own impressions.

1. What did you do that day?
2. What did you learn?
3. Do you think people are being honest with you?
4. What challenges are you encountering?
5. Did you observe or see something interesting happen in the village?
6. Any other thoughts or impressions?

*Also take some pictures of the village and surrounding area.

For researchers working with you:

1. Let me know who is working with you and keep track of their travel expenses too. (Also, I cannot pay them as much as I am paying either of you, but I can pay them a little for their time).
2. Make sure they know how to talk about the project
3. Make sure they understand the importance of asking permission to interview and explain that the interviews will be confidential (no names, and village name will not be used in any documents).
4. Make sure they know how to take detailed notes. how to ask questions, to get permission to interview and to take any photos.

Key Informant questions (village headman, one other person)

Researcher Name:

Date

Time

Setting

Location

Information about the person you are interviewing

Permission:

Village

1. How many people are in the village? How many children? How many households?

2. Tell me about the history of the village? How long has it been here? Has the village changed much over time?
3. What are people's daily schedules like? Are there different times of year that are busier?

Education

4. What education is available for the students? To what grades? And how far away is the school?
5. When did they build the school?
6. How many teachers and how many students?
7. What are the literacy levels in the village?

Temple

8. How far away is the nearest temple? Do children get sent to study in the monastery?

Healthcare

9. How far away is the nearest health care facility? What do people do when they're sick?

Agriculture

10. What are the main agricultural crops? (can ask about opium here if you want)
11. How or where do people sell the crops? (sell to broker? And who does the broker sell to? Sell at market? Contract farming?)
12. Where do people get most of their food from? And who is the buyer?
13. Are there any foods/medicine you get from the forest and river? What's most important?
14. Do people use forest resources frequently? If so, what?
15. Do people use river resources frequently? If so, what?
16. Are there any rules set by the village or by the government over when or how you can use the forest or river? If so, what and by whom?
17. Do you know about the Mon Ton dam? What do you think about it?
18. (For Hom only. What does the Tsang Dam provide?)

Livelihoods

19. What are the main sources of income for the village?
20. How much money, in general, do most families make each year?
21. Is there a local market? And if so, how far away?
22. What do people buy and sell in the market? And who does the buying and selling?
23. Where do people get their drinking water from?
24. How do people get their washing up water?
25. Are there people who are working away from the village? How many? And where? And what?

26. Are there relatives or other people who have been forced to leave their village who are now staying at yours?

Military

27. What other villages, towns, military bases, or companies are nearby?

28. Who controls access to the area around the village (forest and rivers). Is there an overlap? How does this effect the community? How is this different than 10-20 years ago? (EXPLAIN)

29. Is there any support from the military for the community? (and what military?)

30. Is there any support for or from a political party? What support?

31. Do people from the village join the military?

32. Where villagers able to vote in the last election? What party do you know who most people voted for?

Ending questions

33. What are your biggest worries for the village?

34. Is any other thing you want to tell me about the village?

Group Interview Questions:

Researcher Name:

Date

Time

Setting

Location

Information about the person you are interviewing

Permission:

1) Introduce self/project (dams and impact), confidentiality, and what you will be doing.

2) Questions

1 Ask about history of the village (if you haven't learned already)

2 Until what grade do children attend school? What do they learn about?

3 Where do you get medicine / health care from? And what kind of medicine / health care?

4 What agricultural crops and vegetables do people grow?

5 What is the main crop?

6 How do people water their crops/fields?

7 Do villagers practice swidden agriculture? (taungya) How long let fields remain fallow? (or how long do you let a field rest before you grow crops again?) also just ask, how do people do agriculture?

8 What different types fields do people have (upland fields or paddy fields or river bank gardens)

- 9 Do people fertilize their fields and if so how? (ex. Chemical, water buffalo dung, fish etc.)
- 10 What do people fish in the river? How many different species? (or oyster or crab?)
- 11 Are there any other products you get from the river?
- 12 What products do you get from the forest? (broader categories?)
- 13 Who in the household gets the river products or forest products?
- 14 And who in the household uses the river or forest products?
- 15 How did you learn what things you can eat or use safely from the forest or river?
- 16 How has the river changed over time?
- 17 How has the forest changed over time?
- 18 Does the forest have special meaning for village?
- 19 Does the river have special meaning for village?
- 20 Is the forest or river sacred?

Access:

- 21 Are there clear boundaries for where you can and cannot go in the forest and in the river?
- 22 Who sets those boundaries?
- 23 Why can't you go to certain places?
- 24 Who's in charge of the village and who's in charge of the areas around the village?
- 25 Are there different times of day where you can or cannot use the forest or river? Why?
- 26 Are there check points near the village and who controls them?
- 27 Do you have to pay fees or taxes and to whom?

Limitations:

- 28 What prevents you from using forest resources?
- 29 What prevents you from using river resources?

3) Resource mapping: groups of no more 4-5 (split male / female), but one person who can write. Take Pictures!

- 1 First have people draw Village and village land first
- 2 Then ask them to label (or by pictures or symbols.) Be sure to have people explain them to you and take notes.
 - i. What resources are rare?
 - ii. What resources are the most important?
 - iii. Who can use the resources?
 - iv. What are the main problems?

4) PLA (split male / female). People get as many votes as there are options. Take pictures!

