Researching Life Stories of the Myanmar-China Jadeite Trade

Mandy Sadan, University of Warwick, UK

Dan Smyer Yü, Yunnan University, China, & Die Universität zu Köln, Germany

Seng Lawn Dan, Kachinland Research Centre, Myitkyina, Myanmar

Abstract

Jadeite is one of the most valuable gemstones in the world, yet its value is created largely by its importance within the cultural region of eastern Asia, particularly in China. The most valuable form is mined outside this zone, in northern Myanmar, in what is identified as South East Asia. As the stone moves across borders and into different cultural and linguistic landscapes, its meanings shift. What can storytelling expressed through the life stories of those connected with this commodity reveal about the nature of boundaries and borders? And what does this teach us about the challenges of conducting research that transgresses traditional Area Studies boundaries? This paper will consider a project that brought together research teams from Myanmar and from China who conducted more than 100 life stories from the mines in Myanmar to upscale sales rooms in China. It raises important questions about the challenges of communicating knowledge across Areas, the degree to which the political is embedded in both the public and the private worlds of 'ordinary' lives, and the morphing of history into literature in the act of translation. All of these transgressions emphasise the value of deep, place-based knowledge at the heart of both traditional and new Area Studies, but that moving Area Studies forward involves more attention to what happens when Areas become entangled rather than simply juxtaposed.

This paper offers some initial thoughts arising from the collaborative research project "Sustainable Lives in Scarred Landscapes: Heritage, Environment & Violence in the Myanmar-China Jadeite Trade".[1] The comments are intended to encourage reflection on the relationship between life story narration as a research method and new approaches in Area Studies. Our project focused on listening to the life stories of a wide range of people involved in the trans-border jadeite trade between northern Myanmar and China, focusing mainly on those in the lower ends of the commodity chain involved in mining, trading, designing, and selling jadeite in the Kachin region and in Yunnan. Our project was a collaboration involving a Kachin-identifying local research team based in Myitkyina, the capital of Kachin State in Myanmar, and a research team from China, all of whom had extensive personal knowledge of Yunnan and of local jadeite markets. We were of course acutely aware of the political implications of the research, which motivated our work, and

---

[1] The project was funded by the British Academy's Sustainable Development Programme, through their 2018 thematic grants related to 'Heritage, Environment & Violence. (https://www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/projects/sustainable-development-heritage-environment-violence-china-myanmar-jade-trade/). Grant No: SDP2\100109. The two principle investigators on the project were Dr Mandy Sadan and Professor Dan Smyer Yü. Our lead partner was Seng Lawn Dan as Executive Director of the Kachinland Research Centre, Myitkyina. Other partners were PostiveNegatives (https://positivenegatives.org/) and Siobhan Warrington of Oral Testimony Works (https://oraltestimony.org/). Our post-doctoral researcher, Dr Henrik Møller, has also provided significant support to the project. The project was initially held at SOAS University of London and was subject to full institutional ethical review. Due to institutional relocation of the PI, it was then transferred to the Oxford School of Global & Area Studies, University of Oxford, where it was subject to full institutional ethics review for a second time. In addition, the project has been subject to ongoing discussion and further review of its ethical protocols and the processes of approval by the British Academy following the coup by the Myanmar military regime in February 2021. This paper was drafted by Dr Mandy Sadan but the co-authors were primarily responsible for overseeing the collection of data that underpins the paper and for making significant critical interventions on academic content.

did not envisage it as an academic abstraction. For the Kachin-identifying team especially, this was a significant opportunity to get a broader but still ground-level view of an issue that impacted all their lives and that of their families and communities in serious ways. For our local researchers from Yunnan there were also revelations that challenged the way in which they understood the jadeite trade and their own relationship to it. However, for the purposes of this article, we focus mainly on some of the academic implications of the work and their relevance to discussions about new directions in Area Studies.

While jadeite was our focus, the project was also an exploration of the power and challenge of using Life Stories as a research method. All the interviews for the project were undertaken in local languages of the region, including Jinghpaw, Lachid, Zaiwa, Burmese, Yunnanese, and Mandarin Chinese.[2] Considerable time had then to be spent on translation to bridge the communication gap between the knowledge created in local and national languages on both sides of the border so that it could be shared. Translation into English provided a preliminary bridging language, as it was the most broadly shared medium understood across both teams, and it was also necessary for our intentions to reach an international audience. Translation was therefore intrinsic to our research process, consumed a significant part of our budget, and would also result in a corpus of material that would have archival longevity. This reflects the orientations we have towards history as an important, constant, emerging debate, and a corrective to the lack of documentation that most development-focused policy and research engagements in this region create. The coronavirus pandemic, including the very early closure of China's borders, coincided with an extremely challenging political situation in the region even prior to the recent military coup in Myanmar.

---

[2] Jinghpaw, Lachid, and Zaiwa are minority ethnic languages on both sides of the border. In Myanmar, Jinghpaw is the most widely spoken language of the communities identified officially as 'Kachin' but in Yunnan, Zaiwa is more widely spoken among the communities officially identified as Jingpo. For a discussion of the historical emergence of different communities and ethnic category labels and how they relate to each other, see Sadan, 2013.

All these challenges necessitated significant modifications to our project and a slower pace to realising the outputs than we had planned. Some of them have simply had to be abandoned, particularly those relating to local public engagement, as being impossible in current circumstances. This was just the reality of the situation, to which we tried to adapt. At the time of writing, we are still working through the materials produced by the project, and a collected volume of stories and other outputs is anticipated in coming months. Some of the internal debates with which we are engaged about our research communication are discussed at the end of this article. This article therefore does not discuss the individual life stories in detail, which will be the subject of forthcoming publications. Rather it offers preliminary reflections on the conceptualisation of our method, which it is hoped will be of interest to an audience engaged with Area Studies.

We hoped that by focusing on bringing forward the voices and experiences of local people, allowing them to narrate their lives in ways that were not overly pre-determined by us and resisting the temptation to smooth over the complexity of their stories or to resolve them with clear 'research' meanings, alternative ways of thinking about the contemporary jadeite trade might emerge from the process of listening. New and creative solutions or remediations are needed for the apparently intractable problems that have emerged in relation to the trade in recent years. At the very least, we believed that supporting local voices to be heard was an important act in its own right in a setting of geo-political marginalisation. We believed that in using life story research as our primary method, our project had the potential to reveal a great deal about the nature of this loot-able resource from the ground up, about the devastation and resilience of communities, landscapes, and environments, as well as how, despite its catastrophic power, jadeite remains a culturally resonant object of beauty for many.

