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Nationalism: The Wrong Framework for Understanding Local Activism in Myanmar

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 'Nationalism' or the plural 'nationalisms' does not adequately explain emerging ethnic and geographical mobilizations in Myanmar against the state and dominant groups such as the Burmans or Bamar.

- Tai Nay mobilizations in Kyaing Tong in Shan State and Myeik ones in Tanintharyi Region are examples of minorities finding broader civic space to voice their concerns by using their identity as a tool for rallying members of Shan and Bamar sub-groups.

- The state and ruling parties employ Buddhist-Burman identity markers to advance their power. Minorities, in their turn, use their identities as mobilizing catalysts to challenge state elites.

- Minorities' struggles such as those of the Tai Nay and Myeik are appeals to universal values such as inclusion and diversity, made to the state using the medium of identity. They should not be framed as manifestations of 'nationalism'.

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INTRODUCTION

Nationalism is on the rise globally. From 'America First' in the United States and 'Brexit' in Britain to 'Hindutva' in India, nations' leaders rally their followers around nationalism. For international audiences, the term 'nationalism' fits popular sentiments in favour of putting one's nation first at a particular moment. Also, 'nationalism' as an accepted lexicon makes the job of reporters' and writers' easy as they try to explain wide-scale national phenomena to their readers. But, beyond news headlines, the term 'nationalism' fails to explain grassroots movements ranging from anti-gun protests and women's rights movements in the United States to extreme environmentalism in the United Kingdom. Similarly, Myanmar and its struggles, especially those that involve ethnic and religious minorities, are often understood and analyzed through the lens of nationalism. However, even the plural 'nationalisms' does not adequately describe emerging ethnic and geographical mobilizations against the state and against dominant groups such as Burmans or Bamar.

Nationalism is not a catch-all term. This paper seeks to unpack what nationalism means in Myanmar amidst growing struggles on the part of minorities—ethnic, religious and geographical—for various goals, ranging from the state's recognition of their identities to environmental protection, federalism and confederacy. Distinguishing between the terms 'nationalism' and 'activism', the paper argues that the popular notion of 'nationalism' or '*amyothayay*'[1] in Burmese undermines and misrepresents local activism. That notion also leads readers to fail to distinguish civic movements from widely known 'Burman-and-Buddhism' promotion movements such as Ma-Ba-Tha, or the Organization for the Protection of Race and Religion.[2] Branding local activism as 'nationalism' also inevitably frames grassroots movements through Burman-Buddhist-centred lenses.

NATIONALISM AND HUMAN RIGHTS IN BINARY OPPOSITION

Since the sectarian riots that spread from Rakhine State to many cities and towns in Myanmar in 2012[3], nationalism has been portrayed, as in the cartoon below, in binary opposition to human rights. One can substitute environmental rights, women's rights and minority rights for human rights, and the binary still works. In this understanding, 'nationalism' refers to Burman-Buddhist-centred popular movements often led by the now-disbanded Ma-Ba-Tha, which had close ties with the former ruling party, the Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP).[4] Ernest Gellner argues that nationalism characterizes movements organized around common cultures, shared languages and historical experiences which demand secession from a nation-state or resist high cultures and elites.[5]