- 1 What are the most important benefits you get from the forest and river? (can add or change, just take notes).
 - i. Clean water
 - ii. Food
 - iii. Medicine
 - iv. Firewood
 - v. Grazing for animals
 - vi. Hunting
 - vii. Fishing
 - viii. Water for agriculture
 - ix. Markets/selling
 - x. Building / construction materials
 - xi. Spiritual / social importance
 - 2 What are your biggest concerns for your family? (optional)
 - i. Money
 - ii. Finding food
 - iii. Health
 - iv. Education
 - v. Livelihood
 - vi. Safety
 - vii. Good environment
 - viii. Mon Ton Dam
- 5) Exit questions
1. Did you learn anything from the activities? What?
 2. Is there anything else that anybody wants to talk about or that you think is important to share?
 3. Are there any actions that people want to take based on what we talked about?
- 6) Reminder about one-on-one interviews (only if necessary)

Survey-interviews (be sure to later translate your answers to English)

Researcher Name:

Date

Time

Setting

Location

Information about the person you are interviewing

Permission:

Sampling: Quota – (12) (minimum)

Gender: 6 men, 6 women

Age: 4 unmarried, 4 married age, 4 older people (grandparent age)

(*optional, only if there are clear and easy indicators Income: 4 poorer, 4 average, 4 richer

(Table with Interview # down one side and interview categories on the other)

Survey Questions

1. Gender
2. Age
3. Married or unmarried
4. Household Income
5. Job
6. Educational level
7. Ethnic group
8. Religion
9. Household? By year?
10. How long have you live in the village?
11. What are your family's main expenses?

Household questions

12. How important do you think education is? Explain
13. What does your family do when someone is sick?
14. Has anyone in your family left to do work elsewhere? Explain?
15. Do you have any family who has been forced to leave their village who are staying with you?
16. Did you vote in the last election? What party did you vote for? How did you feel about that?

Agriculture questions:

17. What crops and vegetables does your family grow?
18. What products does your family get from the forest?
19. What products do you personally get from the forest?
20. What products does your family get from the river?
21. What products do you personally get from the river?
22. How frequently do you go to the forest and river?

HOUSEHOLD INVENTORY

Can you show me what is in your house right now that you got from the forest or river?
(take pictures and notes!)

23. What services do you get from the forest and river that you couldn't afford or wouldn't have access to otherwise?
24. How important is the forest or river for your family? Please explain?
25. Do you sell any forest or river products? What? When?
26. Where do you sell? And to whom?

27. How has the river changed over time? Explain
28. How has the forest changed over time? Explain
29. What would improve your access to the forest or the river?
30. Does the forest or river have special meaning for you?
31. Is the forest or river sacred?
32. Have you ever encountered a problem using the forest or river?
33. Does anything prevent you from going into the forest or river, and if so, what?
34. What do you know about the Mon Ton dam? What do you think about?
35. How has how you use the river or forest changed in the last 10-15 years and why?

Bigger questions

36. What do you worry about for your family?
37. What would you like to see change in your village?
38. What are you lacking in your village?
39. What do you like the most about your village?
40. What would improve your life in the village?
41. What actions about the dam or river or forest do you want to take?

Group Follow Up (If there is time)

Researcher Name:

Date

Time

Setting

Location

Information about the person you are interviewing

Permission:

Share what information is learned and give a chance to talk to community members.

Appendix C: Primary Research Guidelines

Village Research Guidelines and Interview Questions for Nang Mai

March 2, 2017

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Village Research Overview:

Main research question:

“What is important for local people’s livelihoods and what challenges/threatens that?”

Research Objective:

To evaluate what natural resources are valuable to local people and to determine what challenges they face with access to those natural resources.

Your Job as Researcher: BE CURIOUS and always as WHY?

Ask not just about what is happening, but ask about the absences. Why isn't something happening? What if a woman did this? Why did this change? What happened? Question the differences. If this thing happens like this in one community, why doesn't it happen in this community?

Be transparent:

Make sure that everyone you talk to know why you’re there and get their permission to interview them and permission to record them. Let them know that it is their choice to be interviewed or not and that we will not share their names or the name of the village.

Never tape record someone without their permission.

What to say:

I am from _____. This is part of a bigger research project around the Thanlwin river basin. There are many things that affect people's livelihoods along the Thanlwin river. This research project wants to understand how people use river and forest products for their livelihoods and what is most valuable to them. By understanding what river and forest products are important to people we can help protect those resources and rights. I cannot promise that this project will make a difference, but it is a starting place.

For researchers working with you:

5. Let me know who is working with you and keep track of their travel expenses too. (Also, I cannot pay them as much as I am paying either of you, but I can pay them a little for their time (\$20 USD/day).
6. Make sure they know how to talk about the project
7. Make sure they understand the importance of asking permission to interview and explain that the interviews will be confidential (no names, and village name will not be used in any documents).
8. Make sure they know how to take detailed notes. how to ask questions, to get permission to interview and to take any photos.

[Researcher Journals](#)

At the end of the day:

Write in a journal (English/Shan/Burmese) your own impressions.

7. What did you do that day?
8. Who did you talk to?
9. What did you learn?
10. Did something someone said or you observe not make sense? Explain.
11. Did you observe or see something interesting happen in the village?
12. What challenges are you encountering?
13. Any other thoughts or impressions?

*Also take some pictures of the village and surrounding area.

[Expert Interviews](#)

Expert Interview questions (agriculture/taungya experts (2-3 people); village headman or person knowledgeable about village history (1 person); land law expert (1-2 people); Mong Pan District (group or 2-3 people)

[Mong Pan District history expert interview questions](#)

Researcher Name:

How do you know the expert?

Date

Time

Setting

Location

Information about the person (or group) you are interviewing (age, gender, household position)
Permission:

1. How many people live in Mong Pan District and Mong Pan Town?
 - a. When has the population changed in the last 40 years? Why?
 - b. Has the population changed in the last 10 years? Why or how?
 - c. Why have people moved in or out of Mong Pan Town?
2. How do people in the village practice their religion and culture?
 - a. What do you think is the most important part about the religion?
 - b. What are important festivals or ceremonies?
3. What education is available for the students?
 - a. To what grades? When did they build the school(s)?
 - b. How many teachers and how many students?
 - c. What are the literacy levels in the village?
 - d. What language(s) do people in the village speak?
4. What are the main forms of livelihoods?
 - a. How important are paddy fields for Mong Pan district? Please explain.
 - b. How important is taungya for Mong Pan district? Please explain.
 - c. Is fishing important for Mong pan district? Please explain.
 - d. Is hunting important for Mong pan district? Please explain.
 - e. Is there anything else that's an important livelihood for Mong Pan district?
5. How has forest cover changed around Mon Pan District in the last 40 years?
6. How has the river that flows through Mong Pan town changed in the last 40 years?