This article is therefore a 'thought piece', which also speaks to some of the arguments that were raised in a related article in Volume One of *New Area Studies,* "Why

Decolonising Area Studies is Not Enough: A Case Study of the Complex Legacies of Colonial Knowledge-Making in the Indo-Myanmar Borderlands" (Sadan, 2020). That article emphasised the importance of voice and visibility for the people and communities that have been excluded from traditional Area Studies in regions at the peripheries of nation states, and at the peripheries of (multiple) academic Areas. In that earlier article, a call was made for the value of historically oriented approaches to fill gaps in academic and policy knowledge in order better to support the inclusive and sustainable development of regions such as this, which are highly vulnerable to resource-based exploitation. We worked with the realities of the on-the-ground boundaries that were not only political but also included the cultural and linguistic, among others, while also problematising them. Ultimately, we hoped to use life stories to learn more about how one of the most valuable yet also one of the most damaging extractive industries in Asia is experienced by those who are intimately engaged with it in their lives, and often for their livelihoods.

In "Why Decolonisation of Area Studies is Not Enough", an outline was given of different ways in which the Indo-Myanmar borderlands adjacent to the Patkai Hills with modern northeast India manifested as a colonial 'zone of ignorance' (Carlson, 2001) as an outcome of globalised colonial expansion.[3] These disrupted knowledge flows were created by fissures and administrative idiosyncrasies arising from the same colonial system: the British Empire of India. Burma was a part of this imperial system for most of its colonial history, which started with partial annexation in 1824. It became a Province in 1886 following a further two wars in which all the territories under the control of the Burmese kingdom were annexed, and then a Lieutenant-Governor's Province in 1897; its administration was only separated from India with the creation of the Burma Office in 1937. The eastern borderland with Yunnan, however, was configured between entirely different governance and administrative

---

[3] In that article, Abbot 2010 helped to provide a framing relating specifically to the ways in which academic approaches can produce ignorance, which was a focus of the article

entities: British Burma and Imperial and then Republican China.[4] Yet much of this borderline was settled only in the 1950s and 1960s in negotiations between the newly independent Union of Burma and the People's Republic of China. Nonetheless, the bordering to west and east produced similar effects within the Kachin region where the jadeite mines lie, which was ascribed the role of military and resource 'Frontier' throughout this history. The catastrophe of the contemporary jadeite trade is just the latest manifestation of much longer experiences of resource exploitation by more powerful neighbouring and national cores, in which the voices and experiences of local people in Kachin and Yunnan involved in the trade are barely discernible. As those borders also map onto the academic borders of South, East and Southeast Asia, the ways in which knowledge creation within 'the academy' is also implicit in this outcome, which was discussed in 'Why Decolonisation of Area Studies is Not Enough', is also a significant concern of this paper.

Brief Background to the Jadeite Trade

We use jadeite as the connecting thread of these stories, which are narrated and woven together through the individual lives that come into contact with it. Yet we recognise that this is a more-than-human story with more-than-human outcomes in a tragedy of the Anthropocene (van Dooren & Rose, 2016). There are other forms of mineral known as jade, most notably nephrite jade, which has its own histories and cultural resonances, and which is found in a variety of environments around the world (Denman, 1945; Mowry, 1981). Yet the highest quality translucent green jadeite is relatively scarce and most of it originates from mines in northern Myanmar; this kind of high-quality green jadeite is one of the most valuable gemstones in the world. Jadeite has acquired such monetary value largely because of its cultural importance within what is often referred to as eastern Asia, particularly in China and thence in

---

[4] The Qing Dynasty fell in 1912, and despite a brief period of restoration, a period of warlordism followed and the establishment of the Republic of China.

Chinese-origin diasporic populations globally (RSA 1913 & 1924; Møller, 2017 & 2019). Jade of any form is functionally largely useless because it is notoriously difficult to carve or fashion. However, it is highly resistant to deterioration from the weather or handling, and this hardiness in conjunction with its aesthetic qualities has sustained the symbolic and cultural value of all types of jade over several millennia (Tobisch, 1983).

Jadeite's fluid green translucency is created in metamorphic rocks under high pressure (Mitchell, 2018), and the metaphor of metamorphism is pertinent for our research. As the stone moves across borders and through different human and more-than-human landscapes, so its value as well as its meanings change. This conceptual metamorphosis is produced in part by the various borders that are encountered and transgressed on its journey, be they state (or non-state), linguistic, technological, or cultural. Until very recently, few consumers in China were aware that this precious green gem originates from mines in the Kachin State of northern Myanmar; they instead focus on jadeite's strong cultural associations with health and wellbeing (Møller, 2017). In the Kachin region, however, the gem's contemporary associations are the antithesis of health and wellbeing (Dan *et al*, 2021): it has become the conduit for catastrophic environmental destruction, for the prolongation of endemic conflict, and for an epidemic of narcotic and stimulant drug use related harms in local communities, far out of view of distant consumers. Its impact on local communities is mirrored in other locations where different forms of jade are highly desirable, and reflects the cultural resonance this gem has globally in different forms that can impact the communities whose lives lie adjacent to such mines (Safonova, Sántha, & Sulyandziga, 2018). These knowledge gaps and 'spaces of ignorance' across the commodity chain were intrinsic to the jadeite trade and have been an important focus

of our research as people move back and forth across political borders, but also as they encounter each other in different spaces with different roles.[5]

As noted, jade has had cultural significance in China for several millennia, and the entry of the green, translucent jadeite from mines that are now in the Kachin State of northern Myanmar has a history that predates the development of modern national borders. It is generally thought that jadeite from this region entered the Chinese markets in the seventeenth century during the Qing Dynasty, but periods of upheaval and protracted warfare disrupted the exploitation of the mines. A truce was signed in 1790 between the Burmese and Chinese courts, but this did not bring stability to the mine region. The Burmese court turned its focus westwards in its attempt to consolidate power in neighbouring domains and this activity provided the excuse for the expansion of the British East India Company into Burma. By 1885, through a series of three wars, the Burmese Konbaung Dynasty collapsed. The territories to the north where the mines are located in what is today Kachin State remained disruptive of colonial rule beyond this time; Yunnan, too, was recovering from a long period of internal warfare. These events all restricted exploitation of the mines (Walker, 1892; Sadan, 2013). The cautious theatrics over where the new borderlines between British Burma and China should lie, which persisted throughout the colonial period, limited anything other than local trade across the northern boundaries, although there were some attempts to exploit the mines by colonial and other mining companies, it remained small scale compared to what has happened in recent years and has always been vulnerable to disruption and conflict both near and far. The jadeite had to be taken long distances (Chang, 2004, 2014, 2015; Wu, 2021), transported often across the mountain paths into Yunnan or via the sea routes to the south, as it had no great value locally to the mines other than what it could be worth in China.

