Why Decolonising Area Studies is Not Enough:

A Case Study of the Complex Legacies of Colonial Knowledge-Making in the Indo-Myanmar Borderlands

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Abstract

Decolonisation has become an important agenda both within academic institutions as well as within wider society in recent years. Yet the term is infrequently sufficiently critiqued or deconstructed to identify precisely what 'the colonial' refers to in specific academic contexts and therefore what the process of decolonisation should entail. It remains a relatively over-simplified agenda that easily becomes strategic rather than transformative of knowledge institutions. The focus on restructuring identifiable components, such as reading lists, limits discussion and critique of what decolonisation as an inherently more complex set of challenges should involve. The teaching and research related to Area Studies makes for an interesting example of the unresolved challenges of 'decolonisation' in academia. This paper reflects upon the complex discontinuities in understandings of 'the Colonial' in the Indo-Myanmar borderlands, challenging us to reflect more fully on what 'decolonisation' should entail in relation to academic interactions with this space. Specifically, it considers that region of the trans-Patkai mountain range where its corridors today connect modern north east India with the northern tip of Sagaing Division and Kachin State in Myanmar. The paper distinguishes itself from that broad literature on decolonisation by considering the

ways in which colonial knowledge making intersects with contemporary knowledge making about this region, and the legacies of those historical constructions in the present. The often-unconscious ways in which academics and 'experts' are culpable in sustaining colonial representations that embed this region's economic and political marginalisation, even when they assume that attention to a decentred 'local' voice is being magnified, means that there is also a need to think about the decolonisation of knowledge of this area more deeply. This article intends to contribute to that debate.

D ecolonisation has become an important agenda both within academic institutions as well as within wider society in recent years. Yet the term is rarely critiqued or deconstructed to identify precisely what 'the colonial' refers to in specific academic settings or contexts and therefore what the process of decolonisation should entail. The history of Empires in World History refers to far more than the history of intensive, industrialised and racialised western European conquest and territorial consolidation over the past two hundred-plus years. When decolonisation is assumed to be a process that refers only to that history, it remains a relatively over-simplified agenda that easily becomes strategic rather than transformative of institutions. This is particularly so when engagement with decolonisation focuses upon the desirability of 'decentring' the west and its textual and intellectually hegemonic assumptions, or, for example, how to 'rethink the British Empire'. The primary focus on restructuring identifiable components, such as reading lists, limits discussion and critique of what decolonisation as an inherently more complex set of challenges should involve.

The teaching and research related to Area Studies makes for an interesting example of the unresolved challenges of 'decolonisation' in academia. How does the decolonisation agenda relate to Area Studies? Traditional Area Studies has an ambiguous relationship with colonialism. On the one hand, the primary

organisational framework of Area Studies as it emerged after World War II was self-evidently post-colonial. The configuration of Areas as objects of academic enquiry aligned with the independent nations that emerged from the collapse of western imperial systems around the globe. Area Studies reconstituted these nations, it was claimed, in historically coherent regions of cultural interaction and political and economic collaboration; the new Areas transcended the former experience of western colonisation and were therefore, implicitly, part of a wider project of national restitution and decolonisation. The paradox of this, of course, was that the nations who comprised the new Areas of study had often come into being as an outcome of their colonial experiences: they were themselves in part a legacy of colonialism. Indonesia did not previously exist; Burma or Myanmar had a territorial boundedness that was entirely novel as a post-colonial state; India, Pakistan and Bangladesh were all born out of colonialism. A further paradox was that the western empires of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were now replaced by other forms of imperialism and colonization, especially through economic globalization. Alignments in the Cold War pivoted around centres of power that were Neo-Colonialist in orientation and function. What academic decolonisation should mean and what it should look like in this more granular and convoluted historical landscape is neither clear nor simple.

Area Studies has responded to the decolonisation agenda implicitly if not overtly by also focusing on the need to de-centre the locus of authority in each Area from institutions in the west to institutions in the region. There has also been a demand, certainly in the context of Asian Studies, for more attention to be paid to work in regional national languages and to the work of national scholars: the neo-colonialism of the hegemony of English language scholarship is considered a primary barrier to this project of re-centring. It can be argued that de-centring and re-centring have become the primary *modus operandi* of decolonisation agendas in all institutions, as well as in Area Studies itself. This involves a relatively superficial framework in which

colonialism and decolonisation are understood as opposites. The argument of this paper is that decolonisation remains a poorly articulated conceptualisation of academic hierarchies and what needs to change within them. It fails to acknowledge the historical confluences that make decolonisation an almost impossible agenda to materialise with any consistency where there is a failure also to challenge the methodological nationalisms of many newly independent nations in relation to their Others. One of the most important characteristics of these newly independent nations was that they had to engage in urgent political projects of integration. Many of these projects took a violent form as populations with limited affinities to the new national frameworks had now to accept their novel subservience within post-colonial national systems, to which they had only contingent loyalties. As will be discussed in this article, what 'colonialism' was and how it was experienced was not necessarily something that was made clearer to many of these 'minority' populations with the arrival of post-colonial states.

This paper reflects upon the complex discontinuities in understandings of 'the Colonial' in the Indo-Myanmar borderlands, challenging us to reflect more fully on what 'decolonisation' should entail in relation to academic interactions with this space. Specifically, it considers that region of the trans-Patkai mountain range where its corridors today connect modern north east India with the northern tip of Sagaing Division and Kachin State in Myanmar. The propositions this paper makes, however, are more generally applicable to researching the histories of borderlands at the margins of states where contests over national integration have occurred since World War II, or where those borders act as boundaries of traditional Area Studies, in this case between South and South East Asian studies. This borderline was historically produced in relation to multiple international boundaries, but it also operated as an internal boundary within a common system of governance: the British Empire in India, of which Burma was a part.[1] As such, the study of it offers up important insights into colonial knowledge making (and un-making) that are lost when reflecting only

upon the international dimensions or foreign relations of borders. However, this is more than just a critique of colonial knowledge making. The paper distinguishes itself from that broad literature by considering the ways in which colonial knowledge making intersects with contemporary knowledge making about this region, especially the legacies of those historical constructions in the present.[2] The often-unconscious ways in which academics and 'experts' are culpable in sustaining colonial representations that embed this region's economic and political marginalisation, even when they assume that attention to a decentred 'local' voice is being magnified, means that there is also a need to think about the decolonisation of knowledge of this area more deeply. This article intends to contribute to that debate.

Decolonisation of knowledge in and about this region is no straightforward matter, as there is often an ambivalent or even paradoxical imaginary of the ongoing significance of colonial archives in many communities in this area, especially among language-communities without extensive mother-tongue text-based historical documentation; hopes are often expressed that 'lost' community histories may be recovered from within deep colonial vaults. The knowledge constructions of western colonisation are also often not considered the main fault-line or area of vulnerability in communities in these areas but are rather set against the competing dominance of powerful, and exclusionary, methodological nationalisms that characterise history in the modern, post-colonial Indian and Myanmar states.[3] The decolonisation of knowledge in and of this region then becomes an intricate conundrum in these settings where debates about history are known to have ongoing contemporary importance.[4] It also follows that the appropriation of colonial source material—in this case, especially the published journal articles and reports of early nineteenth century colonial agents as works of colonial 'first discovery'—by local research communities as well as by an expansive range of professional global researchers, many of whom often use such texts to fill historical lacuna in understanding, may have unintended consequences where they inadvertently continue to embed flawed negative tropes and

stereotypes related to the perceived 'primitivism' of local communities. Reflections on history's ongoing meanings in the present must surely be a part of any decolonisation agenda for spaces such as this, and those histories are being constructed by methodological nationalisms at national centres as well as academic practitioner-scholars working often in aid and development in these borderlands.

The article, therefore, brings a number of ideas together in defining this borderline as having been constructed as a Colonial Zone of Ignorance. It will outline briefly the ongoing political significance of historical knowledge gaps that are filled by external projections upon communities of the region. It will also consider how capitalist expansion served as the driver of ignorance through structured colonial agnosia. Finally, it will consider how challenging it is to walk cleanly through this quagmire of historical Ignorance and Ignore-ance and the different performances of academic engagement with this region that make decolonisation very messy, including the new digital economies of research in and about this region. By interweaving these three constructions of knowing and ignorance, we are able to think about the longer trajectories of knowledge re-production and why there is a repetitive cycle of 'knowing erroneously', such that the colonial Zone of Ignorance has continued to be recreated over time. Only then can we begin to address correctives and consider whether 'decolonisation' as a frame of reference is the most encompassing or whether other ways of changing our engagements with marginalised, borderline spaces in post-colonial states may need to be foregrounded.

Making and Re-making the Colonial Zone of Ignorance: Historical Knowledge Gaps and their Power

The questions raised in this paper originally came into view more than twenty years ago when I was living and working in Myanmar, before commencing my PhD studies at SOAS University of London in 2000.[5] In the mid-late 1990s, I had become drawn into a research project with local Kachin researchers, who were trying to preserve a

vulnerable collection of materials comprising audio, video and photographic records of locally endangered ritual language and culture. Kachin State is the most northerly state of Myanmar and it takes its name from being the traditional homeland of one of the country's most significant 'National Races', the Kachin people.[6] Although the demographics of the state are changing as a result of large scale in-migration from elsewhere in Myanmar, the Kachin State, especially beyond the capital Myitkyina, still has a strong sense of cultural, linguistic and historical distinctiveness from the majority Burman Buddhist culture.[7] The Kachin armed movement under the Kachin Independence Organisation has been engaged for extensive periods in low-level armed conflict against successive governments of Myanmar since the early 1960s, including that led by Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.