History and Government

7. How was Mong Pan District effected by the Colonial British? (can you answer?)
8. Before colonization, what was Mong Pan District known for? (can you answer?)
 - a. What is Mong Pan District known for (famous for) now?
9. What events or points in time are significant for Mong Pan District? (ie. Military events, conflicts, ceasefires, natural disasters, etc.)
10. Who do you see as the main form of government in Mong Pan district? Are their multiple?
 - a. How long has the Burmese Government had an office in Mong Pan town?
 - b. How long has the SSA had an office in Mong Pan town?
11. Can you describe how **decision-making** happens in terms of (i) natural resource use, (ii) natural resource access, and (iii) [anything else]?
 - a. What kind of committees does Mong Pan have? Who can participate in them (why?)
 - b. What do the committees make decisions about?
 - c. When you use areas around Mong Pan (forest and rivers) who do you have to inform? And who has the power to control the area? (can be more than 1

group). How does this effect the community? How is this different than 10-20 years ago? (EXPLAIN)

12. How would you describe the relationship between your Mong Pan and local government?
 - a. What is the historical relationship between Mong Pan and the government? (what gov.?)
 - b. What is the local government's concern about the natural resource?
 - c. What have been the greatest successes and challenges in terms of this relationship?
 - d. (How) has the relationship changed in the last 10-15 years and why?
 - e. Are these relationships similar to those with local communities in other parts of the State? Why/why not?
13. How would you describe the relationship between the local government and the SSA?
 - a. What is the historical relationship between the government and the SSA?
 - b. How do they work together or against each other in Mong Pan district?
 - c. What is the SSA's concern about the natural resource?
 - d. What have been the greatest successes and challenges in terms of this relationship?
 - e. (How) has the relationship changed in the last 10-15 years and why?
 - f. Are these relationships similar to those with local communities in other parts of the State? Why/why not?
14. How would you describe the relationship between your agency/village and **CSO**?
 - a. Who are the CSOs? Please explain
 - b. What are their concerns? (How) have these concerns and related activism impacted the natural resource? How would you evaluate these changes?
 - c. What have been the greatest successes and challenges in terms of this relationship?
 - d. (How) has the relationship changed in the last 10-15 years and why?
15. What/who are the main **business people or companies** in (or around) your village?
 - a. Who are the companies? Please explain
 - b. What is your villages relationship to these projects and comapnies?
 - c. Has your village every received money from other groups? Companies? Government? NGOs?
16. What would you like to see happen for Mong Pan district in the future?
17. What are your biggest worries about Mong Pan district?

[Agriculture/taungya expert interview questions](#)

Researcher Name:

How do you know the expert?

Date

Time

Setting

Location

Information about the person you are interviewing (age, gender, household position)

Permission:

Personal Questions

1. Where are you from?
2. How long have you lived there?
3. What is your livelihood?
4. How long have you been farming?
5. How was farming different when you were a kid? Why do you think it has changed?

Agriculture

14. How do people get most of the food they eat?
15. How would you explain how your community does livelihoods to someone from the outside?
16. How do people do agriculture?
 - a. Who in the family practices agriculture? What kind of tasks?
 - b. Where do people do agriculture? (What is grown in taungya or fields or backyards)
 - c. How do people from the village use water for agriculture?
 - d. What time of year do people practice taungya and farming? When are they less busy?
17. What are the main agricultural crops and where/how do people grow them?
 - a. How do they get the seeds they use? And For the seeds people buy, how do they get them and for how much?
 - b. What chemicals do people use? Why? How do they buy them?
 - c. How do people get money for agriculture? (If loans, how much and from whom? What kind of loan?)
18. How do they manage the forest for taungya or for livelihoods or working?
 - a. How do you manage the labour for taungya? (Harvest, clearing field, planting, etc)
 - b. Who in the family does taungya? What kind of tasks?
 - c. What kind of valuable thing do you get from the forest or river? How?
 - d. Are there any rules set by the village or by the government over when or how you can use the forest or river? If so, what and by whom?
 - e. How do you choose the place where you can farm or practice taungya?
 - f. Is taungya done the same way it was done during grandparent or parent generations? If not, why? If so, why?
 - g. If there is conflict over water or land between villagers, how is that addressed?
 - h. If there is conflict over water or land between government and villagers, how is that addressed?

19. Do you have any land title for your agriculture or taungya?
20. Have you experienced the land grab? Please explain.
21. What do you wish the government knew about local people's farming and taungya practices?
22. How do you think farming and taungya have changed from long time ago?

Technology

23. When did they start using chemicals for farming? How did they learn about it?
24. Why did they start using chemicals in the fields?
25. When did they start using machines for farming? How did they learn about it?
26. Why did they start using machines for farming?
27. What other tools are used for farming? (machines, animals, ect?)

Livelihoods

28. What do people do with their crops when they are finished growing?
29. How do people sell the crops?
 - i. What gets sold?
 - j. Who is it sold to? (actual person and their position)
 - k. Where?
30. Do you know anyone who does contract farming? Please explain
31. How much money, in general, do most families make each year from livelihood?
32. What other things do people do for their livelihoods? Please explain
33. What would make people's livelihoods better?

Village History Expert

Researcher Name:

How do you know the expert?