---

[5] See Møller 2019 for an elaboration of key aspects of how knowledge and value change in his significant doctoral research in this area

The time at which the Chinese court and its consumers became aware of the jadeite from these mines coincided with a time when the communities that are now generally identified as Kachin were strongly established territorially in the surrounding region (Sadan, 2013). This territory was never in the domain of the Burmese kings, although they taxed jadeite when it was brought to the local trading towns, such as Mogaung (Anon., 1889, 1924; Griffith & McClelland, 2001). This is why the mines are considered part of the Kachin traditional patrimonial territories today; they are seen as part of the environmental and resource heritage of the Kachin people.[6] The mines are located administratively in the Hpakant Township of Mohnyin District in Kachin State. Until recently, the jadeite mining region was a densely forested area with steep hills from where it was possible to assert control of the trade routes that flowed through them. Non-Kachin identifying miners and dealers also formed an important part of the local landscape, and Chinese miners and traders were always a part of the history of the mines (Chhibber, 1934). However, they would pay dues to the local Kachin chiefs to gain access and their authority in this matter was largely uncontested.

The stones could be transported away from the mines along different routes, depending on the political situation in both lower Burma and in China, and the degree to which those who wanted to buy the jade could access the main trading towns. The overland trade routes, especially via the Kampaiti pass and on to Tengchong in Yunnan, where a local jadeite centre developed, was nonetheless still largely within the domain of lineage groups that, on the Myanmar side of the border, are identified as Kachin. This route was widely used for all kinds of trade (Chang, 2015). Yet when there was a settled relationship with the authorities to the south, be that of the Burmese kingdoms, the British colonial state, or the independent Myanmar military regime, alternative routes including the sea route to Guangdong could be viable as buyers from beyond Yunnan were able to enter the trading centres and cut out the

---

[6] The term Kachin is an umbrella term for different lineages that are in an affinal relationship with each other. See Leach, 1954 as a classic work that helped to establish the term as an anthropological object

Yunnan part of the chain. Kachin authorities around the mines would lose leverage over the southwards routes that exited Kachin-dominated lands. It is this capacity to reroute the flow of jadeite that enabled the Myanmar military regime and its proxies to capture so much of the revenue from the trade in recent years.

Until very recently, artisanal mining predominated as the main form of extraction. This was hard and dangerous work, but it limited the depth to which the stones could be mined and therefore limited the impact of the mines on the local landscape and environment. Flooding from the monsoon also made it a seasonal occupation and the population would ebb and flow such that the mines themselves never became very population dense. The skill required to mine, combined with local customary controls over access, meant that jade mining remained a relatively niche economic activity. Most local miners would use the mines as a subsidiary resource to the subsistence farming that predominated in the hills and plains around (Sadan & Dan, 2021).

Yet the northern land routes have always been important as a network of paths and passes beyond the full reach of state administrations. Traditionally and even in the present, where control may be maintained by state or non-state armed groups or by border guard forces, border gates and control points provide pinch points where different authorities can assert their rights over traded goods and levy revenue even over the illicit trade. In the years after 1960, political changes in Burma and China again affected the mines and the trade trajectory of the stones, but these routes remained operational. The communist revolution in China produced a conflict-ridden region on and across the Yunnan boundary with Burma's northern and northeastern regions. Nationalist Kuomintang (KMT) forces aligned with some of the emerging armed groups in the region who opposed the central government of Burma. The jade trading hub of Tengchong even today presents a very different understanding of the KMT's role in local history to that of the official state narrative. Within Burma, the Communist Party of Burma (CPB) also forged links in China, bringing further violence to the region as the CPB was squeezed further and further north by the more powerful

Burmese military. Most significantly, in the early 1960s, the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) emerged as a major armed actor fighting for greater political federalism for the Kachin region. This political possibility had been subverted by the rise to power of the Burmese military state under the leadership of General Ne Win, who insisted on a unitary state (Smith, 1991).

The conflict between the KIA, and their political wing the Kachin Independence Organisation (KIO), with the Burmese/Myanmar[7] military has been the most important experience impacting the development of this region. For more than 30 years until a ceasefire was signed in 1994, endemic low-level conflict was the norm as this region became the site of one of Southeast Asia's most protracted internal conflicts. The jadeite mine region was hard fought over because of the economic riches it contained, but it remained under the control of the KIA during this time. In the early 1960s, the KIA changed the administration of the mines by removing the traditional chieftainships and local elites who had power in this territory and inserted themselves. However, the KIA and the KIO largely followed a traditional model of resource extraction, controlling access to the mines and levying taxes instead of traditional tribute. The degree to which the KIA used the mines to help resource their conflict with the Myanmar army is difficult to quantify.[8] The truth is that no one knows how much the jade trade contributed to KIA coffers, apart from (possibly) the KIA itself, although they too would likely only be guessing. Jade was part of a portfolio of conflict resources used by the KIA, including opium production for a

---

[7] The terms Burma and Myanmar are used at different points in this article to reflect the distinction between the colonial era nomenclature and the ideological distinction of unitary nationalism under the military regime that emerged from the 1960s. Although the Myanmar government insisted on an international change in title in 1989, which was resisted by those who supported the opposition democracy movement, the ideological perspectives that led to that point were consistent throughout the whole of the period of militarised government.

[8] For example, in 2015 Global Witness estimated that the trade was valued at anything up to 48% of Myanmar's GDP. Others have contested this figure, but the amounts remain highly significant within the national economy.

while, as well as illicit trades in other commodities. Any correlation with the mindboggling valuations of the trade in the era of industrialised mining in the last decade would be inaccurate. Yet it never provided them with wealth on the scale with which it has been seen in relation to the Myanmar military state. The most significant resource was the people of this region, whose voluntary and enforced contributions have kept the armed movement alive for decades, providing its manpower, its resources, and its popular legitimacy, although this has obviously varied over time. The KIA was also aware that local people had to have access to the mines for their own needs. Maintenance of artisanal mining practices was a vital means of livelihood support in the local subsistence economy. The most successful of these miners, who could acquire great personal wealth by a lucky find supported by strong technical and environmental knowledge, were undoubtedly important in resourcing the KIO at higher levels of finance. These 'Big Bosses' have been important figures in local and cross-border politics and, as do similarly figures in Yunnan, they have often provided important support for local social and cultural development initiatives in a setting where access to other support from the state is absent. Artisanal mining not only imposed a natural limit on the degree of degradation upon the environment, although it could be severe in localised areas, it also maintained an important moral discourse about how local 'winners' in the mines should also be accountable for the uplift of others who were less fortunate.[9]

This all changed in the mid-1990s. Most critically, a ceasefire agreement between the KIA and the Myanmar army in 1994 was signed, which changed the political landscape of the mines. The hope was that this cessation in fighting, albeit with the retention of arms by the KIA, would provide respite for communities to recover from prolonged conflict and for the gradual development of political changes that would make further conflict unnecessary (Sadan, 2016). Unfortunately, as has been made

---

[9] Farrelly 2013 discusses the role of the *Sut Du* jadeite bosses and their cultural role. The Jade Museum in Tengchong has an entire room dedicated to the discussion of local jade dealers who similarly were important in local development as a moral responsibility in the town's history

apparent to a global audience in recent months, the Myanmar military has never fully embraced the concept of losing any part of its own authority. The move to opening-up the Myanmar economy to foreign trade, along with changes in economic policy in China, also coincided to see a rapid expansion of Chinese investment in infrastructure to support resource extraction from the Kachin and other regions for development within China (Jones, 2014; Møller, 2018; Oh & Philip, 2015). The ceasefire became instead an opportunity for the Myanmar state still dominated by the military to extend its reach into areas formerly held by armed ethnic organisations. This included agreements to allow government supported companies to gain access to the resources of the Kachin region, including jadeite. Following the ceasefire but especially in the first decade of the 2000s, joint venture companies gained access to the mines for the first time. This enabled a faux regulatory system to be introduced that excluded traditional actors in the claim that it would increase transparency in the jadeite trade. Yet many if not all of these joint venture companies were associated with leading figures in the Myanmar military who profited greatly personally, and many also siphoned resources towards supporting the military regime (Global Witness, 2015). Progressively, the control of the companies increased, and artisanal mining practices were reduced to peripheral areas and targeted as illegal.