With this in mind, I will argue that many movements in Myanmar are, rather, protests or instances of civil disobedience against the state, demanding more inclusion. It is erroneous to view them as nationalist movements. The sections that follow analyze local movements in Tai Nay and Myeik and a case of bureaucratized and politicized identity to highlight why minority movements inside Myanmar should not be viewed through the lens of nationalism.[6]
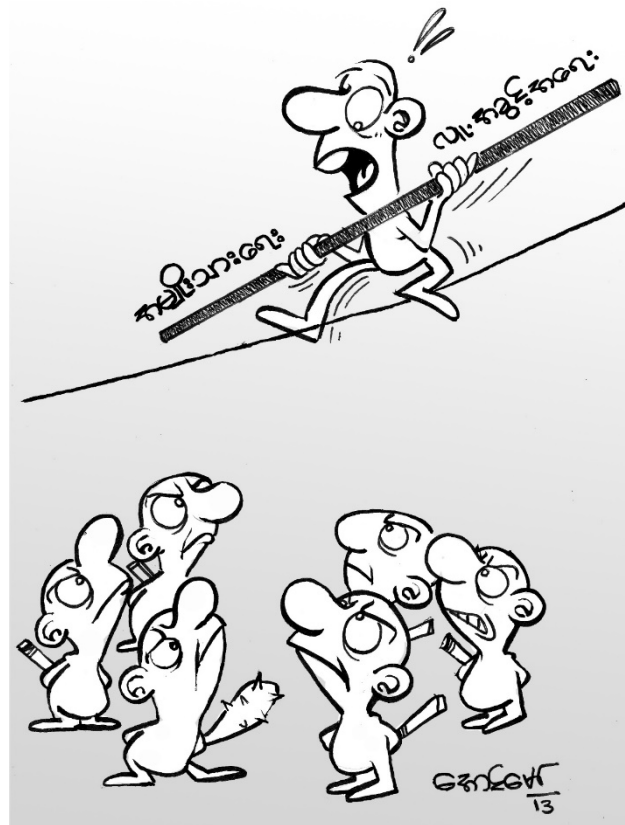
Figure 1: Nationalism and Human Rights. Courtesy of Aung Maw, cartoonist, July 2017.

In the cartoon, the man walking the tightrope symbolizes the government. The pole he is carrying is labelled 'nationalism' on one end and 'human rights' on the other end. A group of people carrying weapons symbolizes nationalists, and possibly human rights defenders as well, as they wait to attack the man if he makes a wrong move. This cartoon captures the popular sympathy for the Myanmar government's difficult position in the aftermath of the sectarian riots of 2012.

Case Study I: *Tai Nay Self-determination and Mobilization*

I was in Kyaing Tong (Kengtung) and Mong La (Meng La)[7] in 2013 and 2014, before the 2014 nationwide census was conducted. Many Shan houses in Kyaing Tong displayed a white laminated-paper card with the number 914. This number was the self-identification code for any ethnic group (ethnonym) or any group tied to a place (toponym) not listed on the enumeration forms for the upcoming census. Next to this number, the Burmese term *Tai Nay*,[8] meaning those who live in a *tai* or a kingdom or principality, was displayed.[9] 'Tai Nay' was not an officially recognized ethnicity in the 2014 census, and Tai Nay people were not recognized as one of the minorities able to legitimately claim indigenous or '*taingyintha*' status.[10] Thirty-three other groups who had officially recognized 'Shan' identity were, however, included on the census forms and therefore counted as indigenous.[11] Nick Cheesman has argued, "In contemporary Myanmar, *taingyintha* is an exemplary term of state: a contrivance for political inclusion and exclusion, for political eligibility and domination."[12] And Tai Nay understood that their identity and their non-*taingyintha* status are implicated in the ethnic make-up of national and regional office-holders.
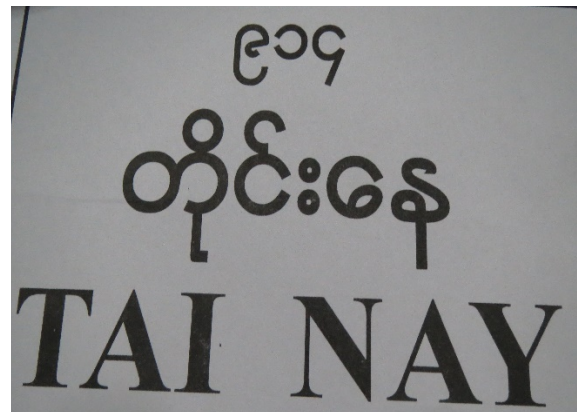
Figure 2: Card indicating Tai Nay mobilization for recognition.
Photograph by the author.