Date

Time

Setting

Location

Information about the person you are interviewing

Permission:

Village People

1. How many people are in the village?
 - a. How many households?
 - b. How many children?
2. What is the story of the village?
 - a. Where did people come from? And Why did they leave where they were before?
 - b. How long has the village been here?
 - c. How did they get here?
 - d. How has the village changed since the beginning?
3. How do people in the village practice their religion and culture?

- a. What do you think is the most important part about the religion for villagers?
 - b. Is there a temple?
 - c. What are important festivals or ceremonies?
4. What education is available for the students?
 - a. To what grades? And how far away is the school?
 - b. When did they build the school?
 - c. How many teachers and how many students?
 - d. What are the literacy levels in the village?
 - e. What language(s) do people in the village speak?
5. How do people in the village do their livelihoods?
 - a. Are there any people in the village who are disabled? How do they do their livelihoods?
 - b. Who are the richer people in the village? Why do you think they are the richest?
 - c. For the people who are the poorest in the village. Why do you think they are the poorest?
6. What do people do in the village when they get sick?
 - a. What medicines do people use and where do they get them?
 - b. How far away is the nearest health care facility?
 - c. Has there been a change in the last 10 years for people's health?
7. Who are your neighbors? What other villages, towns, military bases, or companies are nearby?
 - a. What is your relationship like with these neighbors? (How do you work together?)
8. What outsiders visit your village? Who are they? Why are they there?

Village Government

9. What are the most important things for your village?
10. Can you describe how **decision-making** happens in terms of (i) natural resource use, (ii) natural resource access, and (iii) [anything else?]?
 - a. What kind of committees does the village have? Who can participate in them (why?)
 - b. What do the committees make decisions about?
 - a. When you use areas around the village (forest and rivers) who do you have to inform? And who has the power to control the area? (can be more than 1 group). How does this effect the community? How is this different than 10-20 years ago? (EXPLAIN)
11. How would you describe the relationship between your village and local government?
 - a. What is the historical relationship between this village and the government? (what gov.?)
 - b. What is the local government's concern about the natural resource?
 - c. What have been the greatest successes and challenges in terms of this relationship?

- d. (How) has the relationship changed in the last 10-15 years and why?
- e. Are these relationships similar to those with local communities in other parts of the State? Why/why not?
- 12. How would you describe the relationship between your agency /village and **CSO**?
 - a. Who are the CSOs? Please explain
 - b. What are their concerns? (How) have these concerns and related activism impacted the natural resource? How would you evaluate these changes?
 - c. What have been the greatest successes and challenges in terms of this relationship?
 - d. (How) has the relationship changed in the last 10-15 years and why?
- 13. What/who are the main **business people or companies** in (or around) your village?
 - a. Who are the companies? Please explain
 - b. What is your villages relationship to these projects and companies?
 - c. Has your village every received money from other groups? Companies? Government? NGOs?

Agriculture/Forest/River

- 14. Has there been any land grabs in your community?
 - a. If so, by whom and for what?
 - b. When did they happen?
 - c. How has your community responded?
 - d. How have things changed in your village from before the land grab to now?
- 15. What do you think the government thinks is the most valuable thing from the forest and river for themselves?
- 16. What do you think the businessman/company thinks is the most valuable thing from the forest and river for themselves?
- 17. What do you think is the most valuable thing from the forest and river for your village?
- 18. How do you think the river and the forest are important for your village?
 - a. For your village, what have been the **biggest changes** to managing the forest and river in the last 10-15 years?
 - b. What the **biggest challenges** to your villages use of the river and forest?
- 19. Do you know about the Mon Ton dam? What do you think about it?
- 20. Do you know about land titles? What do you think about it?

Ending questions

- 21. What do you feel people are most worried about for your village?
- 22. What are you the most worried about?
- 23. Is any other thing you want to tell me about the village?

Land law expert (also freely ask questions).

- 1. Can you tell me about what your job/responsibility with land law?
- 2. What are you trying to do for your work with the land laws?

3. What is the history before land titling?
 - a. Were there land grabs?
 - b. By whom?
 - c. How did they take the land?
 - d. What did/do they use the land for?
 - e. Have people been able to get land back?
4. What is the history of land titling and land laws in this area?
 - a. Since when have people been able to get a land title?
 - b. What kind of title is it? (what form?)
 - c. Are there any changes to the land laws/land titling in recent years?
5. What is the land title process now?
 - a. What form?
 - b. How much does it cost?
 - c. Do people need help to fill it out? If so how?
 - d. How long is the title good for? Do they need to extend?
 - e. What kind of 'land' can get the title? And are there different kind of titles?
6. Why do some people have land title and some do not?
7. What is your biggest concern about the land title?
8. What is the most important thing for villagers to understand?
9. What do you think is the most important thing about the land title? Do you think it is a good thing? What do you think having a land title can do?

Market Participatory Observation/Inventory

Worksheet

Picture Number	Name of Product	What is it used for?	How much does it cost?	Who is selling it? (gender, ethnicity, old or young person)	Where did it come from? (general – in the forest? River? High in the mountain?)

Local People Semi-Structured Interviews

Survey-interviews (be sure to later translate your answers to English)

Sampling: Quota – (12) (minimum). 10% of community.

Gender: 6 men, 6 women

Age: 4 unmarried, 4 married age, 4 older people (grandparent age)

	Male		Female	
Unmarried				
Married				
Grandparent				

For the Interview:

Researcher Name:

Date

Time

Setting

Village

Information about the person you are interviewing

Permission:

Survey Questions

42. Household Table:

Person	Age	Married	Male	Female	Religion	Education Level	Job
(Self)							
(Husband)							
(daughter)							

Household questions

43. How long has your family lived in this village?

- If you used to live somewhere else, why did you move and when?
- If you moved, how did you do your livelihood?
- Has anyone in your family left to do work somewhere else? Explain?

44. What do you feel is important to teach your children about? (tanugya, forest, river?)

- What education do your children receive?