From the conversations I had with these local researchers and community leaders, I became increasingly interested not only in the materials with which we were working but also how local people articulated an understanding of their history, especially in the absence of formal educational channels for communicating historical knowledge, either locally or nationally.[8] Out of these conversations gradually emerged a clear sense of the gaps in historical understanding that local people felt pressed upon them, and upon their communities, with some urgency. Critical historical gaps were perceived as opening-up the possibility of existential threats to the 'Kachin' identity.[9] In particular, the absence of an agreed historical narrative of where the term 'Kachin' originated, combined with the implications of its use as an exonym, and sensitivities about the violence-driven processes by which it had evolved as an official terminology of the Myanmar state and of Kachin ethno-nationalists, were all noted as points of vulnerability.[10] What I later learned was that these experiences and fears are very broadly shared among many communities along the Indo-Myanmar borderlands, as shall be discussed.

The modern term Kachin, as with others such as Chin and Naga, is an ethnic category that subsumes a number of different but inter-connected ethnicities under its umbrella.[11] Local Kachin researchers feared that deconstruction of the term could, if framed negatively, lead to it being presented as an artificial rather than historically contingent construct and be used to undermine Kachin claims to recognised political status within the modern Myanmar state.[12] The fact that colonial authorities had picked up this term and embedded it in the ethno-architecture of imperialism created very substantial concerns that it might be represented solely as 'colonial artifice'.[13]

To counteract this possibility, a number of competing narratives have long circulated within Kachin, predominantly Jinghpaw language discourses, laying out claims to the indigenous meanings of the term, as noted, and proposing local alternatives of equivalent multi-group inclusiveness. They all undoubtedly speak to the modern Myanmar (and Indian) state in highly politicised ways.[14] Similar occurrences also occur in other communities and on the Indo-side of the Indo-Myanmar borderlands, for example around contested identities such as Mizo and Zo.[15] But there is always a sense of uncertainty about which of these alternative explanations may be 'true', reflecting insecurities where it is known that labels of identity are inevitably outcomes of long-term political processes, of reinterpretation and therefore of adaptation, rather than being primordial signatures written across time.

What in the end became very clear through these conversations, however, was that the history of this area beyond a rather narrow frame of reference[16] was deemed by its own inhabitants to be a space where gaps in knowledge were profound and deep, and filling those gaps had political significance and had to be handled with great care. The extreme lengths to which the hegemonic state-driven discourse about historical indigeneity can go in pursuit of its own agenda has been made apparent most recently in Myanmar through the crimes of the military and various xenophobic religious-community leaders against the Rohingya people.[17] This violence has been rooted in

the drive to deny them the right to assert their own identity and a rejection of their historical claims to status as a group of long habitation in western Myanmar.[18] While this has been the most visible and violent manifestation of what is an entrenched attitude to enforcing national definitions at the expense of all others, it has ramifications for many peoples experiencing state oppression of their identities and histories, not only the Rohingya people who nonetheless endure suffering at the extreme end of a xenophobic spectrum.[19] There is a different political architecture for recognising citizenship and ethnicity within India, but there, too, it can produce violent eruptions to limit capacities for self-identification.[20] In Myanmar, the desire of post-colonial regimes of various persuasions to insist on a Burmanized view of history, especially through the centralised control of history education at all levels of the sector, has long been cited as a major impediment to the peaceful integration and social inclusion of many of the modern nation's minorities.[21] This background noise was powerfully evident in all the conversations with Kachin researchers that I had about history more than twenty years ago and remains true today, despite the rhetoric (and some realities) of democratisation. History, and who controls its narrative, was and is a serious business in this region and can have profound, even existential, consequences for those who try to express a different viewpoint and assert their rights based upon historical claims.

While this was undeniably fascinating, it also incurred a sense of responsibility in as much as historical un-knowing was an urgent political dilemma among local researchers and community elites in the Kachin region, and elsewhere. Where was this 'lost' history located, and how could it be salvaged to explore how it might raise questions for the hegemonic claims of the state to define the historical legitimacy of the nation's Others? Some of this history obviously lies as a shadow across the environments in which people live and they simply need more tools to delineate its form; other parts of this history were deemed to be located in archives controlled and owned by external gatekeepers and beyond the reach of local researchers. These

imagined archives acquired an almost mythic quality in some contexts, carrying the burden of unfulfillable expectations about what they might reveal of detailed local pasts.[22]

Against a background of un-knowing that enabled false histories to proliferate, I made it a goal when I did eventually return to the UK in 1999 to try to push down into the colonial archives as far as possible to trace the modern political trajectory of the term Kachin from the politicised entry point of 'first encounter' with colonial authorities in order to flesh out our understanding of this particular side of the dynamic.[23] The foundation stones of the Colonial Zone of Ignorance that this area was to become were laid in the early nineteenth century. A series of texts were published against the backdrop of the first Anglo-Burmese war of 1824-6, which was the endpoint of one of the most violent periods of human displacement that this region had ever experienced before the twentieth century.[24] However, in all of the texts, the upheavals associated with the lead-up to and operation of the war and its aftermath, and the personal and often highly traumatic personal experiences of the authors, became agnotologically removed through the censorship and publication process in favour of a discourse of imperial discovery and redemption.[25] This process of agnosia has in turn impacted upon the longer-term associations made with these areas by embedding a number of ideas as 'natural' in relation to them—their remoteness, isolation, backwardness, primitivism, 'tribalism', violence, environmental vulnerability, neglect or waste of natural resources that could be deployed as a medium for 'development' and as a proxy for modernity, and so on.[26] These are deemed to be defining characteristics of these areas and are so powerful that they dominate at the expense of alternative ways of thinking about them, but they were shaped significantly by works of 'first encounter'.[27] By resituating these texts in the context of their production, it is possible to identify the kinds of information and experience, especially the affective and emotional responses to violence, fear and anxiety, which became detached in the process of laying them before a wider colonial public as an official publication.

Decolonisation involves difficult re-readings and 're-graining' of these texts, not their erasure.[28] The point, however, was not simply to identify a moment of 'presence' or moment of recognition, or to say when 'the first' time was that the term Kachin or its cognates was formally noted by colonising agents; rather it was to explore the imaginaries that were attached to that presence and the related act of recognition.[29]

The Zone of Ignorance and Ignore-ance: Capitalist Expansion and the Supra-External Arena

What opened-up before me as I cut through the historical foliage of the 1820s and 1830s as I tracked the term Kachin and its cognates through the intellectual corridors of this space was a strange and surprising pathway leading back into the era when the modern world system established its presence in this area and began to shape its future; I was quickly led across the Patkai mountains into Assam.[30] Unanswered questions started to make sense, not because they were answered but rather because the reasons they remained unanswered became clearer as the area manifested as a colonial Zone of Ignorance produced by capitalist expansion.

The leading proponent of the idea of the Zone of Ignorance as an important additional element of world systems theory has been Jon D. Carlson.[31] Carlson sees such zones as vital to understanding how regions—often characterised as Frontiers in colonial parlance—became attributed with specific characteristics in ways that were different to those of the periphery and its zones of incorporation, as well as being distinct from the external arena. These colonial frontier Zones of Ignorance were a "supra-external" arena, often being a site of competition between different systems but which were also subject to 'grooming' with a view to possible incorporation at different times. One of the methods of grooming was mapping.[32] Furthermore, these zones often become embedded as spaces of conflict through their historical interactions, caught between competing systems, where no one has a monopoly on violence.[33]

Carlson uses this concept as a way of intervening in the macro-analysis of world systems theory. He demonstrates the value that more localised critiques incorporating the cultural response to capitalist expansion can have in helping us to understand these processes more deeply. He argues that this is especially the case in those regions (Frontiers) often erroneously represented as spaces entirely 'untouched' by capitalism's reach and lying beyond the world system. This paper supports that view that we need to take into account the differentiated experiences in the Frontiers betwixt and between the incorporated world system and the external arena (China, in Wallerstein's model).[34] Critical deployment of Carlson's Zone of Ignorance metaphor disrupts the tri-fold world systems framework and may help to explain the longevity and persistence of such zones as spaces of conflict and contest.[35]

My early archival research highlighted powerful alternative histories that had been truncated or redirected by actions and events, policies and rivalries associated with capitalist expansion and its drivers.[36] What I had found myself tracing was not just the breadcrumb trail of a term through history, but intoxicating insights into why and how the predominant narratives of colonial rule in the Frontier came to be predominant—with hints as to why this has led to colonial and post-colonial regimes embedding them as normative models underpinning their own ideas of 'development' and incorporation ever since. These tropes were enormously beneficial to the economic and political interests of colonising powers of all kinds and for justifying their own limitations (in knowledge, capacity, finance and others). Rather than tracing an embedded rejection of this expansionary force, as James C. Scott might have it, communities identified as Singpho, Naga, Mishmi and others were all in different ways interacting with the new economic and political frameworks that began to emerge as the British East India Company established its military-economic footholds.[37] One of the most important revelations was the highly significant role that Singpho communities played in the emerging narrative of tea in Assam in these early years of encounter.[38] Their subsequent removal from the historical record was just

one example of a contrivance that reflected the consolidation of East India Company interests according to its own agenda. There was no rejection of 'the state' by Singpho chiefs other than when the structures that were being embedded disadvantaged them or excluded them.[39] This was how the colonial Zone of Ignorance emerged: it did not reflect an innate state of being but rather a construction that justified Company decision making in a dynamic and confusing environment where their own knowledge and power to act was deeply constrained. This was a very messy policy space indeed, certainly at its foundation point, but also for much of its history subsequently. However, the archive itself still has the power to make some of this unknown history visible, if we would but look.[40]

The Paradox of Decolonisation

The significance of this kind of historical context as a starting point for thinking about the decolonisation of research has been asserted by Sabelo Ndlovu-Gatsheni: "Decolonising methodology must begin with unmasking the modern world system and the global order as the broader context from which re-search and methodology are cascading and are influenced."[41] This was surely the underlying object of my archival search. Decolonising this space must include a rigorous enquiry into the realities of those encounters with early capitalist expansion by colonialism's agents, whether or not one ascribes to the overarching framework of world systems. On the ground, the process of colonial knowledge making was a contentious and complex process that is belied by the simplifications of its published accounts.