Tai Nay voiced their concerns and dissatisfaction with the central government's promotion of the identities of smaller groups such as Lahu, Akha, Pa Laung and Pa-o at the expense of that of Shan. They interpreted the government's promotion of minority rights as a mobilization tactic against the Shan minority to which Tai Nay belong. It was in their view a means of strengthening non-Shan politically and militarily so that they could resist the locally dominant Shan. Tai Nay had a legitimate concern since Shan State has the largest number of regional National Race Affairs ministers — seven non-Shan ministers representing the Bamar, Kachin, Lisu, Lahu, Akha, Inntha and Kayan minorities.[13] Though there are Shan National Race Affairs ministers in Kachin State and in Mandalay and Sagaing Regions, no state has as much cabinet representation for groups other than the regionally dominant group as does Shan State.[14] Even though Ardeth Maung Thawnhmung and Yadana argue that National Race Affairs ministers have ambiguous roles and limited autonomy,[15] their presence in state- and region-level cabinets is nonetheless visible. This factor compounds Tai Nay fear of disenfranchisement in their own state. They fear that the government is promoting other minorities' interests at their expense.[16]

In addition to the direct appointment of ministers at the state and regional levels, the government reserve seats in both houses of the national parliament, the Pyidaungsu Hluttaw and the Amyotha Hluttaw, for groups or national races that constitute 0.1 per cent of the population in their areas.[17] New political boundaries based on ethnic composition can shift ethnic allegiance. A system of representation featuring ethnic quotas encourages notions or imaginations of, for example, pan-Chin-ism, and pan-Kachin-ism across state lines.[18] Mobilizing to identify as Tai Nay — a group not recognized as one of the 135 ethnic groups or 'national races'[19] that make up the ethnic landscape of the country — is a means for members of the group to exercise their right to self-determination and to fine-tune their sub-group identity.[20]

ETHNIC IDENTITY AS CIVIC SPACE

Such mobilization against the government's — and international agencies' — categorization and counting of minorities, a practice that minorities such as Tai Nay interpreted as exclusionary, was one of the early signs of disenfranchised Myanmar

minorities attempting to reclaim their identity.[21] But the goal of these attempts is not to secede from either Shan State or from Myanmar. Van Ginderachter and Beyen argue that "national identity [becomes] manifest primarily in an indirect way, namely as a complement to the construction of 'otherness'".[22] In the Tai Nay case however, ethnic identity is used to challenge the domination of Burman and Burman-government-supported minority groups in Shan State through a tactic that Tai Nay perceive as othering Shan, the broader group to which Tai Nay belong.

In the absence of collective bargaining through unions and active civic spaces such as universities, Tai Nay use their identity as a space to rally others against the state. In industrial zones in Yangon, workers have staged protests outside their factories or outside the office of the chief minister of Yangon Region. For supporting or protesting internationally-known causes such as Gambia's case against Myanmar at the International Court of Justice in the Hague, a park in downtown Yangon across from the city hall was chosen. Shan State is very different from Yangon; common causes to unite all minorities such as Shan, Pa-o and Tai Nay are rare, the most important one being federalism. What had been regarded as a common enemy, the military, was officially gone after 2011. How then are Tai Nay to attract attention nationally and internationally?

Is Tai Nay mobilization to reclaim their identity not a nationalist movement? The answer is no. Tai Nay are fighting against the modern Burman- or Bamar-dominated state in a historically non-Bamar but Shan principality. Tai Nay exercise self-determination in opposition to the state's failure to include Shan in the state's functions or to its failure to devolve authority. In Myanmar's 2015 elections, most Shan voted for the National League for Democracy (NLD) and its ally the Shan National League for Democracy (SNLD), and not for the Shan Nationalities Democratic Party (SNDP).[23] SNDP President Sai Ai Pao attests that his party met with defeat in those polls for three reasons. First, it was accused of being a subsidiary of the USDP. Second, ethnic armed groups in Shan State threatened voters against supporting the party. And, third, Shan themselves wanted change through another party, the SNLD.[24] By means of 'tactical voting',[25] Shan's foremost concern was to stop the military-backed USDP from becoming the government at the regional and national levels. But their faith in the NLD and the SNLD did not last long. During the 2017 by-elections, home-grown parties such as the SNDP gained popularity, winning six out of eight contested seats in Shan State.[26] Voters increasingly see the SNDP, as it fights for federalism and more autonomy for Shan ministers and more administrative authority for Shan, as representing Shan and their local interests.