The most dramatic impact of this change, however, was the increasing and devastating use of heavy machinery and removal of artisanal mining rights. Within a few years, entire mountains had been destroyed, rivers polluted, villages relocated with minimal compensation for lands seized, and the jadeite reserves depleted to an extent and speed that would have been unimaginable if artisanal practices had been maintained.[10] Heavy machinery could clear in a day what would have taken many seasons of digging by local miners; it provided access to layers of rock that were

---

[10] These comments are extrapolated from the Life Stories that have been generated and are supported by GIS imagery freely available in the historical imagery section of Google Earth, as well as the reports of Global Witness and others. These are the narratives that our project hopes to bring forward in a collective volume shortly.

previously inaccessible. Furthermore, the shift from artisanal mining to low-skilled jadeite 'scavenging' in which people would hunt through the discarded stones of the heavy machines to find stones that their sifting processes had missed or rejected produced an influx of people from many parts of Myanmar, who came to the mines for the first time in the hope of making themselves rich. Mainly young men, the migrant population of Hpakant Township expanded exponentially, producing a heavily distorted gender demographic (Sadan & Dan, 2021, forthcoming). There has long been an association between mining and opium use, but within a few years, this had changed to a perfect storm of chronic drug related social harms among this migrant population, which spread with devastating effects into the communities beyond (Dan *et al,* 2021). Opium was replaced by new and easy access to heroin and methamphetamine, and for the first time, injection became a common mode of ingestion, leading also to the spread of serious drug use related diseases, such as HIV Aids and Hepatitis C. It was a human disaster, as well as an environmental disaster.

It was into this multiplicity of experiences and voices that we inserted our project. We wanted to understand the importance of jadeite on human development in the region as part of a wider story including people who connect with the trade at a variety of levels and with different experiences. We hoped to understand how access to local mines in the context of sustainable small and medium-sized stone trading previously influenced household financial negotiation and decision-making, access to education, travel, business development and other areas of life by providing an economic 'safety net' for households during civil war (Hedström, 2017). We also wanted to include a more diverse range of voices, including those of women who are mostly not considered in relation to the jadeite trade other than where they occupy roles in the sex industry that has sprung up around the mines. Yet women had long been important economic actors in this region, including in the jadeite trade in different capacities, and we wanted to bring that perspective into view (2014). We also wanted to understand the longer trail of connections and influence that jadeite creates as it moves and is reshaped over time and space away from the mines and the
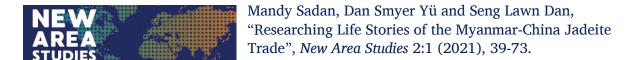
role that jadeite has played in the region's gendered economic, social and environmental history as a more-than-human story. Understandings of the intersectional and super-diverse history of this border region from the lived experiences of its inhabitants through their relationship with jade was our goal. This was where we considered our method of life story narration particularly important.

The Challenge of Area Studies in this part of Asia

The critical turn in Area Studies in recent decades has delved deeply into the mechanics of how Area Studies produce knowledge while also limiting knowledge creation by de facto boundary setting. One of the most important drivers towards re-thinking Area Studies in recent years has been the awareness that academic boundaries have constrained intellectual cross-fertilisation among specialists institutionalised within different Area-defined bubbles. These issues have been discussed elsewhere relatively extensively and so shall not be repeated in detail here. Instead, it will refer to perhaps the most important challenge to traditional Area Studies directly related to our area of enquiry presented by Willem van Schendel in 2002, which initiated a wide debate about the historicity or otherwise of the *Zomia* as an alternative region. Van Schendel encapsulated the limitations of Traditional Area Studies 'on the ground' in this region when he referred to four closely neighboured villages in the eastern Himalaya where the borders of India, China and Myanmar meet. All lie within a radius of 50km yet are separated into four different Area Studies domains such that scholarship produces discontinuous knowledge that aligns with national boundaries that have little relationship to lived realities in the region (van Schendel, 2002:653):

> *Arbitrary decisions made in far-off studies and conference rooms have allocated them to four different world areas: Gohaling is in Yunnan ('East Asia'), Sakongdan in Burma ('Southeast Asia'), Dong is in India ('South Asia'), and Zayü is in Tibet ('Central Asia'). … The assumption that the more meaningful links of these places*

are with faraway 'area cores' rather than with each other is rather preposterous, and the claim of area studies to be mindful of the unity of people's 'shared ideas, related lifeways, and long-standing cultural ties' comes a cropper here.

Southeast Asia Studies has been more self-critical about its own territorial authenticity than many others, being considered intrinsically to be composed of the parts of the globe in 'Asia' that are not 'something else': not east Asia, not South Asia.[11] Likewise, there have been many debates about 'what' China is. Most recently, one of the authors of this paper has engaged directly with van Schendel's approach to process geographies by considering China through the lens of more-than-human geographies and how we rethink area studies in environmental terms. This line of thinking creates China as an inter-Asian nation rather more than an East Asian nation due to its imperially-inherited geography that forged links with Inner Asia, Central Asia, Southeast Asia, and East Asia. Geologically and ecologically, Yunnan is more Southeast Asian than East Asian (Smyer Yü, 2021). Such approaches help us to invert, subvert, twist, and reorientate our thinking about Areas, how they should be approached, what they conceal and reveal, and how it can force us out of intellectual 'comfort zones'. The geographical and cultural disunity of Southeast Asia, with its strongly maritime, Islamic southern identity juxtaposed with the land-based, predominantly Theravada Buddhist paddy states of the main landmass, has always presented a challenge in relation to where they 'naturally' fit. The debate around whether or not Vietnam is truly more 'East Asia' than South East Asia is just one of many contestations. The current resolution of the 'What is Southeast Asia?' debate has tended to focus on the recentring of knowledge cores within the region, with an emphasis on national institutions, traditional disciplines, and national (and

---

[11] The bibliography of such self-reflection is vast and of considerable interest and depth. An early and influential example is Kratoska *et al*, 2005, which also republished and ensured wider circulation of the ideas relating to *Zomia* proposed by van Schendel.

international) languages. ASEAN has also set out its own intellectual agenda justifying its primacy as a regional umbrella creating linkages between countries.