In dealing with the conundrum of how to deal with the untapped potential of this nonetheless deeply problematic set of materials, Linda Tuhiwai Smith's seminal work *Decolonising Methodologies* was important in the development of my thinking as a doctoral student.[42] Most importantly, she conveyed clearly and unambiguously how re-searchers such as myself, involved in re-searching previously colonised spaces and using methodologies that are rooted in hierarchical colonial and neo-colonial power

structures of knowledge-production, need to be more conscious of our potential complicity in the same forces of oppression that we often claimed to be overturning. Tuhiwai Smith's work did not entirely resolve the paradoxical issue of what to do when the colonial also still offers a space of historical 'discovery' against domineering regimes using methodological nationalism in ways considered equally as powerful and oppressive as those of historical colonisers. But Tuhiwai Smith's work opened up critical spaces of reflection that must lie at the heart of any intellectual decolonisation agenda: reflection upon the conscious and unconscious culpability of academic researchers in the ongoing reproduction of forms of colonial marginalisation for communities in regions such as this.[43]

How most effectively to support the decolonisation of knowledge about this space while simultaneously deploying colonial archives as an important resource for enabling local communities to lay claim to their own narratives, experiences and interpretations? Here within lay not only the roots of understanding those essentialising tropes of Othering, but also the means of showing their fallacies as representational norms across time. How, also, can we be sensitive in our approach to that wider context in which the structures of colonialism, particularly its forces of accumulation and extraction, are still very much in evidence, but are embodied today by post-colonial national regimes, regional 'super powers' and 'international business' and who also have something to lose by changing the narrative?[44]

For those with privileged access to external archives, a simple response is sometimes focused upon making archives accessible to local communities through digitisation. This must surely be the key to unravelling the colonial Zone of Ignorance and its reproduction? However, one of the arguments of this article is that this has not contributed to the decolonisation of knowledge to the extent we might hope for to date, as 'the internet' has proved itself to be a capricious mediator of forces for 'good' in this sphere, as in many others. Indeed, it has in important ways embedded many

problems rather than resolved them in relation to supporting complex archival research practices that must underpin scholarly enquiry. However, if we deploy the Zone of Ignorance metaphor in a different way, it may provide us with further tools for thinking in more detail about ongoing challenge within the decolonisation of knowledge.

Zomia and the Digital

A different approach to the issue is offered up by the model of *Zomia* developed by Willem van Schendel, in which he reflects mainly upon the post-colonial, post-World War II setting, in which knowledge-making has evolved in and about this region.[45] In *Geographies of Knowing, Geographies of Ignorance* van Schendel wrote a compelling polemic on how the neglect of areas at the interstices or borderland "honeycomb" of different Cold War Area Studies regimes (South, East, South East Asia and so on), helped to consolidate the framing of them through ideas of their remoteness, isolation and backwardness. These constructs fed into national and international political and economic arrangements for these areas, which were then naturalised through methodologically nationalist discourses that proliferated in the post-World War II geo-politics of knowledge. Given that van Schendel emphasises the institutional nature of this marginalisation, by connecting this zone of ignorance with that of Carlson, we can undoubtedly see historical lineage from the colonial to the post-colonial following the threads of capitalist expansion directly into more contemporary processes of Cold War competition and division.

The idea of *Zomia* as elaborated by van Schendel needs to be updated as an ongoing model for understanding this space as a Zone of Ignorance, however, especially with respect to the digital turn and the implications and outcomes of that turn for challenging the constraints of institutionalised ignorance. Van Schendel's article was first published in 2002, which was a critical moment in the digital turn but was equally an early point at which the web's future trajectory was still only faintly

outlined. In the years immediately following, the impact of the participatory or social web, which used to be referred to as Web 2.0, has been significant in many ways. The static pages of Web 1.0 were transformed by new ways of using the digi-sphere, which became interactive, participatory and which invited real time commentary. The implications of this for decolonisation of research in the colonial Zone of Ignorance, especially the power to change the boundaries of the traditional research communities, have been potentially quite profound.

The traces of the digital turn were already being seen in the Kachin region in the 1990s.[46] The local researchers from Kachin State with whom I worked, even in 1996 could express an aspiration that they wanted to turn their materials into "a museum in a computer"; our project was jointly focused upon the digitisation of their own materials while also complemented by the joint annotation and sharing of a collection of late-colonial photographs.[47] In this respect, the possibilities for new ways of collaborative working were easy for all to appreciate from the outset of these technological developments, even at a time when personal computer ownership in Myanmar was still illegal and the telecoms infrastructure to support this development was barely discernible. 2004 saw the initial launch of Facebook and then in 2006 it became an open public platform beyond its original narrow circles. Facebook in particular has had a dramatic impact on the political and social life of many communities in Myanmar, including among the Kachin.[48] The rise of participatory knowledge production and social media should significantly change the way in which we think about and engage with the idea of *Zomia*—and perhaps even what *Zomia* is—and especially what this means for the decolonisation of research about its related Geographies of Ignorance.

Yet all has not been as positive as the above trajectory first offered. Clifford Lynch has made very pertinent comments about the implications of the 'Digital Age' for memory institutions in particular, but they are valid also for academics who are

engaging in new technologies of research, whether proactively or not, given that we all engage with online repositories.[49] One of the issues Lynch raises is that the boundaries of digital archives and collections have become very fuzzy; it is difficult to know where they begin and end as digital objects, including texts, are circulated beyond the boundaries and control of the holding institution. New audiences, especially those in regions such as the Kachin State engaging with historical materials in which they are the object/subject, as Lynch notes, are frequently impatient with institutional boundary-making and engage in constant re-assemblages of material according to logics that are not under the control of the curators of the archive or collection.[50] Although this creates enormous opportunities for the "evolution of disciplinary scholarly practices", Lynch notes that this will only be realised if these interactions go a step further to build up new scholarly communities of communication through which those disciplines and disciplinary practices can develop: there have to be ways of incorporating this new knowledge permanently into the scholarly record.

In addition, given the sensitivities with which historical representation is loaded, filling gaps in historical knowledge can also bring with it enormous jeopardy in these highly politicised contexts. [51] We are already alert to the negative influences and capabilities of the social media giants in other areas of our lives, and one of the influences that is now increasingly coming under scrutiny is the influence of 'the internet' on knowledge, including on the agnotological construction of deliberate ignorance. The recent battles over the identity Rohingya and its historical origins seen across Facebook in Myanmar, which have led to accusations of the company's complicity in the outrages against Rohingya people, is evidence enough that the contested domain of history arising from the colonial Zone of Ignorance has not been served well through the digital turn. Reliance on making archival material available is not a substitute or a proxy for decolonisation by simply enabling a distorted form of 'access'.

Scholarly Knowledge

It should be clear from the above comments that while decolonisation of the colonial Zone of Ignorance cannot take place without some level of democratization of the archive, facilitated by digitisation, the Open Research agenda also requires careful reflection on the nature of the political space in which it operates. There must also be recognition of differentiated forms of Ignorance and Knowledge, and different performances of engagement with the colonial archive. This is especially true in spaces where there has been a severe limitation on both formal history education and informal cultural transmission of historical knowledge over many decades, and where tight controls and restrictions on historical teaching, learning and expression still exist.[52] In this context, a third and final model of Ignorance may help us to think about this space and our responsibilities towards it, our own ethics of right action, in relation to the paradoxes and challenges of decolonising knowledge described above, as well as recognising where our own complicity with the recreation of the Zone of Ignorance may occur. This third model of a Zone of Ignorance takes inspiration from the discussion of academic ignorance developed by the sociologist Andrew Abbot.[53]

Abbot identifies three forms of Ignorance in relation to academic and scholarly practice: amateur ignorance, professional ignorance, and expert ignorance. Each one has its own characteristics and plays a different part in how knowledge is communicated, especially in a Web 2.0 digital context. Amateur ignorance, he states, "is not sheer ignorance of facts or literature; it is principally ignorance of the possible modes for evaluating those facts and then setting them and the literature into an order that will stand against the onslaughts of new facts and literature."[54] Abbot uses the example of a writer of a Wikipedia page for his illustration, but it could apply to the many users of the digital world who engage with digitised historical texts and other objects rather for the accumulation of facts to substantiate a pre-determined narrative, rather than being open to possibilities of alternative enquiry. Amateur ignorance can

be demonstrated through the deployment of facts without understanding their wider context, but it may also be through the deployment of facts for a contrived purpose or even to create a deliberate agnotological confusion or deliberate distortion about the historical past as in the case of the Rohingya ('fake history' akin to 'fake news'). This applies not only to 'amateur' engagement with colonial and other archives but could also apply to those writing about aspects of this area and building or confirming perspectives from a limited base capacity to interpret the information they re-present. Clearly this manifestation of the Zone of Ignorance can produce great jeopardy, as mentioned above in relation to the Rohingya people and the tragedy of historical abuse that is used to justify their oppression, but typically it does not become embedded in the permanent scholarly record. However, we can see that in the methodological nationalism of Myanmar historical production, that it has been configured as 'truth' because the control of the knowledge is invested in a politically-oriented knowledge framework of xenophobic nationalism.