45. What does your household do for livelihood? What are the main sources of income? (and about how much?)

46. What are your family's main expenses?

47. What does your family do when someone is sick?

- Is there any medicine you get from the forest and river? What?
- What medicine is the most important?

48. How do you get water for your household?

- Where and how do you get your drinking water?
- What do you use water for in your household?

49. Does your household have any land titles? If so, what kind?
 - a. Has your household had land taken from you? Please share the story of what happened.
 - b. How do you feel about having your land taken?
 - c. Is there anything you can do to try to get the land back?
50. Who from your household attends meetings in the village or ward? Why do they attend? (If applicable, why don't you attend?).
51. If you were able to vote in 2015 who did you vote for and why?

Agriculture/Livelihood questions

52. Where do you get the food your household eats?
53. How do you do agriculture?
 - a. Who makes decisions about agriculture in the community and in your family?
 - b. What are your main agricultural crops and where/how do you grow them?
 - c. How do you use water for agriculture?
 - d. Do you use any chemicals for agriculture? If so, what, where/from who do you buy it from and what do you use it one?
 - e. What do you talk with your friends the most about farming?
54. Is taungya important for your livelihood? Why or why not?
55. How do you manage the forest for taungya or for livelihoods or working?
 - a. Who makes decisions about taungya in the community and in your family?
 - b. How do you know what part of the forest you can use for taungya and what fields you can use for agriculture? If there is a conflict, how do you resolve it?
 - c. How did your family practice taungya when you were a kid? Is anything different now?
 - d. What affects your ability to practice taungya or farm?
56. How else do you support your livelihood? Please explain
57. Do you sell anything in the market? What? And Where? For how much?
58. Have you ever had your land grabbed? If so, please explain.

Forest/River Questions

59. What was the river and forest like in your childhood?
 - a. What is different about the forest and river than it used to be?
60. If you didn't have the forest or the river how would you manage your livelihood?
 - b. What do you worry about with the forest and river?
61. How do you find the valuable thing in the forest and river?
62. What does your household use from the forest and river? And How?
63. What do you personally use from the forest and river? And How?
64. Do you think there is enough forest and trees to meet your needs and your village's needs? Please explain.

65. Do you think there enough water to meet your needs and your village's needs? Please explain.
66. Have you ever had a problem using the forest or river? (Has anything every prevented you from using it?) If so, what?
67. What do you want the forest and river to be like?

Bigger questions

68. What do you think the government thinks is the most valuable thing from the forest and river for themselves?
69. What do you think the businessman/company thinks is the most valuable thing from the forest and river for themselves?
70. What is the most valuable thing for you from the forest and river? What is the most valuable for the man? What is the most valuable for the women? What is the most valuable for the child? What is the most valuable for the old person?
71. What do you talk about with your friends that you worry about for the future?
72. What do you think the man worries about for the future? What do you think the woman worries about for the future?
73. Are there any questions you think I should have asked?
74. Is there anything else you would like to add or ask?

PLA

- 7) PLA. People get as many votes as there are options. Take pictures!
 - 1 What are the most important benefits you get from the forest and river? (can add or change, just take notes).
 - i. Clean water
 - ii. Food
 - iii. Medicine
 - iv. Firewood
 - v. Grazing for animals
 - vi. Hunting
 - vii. Fishing
 - viii. Water for agriculture
 - ix. Markets/selling
 - x. Building / construction materials
 - xi. Spiritual / social importance
 - 2 What are your biggest concerns for your family?
 - i. Money
 - ii. Finding food
 - iii. Water
 - iv. Health
 - v. Education

- vi. Livelihood
- vii. Safety
- viii. Good environment
- ix. Mon Ton Dam
- x. Land title

Appendix D: Nam Khone School research training

December 26-27, 2017 Agenda

Leaders: Roberts and Nang Mai

Participants: Mong Pan Youth Association Training School

Location: Taunggyi

9:00am –5:00pm (with breaks for morning tea, lunch, and afternoon tea)

Day 1 – What we know 1.6.15

9:00am | Introduction

- “Energizer”
 - o Nang Mai and Roberts introduce themselves
 - o Students introduce themselves (Name, Org, What are you working on?)
- Establish what they have already learned and are interested in
 - o What have you learned from the school?
 - o What types of research methods have you already learned about?
 - o What types of research have you conducted before?
- Outline what we will do for the training
 - o Who, what, when, where, why, and How of research.
 - o Tell the youth that they’re break up into groups and “practice” a mini research project

9:45am | The What of Research Design

- What makes a good research question?
 1. You need to be able to answer your question.
 2. How and What questions (not just yes or no)
 3. Think about your objective audience, your access, your timeframe (Where and When)
 - a. How do you make your decision about location and timing?
 - b. What access restrictions do you need to consider?
 4. Make sure you’re interested in your research question.
- Nang Mai and Roberts give some examples (we come up with something that can be the “example” for the whole training”
 - o Examples:
 - What is the relationship between women and water in their livelihoods? (Nang Mai)
 - How does environmental governance affect local people’s access to natural resources? (Roberts)
 - How have fisheries changed in the Thanlwin Delta in the last 20 years? Why?
 - o Example for training; **How do land grabs affect local people’s livelihoods?**

10:30am BREAK

10:45am The WHY of research

- Reflect on your choices. What's missing? Are you considering gender? Age? Will you have limitations?
- Who's your audience?
- Insider vs. outsider status.
- During group discussion Nang Mai talks about her own experiences as a young, female doing research

11:10am PRACTICE

- **Main research question:**
- "What is important for local people's livelihoods and what challenges/threatens that?"
- **Research Objective:**
- To evaluate what natural resources are valuable to local people and to determine what challenges they face with access to those natural resources.
- As a group (based on topic of interest) select research questions and location. The when will be during the training.
- Each group presents their research question.