One of the limitations of this model of knowledge production is that its mapping of political boundaries as boundaries of an academic area also loads that area with the political framing of institutional hierarchies arising from the national cores. This is the critique that van Schendel and others have applied in proposing an alternative conceptualisation of *Zomia* which would encompass the uplands and montane regions of the extended Himalaya and beyond, and which would recentre the previously peripheral zone that he described in the quotation above. For van Schendel, this is a polemical construct intended to trigger discussion; for others, including for James C. Scott (2009), it appears to be a legitimate counter-region in which 'non-state' space is given a unified history of evasion and anarchy. Without repeating those discussions, it is certainly true that our research collaboration flowed out of recent efforts to challenge the limiting power of traditional Area Studies relating to debates on *Zomia* as initiated by Willem van Schendel. Bringing together research teams from Myanmar and China was partly a work of academic activism to move beyond traditional Area Studies model of East and South East Asia divisions by bringing together local researchers from the Kachin region and Yunnan to learn from each other.[12] The starting point for our project from this perspective was the understanding of knowledge gaps that superficially appeared to be an outcome of both political and traditional Area Studies limits. A key objective was to fill a perceived gap in relation to what people on both sides of the Myanmar-China state borders involved in the trade know about the metamorphosis of jadeite from stone to gem.

---

[12] Our initial project discussions took place in the context of the research project *The India China Corridor* - https://lnu.se/en/research/searchresearch/research-projects/the-india-china-corridor/

We took some initial inspiration from the typology of ignorance proposed by Proctor and Schiebinger (2008),[13] who employ 'agnotology' as a useful term to describe the inquiries we make about what we don't know, and why we don't know it. They propose a threefold typology of ignorance: ignorance as 'native state', or a kind of vacuum that is progressively filled with knowledge of the kind just described that maps onto a good deal of research in academia; ignorance as a 'lost realm' or selective choice, which can be a result of personal preference or be manipulated by people, organisations, or institutions who benefit from the selective ignorance of others (Proctor uses the tobacco industry as an exemplar of this); finally, ignorance as 'virtue' or resistance, for example when we reject knowledge that we believe may carry with it some danger or threat. It is a preliminary but helpful typology in the context of our project because it allows contemplation of more than our conventional assumptions about the value of knowledge to fill a vacuum or empty space. It encourages engagement with the political and the everyday reasons why we know some things and not others in a way that the more theoretical approaches of philosophical epistemology do not always facilitate. The three types of ignorance described by Procter and Schiebinger can also intersect, and we can see all of them at play in the jadeite trade. Given the enormous financial rewards that success can bring to some people, albeit at the expense of many, and the illicit nature of much of the trade, this should not surprise us: there are many actors involved at different parts of the chain, each with their own set of interests. There are advantages for some in limiting what others know, just as there may be risks for those who prefer to avoid knowing 'too much'. In our initial thinking about the project, we supposed that knowledge gaps across the commodity chain were bound to be largely a consequence of the political border. This assumption reflected the political realities within which the research teams live their lives in the everyday.

---

[13] Thanks to Henrik Møller for his valued contributions to developing this intellectual framework. Henrik's PhD research that develops important elements of change across space of the jadeite trade is available as Møller 2019.

Much academic and policy engagement with the jadeite trade starting from the mines in Myanmar also tends to take a birds-eye view of its geo-politics as a default perspective, prioritising the national and international dynamics. For example, recent advocacy intended to introduce better governance of the mines makes high level 'transparency' the starting point as a means of seeing into the trade and making its secrets known (Hendrix & Noland, 2014). The Extractive Industry Transparency Index (EITI) is signed by national governments and requires that mining and other resource extraction companies reveal details of their business. EITI uses the term 'disclosure' frequently[14] and being transparent in this context is the opposite of being secret, which is a pseudonym for the illicit. The illicit trade is opaque, or in James C. Scott's phraseology, illegible or evasive, especially in relation to state taxation and regulatory accountability. EITI has itself acknowledged more recently that this orientation perpetuates ignorance of certain experiences, perspectives, and understandings of extractive industries; all that knowledge embedded in local lives and stories, rather than in higher level policy discussions (EITI, 2020; Vijge, 2018).

From a comparative research perspective, seeing political borders as key realities creating ruptures in our knowledge field aligns with the practices and outcomes of traditional Area Studies. Yet our aim was not just to bring areas or regions together that had become divided by political and academic borders. Life stories allowed other kinds of complexity to come fully to view in the everyday narration of experience 'on the ground'. For example, our use of the categories Kachin or Myanmar and China as units of organisation was, at ground level, of limited usefulness relative to the messy intersections of these identities in the everyday life of this cross-border region. Yet our project was also not 'just' about migration or mobility as ends in themselves. Many of our narrators had not moved very far from their own villages all their lives, while others repeatedly travelled the long and hard journey to the mines, across hills

---

[14] Myanmar was a signatory to it in 2014 but was suspended in 2021 following the re-assertion of full control by the military.

and borders over decades. It was the variation of interactions with jadeite that also intrigued us. Neither, despite interviewing many people who had migrated and established long term residence on different sides of the political border, was it about diaspora. Some of our narrators had moved and settled to be part of a recognisable community, but not all. Furthermore, we were exploring a trade that predates the establishment of state boundaries, although it has adapted to their existence. Borders are also ignored, transgressed, erased, or crossed, and without their intermittent erasure, the illicit trade could not exist at all, but borders are also a present reality in the contemporary jadeite trade. The knowledge we sought to gain was spatial, fluid, temporal, and mobile, while also fixed, persistent, constructed and bounded. It was produced by the intermingling of cultures and languages, not their over-layering, as well as by the boundaries that individuals created in relation to culture, language, economics, and politics. We did not consider the absence of knowledge in this case to be 'just' a need for re-connecting that which had been disrupted by political and academic borders. Boundaries of knowledge are real in the jadeite trade, but they emerge in surprising ways. In challenging Area Studies boundaries, we were left in a space where new boundaries of knowledge and ignorance became discernible.