Professional knowledge, according to Abbot, is more varied and he gives a number of examples. However, the two most pertinent to historical representations in and of spaces such as the Indo-Myanmar border region are first, professional ignorance of other specialisms, and second, the inappropriate use of historical texts to fill gaps in knowledge. These practices of professional ignorance might take the form of someone working in a non-history discipline who references a historical text or source without understanding the theoretical or contextual framework within which the text sits, as this is outside their own area of specialisation; the text is often used to cover-up a gap in knowledge, such that the text becomes a proxy for active research into the subject which they have not themselves carried out or would ever intend to do so. One of the most obvious examples of this professional ignorance in the context of the Indo-Myanmar borderlands is the use of historical writing in the manifold Development reports and other publications within and about the region. It has become a convention in many such reports to include a paragraph or two, or even a chapter, on

'historical context', that typically re-presents a derivative historical narrative mainly from secondary sources, often with some confusion where an 'old' secondary or chimerical, 'non-binary' source is deemed to be 'primary source' merely by virtue of its age. This is perhaps one of the most significant ways in which the tropes alluded to in this article have become recirculated, given the rapid expansion of international engagement with these borderlands and, especially in Myanmar, the growth of an expatriate community of professional researchers working in Development and other areas. Highly specialist practitioners in their own fields, they may deploy historical representations without awareness of the unintended consequences of misappropriating history as 'story' or 'background'. This impacts on academic knowledge more deeply, because within this other specialism, certain texts or understandings do tend to become embedded in the historical perspectives and understanding of the non-history discipline. Where these other disciplines carry more dominant influence in these areas, they may embed what is erroneous or inadequately researched as 'historical knowledge'. This has serious implications for how we deepen understanding of the use and mis-use of inter- and cross-disciplinary research about such spaces and as part of the effort to decolonise the colonial Zone of Ignorance from the weight of erroneous historical representations.

Expert ignorance is conceptualised as different again and is characterised by Abbot as "synthetic ignorance". Over time, recall of how the minutiae of one's research has accumulated to shape specific ideas diminishes, and so too does the expert's capacity to elaborate upon the complexity of their underpinning formative analysis in detail. In short, the expert over time forgets how they came to understand things in the way they do by a failed recall of detail: "The ignorance of experts is … dominated by the use of synthesis as a means of memory as well as summary … It is in many ways the reverse of amateur ignorance, reflecting too much synthetic power rather than too little."[55] It also produces statements that are taken as expertise, but which may, through over-synthesis, reduce the complexities of evidence or fail to elaborate upon

areas of contestation or weakness. There would clearly seem to be implications in this performance of ignorance for the better deployment of open research data in the humanities, but with greater elaboration of the process of analysis rather than simply making it available in its own right, especially in light of previous comments on the misappropriation of 'facts' in a chaotic social media environment.[56] When this expert ignorance is subsumed within the scholarly output of non-specialist professional ignorance, described above, one can see how a vicious cycle comes into being in these contexts. Complex issues relating to digital knowledge and its limitations, combined with academic and professional practices that have under-represented the complexity of the historical research process in this region, each may contribute to maintaining and extending the Zone of Ignorance rather than to decolonising it.

Conclusion: The Ongoing Recreation of the Colonial Zone of Ignorance and the Complexity of Decolonisation

We may now combine three layers into the mix to understand the complexity and entrenched-ness of this Zone of Ignorance and its re-creation over time, as well as why 'decolonisation' of knowledge about and in this region is neither straightforward or uncontested. Carlson's Zone of Ignorance creates a model for thinking about how the processes of capitalist expansion produced a supra-external arena (the Frontier) that manifested as a Zone of Ignorance in part through embedded colonial agnosia. This went on to become a Zone of Ignore-ance as it served higher level interests of both the colonial and post-colonial states, who desired to extract its resources while neglecting its political and economic development. Van Schendel's model explores the on-going institutionalised marginalisation of these areas that has contributed to the limitation on research within and about these regions. These constraints around access and their invisibility in national histories has led to a heightened sense of contest over the value and use of the British colonial archive as a repository of voice and visibility. Finally, in settings where political and economic shifts facilitate the more active engagement of a host of new actors in these settings engaged with its

'development', seeking out information often takes them back to poorly articulated historical contexts, where meanings seem to 'fit' expectations because they have been normalised over time, and where the poor condition of local educational infrastructure for contesting these representations means that there is a limited local 'voice' for offering expertise over histories that have been 'lost'. And so, the conundrum continues.

If this conundrum is to be resolved, introspection is required not only in the traditional centres that were the originators of the colonial structures that are now in need of decolonisation, but also within the newly oriented Centres within nations and Area Studies institutions themselves, where methodological nationalism often replaces western colonialism as a default. It is not the case that in all contexts the outcomes are as tragic as those for the Rohingya people in the recolonization of history—but it also requires concerted reflection on the fact that the ethnic cleansing, and even genocidal intent, of the Myanmar state towards the Rohingya is justified internally *as a project of decolonisation*. Those who deploy this term as if it involves a simple decentring of western hegemony to new centres, or regions, are often blind to the extent to which many minority communities, especially in the borderlands of Myanmar as an example, feel that decolonisation has yet to happen. It does not involve simply re-centring the Myanmar state. The decolonization of Area Studies— New Area Studies—in this region of Asia must also involve the internal reconfiguration of power relations and the control of knowledge within the nations of the region, and not just in their external historical relations.

The challenge of finding new solutions to borderland problems in this part of Asia is a particularly complex one that involves unpacking the legacies of colonialism that permeate down to the present. Acknowledging and reflecting more deeply upon the problems inherent to historical representation is important for imagining new solutions to the challenges that these regions at the interstices of many states are

facing. For those engaged in scholarship on this region, it requires nuanced reflections on what the decolonisation of knowledge may mean in these contexts, including greater awareness of the implications of our findings for communities who carry the weight of these representations upon their shoulders.

Of course, one response towards decolonisation of knowledge about these areas may be that we simply de-privilege colonial archives in our discussions. What I had learned in Myanmar, however, was that for communities such as those using the identity 'Kachin', who are grappling with powerful authoritarian regimes who have closed off their own archives to scrutiny by anyone but themselves and which are still engaged in writing dominant, controlling national historical narratives premised on the naturalness of victors and losers, colonial archives were considered potentially important repositories of histories that had yet to be revealed. In important ways, that characterisation holds very true as even the colonial sources relating to this region have been studied relatively little.[57] Some of the examples of how even these widely cited published texts can be reviewed in the context of their archival origins but also when set against new critical perspectives reveals some of the potential that is still largely untapped. This continues to produce a complex paradox in relation to the meaning and significance of the colonial archive, even for what colonialism and decolonisation might mean in these contexts. For some, the post-colonial may have been a moment of rupture with the structures of authoritarian imperial rule. For others, the post-colonial has yet to happen; western colonialism has instead been replaced by other forms of colonisation by actors closer to home, generating a different mind-map for their own historical experience from that of the dominant view of the modern nation state.[58] 'Orientalism', broadly defined, is not just a western problem in many of these settings when post-colonial states project similar essentialising narratives internally upon a state's Others.

Where professional ignorance has contributed to this over-reliance on the published texts of colonial travellers and officers rather than the underlying material it has led to the assumption that these published works are, simply through their age, 'primary materials' and therefore 'authentic'. Instead, these published articles are a chimerical species of source material. Moving then into a setting where van Schendel's academically-institutionalised Geography of Ignorance comes into play, uncritical over-utilisation of the imaginaries produced by these texts of these borderland environments have produced and embedded frames of reference in academic approaches that, post-World War II, have led to marginalisation that crosses into the post-colonial and contemporary period. In the meantime, the structurally created agnosia that arose from the colonial Zone of Ignorance continues to have profound implications for all of those communities that moved across and inhabited this long, emergent borderland region, from Cox's Bazaar to Walong, from Sittwe to Putao. The digital turn has subsequently exaggerated a multi-layered intersection of practices of ignorance in relation to the use and circulation of derived colonial historical imaginaries and under-analysis of the texts that underpin them. Expert and professional practitioners make inappropriate use of the historical record in ways that can embed people's marginalisation and exclusion, which new research and scholarly communities have not yet been able to intervene against for a range of entrenched political and academic-educational reasons in the cyclical reproduction of this Zone of Ignorance outlined above.