11:40 LUNCH

12:30 The How and Who of Research

- Explain the research matrix.

Research Question(s)	Data Needed	Interviewee/Source	Tools
MAIN Question: How do land grabs affect people's livelihoods?			
What are people's current livelihoods?	-People's current form of income - Past forms of income - Sustenance livelihood practices	- Local leaders - local people - NGOs	- Expert interview - group interview - Transect walks -survey interviews
What land grabs have affected the area?	-Formal land tenure rights - informal land tenure practices - Land grabs that have occurred	- Government officials -Local leaders - NGO - Local villagers - Companies stakeholders -Legal documents	- secondary data review - Expert interviews

- Review what they already know about research methods
 - o -Research Tools (interviews (types); participatory observation, PLAs, participatory mapping, surveys, focus groups, secondary data review)
 - o Think about who? Women and Men? Age groups? Different Ethnic Backgrounds?
- Break students into group, they each add 2-3 sub-questions and data filled into table and present (we get a student volunteer to help fill in on the board).

7.4 1:30pm – Practice Matrix Table

- Each group creates the matrix for their own research.
- Give Presentation

2:30pm Interview Questions Guidelines

- **Your Job as Researcher: BE CURIOUS and always as WHY?**
 - o Ask not just about what is happening, but ask about the absences. Why isn't something happening? What if a woman did this? Why did this change? What happened? Question the differences. If this thing happens like this in one community, why doesn't it happen in this community?
- **Be transparent:**
 - o Make sure that everyone you talk to know why you're there and get their permission to interview them and permission to record them. Let them know that it is their choice to be interviewed or not and that we will not share their names or the name of the village.
 - o Never tape record someone without their permission.
 - o *What to say:*
 - o I am from _____. This is part of a bigger research project around the Thanlwin river basin. There are many things that affect people's livelihoods along the Thanlwin river. This research project wants to understand how people use river and forest products for their livelihoods and what is most valuable to them. By understanding what river and forest products are important to people we can help protect those resources and rights. I cannot promise that this project will make a difference, but it is a starting place.
- ALWAYS ask permission

Interview Questions

- Avoid closed questions (yes/no). Always ask why?
- Avoid leading questions (ie. How have land grabs negatively affected your livelihoods?)
- Be careful of taboos
- Order questions:
 - o Easy (name, age, occupation)
 - o Medium (What foods from the forest do you get every week?)

- Hard (How do land grabs affect your livelihood?)
- End with open ended
 - Is there anything else you'd like to share?
 - Is there something else I should have asked
 - Is there anything you'd like to ask me?
- Categorize questions. Forest questions with forest, livelihood with livelihood, etc.

7.5 3:00pm Break

3:15 PRACTICE Forum Theatre – whole class

Pre-activity. (5 minutes)

- Ask the participants: What are the top three challenges you think you'll face when conducting your interviews? (With the intent of asking the same question again after the exercise is complete).
- Establish that this is a space of respect and go over guidelines.

Theatre forum- Anti-Model (10 minutes)

The class will be instructed to actively watch the scene, being “spec-actors” rather than spectators. They will be forewarned that they will be asked to come up with ‘fixes’ for what goes wrong in the scene.

The course instructors will ‘act’ a five minute interview scene, with one individual representing a clueless researcher and the other individual representing the interviewee. In the scene a series of mishaps will occur that highlight cultural, linguistic, educational, ethnic, gender, economic barriers and power dynamics.

In the scene the practitioner will:

Holding a notebook and an audio recorder.

Perform cultural taboos (using left hand, talking really loudly, etc).

Abruptly start the interview, ignoring the cup of tea offered by the interviewee and rushing quickly over questions of ethics.

Take pictures while the interviewee is responding (and without having asked permission first, or just saying things like “don’t mind me”).

Begin the interview with the really difficult and complex questions, such as “How does the gold mine affect your local community?”

Ask questions that may present a challenge in translation such as “what conflicts have you experienced since the mine was established?”

The interviewee looks progressively more and more uncomfortable and affronted as the scene progresses. The scene ends with the interviewer only receiving one or two word answers and then going silent.

Script:

Q: I’m going to ask you questions now.

A: Okay

Q: Why do you think land grabs are bad?

A: I’m not sure

Q: How much money do you make in a year?

A: I can't really say

Q: Has land been taken from you?

A: Yes

Q: What do you do for livelihood?

A: Paddy field, taunggya

Interviewer takes some photos, without asking permission. Interviewee looks uncomfortable

Q: Do you grow opium?

A: No

Q: Do you think your village leaders have done enough to help with land grabs?

A: I can't really say.

Q: What do you think needs to be done to fix land grabs?

A: I don't know.

Q: Before the land grabs, what did you used to do for livelihoods?

A: Same.

Discussion of what went wrong (45 minutes)

Small groups (15 minutes): Break the participants up into small groups of 3-4 and provide them with a copy of the script. Have each group think about what went wrong in the scene and brainstorm how they might fix it. Remind the groups that these are spaces of respect and that in brainstorming there is no right or wrong. Provide pens and paper for each group to brainstorm on, and emphasize that in brainstorming there is not right or wrong, so anything goes.

Large groups (15 minutes): Keep group situated where they are, but get them to talk as a larger group of the errors and power dynamics they saw (make sure that all get discussed from cultural, to linguistic, to ethnic, to educational, to economic)

Small groups (15 minutes): After the discussion of themes, have each group suggest alterations/fixes to the scene.

Re-play of the scene (30 minutes)

Invite each group to intervene in the scene, with group members standing in for the characters in select portions of the scene.

Final Discussion: (20 minutes)

Have the participants discuss what they observed in the scenes, before and after. What fixes did they like? What was still unresolved? What barriers hadn't they thought about before?

As instructors, use white board to bring the discussion to larger themes and positions of power displayed through the binaries of: outsider/insider; educated / uneducated; ethnicity; urban / rural; indigenous / non-indigenous; gender; wealthy / poor; global north / global south.