Boundaries of knowledge and ignorance are also culturally rooted and linked to identity, language, education, and technology, as well as politics in the jadeite trade. Actors in the jadeite trade demarcate the boundaries of their own knowledge with deterministic precision. Superficially their proclamations of what knowledge they have, and what might not be rightfully theirs to possess, may seem to be just a reflection of the geo-political divisions just described. For example, miners and jade dealers on the Myanmar side often profess ignorance about the technology and skills used to fashion the stones. They may see this as 'Chinese' knowledge, while being aware that their own 'ignorance' restricts their economic activity to the lower levels of the value chain. It is not always clear which type of Proctor and Schiebinger's ignorance is at play in this respect, given that it is not beyond the reach of local people to try to extend their technical knowledge if they were to wish to do so. Likewise,

consumers in China typically profess to know little about where the jadeite they wear is from, or about the impact of mining on local communities in Myanmar, or its associations with protracted conflict. The vital place jadeite plays in traditional Chinese culture leads many to assume that it must come from China. Indeed, only when the illicit stones cross the border gates of Yunnan do they become officially legible; they get an ID (a tax certificate) that gives them a 'Chinese' identity, making them 'transparent', known objects. Yet many people involved in the trade in China are acutely aware of the tragic background story of the mines in Myanmar having spent many seasons living and working there. The reasons why this knowledge does not permeate consumer consciousness higher up the commodity chain is then an important question reflecting multiple forms of 'selective ignorance' and the variety of vested interests involved.

Complex patterns and boundaries of knowledge and ignorance between actors, cultures, languages, and technology, are intrinsic to the jadeite trade and have been a part of its culture pre-dating the more recent political boundary and border making. They often map onto identity and cultural boundaries and become subject to their own social norms, especially at the points at which individuals within different roles in the chain come together. For example, the 'gambling stone' is a renowned part of this culture. Stones are bought and sold without ever cutting them open, which would reveal the hidden quality of the jadeite core and establish a clear market value. Deals relating to stones would traditionally be finalised through hand signals and handshakes that were concealed beneath a cloth placed over the hands of the buyer and seller; only those involved would know the details of the deal they had made. It might seem more rational for both parties to opt for full knowledge, for 'transparency', yet miners and dealers working close to the uncut stones have honed their knowledge to read the shapes, lines, textures, and external colouration of the unimpressive, uncut grey rocks. This knowledge provides the route to great profits from even worthless stones if luck falls the right way when it is eventually cut open. This is somewhat equivalent to going to an auction and buying a box without seeing inside, but with

far higher stakes. Acquiring knowledge of the sensory materiality of the stone is an artisanal legacy that involves a strong cultural resonance within economic choices. Transparency, it seems, had little or no role in the traditional culture of the jadeite trade, which evolved as an enterprise that tapped the dopamine pathways of the brain to feed the gambler's search for reward, respecting the materiality of the object as the possessor of its own secrets. In approaching stories as part of a more-than-human set of relationships, in which an inanimate mineral had some power over human lives and life stories, enabled us to see the problems caused by the contemporary jadeite trade as something that requires more than just governance reforms to reduce its harms.

Life Stories and Area Studies

Life story research is often used in work that is oriented towards practice led approaches in development (Slim *et al,* 1993). However, it is rarely used in the same way as we have deployed it in our project. This also created a conceptual challenge for some of the local researchers, who had been more accustomed to exploring issues-led research projects through research methods such as focus groups and structured and semi-structured interviews with a clear list of questions. Oral Testimony and Oral History are other ways in which biographical research can be framed. Both of them tend to place the narrator, or the 'research subject', at the centre of the enquiry, but nonetheless projecting outwards to an issue that may be deeply important to them, but which they are able to externalise. Oral testimony is particularly used in the context of local research in development practice to gain insights into particular problems that are relatively localised. Elements of life story are threaded through the testimony, but the primary objective is to understand the impact of a dam, or a change in agricultural policy, for example. Emotion is facilitated, not least because the issues discussed are often of heightened significance in the lives of the narrators, but emotion or abstractions such as 'dignity' or 'heritage' are not typically the primary

focus of research. Oral history, too, has become a widely used research method for gaining insight across a very wide range of subjects. Elite oral history is well established globally, and many research projects related to studies of development and change engage in place-based oral history, providing insights into community histories. Again, individual lives are inextricably connected but often with a sense of history about place rather than about person that is tangible. Elite narrators are conscious of the record they will make of themselves and their involvements in the sweep of history to which they are being connected, while carving out presence for histories that are subaltern or under-represented or invisible also influences the narratives of local Oral History.

Our project was somewhat different as it was expressly framed around Life Stories. We knew that there would be stories that it would be too difficult or too risky for our young research team to do. For example, one of the first questions that those in the policy arena often ask of our project is if we might be able to trace the illicit flows of finance to the upper ends of the commodity chain. That would be a different kind of research, and we knew also that most of the narrators would keep that as knowledge that would not be communicated to us, or they would apply their own selective ignorance to the issue to limit the possibilities of harm. Our capacity to deliver an 'answer' to this question also did not enhance the wider intellectual objectives we had of understanding the role of jadeite in the ordinary and the everyday.

The method sounded deceptively simple. Each team would record up to 75 life stories, resulting in up to 150 stories covering the Area that was created by the jadeite trade in this part of Asia – the Kachin and Yunnan borderlands. It was hoped that there would be a broad geographical scope, and demographic diversity. Detailed discussion of the method and the ethical questions and approach will be the subject of later articles and will not be discussed extensively here to enable focus mainly on issues

relating to Area Studies as a field.[15] Yet the objective of the project was also to find ways of making the full cacophony of voices that we engaged to be heard, without overly delimiting or rationalising the inconsistencies across different stories and within each one, or their meanings. There has been a move towards this kind of use of biography in recent years. For example, Philip Holden (2012) has examined the work of Malaysian film maker Amir Muhammad, whose corpus of work includes attention to life stories and life experience as both biography and autobiography in a setting where the production of national histories has been dominant, including in the political development underpinning Area Studies. Holden wrote of Amir Muhammad's work "The interviews Amir chooses are almost abnormal in their unexceptionalness, and all show an obsession with the minutiae of their everyday lives … These framing and interviewing techniques juxtapose personal life narratives with the larger narratives they intersect" (2012: 23). It is the desire to allow each story to speak along its own lines that we hope to reproduce. We will certainly write academic articles from the research, but a central objective has been to make accessible the full range of stories and to allow them to stand for themselves. Jadeite was a point of connection, but we did not determine where or how jadeite emerged in the telling of the life. We also wanted to explore the affective relationship that people had with jadeite and how their experiences shaped this understanding. This was also a challenge for the narrators to understand the interest that our researchers were taking in them and why other people should value their stories. This was especially pertinent with people who had spent their lives with a sense of insignificance. As noted, there are many dimensions of the method and process itself that deserve fuller discussion, but these will be the subject of later writing.

The volume that Holden's essay appears in, *Locating Life Stories* edited by Maureen Perkins (2012) is an important volume for those who are interested in the

---

[15] Our core team training benefited hugely from the expertise of Siobhan Warrington, the founder of Oral Testimony Works (https://oraltestimony.org/), whose long experience, including for many years with Panos Oral Testimony Programme.

intersections of place-based auto/biography and thence the significance of this genre of storytelling for Area Studies. The volume is very much focused towards the cultural contexts in which life stories are narrated and communicated, ultimately challenging the assumptions that were expressed by autobiography scholar Georges Gusdorf (1956) that autobiography is not a universal phenomenon, being primarily situated in 'western' intellectual and philosophical tradition.