What are the solutions to this problem, especially in the context of the decolonisation of knowledge? There are many layers to this issue, and most are beyond the scope of this article, especially about supporting history education in settings where such enquiries have been marginalised for many decades. Clearly another need is for more historians with significant inter-disciplinary knowledge to engage in research on these areas to improve the depth and breadth of scholarly engagement, and for historians more generally to appreciate the challenges of undertaking historical research in

spaces such as this rather than to consider them as settings where 'real history' is not possible. We also need to think through carefully the ways in which our professional practices may support or diminish the process of decolonisation when writing work that is rooted in colonial/colonising archives. Decolonisation in this context is deemed to be not just relating to the ongoing embeddedness of structures and power hierarchies of historical colonialism, but also the practices of discrimination and marginalisation that are evocative of new forms of colonisation in the present.

Challenging an overarching, synthetic representational model of the Otherness of the highlands-hills-frontier regions and the 'natural-ness' of their violent tendencies towards 'the state' means that we think creatively about new ways of thinking about this region and how its deeper histories may be explored—the emotional, the gendered, the philosophical, all of these present huge challenges but may lead us to new kinds of understanding that take us beyond *Zomia* as a place for the ungoverned and the restive.

Ultimately, this article explicitly sees the work of historians, development specialists and policy practitioners as being intertwined rather than disconnected in how they produce resilient frames of both knowledge and ignorance of and in this region. This reflects the seriousness of the challenges to regional political and economic development and social integration this region faces, as well as the unintended outcomes of our conscious or unconscious complicity in narratives that embed marginalisation. This is a space where History matters. As such, this article also makes a plea for the deeper recognition in interdisciplinary and cross-disciplinary work on these subjects for the better and more appropriate deployment of History within these endeavours; not to see it 'just' as context, background or story, but as a vital contributory partner to the process of researching and knowing in its own right, with its own capacities for insight and disruption to domineering development and political agendas that are still not yet fully revealed or understood. Is the term 'decolonisation'

sufficient to encapsulate the task at hand? I suggest that it is not. It becomes too messy in this environment. But what decolonisation refers to is systems of power, of hierarchy, of the inclusion and exclusion of voice, of boundary making that facilitates and inhibits presence and visibility. These are the underpinning issues that we need to reflect upon. Decolonisation becomes a relatively unsophisticated term in the face of this broader challenge. Yet the advantage of shifting our focus from decolonisation to Voice, Visibility and Inclusion is that it opens up the challenge to all of us to ensure that we are aware of our own positionality, our privilege and our capacities to impose constraints and exclusions for others less privileged and to become conscious of our management of those issues in our everyday practice as teachers and researchers. This becomes a universal rather than a local demand of academic ethics and transcends the messy divisiveness that the focus on decolonisation as a poorly articulated end in itself can produce.

Notes

[1] Jonathan Saha, "Is it in India? Colonial Burma as a 'problem' in South Asian history," *South Asian History and Culture* 7, no. 1 (2016). Dorothy Woodman, *Himalayan frontiers: A Political Review of British, Chinese, Indian and Russian Rivalries* (London: The Cresset Press, 1969). For a wonderful recent history of the broader geo-political region brought into new frames of reference at a later date than the concerns of this paper, see Bérénice Guyot-Réchard, *Shadow States: India, China and the Himalayas, 1910-1962*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2017. The most important work on this connected history from the perspective of the time under consideration in this article is undoubtedly that of Gunnel Cederlöf, *Founding an Empire on India's North-Eastern Frontiers, 1790-1840: Climate, Commerce, Polity*, New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 2014. See also Gunnel Cederlöf, 'Fixed Boundaries, Fluid Landscapes: British Expansion into Northern East Bengal in the 1820s.' in *Blending Nation and Region: Essays in Honour of Late Professor Amalendu Guha*, New Delhi: Ratna Sagar, pp.128-155, 2018. An important work that considers similar processes but located within the Indian nation state, but which can be considered analogous because the boundaries of the North East Frontier were also formulated under a single system from the end of the nineteenth century, is Sanghamitra Misra, *Becoming a Borderland: Space and Identity in Colonial Northeastern India*, Routledge India, 2011. See also the ground breaking work on Assam and the intersections between local inscription and colonial officials by Indrani Chatterjee, 'Connected Histories and the Dream of Decolonial History', *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*, 41(1), 2018, pp.69–86; as well as her monograph *Forgotten friends : monks, marriages, and memories of Northeast India,* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013.

[2] There is a wide and highly thought-provoking literature on colonial constructions of knowledge, not just in relation to British and western imperialism but also other forms, as in the Ottoman and Chinese empires, and which have developed the critique of Orientalism in manifold, subtle directions. Many of these works do not reflect directly on the ongoing implications of colonial construction, and their modern ramifications are drawn out only indirectly, are implied or have to be inferred. Historical anthropology has also been a rich field for the exploration of colonial constructions in ethnographic representations. Some of the most influential of these works have been Bernard S. Cohn, *Colonialism and its forms of knowledge: the British in India,* Princeton Studies in Culture/Power/History, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996; *Colonial Situation: Essays on the Contextualization of Ethnographic Knowledge,* George W. Stocking (ed.), History of Anthropology 7, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991; *The Demographics of Empire: the Colonial Order and the*

Creation of Knowledge, Karl Ittmann, Dennis D. Cordell, and Gregory Maddox (eds), Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2010; Ricardo Roque, and Kim A. Wagner, *Engaging Colonial Knowledge: Reading European Archives in World History*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012; James Louis Hevia, *The Imperial Security State: British Colonial Knowledge and Empire-building in Asia*, Critical Perspectives on Empire, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012; Ulrike Hillemann, *Asian Empire and British Knowledge: China and the Networks of British Imperial Expansion*, Cambridge Imperial and Post-Colonial Studies Series, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009; *Ordering Africa: Anthropology, European Imperialism and the Politics of Knowledge*, Helen Tilley and Robert J. Gordon (eds), Studies in Imperialism, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007; Padma Rangarajan, *Imperial Babel: Translation, Exoticism, and the Long Nineteenth Century* New York, Fordham University Press, 2014; Thomas Richards, *The Imperial Archive: Knowledge and the Fantasy of Empire*, London: Verso, 1993; C. A. Bayly, *Empire and Information: Iintelligence Gathering and Social Communication in India, 1780-1870,* Cambridge Studies in Indian History and Society, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996. For attempts to connect the history of northeast India with development problems, see Alokesh Barua, *India's North-East: Developmental Issues in a Historical Perspective*, New Delhi: Manohar, 2005. For a longer perspective history that connects the regions past to its present in ways that transcend methodological nationalist myopia and develop an important environmental history of the region see Arupjyoti Saikia, *Forests and Ecological History of Assam, 1826-2000*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011.

[3] This has underpinned a lot of the post-colonial development of Area Studies, in which the historical narratives of modern states acquired precedence, squeezing out alternative ways of 'seeing' of history other than the natural emergence of those particular nations. An important critique of this approach to post-colonial institutionalised knowledge is Willem van Schendel's work on *Zomia*, which will be referred to in detail later in this paper: Willem van Schendel, "Geographies of Knowing, Geographies of Ignorance: Jumping Scale in Southeast Asia", *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 20, no. 6, December 2002, pp.647–68. However, the idea of methodological nationalism was developed most persistently in relation to migration studies and studies of transnationalism, in which the nation was too small as the container of research. See, for example, Andreas Wimmer, and Nina Glick Schiller, "Methodological Nationalism, the Social Sciences, and the Study of Migration: An Essay in Historical Epistemology", *The International Migration Review* 37, no. 3, 2003, pp. 576-610. The rich and extensive literature on nations and nationalism also contributes to understanding this approach as a framework for academic studies within

post-colonial nations. See A. D Smith, *Nationalism and Modernism: A Critical Survey of Recent Theories of Nations and Nationalism*, London: Routledge, 1998; Anna Amelina, *Beyond Methodological Nationalism: Social Science Research Methods in Transition*, London: Routledge, 2012; Ranabir Samaddar, *Many Histories and Few Silences: The Nationalist History of Nationalism in Bangladesh*, Calcutta: Maulana Abul Kalam Azad Institute of Asian Studies, 1995.

[4] This comment has roots in my long-term engagement with history education in Myanmar relating to marginalized and 'borderland' communities. The teaching of history is controlled centrally within the state education system, and it precludes study of histories that might be deemed challenging to the post-colonial narrative of the innate drive towards national integration. See Mandy Sadan, "Reflections on building an inclusive higher education system in Myanmar," *British Academy Review*, Summer (24), pp. 68-71 for a summary of this situation as it affects the teaching and learning of history in the Kachin region, and the implications of this for ongoing ethno-nationalist resistance. For commentary on the general challenges of higher education see Han Tin, "Myanmar Education: Challenges, Prospects and Options" in *Dictatorship, Disorder and Decline in Myanmar*, Monique Skidmore and Trevor Wilson (eds), pp. 113-26, Canberra: ANU Press, 2008; Ashley South and Marie Lall, "Language, Education and the Peace Process in Myanmar" in *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 38, no. 1, pp.128-53, 2016; Nassir Uddin, "State of Stateless People: The Plight of Rohingya Refugees in Bangladesh" in *The Human Right to Citizenship: A Slippery Concept*, edited by Howard-Hassmann Rhoda E. and Walton-Roberts Margaret, Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, pp. 62-77, 2015.