Underneath the movement to be counted in the census lay many layers of struggle and difficulty, including youth drug addiction in the state, environmental degradation and unemployment.[27] Tai Nay, like such other minorities as Rakhine (Arakanese), are finding broader civic space to voice their concerns. In the absence of broader political agendas and active civic space and mobilization, they use their common Tai Nay identity as a tool to rally other Shan sub-groups. To put pressure on the government to address local concerns, Tai Nay use their identity to attract mass support. Local markers such as markets and cemeteries bearing the name Tai Nay are not reflected in the official state organs, and local priorities are not aligned with those of the state. Local problems such as drug addiction among youths have not been addressed by the government. In minority areas such as Kyaing Tong, identity markers are powerful mobilizing tools, and the Tai Nay movement is neither nationalist in a rigid sense — that is, rallying for a separate state — nor ethnosymbolism —

an effort to emphasize the importance of a Tai Nay identity in existence since before the creation of the state and to overlook the group's demand for participation in secular space.[28] Rather, the Tai Nay movement uses ethnic identity as a collective space to stage protests against oppression and disenfranchisement by the government.

Case Study II: Mobilization for Myeik identity

Dawei Watch, a local news agency based in Dawei (Tavoy), Tanintharyi Region (Tenasserim), published a short article in January 2020 about groups in Myeik (Mergui) that were mobilizing to have 'Myeik' ethnicity listed on their national registration cards.[29] Currently Myeik are recognized as one of the nine sub-groups of Bamar, but only 'Bamar', not the name of their sub-group, is listed on their national registration cards.[30] The preferences of applicants for national registration cards concerning their ethnicity, or for the use of an identifying toponym in this case, are often overridden by prescriptions from local immigration officers. If they address themselves to the local immigration office, complainants are referred to national-level immigration authorities.[31] The government officials at township and village levels who interact with minorities — either those identified by such ethnonyms as Kachin or Kayah or those identified by such toponyms as Dawei or Yaw — also have prescriptive religions for different minorities. Christianity will be assigned to Chin and Buddhism to Pa-o, for example.

Case Study III: Bureaucratization of race and religion

In early 2019, a grandmother went to a township-level office of the General Administration Department (GAD) in downtown Yangon to add her one-year-old grandson to the family's household registration list.[32] Seeing that the grandmother gave the Kayah sub-group of Kayan as her ethnicity or *lumyo*,[33] the officer ticked 'Buddhism' on the list's box for religion. The mother, who had not gone to the GAD office with her mother-in-law, decided, upon seeing this, to return to the office the next day and to ask the officer to change the baby's recorded religion from Buddhism to Christianity. The officer nonchalantly replied, 'We thought Kayan were Buddhists'.

PERSONAL IS POLITICAL

Case Studies II and III show that one's ethnic, regional and/or religious identity is not private or personal in Myanmar. The government controls the accounting of minorities — or national races or *lumyo*—and religions through its records, including household registration forms. One's personal identity becomes an asset or liability through these records. Christians have rarely received promotions, especially in the army, at least in pre-reform Myanmar.[34] Muslims were not fielded for the 2015 elections by the NLD.[35] And, since the renewal of the Burmese military's war with the Kachin Independence Army in 2012, Kachin live in terror of frequent searches on the road.[36]

The state uses citizens' identities, particularly ethnic and religious identities, to advance its interests, as in the case of legislating marriage laws applying to Buddhists in 2015, and in upholding Burman-Buddhist-centred nationalism. In such a political climate, minorities will use their identities as a means of mobilizing power to challenge the state. The state and ruling parties employ Buddhist-Burman symbols or identity markers to advance their

powers, and minorities use their identities as mobilizing power to challenge state elites.[37] The latter continuously emphasize nationalism in order to rally Burmans and Buddhist majorities, and the ruling NLD has declared in the run-up to the 2020 elections that it will not enter into a coalition with ethnic parties after those polls.[38]

Questions should be raised about using label 'nationalism' to describe attempts to reclaim identity, not just as based on ethnicity but also through common territoriality or shared experiences, when these attempts do not have the goal of achieving a state, federacy, or confederacy. The term 'nationalism' is part of a binary. It connotes anti-progressive, anti-liberal and even anti-leftist tendencies. Trapped in this binary, the term 'nationalism' can undermine progressive local movements, from Tai Nay to Myeik. Nationalists attempt to unify culturally, ethnically and religiously homogenous groups to advance elite — in the case of Myanmar, Burman-Buddhist—interests. The striving of minorities such as Tai Nay, Myeik and Kayan for self-determination is in fact resistance against such nationalism. If asking for civic rights or human rights is viewed in binary opposition to nationalism, as the cartoon in Figure 1 above suggests, minorities' struggles are not nationalist ones. Rather, they are appeals through identity to universal values such as inclusion and diversity. When modern apparatuses of the nation such as elections fail,[39] identity becomes minorities' protection and a political vehicle for demanding civic rights.