However, it is the discussions of the role of culture in the narrative that are the most challenging. The tendency to impose cultural meanings which map onto bigger national and cultural Area narratives is an experience not only of the researcher but also of the narrator. Categorisations and expectations around ethnicity, religion, gender, and other attributes of personhood, community, and nation must also remain true to their initial modes of expression; this is the point at which the public-private dichotomy of history, including life history narration, as a political act becomes most apparent. We knew, therefore, that it was important to make known the full range of the stories, each in their own right, but also allowing them to connect and make new stories and shape new meanings as a collective.
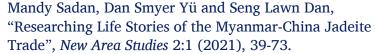
Yet when we move beyond this to the issue of *how* such narratives should be more widely communication, the boundaries between history and literature in the process of story-telling become most critical. The value of story-telling as a means of engaging listeners and audiences are well known and well-described, especially in its capacity to engender deeper empathy with otherwise apparently culturally 'othered' subjects. The neurological pathways that good stories excite ensure that we feel deeply when a story moves us, we learn from it, and we encode its meanings into our own lives and experiences so that we develop more empathetic appreciation, which can motivate action as well as compassion. This facet of story-telling is well known amongst marketing professionals, who use the power of story-telling to persuade us to buy things that we do not need and construct narratives of consumerism that then become so deeply engrained in our behaviours that they seem to be parts of ourselves.

This is knowledge creation that may also be cynically manipulated as Proctor (2012) compellingly describes. Stories have power because they become part of our own sense of self through how we process them. This is also why they are so important in childhood and education in every culture. We had an awareness that simply making available unedited (albeit anonymised as appropriate) translated transcriptions would negate some of that power, as people do not narrate their lives as professional story-tellers do. We also had to confront this fact in the act of translation itself. Word for word translation was impossible in so many instances that we were from the outset confronted by the reality that the boundaries between the life stories as history and literature were blurred as soon as they were confronted by the act of translation.

The relationship between history and literature is particularly important in relation to our project, and it is also at this point that the implications for Area Studies become significant again more clearly. The work of Arif Dirlik remains very significant for thinking through these issues in our project, not least because he has posed many challenges to 'China' as a globally accepted category of knowing, and of cultural projection. He also poses many challenges to the roles that history and literature have in bringing forward the voices of those who are excluded from national and ideological histories. This is a burden that is embedded in both translation and the transnationalization of research (Dirlik, 2002). As Stephen Morton (1999) has described, the postcolonial critiques that authors such as Dirlik outline encourage a deeply reflective engagement with place and the geo-political and power relationships that exist in that locality. Dirlik's attention to the relationship between literature and history that storytelling of lives involves ensures that we also explore this issue beyond the claims around 'local voice' that a project such as ours valorises. We cannot escape the realities of these demands in the process of translation, as well as in the re-narration of lives as stories to enhance their communicative resonance and value.

Conclusion

The challenge for our project is how to engage with these issues in the way in which we present these stories. A collective volume of lives rewritten through the translation process as stories is one option. A hyperlinked website that provides multiple ways through the stories and opens up multiple new story threads is another. What we want to avoid is simply the extrapolation of information as academic research that is built upon, yet which continues to keep hidden as 'data', the details of the life stories that have been explored. The ethical, technical, intellectual, emotional[16] implications for each decision are significant. Yet in relation to Area Studies and its new directions, our project hopefully provides an opportunity for reflection upon what Area Studies was and what it is becoming, especially what it means in practice to do research that crosses geo-political boundaries that is more than just juxtaposition or comparison. Deep, place-based knowledge of all the researchers involved in the project is vitally important and without it, the possibilities of communicating across these boundaries are greatly reduced, but it also required that we shifted how we understood the interactions and intersections between us all in the process of researching and knowing through these stories.

Furthermore, the act of translation across local and national languages within the region, and the role of global languages in the process of translation of knowledge and the intersection with ignorance, is an issue that requires further debate within Area Studies, old and new. In part this act collapses boundaries of knowledge and ignorance, but it is not neutral in its own set of relations nor in its outcomes. In our project, the act of translation pushed us into a domain of story as literature more than we initially expected it to do; conveying the meaning of the stories as a humanising form of research communication that stayed true to local narration could not be done through word-for-word translation. The connection between history and literature

---

[16] The emotional impact of the stories on the narrator, the researcher, and also the translator has also been a critical concern for our project.

raised by scholars such as Dirlik remains still an important issue for cultural studies and Area Studies alike.

Finally, mobility, migration, diaspora, or commodity flows are all conceived as correctives of bounded traditional Area Studies. Cut what the telling of life stories alerts us to when carried out on a scale that transcends geo-political boundaries, but which is also very much affected by them, is that new directions in Area Studies needs to develop attention to the complex and challenging ways in which boundaries are carried, transgressed, rebuilt, repositioned and made known and unknown when working in a way that reflects their realities. This is more than just intersectionality. It was the engagement with the more-than-human story created by jade that made most visible these complex human relationships. None of this would have become apparent without the power of life stories in all their discordant power.

Acknowledgements

References

Abbott, A. (2010). 'Varieties of Ignorance', *The American Sociologist, 41*(2), 174-189

Anonymous, (1889). Jade in Burmah. *Science, 14*(351), 285-285.

Anonymous, (1924). Jade, Amber, and Precious Stones in Burma. *Journal of the Royal Society of Arts* 72.3714 (1924): 170-170.

Carlson, J. D. (2001). Broadening and Deepening: Systemic Expansion, Incorporation and the Zone of Ignorance. *Journal of World-Systems Research, 7*(2), 225-263.

Chang, W. (2004). Guanxi and Regulation in Networks: The Yunnanese Jade Trade between Burma and Thailand, 1962-88. *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies,*35(3), 479-501

Chang, W. (2014). Circulations of the Jade Trade: The Duans and the Pengs. In *Beyond Borders: Stories of Yunnanese Chinese Migrants of Burma* (pp. 207-236). Ithaca; London: Cornell University Press.

Chang, W. (2015). Beyond Borders: Stories of Yunnanese Chinese Migrants of Burma. Ithaca, NY.

Chhibber, H. (1934). The mineral resources of Burma. London: Macmillan and, limited.

Dan, S. L; Maran, J. H. P; Sadan, M; Meehan, P; Goodhand, J. (2021). The Pat Jasan Drug Eradication Social Movement In Northern Myanmar, Part One: Origins & Reactions, *International Journal of Drug Policy*, Volume 89

Denman, C. (1945). Jade; A Comprehensive Bibliography. *Journal of the American Oriental Society,*65(2), 117-126.

Dirlik, Arif. (2002). Literature/Identity: Transnationalism, Narrative and Representation. The Review of Education/pedagogy/cultural Studies, 24(3), 209-234.