[5] Work describing this research in more detail and the challenges faced by local researchers in this environment working on vulnerable material and oral culture collections can be found in Sadan, M., "Remembering Fieldwork Histories" in *Memories and Moments of Fieldwork: South Asian Experience*, Chaudhuri S. K. & Chaudhuri S. S. (eds.), New Delhi: Sage Publications Pvt Ltd, 2014, pp.88-105; Mandy Sadan, "Meeting Educational Needs in Marginal Areas of the State: Reflections on Research in Myanmar" in Oscar Salemink (ed) *Scholarship and Engagement in Mainland Southeast Asia: A Festschrift in Honor of Achan Chayan Vaddhanaphuti*, Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, pp. 221-242, 2016. See also Patrick McCormick, "Ethnic Histories: Reflections from the Field", *Journal of Burma Studies*, vol. 18 no. 1, 2014, pp. 123-135 and Lisa Brooten and Rosalie Metro, "Thinking about Ethics in Burma Research", *Journal of Burma Studies*, vol. 18 no. 1, 2014, pp. 1-22.

[6] There are 135 officially recognised ethnic groups in Myanmar, which are grouped into eight 'national races'. See Martin Smith's ground-breaking and encyclopaedic *Burma: Insurgency and the Politics of Ethnicity*, 2ⁿᵈ ed. London: Zed Books, 1999.

[7] Myitkyina, the state capital, was not originally a 'Kachin' town but grew up as a trading post for many communities due to its location on the Irrawaddy/Ayeyarwady River. It was consolidated as a key site for administration during the British colonial period. Previously, Bhamo on the border with China had been considered more important strategically and economically, and this was not least because of its relative easy distance from the capitals of the Burmese kingdoms at Ava/Mandalay. There are historically longstanding communities of Chinese origin, Shan groups that identify themselves in various ways, and communities from South Asia. While the British colonial period intensified the migration of some communities, the significance of the trans-regional trade routes across this area mean that it should always be considered a complex ethnographic and linguistic mosaic, especially in relation to its urban and economic (especially mining) centres. However, the recent acceleration of inward migration from elsewhere in Myanmar has led to concerns that 'losing' a Kachin demographic majority across the state as a whole will be used by the Myanmar government as a way of undermining ethno-nationalist claims for autonomy through federalism or other forms of devolution up to and including independence.

[8] For some of this discussion, see Mandy Sadan, "The Kachin Photographs in the J.H. Green Collection: a contemporary context" in *Burma Frontier Photographs: 1918-1935*, Elizabeth Dell (ed.), London: Merrell Publishers, 2000 pp. 51-65 and "Historical Photography in Kachin State: An Update on the James Green Collection of Photographs" in *South Asia: The Journal of the South Asia Studies Association of Australia*, Routledge, *Special Edition on the Changing Hill Communities of North East India*, Erik De Maaker and Vibha Joshi (eds.), 30:3 (2007), pp. 457-477.

[9] This has been manifested most recently in the experience of the census of 2014, in which the official category Kachin became highly contested, with fears arising that there were attempts to under-record the demographics of Kachin ethnicity in the state. 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, no. 2 (2017): 452-78. See also Laur Kiik, "Conspiracy, God's Plan, and National Emergency: Kachin Popular Analyses of the Ceasefire and Resource Grabs", in Mandy Sadan (ed.), *War and Peace in the Borderlands of Myanmar: The Kachin Ceasefire, 1994-2011*, pp. 205-235. Copenhagen: NIAS

Press, 2016, for a detailed discussion on some of the contemporary debates among ethno-nationalists in this region about the existential threat that they feel is very real

[10] There are a number competing explanations of the ethnoym, including 'Red Earth' as myth-making around sites of warfare with Shan and/or Burmese troops in ages past. For further discussion of this particular explanation, see Zhusheng Wang, *The Jingpo: Kachin of the Yunnan Plateau*, Tempe, Arizona: Program for Southeast Asian Studies, 1997

[11] The anthropological tradition has created a large corpus of material in which individual ethnicities are subject to scrutiny. For an overview of the range of this and the peoples this literature aims to communicate about, see Jean Michaud, Margaret Byrne Swain, and Meenaxi Barkataki-Ruscheweyh, *Historical Dictionary of the Peoples of the Southeast Asian Massif*, 2nd edition, Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016.

[12] Mandy Sadan 2000 and 2007 for discussion of how these issues materialised in the conversations underpinning the research for this paper

[13] There is a strong current of thinking across post-colonial historical writing in and about Burma in relation to broader structures of ethnicity within the colonial state, but this needs to be tempered by more detailed studies of its implications in different places/spaces. An early example of its application is Michael Aung-Thwin, "The British 'Pacification' of Burma: Order without Meaning", *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 16, no. 2 (1985): 245-61, and Robert H. Taylor "Perceptions of Ethnicity in the Politics of Burma" in Asian Journal of Social Science, 10(1) 1982, pp.7-22. However, this deconstruction of the colonial 'ethnocratic state' (David Brown, *The State and Ethnic Politics in Southeast Asia*, London: Routledge, 1996) creates vulnerabilities for ethno-nationalists when it is used to argue that ethnic identities are a result of colonial-'brain-washing'. However, many scholars, such as Aung-Thwin and Taylor, who have also attempted to raise serious issues about these matters have sometimes been attacked for their political implications rather than their scholarly perceptions, which has led to a highly fractured academic discourse on these matters where various contributors embed oppositional points of view. See Michael Aung-Thwin, 'Parochial Universalism, Democracy Jihad and the Orientalist Image of Burma: The New Evangelism', *Pacific Affairs* 74, no. 4 (2001): 483-505

[14] For detailed discussion of the term *Wunpawng* and its historical evolution see Mandy Sadan, 2007 and 2013.

[15] Biance Son Suantak, *The Making of the Zo: The Chin of Burma and the Lushai and Kuki of India Through Colonial and Local Narratives 1826-1917 and 1947-1988*. PhD Thesis of the University of London, 2013; Joy Pachuau, *Being Mizo: Identity and Belonging in Northeast India*, New Delhi, India: Oxford University Press, 2014.

[16] In this case, the narrowing of historical discussion solely to a critique of missionary history in the context of the widespread conversion to Christianity, seeking to interpret it tautologically as 'divine will', has been the cause of the most significant narrowing of historical research within communities in this area; when combined with the exclusion of non-national histories in the state education system it becomes a major contributory factor for the development of 'lost histories'. See Mandy Sadan, 2013; Christian Culas and François Robinne, *Inter-ethnic Dynamics in Asia: Considering the Other Through Ethnonyms, Territories and Ritual*, London: Routledge, 2009; François Robinne, *Prêtres Et Chamanes: Métamorphoses Des Kachin De Birmanie*, Paris: Harmattan, 2007. Some local writers are also trying to break these boundaries and to represent other ways of thinking about Kachin history. See also, L. Dingluaia, "Maps, Mission, Memory and Mizo Identity", *Transformation*, 35(4), 240–250, 2018. I am grateful to Nbyen Dan Hkung Awng, Revd. Bawk San and Revd. Sabaw Gumja Awng for their recent conversations about these issues. It remains an extremely sensitive area.

[17] See Matthew J. Walton, *Buddhism, Politics and Political Thought in Myanmar*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017 for a sensitive discussion of the different ways in which Buddhist philosophies and cosmologies permeate political thinking in Myanmar. Also A. Burke, "New Political Space, Old Tensions: History, Identity and Violence in Rakhine State, Myanmar", *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, 38(2), 258-283, 2016.

[18] There is an extensive contemporary production of writings, blogs and other media on this issue. For an important insight into Rohingya activist claims on their historical presence, see the compiled evidence of the Free Rohingya Coalition, including: https://freerohingyacoalition.org/en/?p=1047 on local representations of indigeneity. Academic support for the historical appropriacy of this view and some of the dangers of misinterpretation has been given by Prof Michael Charney, see, for example "Misunderstandings of ethnic identities in Rakhine as fixed and biological are leading to policy errors by the Government of Myanmar and NGOs on the ground in Rakhine": https://eprints.soas.ac.uk/26123/1/Charney%202018%20Brief%20on%20Rohingya%20identity.pdf. There has, however, been a bitter public debate across academic divides around the significance of Francis Buchanan's identification of the term *Rooinga* in his vocabulary

of 1799 (Francis Buchanan, "A Comparative Vocabulary of Some of the Languages Spoken in the Burma Empire", *Asiatic Researches* 5 (1799): 219-240, the typescript of which is also at https://www.soas.ac.uk/sbbr/editions/file64276.pdf). The debates/arguments about this work of 'first discovery' would also benefit from the rigorous historical contextualisation of Buchanan's article using methodologies outlined in this paper and in Mandy Sadan 2007 and 2013. Some initial contextualisation is contained in Marika Vicziany, "Imperialism, Botany and Statistics in Early Nineteenth-Century India: The Surveys of Francis Buchanan (1762-1829)", *Modern Asian Studies*, 20(4), 625-660, 1986, but the focus of this is obviously not directed towards contemporary issues in Myanmar (which were well known at that time as the 1980s saw significant oppression of the Rohingya and flows over the border with changes to the nationality laws of the country). Some steps in relation to the study of historical linguistics in this complex linguistic environment are being undertaken with great potential insight by Patrick McCormick and others. See https://iias.asia/the-newsletter/newsletter-75-autumn-2016 for a brief outline of some of this research, which will hopefully be made more widely available in due course. There is a clear need for historical research working with and responsive to Rohingya knowledge in which activist framing can be located as one of a range of historical and competing pressures. This is a challenging proposition given that it requires sensitivity to this local environment as well as capacity to interpret a range of materials across disciplines. It also requires significant sensitivity and self-awareness of the political implications of findings and how they are presented.