CONCLUSION

As the cartoon in Figure 1 illustrates, 'nationalism' or '*amyothayay*' is understood in Myanmar as 'Burman-Buddhist' mobilization aimed at strengthening the Burman and Buddhist character of the nation. Minority movements such as those of Tai Nay and Myeik people are seen as anti-nationalist or as expressions of dissent against the Burman state. Minorities and their representative parties such as SNDP are left to defend themselves, and as long as Burman and Buddhist identities are dominant in state organs and the state continues to exclude others, minorities have no choice but to resist the state at the most obvious node of exclusion — their identities.

To conclude, I return to the case studies. Shan in Kyaing Tong will continue to claim their sub-group identity, Tai Nay, as a unifying marker as well as a means of resistance against groups close to the government, and against the government itself. Christian Kayan witnessed historical oppression, and, instead of adopting the dominant identity markers that the state has imposed on them, they hold onto their identity and identity politics as an empowering tool. Myeik residents want to free themselves from Burman domination. When avenues to demand rights within non-ethnic space are closed, and when parliament is no longer seen as a place to address the plight of ethnic minorities, minorities have nowhere to turn but to their identities as they seek to build solidarity with equally marginalized citizens. Framing their struggles as nationalist undermines their political shrewdness and further privileges Burman-Buddhist nationalism.

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[1] အမျိုးသားရေး in Burmese.

[2] 'Ma-Ba-Tha is also known as the 969 organization. The numeric symbol comes from the 9, 6, and 9 attributes or characteristics of the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha (that is, the monastic order). See Tharaphi Than, 'Nationalism, Religion, and Violence: Old and New Wunthanu Movements in Myanmar', *The Review of Faith & International Affairs* 13:4 (2015): 12–24, p. 22. Ma-Ba-Tha was disbanded on the order of the State Sangha Council in July 2017. Subsequently, it changed its name to 'Buddha-Dhamma Parahita Foundation', meaning 'Buddha-Dhamma Welfare Foundation'.

[3] What started as a clash between Rakhine Buddhists and Rakhine Muslims quickly turned into an anti-Muslim pogrom throughout the country. Muslims are also increasingly viewed as legal (non-Rohingya) or illegal (Rohingya). For more on the 2012 and post-2012 conflicts surrounding Rohingya and their legal status, see Nyi Nyi Kyaw, 'Alienation, Discrimination, and Securitization: Legal Personhood and Cultural Personhood of Muslims in Myanmar', *The Review of Faith & International Affairs* 13:4 (2015): 50–59.

[4] The USDP campaigned in the 2015 elections with the slogan 'to protect national interests', meaning 'national race and religion — Burman and Buddhism'. The NLD did not field a single Muslim candidate, indicating its fear of the backlash from Burman-Buddhist groups. See Phyo Thiha Cho, 'Joining a Ma Ba Tha event is a USDP member's right and choice', *Myanmar Now*, 2 November 2015 (https://myanmar-now.org/en/news/joining-a-ma-ba-tha-event-is-a-usdp-members-right-and-choice, accessed 5 March 2020).

[5] Ernest Gellner, *Nationalism* (New York: New York University Press, 1997), p. 69.

[6] Broader movements such as those rallying behind Arakan Army in Rakhine State in the West and the Kachin Independence Army in Kachin State in the North will not be discussed, as detailed analysis of the different stages of these two movements to highlight when they fall in and out of nationalism warrant a longer paper.

[7] မိုင်းလား in Burmese.

[8] တိုင်းနေ in Burmese.

[9] An old term for countries before the concept of *naing-ngan* or nation-state became widespread.