5:00pm Homework: PRACTICE CREATE your own interview question in your group

Ordering questions easy, hard, open ended (20 Questions)

DAY 2 – Practice Day

9:00am Recap yesterdays activities

Next you will practice your interviews

Researcher Journals

At the end of the day:

Write in a journal (English/Shan/Burmese) your own impressions.

What did you do that day?

Who did you talk to?

What did you learn?

Did something someone said or you observe not make sense? Explain.

Did you observe or see something interesting happen in the village?

What challenges are you encountering?

Any other thoughts or impressions?

9:30am PRACTICE Interview questions within the group from the previous day

Instruct class to practice interviews

Leave space at the end for them each to fill in their “researcher journal”

Leave space for group interviews

Individual interviews

Participatory activities, etc.

10:30 Research Journals

10:45 Break

11:00am How to Analysis the Data – Next Steps

Now that we have the data, what do we do?

This is messy. And there is no perfect way to do this. But there are some wrong ways

Don’t just look for the data that supports what you want to say and ignore what contradicts it (maybe some people have financially benefited from land grabs)

Bring together what data you have (think back to matrix tools)

Secondary data

Interviews

Maps

Participant observation

Research journals

Quantitative:

Demographics

% of people who responded X

Qualitative:

Find categories, themes (land grabs, livelihoods, forests, river, women and gender).

Then compare themes: what did women say about land grabs? Where did land grabs and livelihoods intersect?

What does that tell you about your research question?

Be prepared to be wrong. Maybe you thought land grabs would negatively affect livelihoods, but maybe people talk about no change.

Let the students know as a group they will present their findings (their purposes)

12:00 LUNCH

1:00 PRACTICE – Analysis their data

7.6 2:30pm Break

7.7 3:00pm Present Findings

7.8 4:00pm QUESTIONS/ WRAP UP, ECT

7.9 On Forum Theatre

GEOG 5355 Pedagogy Exercise:
Theatre Forum (Theatre of the Oppressed) and Interviews

Linda Marroquin-Ponce

K.B. Roberts

Topic & level of the general course: *“Barriers and positionalities in the interview process”*

This specific class is part of a larger orientation and workshop for Mong Pan youth who will be conducting research local communities. The participants will already have been introduced to project goals and objectives. This particular class is meant to highlight the potential challenges and barriers to conducting interviews, rather than the logistics.

Topic(s) or key concept(s) of the particular exercise: Research positionality and power dynamics (i.e. colonizing knowledges (Smith 2012)), informed by Anzaldua's understanding of what a border is (1999).

Objectives: The aim of the class is to introduce concepts of positionality and to get the participants to think critically about their own assumptions and views of the world and how this might influence the interview process.

Procedures: (2 hours)

I. Pre-activity. (5 minutes)

- Ask the participants: What are the top three challenges you think you'll face when conducting your interviews? (With the intent of asking the same question again after the exercise is complete).
- Establish that this is a space of respect and go over guidelines.

II. Theatre forum- Anti-Model (10 minutes)

- The class will be instructed to actively watch the scene, being "spec-actors" rather than spectators. They will be forewarned that they will be asked to come up with 'fixes' for what goes wrong in the scene.
- The course instructors will 'act' a five minute interview scene, with one individual representing a clueless researcher and the other individual representing the interviewee. In the scene a series of mishaps will occur that highlight cultural, linguistic, educational, ethnic, gender, economic barriers and power dynamics.

In the scene the practitioner will:

- By wearing a very professional outfit and holding a clipboard and a audio recorder.
- Perform cultural taboos (using left hand, talking really loudly, etc).
- Abruptly start the interview, ignoring the cup of tea offered by the interviewee and rushing quickly over questions of ethics.
- Take pictures while the interviewee is responding (and without having asked permission first, or just saying things like "don't mind me").
- Begin the interview with the really difficult and complex questions, such as "How does the gold mine affect your local community?"
- Ask questions that may present a challenge in translation such as "what conflicts have you experienced since the mine was established?"

The interviewee looks progressively more and more uncomfortable and affronted as the scene progresses. The scene ends with the interviewer only receiving one or two word answers and then going silent.

III. Discussion of what went wrong (45 minutes)

- Small groups (15 minutes): Break the participants up into small groups of 3-4 and provide them with a copy of the script. Have each group think about what went wrong in the scene and brainstorm how they might fix it. Remind the groups that these are spaces of respect and that in brainstorming there is no right or wrong. Provide pens and paper for each group to brainstorm on, and emphasize that in brainstorming there is not right or wrong, so anything goes.

- Large groups (15 minutes): Keep group situated where they are, but get them to talk as a larger group of the errors and power dynamics they saw (make sure that all get discussed from cultural, to linguistic, to ethnic, to educational, to economic)
- Small groups (15 minutes): After the discussion of themes, have each group suggest alterations/fixes to the scene.
- IV. Re-play of the scene (30 minutes)
 - Invite each group to intervene in the scene, with group members standing in for the characters in select portions of the scene.
- V. Final Discussion: (20 minutes)
 - Have the participants discuss what they observed in the scenes, before and after. What fixes did they like? What was still unresolved? What barriers hadn't they thought about before?
 - As instructors, use white board to bring the discussion to larger themes and positions of power displayed through the binaries of: outsider/insider; educated / uneducated; ethnicity; urban / rural; indigenous / non-indigenous; gender; wealthy / poor; global north / global south.