[19] This includes accusations of their oppression being a genocide, which has also been supported within the UN: https://news.un.org/en/story/2018/08/1017802

[20] See, for example, Kriti Kapila, 'The Measure of a Tribe: The Cultural Politics of Constitutional Reclassification in North India.' *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 14, no. 1, 2008, as a good summary of the processes by which groups may acquire, or be excluded from, recognition of Scheduled Tribe status. This status may offer certain advantages within geographically defined 'tribal' areas, even as it creates marginalisation in other areas.

[21] The impact also produces methodological ethno-nationalism amongst marginalised communities in response, in which the complexities of their own identities may be over-ridden to create meta-narratives that speak to the state and its overarching narrative. See Patrick McCormick, "Writing a Singular Past: Mon History and 'Modern' Historiography in Burma," *Sojourn: Journal of Social Issues in Southeast Asia*, vol. 29 no. 2, 2014, pp. 300-331.

[22] I have had many conversations with local historians across this region who express a desire to see colonial archives in person. One of the most frequently cited requests in recent years has been that the colonial records of local recruits to the Indian Army, who have acquired the status of local heroes, should be made available in the hope that they will contain significant detail about their lives and actions and fill in gaps in the local historical record. Conveying the reality that the colonial machine had barely any interest in recording these kinds of details about local recruits is just one disappointing reality that has to be handled with sensitivity.

[23] There are, of course, many other linguistic framings of this term, including in Burmese, in Ahom, in Shan and so on. It is beyond my capacities to explore all of these singlehandedly, reflecting my own intellectual and linguistic limitations but also the challenge of historical research in these polyglot spaces. The solution must surely be to work collaboratively across this area with researchers who can demonstrate sensitivity to this context and with deep local knowledge

[24] The demographic crisis was extensive and preceded the Anglo-Burmese conflict, as the Burmese kingdom extended its reach into Manipur and Cachar in the latter half of the eighteenth century, causing several decades of war and instability before 1824-6. Manipur and Cachar in particular were severely depopulated as a result. See Bryce Beemer 'The Creole city in mainland Southeast Asia: slave gathering warfare and cultural exchange in Burma, Thailand and Manipur, 18th-19th c.', PhD Dissertation, 2013, University of Hawai'i at Manoa. The financial costs of the war were devastating for the East India Company, and the punitive reparations that were imposed upon the Burmese kingdom also created a transformative pressure that contributed to its increasing instability. Thant Myint-U, *The River of Lost Footsteps--Histories of Burma*, New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, pp. 113, 125–127, 2006; Anthony Webster, *Gentlemen Capitalists: British Imperialism in South East Asia, 1770-1890*, London: I.B.Tauris, pp. 142–145, 1997.

[25] Agnotology is a term coined by Robert Proctor and Iain Boal and it relates to the ways in which societies may choose not to know things, or may come to doubt what is known. Robert N. Proctor and Londa Schiebinger (eds) *Agnotology: The Making and Unmaking of Ignorance*, Stanford California: Stanford University Press, 2008; Roy Dilley and Thomas G. Kirsch (eds), *Regimes of Ignorance: Anthropological Perspectives On the Production and Reproduction of Non-knowledge*, Oxford: Berghahn Books Ltd, 2015; Mark Hobart (ed) *An Anthropological Critique of Development: The Growth of Ignorance*, London: Routledge, 1993; Shannon Sullivan, and Nancy Tuana, *Race and Epistemologies of Ignorance*, Albany: State

University of New York Press, 2007. This concept is also underpinning another major research project that has contributed to the intellectual development of this paper considering the ways in which knowledge about the Burma-China jade trade changes as it crosses borders, funded by the British Academy Sustainable Development Programme (PI Mandy Sadan, Co-PI Dan Smyer Yu). I am grateful to Henrik Møller for his comments and direction on this issue.

[26] The literature on colonial ethnographic writing and studies of colonial travel writing is expansive and those that have helped to shaped my understanding of this issue, which falls somewhat outside the reach of this paper as a subject of enquiry in its own right, include William Beinart and Lotte Hughes, *Environment and Empire*. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2007; Jeremy Vetter, *Knowing Global Environments: New Historical Perspectives On the Field Sciences*, New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2011; Arupjyoti Saikia, *Forests and Ecological History of Assam, 1826-2000*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011; Gunnel Cederlöf, *Landscapes and the Law: Environmental Politics, Regional Histories, and Contests Over Nature,* Ranikhet: Bangalore: Permanent Black, 2008; Vinita Damodaran, Anna Winterbottom, and Alan Lester, *The East India Company and the Natural World*, Houndsmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014; Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, 2nd ed. London; New York: Routledge, 2008; Catherine Hall, *Civilising Subjects: Metropole and Colony in the English Imagination, 1830-1867*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2002.

[27] The most recent manifestation of this is James C. Scott's reinterpretation of *Zomia* as a state-repelling region: *The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia*, New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2009. I have already written extensively in critique of this and so will not repeat those debates here other than to reiterate that, in my view, this volume embeds many colonial tropes without considering the historical evidence other than to synthesise it in a way that it is ultimately ahistorical. It is, therefore, deeply problematic in relation to the way we imagine and re-present the histories of these regions. This has implications for the models of ignorance discussed in this paper in relation to the notion, often expressed, that the truth or otherwise of Scott's historical interpretation is not the key issue. For historians, it is difficult to see how it could be anything other than the key issue! See Mandy Sadan, *Being and Becoming Kachin: Histories Beyond the State in the Borderworlds of Burma*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013, and Mandy Sadan "Review of The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia by James C. Scott", *Reviews in History* 903, 2010. For other critiques of Scott's notion of *Zomia* see Tom Brass, "Scott's 'Zomia' or a Populist Post-modern History of

Nowhere", *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, 42:1, 123–33, 2012, also the Special Volume of the *Journal of Global History* (5(2) 2010), in which the eminent historian Victor Lieberman gives a pertinent critique of the limitations of the *Zomia* construct from the early modern perspective that Scott claims to be elucidating. Victor Lieberman, "A zone of refuge in Southeast Asia? Reconceptualizing interior spaces", *Journal of Global History*, 5(2), 333-346. See also the work of Hjorleifur Jonsson, 'Above and beyond: Zomia and the ethnographic challenge of/for regional history', *History and Anthropology*, vol. 21, no. 2, pp. 191-212, 2010. It is notable that non-historians (especially those working in Politics and related disciplines) tend to see Scott's *Zomia* as a valuable way of re-presenting this space in order to fit it into higher-level models of politics, development and international relations, while historians have been almost universally critical of the poor deployment of historical ambiguity and debate.

[28] A. L. Stoler, *Along the archival grain: epistemic anxieties and colonial common sense*, Princeton, New Jersey; Princeton University Press, 2009.

[29] My first effort at outlining these issues was at the first International Burma Studies Conference to be held outside the United States, in 2002 at Gothenburg University. The paper was 'The Environmental Imagination and the Construction of 'Kachin' in Early British Colonial Archives, 1824-47' (Burma Studies Conference 2002, Gothenburg University, Sweden. [Unpublished]).

[30] The Singpho communities mainly residing in Assam and Arunachal Pradesh today are connected through lineage links with the Jinghpaw sub-group and Kachin ethnic category. The Kachin and Singpho are connected then to the Jingpo in Yunnan. The historical record shows the interconnectedness of all these communities over an extended period. See Mandy Sadan 2013

[31] Jon Carlson, "The Otter-Man Empires: The Pacific Fur Trade, Incorporation and the Zone of Ignorance", *Journal of World-Systems Research*, 8.3 (2002): 390-442. This builds on the extensive work on developing world systems theory by Chase-Dunn and Hall; see especially Thomas Hall, "Puzzles in the Comparative Study of Frontiers: Problems, Some Solutions, and Methodological Implications", *Journal of World-Systems Research*, 15.1 (2009): 25-47; Jon Carlson, "Broadening and Deepening: Systemic Expansion, Incorporation and the Zone of Ignorance", *Journal of World-Systems Research*, 7.2 (2001): 225-263; Thomas Hall, "Frontiers, and Ethnogenesis, and World-Systems: Rethinking the Theories," in *A World-Systems Reader: New Perspectives on Gender, Urbanism, Cultures, Indigenous Peoples, and*

Ecology, Thomas D. Hall (ed.), Boulder, CO: Rowman & Littlefield, pp.237-270, 2000. The term World Systems of course relates to the work of Immanuel Wallerstein and of particular relevance to this paper is his work on the early nineteenth century, in which he posits China as the external arena relative to British imperial expansion: Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Modern World-System Vol II: The second era of great expansion of the capitalist world-economy, 1730's-1840's,* Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011. See also Abikal Borah for further discussions of some of the contestations of this, "A Region in a Mobile World: Integration of Southeastern Sub-Himalayan Region into the Global Capitalist Economy (1820–1900)", *Review* (Fernand Braudel Center) 37, no. 2, 2014, pp. 87-12. See also David Washbrook, "South Asia, the World System, and World Capitalism", *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 49(3), 479-508, 1990, for fuller discussion of how World Systems is above all a western-centric model of historical developments. However, the notion of the Zone of Ignorance as a capitalist projection that had long-term implications within the Frontier is perhaps the most substantive over-arching and historically demonstrable initial paradigm that we have to pursue the local manifestation and expression of different histories against. I have therefore chosen to add Colonial to Carslon's term because of the dangers of further embedding unhelpful representations of this region in respect of associations of 'primitivism' including of the intellect and emotions, which have been projected upon it, and normalising the idea of the world systems as the overarching 'total fact'. The emphasis is intended to shift the idea of Ignorance clearly to the notion of colonial ignorance by adding this qualifying term and develop more localised, culturally informed interpretations.