EITI, (2020). *Empowering Communities in EITI Implementing Countries to Participate in the Oversight of the Extractive Sector*, Oslo: EITI International Secretariat, October 2020

Farrelly, N. (2013). Nodes of Control in a South(east) Asian borderland in *Borderland Lives in Northern South Asia: Non-State Perspectives*, DN Gellner (ed), Duke University Press, pp. 194-213.

Global Witness, (2015). Jade: Myanmar's "Big State Secret.", London: Global Witness.

Griffith, W. & McClelland, J., (2001). *Journals of travels in Assam, Burma, Bootan, Affghanistan and the Neighbouring Countries*, New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd.

Gusdorf, G. (1956/2014). Conditions and Limits of Autobiography. In James Olney (ed) *Autobiography: Essays Theoretical and Critical* (pp. 28-48). Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Hedström, J. (2017). The Political Economy Of The Kachin Revolutionary Household. *Pacific Review,* 30(4), pp.581–595.

Hendrix, C. & Noland, M., 2014. *Managing Myanmar's Resource Boom to Lock in Reforms*. IDEAS Working Paper Series from RePEc, 2014.

Holden, P. (2012). Refusing The Cultural Turn: Amir Muhammad's Politics Of Surfaces. In Perkins M. (Ed.), *Locating Life Stories: Beyond East-West Binaries in (Auto)Biographical Studies* (pp. 15-34). University of Hawai'i Press.

Jones, L., (2014). The Political Economy of Myanmar's Transition. *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, 44(1), pp.144–170.

Kratoska, Paul H., Remco Raben, and Henk Schulte Nordholt (eds.). (2005). *Locating Southeast Asia: Geographies of Knowledge and Politics of Space*. Singapore: Singapore University Press.

Leach, E.R., (1954). *Political Systems Of Highland Burma: A Study Of Kachin Social Structure*, London: Bell

Mitchell, A. (2018). Geological belts, plate boundaries, and mineral deposits in Myanmar. Amsterdam, Netherlands.

Møller, H. (2017). The Potentials of Feicui: Indeterminacy and Determination in Human-Jade Interactions in South-West China. In Bregnbæk S. & Bunkenborg M. (Eds.), *Emptiness and Fullness: Ethnographies of Lack and Desire in Contemporary China* (pp. 120-138). New York; Oxford: Berghahn Books

Møller, H. (2019). *Spectral Jade: Materiality, Conceptualisation, and Value in the Myanmar-China Jadeite Trade*. Lund University.

Møller, H. (2018). Boom or Bust in China's Jade Trade with Myanmar? In Franceschini I. & Loubere N. (Eds.), *Gilded Age* (pp. 182-185). Australia: ANU Press.

Morton, Stephen. "Postcolonialism and Spectrality." *Interventions* (London, England), vol. 1, no. 4, 1999, pp. 605–620.

Mowry, R. (1981). Chinese Jades from Han to Qing. *Archaeology*, 34(1), 52-55. Retrieved September 2, 2021, from http://www.jstor.org/stable/41726543

Perkins, M. (Ed.). (2012). *Locating Life Stories: Beyond East-West Binaries in (Auto)Biographical Studies*. University of Hawai'i Press.

Proctor, R. (2012). *Golden Holocaust: Origins of the Cigarette Catastrophe and the Case for Abolition*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

RSA. The Chinese Jade Industry. (1913). *Journal of the Royal Society of Arts* 61(3143), 364-365. Retrieved September 2, 2021, from http://www.jstor.org/stable/41340525

RSA. Jade, Amber, And Precious Stones In Burma. (1924). *Journal of the Royal Society of Arts* 72(3714), 170-170. Retrieved September 2, 2021, from http://www.jstor.org/stable/41356448

Sadan, M., (2013). *Being and Becoming Kachin: Histories Beyond the State in the Borderworlds of Burma*. Oxford: British Academy & OU

Sadan, M. (2014). The Extra-ordinariness of Ordinary Lives' in *Burmese Lives*, Eric Tagliacozzo and Wen-chin Chang (eds.), New York: Oxford University Press, pp.25-52

Sadan, Mandy. (2016). *War and Peace in the Borderlands of Myanmar : The Kachin Ceasefire,1994-2011*. Copenhagen: NIAS Studies in Asian Topics: 56

Sadan, M., (2020). Why Decolonising Area Studies is Not Enough: A Case Study of the Complex Legacies of Colonial Knowledge-Making in the Indo-Myanmar Borderlands. *New Area Studies*, 1(1), pp.180–220.

Sadan, M., & Dan, Seng Lawn. (2021 forthcoming). 'The role of artisanal mining in the sustainable development of Myanmar's jadeite industry' In Special Volume 'Small-Scale Mining and the Sustainable Development Goals: Critical Reflections on a Neglected Sector's Environmental and Development Trajectories' edited by Gavin Hilson, *Environmental Science and Policy*

Safonova, T., Sántha, I., & Sulyandziga, P. (2018). Searching for Trust: Indigenous People in the Jade Business. In Humphrey C. (Ed.), *Trust and Mistrust in the*

Economies of the China-Russia Borderlands (pp. 205-228). Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.

Scott, J. (2009). The art of not being governed: An anarchist history of upland Southeast Asia (Yale agrarian studies). New Haven, Conn.; London: Yale University Press.

Slim, H., Thompson, P., Bennett, O., & Cross, N. (1993). Listening for a change : Oral testimony and development. London: Panos.

Smith, M. (1991). *Burma : Insurgency And The Politics Of Ethnicity*, London: Zed Books.

Smyer Yü, Dan (2021). 'Environmental Edging of Empires, Chiefdoms, and States: Corridors as Transregions' in *Yunnan–Burma–Bengal Corridor Geographies: Protean Edging of Habitats and Empires*, Dan Smyer Yü & Karin Dean (eds). Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, pp.46-67

Tobisch, O. (1983). Connections between the Geological Sciences and Visual Art: Historical Perspectives and Personal Expression in Artwork. *Leonardo*,16(4), 280-287.

Van Dooren, Thom and Deborah Bird Rose. (2016). "Lively Ethography: Storying Animist Worlds." *Environmental Humanities* 8, no. 1: 77-94.

Van Schendel, Willem (2002). 'Geographies of Knowing, Geographies of Ignorance: Jumping Scale in Southeast Asia', *Environment and Planning D-society & Space, 20*(6), 647-668

Vijge, Marjanneke J. (2018). The (Dis)empowering Effects of Transparency Beyond Information Disclosure: The Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative in Myanmar. *Global Environmental Politics*, 18(1), pp.13–32.

Walker, J. (1892). Expeditions among the Kachin Tribes on the North-East Frontier of Upper Burma. *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society and Monthly Record of Geography,* 14(3), new monthly series, 161-173.

Wu, Y. (2021). Transporting Jade: Objects, Ecology, and Local Bureaucracy in Qing Xinjiang. In Siebert M., Chen K., & Ko D. (Eds.), *Making the Palace Machine Work: Mobilizing People, Objects, and Nature in the Qing Empire* (pp. 187-212). Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.