

**Session Chair:** Maitrii Aung-Thwin, Coordinator, Comparative Asian Studies Ph.D Programme, Department of History/Department of Southeast Asian Studies, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, National University of Singapore

**Panel 1**

1. Relations between the New Regimes of Myanmar and China in the 1950s – Margaret Wong, Head, History Department, University of Yangon

**Abstract:** Since regaining independence on 4 January 1948, Myanmar has proved that she will be friend to every country but not ally to any country. After the founding of the People's Republic of China on 1 October 1949, Myanmar was one of the earliest Asian countries to announce recognition of the new Chinese Government. On 8 June 1950, the two countries formally established diplomatic relations and mutually sent Ambassadors. However, the relations was not so cordial at the beginning since there were problems which were waiting to be solved and the different ideologies was also the main obstacle for their good relationship. The relationships between the two countries have been entered into a new phase due to the changes of the international politics in the 1950s especially based on the Five Principles of Peaceful Co-existence. This paper is an attempt to analyze the relationship between the two new governments in the 1950s and the impact of the Five Principles of Peaceful Co-existence which is still the basic principles in the relations of the two countries.

2. Chinese Merchants in Upper Burma – Jorg Schendel, Independent Scholar

**Abstract:** The role of the Chinese has been an extremely prominent theme in writings on Southeast Asian economic history and development. Precolonial Burma, however, has so far attracted relatively little scholarly attention. This paper seeks to trace the course of Chinese business in Upper Burma, largely focusing on the nineteenth century, distinguishing between the well-established Yunnanese merchants and newly emerging traders from southern China. By analysing their divergent *modi operandi* and their interaction, I hope to cast light on the underlying causes of their success, and limitations, and thus contribute to larger debates on exogenous mercantile groups ("trade diasporas").

3. Cold War in Burma, Buddhist campaigns against Communism and founding a national identity – Maung Bo Bo, Ph.D Student, School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS), University of London

**Abstract:** State-sangha relations have been an important topic in the historical understanding of Burmese society. Few scholars have studied how the Cold War affected domestic political dynamics in post-Independence Burma, especially in regard to the religious sector. Most studies of the military have focused on their institutional history or within the context of their post-1988 policies. This work focuses on their interaction with the Buddhist sangha. In 1950s, Burma saw a divided nation with multi-insurgents where even monks took stern guns to rob for party funding. In some places, monks got grants

and aids from the US Embassy to circulate religious magazines with women cover. More seriously, some army colonels approached a senior monk to help them in formulating socialism accordance with Buddhism. Here, I will look through press materials from 1950s to the early years of Ne Win's socialist march to present how Burmese Theravada Buddhism and its *Sangha* responded to Cold War and their own civil war. I assume modern crisis of Burmese national identity that is mainly based on Burman Buddhist nationalism against ethno-centric nationalisms of minorities dated back to the founding of Buddhism as the state religion and U Nu's effort to promote Buddhism as anti-communist propaganda. Cold War studies through the Theravada landscape in Burma and other Southeast Asian states would also highlight the strong connection between the state and religion in forming a post-colonial hegemony.

## Panel 2

**Session Chair: Daw Nanda Hmun, Director-General for historical research, Ministry of Culture, Myanmar**

### 4. Urbanism in Sri Ksetra – Shah Alam Zaini, University of Hawaii

**Abstract:** Recent shifts in perspectives on the study of early Southeast Asia has led to a greater understanding of the diversity in form, function and origin of early cities in this region. This research focuses on the nature of urbanism in Sriksetra. Earlier researchers considered it the ceremonial and administrative centre of a Pyu kingdom that encompassed much of the Dry Zone. More recently, it is considered the political centre of one of a series of autonomous polities collectively called Pyu. This research proposed that Sriksetra functioned as a centre of trade and exchange. It was a gateway community, the interface between the Dry Zone and southern Burma, and continued to be so until at least the thirteenth century. Urbanisation in Sriksetra should be viewed as part of processes that has its beginnings in prehistory. The emergence of bronze manufacturing in the Dry Zone provides the earliest evidence of interregional trade and exchanges, and the trade in metals also provide some of the most compelling examples of the importance of trade to the various commitments of the Dry Zone. This research also adopts the view that there was no demise of the Pyu in the ninth century, and views Sriksetra as complementing rather than competing with the interests of Pagan from the eleventh century onwards. The research integrates existing data with results of field research in Sriksetra. The scarcity of archaeological data also necessitated the need for the use of multi-disciplinary material to address the question panel.

### 5. Ancient Irrigation Works of the Pyu at Sri Ksetra and their Impact on Present Livelihoods - Janice Stargardt, Professorial Research Fellow in Asian Historical Archaeology and Geography, Downing Place, University of Cambridge, and Fellow & Director of Studies, Sidney Sussex College, University of Cambridge; and Dr Gabriel Amable, Department of Geography and Sidney Sussex College, University of Cambridge.

**Abstract:** Using innovative techniques of Remote Sensing, the authors have captured evidence showing that significant parts of the ancient irrigation works of the Pyu at Sri Ksetra still function both on the surface and beneath the modern ground level. Their study has led to new maps of the ancient city which show how its urban format and irrigation features developed together during the first millennium CE. They also reveal how even in the present post-urban period the same irrigation works are impacting on the livelihoods of the contemporary farmers. They identify the specific conditions that have preserved this evidence at Sri Ksetra and consider their relevance to other sites of mainland Southeast Asia.

6. Memory of Myanmar Museums: History and Heritage – Nu Mra Zan, Museum Consultant, Myanmar

**Abstract:** 1952 saw the birth of the first National Museum in post-independence Burma. Before independence, site museums existed in Bagan and Mrauk-U since the 1900s, but they were more a repository of curiosity and collections, until after the Second World War when museums in Myanmar assumed more significant roles and increased in Myanmar. In keeping with the country's cultural policy set by the Ministry of Culture to "honour the state with culture", Myanmar's rich cultural heritage in both tangible and intangible forms are preserved mainly at the National Museum (Yangon) and Bagan Archaeological Museum together with other regional cultural museums and archaeological museums under the Ministry of Culture's purview. The Bagan Archaeological Museum's collections have earned it the name of "National Museum of Upper Myanmar". The need to better curate and showcase these collections and exhibits have led to plans for a new National Museum project, with contributions from museum professionals and experts from various fields. The project, starting in the 2014-15 fiscal year, has an expected duration of three years to collect exhibits from every region and state in the country. This is an unprecedented opportunity to build on the strength of rich cultural heritage of Myanmar National Museum and Bagan Archaeological Museum which are valuable collections that showcase our different periods of civilization and national identity.

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