[10] The literal meaning of *taingyintha* (တိုင်းရင်းသား) is 'the most original or the closet blood-relation to their *tai.*'

[11] The 33 groups officially provide for under 'Shan' include ရှမ်း (Shan), ယွန်း (လာအို) (Yun/Lao), ကွီ (Kwi), ဖျင် (Pyin), သအို (Tha-o/Yao), ဓနော (Danaw), ပလေး (Pale), အင် (In/Eng), စုံ (ဆံ) (Son/San), ခမူ (Khmu), ကော် (အာခါ-အီကော) (Kaw/Akha/E-kaw), ကိုးကန့် (Kokang), ခန္တီးရှမ်း (Khamti Shan), ဂုံ (ခွန်) (Gon/Khun), တောင်ရိုး (Taungyoe), ဓနု (Danu), ပလောင် (Palaung), မြောင်းဇီး (Myaungzi/Man Zi), ယင်းကြား (Yin Kya), ယင်းနက် (Yin Net), ရှမ်းကလေး (Shangalay), ရှမ်းကြီး (Shangyi), လားဟူ (Lahu), အင်းသား (Inntha), အိုက်ဆွယ် (Aiswe), ပအိုဝ် (တောင်သူ) (Pa-o/Taungthu), တိုင်းလွယ် (Tai Lwe/Tai Loi), တိုင်းလျှမ် (Tai Lem), တိုင်းလုံ (Tai Lon), တိုင်းလေ့ (Tai Le), မိုင်းသာ (Mai Tha), မောရှမ်း (Maw Shan) and ဝ (Wa). See "Answers by Deputy Minister, U Win Myint, Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population to U Aung Thein", n.d. (https://pyithu.hluttaw.mm/question-2141 accessed 11 February 2020).

[12] Nick Cheesman, 'How in Myanmar "National Races" Came to Surpass Citizenship and Exclude Rohingya', *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, 47:3 (2017): 461–483, p. 462.

[13] Ardeth Thawnhmung and Yadana, 'Citizenship and Minority Rights: The Role of "National Race Affairs" Ministers in Myanmar's 2008 Constitution', pp, 113–139 in Ashley South and Marie Lall, editors, *Citizenship in Myanmar: Ways of Being in and from Burma*. (Singapore: ISEAS, 2017), pp. 131–135, and President's Office, Republic of the Union of Myanmar, "President

[14] Appointed the Ethnic Minority Ministers", n.d. (https://www.president-office.gov.mm/?q=cabinet/region-and-state-government/id-10079, accessed 11/02/2020).

[14] Ardeth Thawnhmung and Yadana 2017, pp. 132–135.

[15] Ibid., pp. 122-123.

[16] Sai Moun, personal communication, Tachileik, Shan State, July 2013.

[17] Article 161 of the Constitution of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, 2008. (https://www.burmalibrary.org/docs5/Myanmar_Constitution-2008-en.pdf, accessed 3 March 2020)

[18] In Myanmar, seven states are designated for seven major ethnicities: Kachin, Kayah, Kayin, Chin, Mon, Rakhine and Shan. Because of the new quota system, Chin living outside Chin State have representation in the parliament.

[19] လူမျိုး in Burmese.

[20] 'Tai Nay' is not officially recognized in the 2014 census, and Tai Nay therefore are not recognized as one of the minorities able to legitimately claim indigenous or တိုင်းရင်းသား status or, if we are to extrapolate further, to have a claim in the whole Pyidaungsu or the Union. The 33 other groups who make up the official 'Shan' list can however claim legitimacy to their Shan identity (and territory) and the right to be included and counted as indigenous; see President's Office, n.d.

[21] For more on the controversies surrounding the 2014 census, see Mary P. Callahan, 'Distorted, Dangerous Data? *Lumyo* in the 2014 Myanmar Population and Housing Census,' *SOJOURN: Journal of Social Issues in Southeast Asia* 32:2 (2017): pp. 452–478.

[22] Marnix Beyen and Maarten Van Ginderachter, 'Writing the Mass into a Mass Phenomenon', pp. 3-22 in Maarten Van Ginderachter and Marnix Beyein, eds., *Nationhood from Below: Europe in the Long Nineteenth Century* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), p. 14.