[32] Carlson, 2002. Carlson states that maps may be useful as indicators of different stages of incorporation.

[33] Hall 2000, p.241

[34] Wallerstein 2011

[35] Carlson 2002

[36] See Sadan, M. 2013 for discussion of the ways in which changes in the jade trade during the first half of the nineteenth century may have impacted on the internal political development of Kachin communities Kachin

[37] Scott *op cit* 2009

[38] The literature on northeast India as a whole, but particularly about Assam, has expanded significantly in the last decade, and with that has also come some greater awareness of the early roles of Singpho, Naga and other communities in relaying information to colonial agents about the 'true' tea plant before, during and after the first Anglo-Burmese War. However, in 2000 when this work was originally undertaken there was barely any recognition of that issue in most writing on this subject, although some brief references had been taken up (Jayeeta Sharma's preliminary work on this area makes limited mention of it but it is not a core focus of interest). See Jayeeta Sharma, *A European Tea 'garden' and an Indian 'frontier': The Discovery of Assam*, Cambridge: University of Cambridge, 2002 later revised as *Empire's Garden: Assam and the Making of India.* Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011. See also Nitin Varma, *Coolies of Capitalism: Assam Tea and the Making of Coolie Labour*, Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017, which deals with a later period but references the significance of 'hill tribes' to the economy of the tea plantations. See also Rana Partap Behal, *One Hundred Years of Servitude: Political Economy of Tea Plantations in Colonial Assam*, New Delhi: Tulika Books, 2014. A full explanation of the contemporary trace of this early 'tea story' is beyond the scope of this paper.

[39] By 1873, this was formalised with the development of the Inner Line Regulation which established a different system of administration and indirect control over the Frontier regions. For discussion of contemporary manifestations of these arguments and the legacies of colonialism see T. Barua, 'Return of the Frontier: Understanding the Demands for Inner Line in Northeast India', *Alternatives*, 42(3), 107–120, 2017

[40] The archives of Myanmar are coming more into use, but they are still tightly controlled especially for the period after 1950.

[41] https://theconversation.com/decolonising-research-methodology-must-include-undoing-its-dirty-history-83912. Originally posted 26/09/2017 (Accessed 25/01/2019)

[42] Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, London: Zed Books, 1999. See also Norman K. Denzin, Yvonna S. Lincoln, and Linda Tuhiwai Smith. *Handbook of Critical and Indigenous Methodologies.* Los Angeles, California; London: Sage Publications, 2008.

[43] Timothy Pachirat, *Among Wolves: Ethnography and the Immersive Study of Power*, New York, NY: Routledge, 2018, is one of the most creative recent attempts to focus on the new ways of thinking about and engaging with ethnographic research. There have been increasing numbers of publications in recent years that have addressed the issue of

decolonising intellectual constructions and how they function institutionally as well as being embedded in individual mentalities. See for example, B. R. Barnes, "Decolonising research methodologies: opportunity and caution", *South African Journal of Psychology*, *48*(3), 379–387, 2018; R. Datta, "Decolonizing both researcher and research and its effectiveness in Indigenous research", *Research Ethics*, 14(2), 1–24, 2018.

[44] A full discussion of the critical need to support history education in these areas where the transmission of historical knowledge has been subject to neglect and, at worst, to hostile control by national education systems, is beyond the scope of this paper.

[45] Willem van Schendel, "Geographies of Knowing, Geographies of Ignorance: Jumping Scale in Southeast Asia", *Environment and Planning D-society & Space, 20*(6), 647-668, 2002

[46] In the mid-1990s, changes in the economic policy of the Myanmar government led to an opening of borders with its neighbours. This facilitated the easier accessibility of the necessary hardware to develop a nascent internet communications and digital infrastructure. However, even in urban Yangon, the then-capital of Myanmar, it was still very easy to run out of printer ink as supplies were erratic and limited electricity supplies also meant that most computers had to be connected to an elaborate web of batteries, transformers and other equipment

[47] See Dell 2000 and Mandy Sadan 2008

[48] The most recent manifestation of this has been the use of Facebook in the production and circulation of hate speech about the Rohingya. See Christina Fink, "Dangerous Speech, Anti-Muslim Violence, And Facebook In Myanmar", *Journal of International Affairs* 71, no. 1.5 (2018): 43-52; Matt Schissler, "New Technologies, Established Practices: Developing Narratives of Muslim Threat in Myanmar" in Melissa Crouch (ed) *Islam and the State in Myanmar: Muslim-Buddhist Relations and the Politics of Belonging,* Oxford University Press 2015.

[49] Coalition for Networked Information: www.cni.org – Clifford A. Lynch, "As Lives Are Documented Digitally: Strategies for Cultural Memory Organizations", presented at the Spring 2010 CNI Membership Meeting, April 12-13, 2010 in Baltimore, MD. Video available at vimeo.com/11697877 and CNI YouTube channel.

[50] Museum perspectives arising directly from the foundational research of this paper are elaborated upon by Helen Mears in "Brave New Worlds: Transforming Museum

Ethnography through Technology", special edition of *Journal of Museum Ethnography*, H. Mears and C. Wintle (eds), 4 Apr 2014 27, p. 3-116 114 and in Helen Mears, "'We owe a historical debt to no one': The re-appropriation of photographic images from a museum collection", *Museum Worlds: Advances in Research, 5*(1), 162-176, 2017.

[51] See Dell 2000 for discussion of these issues.

[52] Han Tin, "Myanmar education: Challenges, prospects and options' in M. Skidmore and T. Wilson (eds.), *Dictatorship, Disorder and Decline in Myanmar* (pp. 113-126), 2008. Ashley South and Marie Lall, 'Language, Education and the Peace Process in Myanmar', *Contemporary Southeast Asia, 38*(1), 128-153, 2016. J. Lorch, "The (re)-emergence of civil society in areas of state weakness: The case of education in Burma/Myanmar" in Skidmore and Wilson (eds), 2008, pp. 151-176. However, there are also further complicating issues in situations there has been widespread religious conversion, as in many places in the Kachin, Naga and Chin regions of this trans-Patkai border region, as this has also led at times to a constraint on teaching about traditional practices and histories embedded in non-Christian social perspectives and experience. See for example, Lian H. Sakhong *In Search of Chin Identity: A Study in Religion, Politics and Ethnic Identity in Burma*, Richmond: Curzon, 2002, in which there is a primary orientation to presenting these pasts as directed towards the logic of conversion

[53] A. Abbott, "Varieties of Ignorance", *The American Sociologist, 41*(2), 174-189, 2010.

[54] Abbott, "Varieties of Ignorance", p.184.

[55] Abbott, "Varieties of Ignorance", p.186.

[56] Some of the complexities this creates for the archivists of digital repositories is made clear in the following: Panel discussion, "Beyond the Low Hanging Fruit: Strategies on Providing Access to Complicated Content," IMLSFocus: Strategic Priorities, 2014, April 29, New York City. Moderator: Rachel Frick; Panelists: Sari Feldman, Clifford A. Lynch, Katherine Skinner http://www.tvworldwide.com/events/imls/140429/globe_show/default_go_archive.cfm?gsid=2492&type=flv&test=0&live=0

[57] My involvement with various 'Borderland' initiatives, most recently in the India-China Corridor project and with various international graduate studies initiatives for those working on Myanmar, demonstrates that while there has been significant growth in studies relating to northeast India in recent years, with some ground-breaking work, the presence

of historians is still relatively smaller than those working in Development and other areas of the social and hard sciences. However, that limitation is even greater on the Myanmar side. While there are some excellent researchers completing their research at present, the numbers of those working in History as their main discipline, and of these areas, is less than in other subjects generally and infinitesimal when working in the border regions. Those who are working on trans-border histories of the Indo-Myanmar (or Sino-Myanmar) borderlines are even more rare. However, this means that it offers rich opportunities for intellectual growth, if ever the prejudices of methodological nationalisms that unconsciously assign such work a more marginal position can be overcome.

[58] Gyan Prakash, Nikhil Menon, and Michael Laffan (eds), *The Postcolonial Moment in South and Southeast Asia,* London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018.