Potential Pedagogical Difficulties:

Participation and Engagement: This activity requires and depends on the full and committed participation of the entire group, and will be most effective if people feel safe enough to step outside their comfort zones. Getting a group of people to this point can be a challenge, however the design of this week-long orientation will help facilitate team building and promote trust so that participants will feel at ease around each other. In order to create a safe and inclusive space group guidelines will be established from the beginning of the training. At the beginning of this lesson in particular, participants will be reminded to refrain from criticizing other people's ideas, monopolizing the conversation, interrupting other people etc. in order to make sure that everyone feels respected and safe enough to share their ideas. Throughout the lesson there will be many opportunities for different kinds of participation- from being spect-actors to contributing to small group brainstorming/discussion - and people will be encouraged to participate in whichever way they feel they can.

Group Dynamics: Because this training is aimed at development practitioners who come from different backgrounds - different levels of hand on experience, working in different countries, with different organizations, focused on different topics etc, - some people may think that they do not need training and could easily impact the way the rest of the group participates. To avoid this dynamic, this exercise is specifically designed to push people out of their comfort zones and get them to try something new. Through this activity and the following discussion, participants will be exposed to different perspectives, ideas and understandings that will challenge their own assumptions.

Learning Styles: Within this group there are also bound to be a mix of different learning styles. This lesson is designed so that everyone, regardless of learning style, can learn and participate. Theatre forum is a tool that incorporates kinesthetic, visual and auditory learning. Those who have a reading and writing based learning style will benefit from the small group/class discussions where ideas will be organized visually on the board or on large sheets of paper.

Evaluation: Prior to the lesson participants will be asked to reflect on the top three challenges they think they will face in the interview process, and write them down on a piece of paper. After the lesson the participants will once again be asked the same question and note whether or not their answers have changed. The point of this evaluation is to get an idea of where participants are at prior to the activity and then to see if going through this exercise has changed/informed/reinforced their perspective. Participants will also be asked to write a 500 word reflection on their experience with this activity, what they think their challenges will be and how they will address them in the field. In this reflection they will also be encouraged to tie in some themes from the readings.

Pre-planning: Prior to the lesson the anti-model needs to be written, rehearsed and workshopped thoroughly so that the performers/instructors understand and feel comfortable with their roles. Key topics for the discussion should also be prepared beforehand so that the facilitators can inform and direct the conversation if need be.

Materials: The room where this training would take place would need to be equipped with a white board and also be big enough for people to act out a scene. The following material would, while not absolutely necessary, would make it easier to facilitate a discussion:

- dry erase markers
- permanent markers
- giant post-it notes

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Appendix E: CSO interview baseline questions

Possible Interview Questions to Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and Other Civil Society Organizations

Researcher Name:

Date

Time

Setting

Location

Information about the person you are interviewing

Permission:

1. What are your **interests** in the Shan State?
2. Can you provide a **brief history** of your operations/interests here?
 - a. What have been your greatest successes and challenges when operating here?
3. What are the main forms of livelihood in Shan State?
4. What do you see as the **importance** of Shan State? (ecological, social/cultural, political, economic, etc.) of this particular resource?
 - a. What significance does the Shan State hold for the larger natural resources?
5. In general, what have been the **biggest changes in Shan State** over the last 10 to 15 years?
 - a. What explains these changes?
 - b. (How) has your **Org** responded?
6. How would you describe the relationship between your CSO and local government?
 - a. What is the historical relationship between KBZ and the government? (what gov.?)
 - b. What have been the greatest successes and challenges in terms of this relationship?
 - c. (How) has the relationship changed in the last 10-15 years and why?
 - d. Are these relationships similar to those with CSOs in other parts of the State? Why/why not?
7. How would you define government in Shan State?
 - a. What is the historical relationship between the government (s)?
 - b. How do they work together or against each other in Shan State?
 - c. What have been the greatest successes and challenges in terms of this relationship?
 - d. (How) has the relationship changed in the last 10-15 years and why?
 - e. Are these relationships similar to those in other States?
8. How would you describe the relationship between villages in Shan State and your **CSO**?
 - a. What have been the greatest successes and challenges in terms of this relationship?
 - b. (How) has the relationship changed in the last 10-15 years and why?
9. What/who are the main **business people or companies**/governments that influence Shan State?

- a. Who are the companies? Please explain
- b. What is your CSOs relationship to these projects and companies?
- c. Has your village every received money from other groups? Companies? Government? NGOs?

Natural Resources

10. Can you describe the **historical relationship** with the natural resource and surrounding areas?
11. Can you describe the **current relationship** with the natural resource and surrounding areas?
 - a. (How) would you like to see this relationship change? Why?
 - b. What changes, if any, are underway? How did they emerge? What have been the outcomes? What are the long-term goals of these changes?
12. Can you describe how **decision-making** happens in terms of (i) natural resource use, (ii) natural resource access in Shan State?
 - a. (How) has this changed in the last 10-15 years and why?
13. What **groups/actors** have been involved with natural resource decision-making?
 - a. What is your relationship with them?
 - b. How do your interests reflect and/or depart from theirs?
14. What have been the **biggest changes** to the resource over the last 0 to 15 years in terms of ecology, management, and relationships with local communities?
 - a. What explains these changes?
 - b. How have these impacted you and your community?
15. What **business interests**, if any, exist in the resource and adjacent areas?
 - a. Can you describe the partnerships or relationships enabling these business interests/projects?
 - b. What benefits have these ventures produced or will they potentially produce? Have there been any challenges?
 - c. Are there business initiatives underway in the resource that do not involve your community? What are your thoughts on these?
 - d. What is your general opinion of private investment and activity in or around this natural resource in general?
16. What are your thoughts on **criticisms** of private businesses using natural resources in Shan State?
17. What are your thoughts on **criticisms** of Military using natural resources in Shan State.
18. In terms of your interests in natural resources, does your Org interact with **local communities**? And with **NGOs**?
 - a. What is the nature of your relationship and how did it emerge?

Future Questions

19. What would you like to see happen in Shan State in the future?
20. What are your biggest worries for Shan State district?
21. Is there anything else you think I should have asked?

22. Is there anything else you'd like to add?