[23] In the 2010 elections, the SNDP in the absence of SNLD won 21 seats in the two houses of the national parliament and 36 seats in Shan State. However, it lost most of them to the SNLD five years later. 'SNDP chief says merger with Shan rival unlikely', *Shan News*, 22 March 2016 (https://english.shannews.org/archives/13809 accessed 1 March 2020). The SNLD was seen as standing together with NLD, which boycotted the 2010 elections, and Shan overwhelmingly voted for the party in 2015. Like other parties that had won seats in 2010, the SNDP lost to the NLD and its allies in 2015. Established in 1988, the SNLD was seen as being the forefront of the democratic struggle. See 'Shan Nationalities League for Democracy (SNLD)', *The Irrawaddy*, n.d. (https://www.irrawaddy.com/election/party/shan-national-league-for-democracy-snld, accessed 14 April 2020).

[24] 'Interview with Sai Ai Pao', *SNDP Journal*, December 2019, pp. 5–10.

[25] 'The Aftermath of By-election: Shan party's success indicates abandonment of tactical voting that brought NLD to power', *Shan Herald Agency for News,* 7 April 2017, (https://english.shannews.org/archives/16104 accessed 6 March 2020).

[26] 'By-election winners sworn in at Shan State parliament', *Shan Herald Agency for News* 6 June 2017 (https://english.shannews.org/archives/16323, accessed 14 April 2020).

[27] Sai Moun, Personal Communication, July 2013.

[28] I find Montserrat Guibernau's assessment of Anthony Smith's concept of ethnosymbolism useful, as it addresses why nations without states, or in the case of Tai Nay, without a state representing local people, use pre-modern elements such as identity to challenge the functioning of modern states. See Montserrat Guibernau, 'Anthony D. Smith on nations and national identity: a critical assessment', *Nations and Nationalism* 2:1-2 (2004): pp. 125–141.

[29] "ဗမာ၊ မြိတ်၊ ထားဝယ်၊ ယော၊ ဆလုံ မှတ်ပုံတင်တွင် မြိတ်လူမျိုးအဖြစ် ထည့်သွင်းရေး ကြိုးပမ်း" [Bamar, Myeik, Dawei, Yaw and Salone striving to include Myeik *lumyo*], *Dawei Watch*, 21 January 2020 (http://www.daweiwatch.com/2020/01/21/news/21958/?fbclid=IwAR1WTtGKmTiir0m_fiTyLDprL-0Tx7q8pblECKCMzqpD-jxQo6IhD5Ribc8, accessed 6 February 2020).

[30] The nine sub-groups include ဗမာ (Bamar), မြိတ် (Myeik), ထားဝယ် (Dawei), ယော (Yaw), ဆလုံ (Salone), ရဘိန်း (Yabane), ကဒူး (Kadu), ကဏန်း (Kanan) and ဖုန်း (Phon).

[31] *Dawei Watch*, op. cit.

[32] This is called အိမ်ထောင်စုလူဦးရေစာရင်း.

[33] In Burmese, လူမျိုး.

[34] Benedict Rogers, 'The Contribution of Christianity to Myanmar's Social and Political Development', *The Review of Faith & International Affairs* 13:4 (2015): 60–70, p. 63.

[35] "NLD blocked Muslim candidates to appease MaBaTha party member", *The Irrawaddy*, 31 August 2015, quoted in 'Buddhism and State Power in Myanmar', *International Crisis Group, Asia Report No 290*, 5 September 2017, p. 14.

[36] While brave Bamar questioned the searches by the military and police on highways, Kachin would submit to them in silence. Personal communication with Pyo Let Han, September 2019.

[37] Athena Leoussi and Steven Grosby, eds., *Nationalism and Ethnosymbolism : History, Culture and Ethnicity in the Formation of Nations* (Edinburgh University Press, 2006; ProQuest Ebook Central, http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/niu/detail.action?docID=282270), p. 17.

[38] Swe Lei Mon, 'Ruling party nixes coalition govt in 2020', *Myanmar Times*, 23 September 2019 (https://www.mmtimes.com/news/ruling-party-nixes-coalition-govt-2020.html, accessed 2 March 2020).

[39] On modernization and nationalism, see Brendan O'Leary, 'On the Nature of Nationalism: An Appraisal of Ernest Gellner's Writings on Nationalism', *British Journal of Political Science 27: 2 (1997):* 191–222.