



Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs

Egreteau, Renaud (2012), Burma in Diaspora: A Preliminary Research Note on the Politics of Burmese Diasporic Communities in Asia, in: *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs*, 31, 2, 115-147.

ISSN: 1868-4882 (online), ISSN: 1868-1034 (print)

The online version of this article can be found at:

www.CurrentSoutheastAsianAffairs.org

Published by

GIGA German Institute of Global and Area Studies, Institute of Asian Studies and Hamburg University Press.

The *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs* is an Open Access publication. It may be read, copied and distributed free of charge according to the conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution-No Derivative Works 3.0 License.

To subscribe to the print edition: <ias@giga-hamburg.de>

For an e-mail alert please register at: <www.CurrentSoutheastAsianAffairs.org>

The *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs* is part of the GIGA Journal Family which includes: Africa Spectrum ● Journal of Current Chinese Affairs ● Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs ● Journal of Politics in Latin America ●
<www.giga-journal-family.org>



Research Note

Burma in Diaspora: A Preliminary Research Note on the Politics of Burmese Diasporic Communities in Asia

Renaud Egreteau

Abstract: This research note focuses on the far-flung Burmese overseas communities, situating them into the wider diaspora literature. Drawing on extant scholarship on refugees, migrants and exiled dissidents of Burmese origin, it presents an original cartography of Burmese diasporic groups dispersed throughout Asia. It explores their migration patterns and tentatively maps out their transnational networks. It seeks to comparatively examine the relationships these polymorphous exiled groups have developed with the homeland. Two research questions have been identified and need further exploration in the context of the post-junta opening that has been observed since 2011: First, what comprises the contribution of the Burmese diaspora to political change and homeland democratization? This has been widely debated over the years. Despite a dynamic transnational activism, there is still little evidence that overseas Burmese have influenced recent domestic political developments. Second and subsequently, how can the Burmese diaspora effectively generate social and economic change back home: by “remitting” or by “returning”? This note argues that Burmese migrant social and financial remittances might prove a more viable instrument to foster development and democratization inside Myanmar in the short term than a mere homecoming of exiles and skilled migrants. This is a preliminary analysis that hopes to encourage further research on Burmese diasporic politics and their potential leverage as “agents of change”.

■ Manuscript received 17 January 2012; accepted 6 August 2012

Keywords: Burma/Myanmar, diaspora, transnationalism, democratization, development, agents of change, migrant remittances, refugee, return

Renaud Egreteau is a research assistant professor with the Hong Kong Institute for the Humanities and Social Sciences (HKIHSS) at the University of Hong Kong. A political scientist, he received his doctoral degree from the Institut d’Études Politiques of Paris (CERI-Sciences Po, 2006). His research focuses on interstate relations in Asia, democratization processes, ethnic and praetorian politics in Burma/Myanmar, as well as on the transnational networks of Indian and Burmese diasporic communities. He has authored *Wooing the Generals: India’s New Burma Policy* (New Delhi: Authorspress, 2003) and *Histoire de la Birmanie contemporaine: le pays des prétoriens* (Paris: Fayard, 2010).

E-mail: <regreteau@hotmail.com>

Introduction

Considering Myanmar's postcolonial decades of military rule, interethnic violence and underdevelopment, it certainly looks depressing to be a Burmese,¹ at home and abroad. Diasporas – the motivated dispersal of people away from their homeland – are often the product of conflict, dire economic conditions, and/or socio-religious strife, according to the literature. People are driven out of their home into exile because of desperation or persecution, and aspire to better lives abroad. This is surely the case with the 2 to 3 million people of Burmese origin living outside their home country today. Most of them have migrated and settled throughout Asia – and to a lesser extent in the West and the Persian Gulf – over the past two decades.

Extant scholarship has focused extensively on the particular case of Burmese refugees fleeing Myanmar's renewed authoritarian rule following the crackdown on the pro-democracy uprising in 1988. Typically using field research conducted along the Thailand–Myanmar border, these studies have catalogued the challenges faced by Burmese refugees (Grundy-Warr and Wong 1997; Grundy-Warr et al. 1997; Hyndman 2001; Lang 2002). More recently, international academia has attempted to explore more deeply the impact Burmese exiled political dissidents have tried to exert on homeland politics. The long-distance pro-democracy struggle and the rise of ethno-nationalist activism have received particular attention (Zarni 2000; Thawnghmung 2005; Zaw Oo 2006; Brees 2009). A few authors have also critically examined the transnational activism promoted by these extremely politicized exiled communities and its influence on the international community (Aung-Thwin 2001; McLean 2004; Beatty 2010; Dale 2011; Williams 2012). Aside from that, the socio-economic impact of Burmese migrations on both their homeland and various host countries has also been recently addressed (Turnell, Vicar, and Bradford 2008; Pollock and Soe Lin Aung 2010; Myat Mon 2010). Lastly, moving beyond the well-documented Burmese refugees in Thailand, other studies have examined particular cases of Burmese enclaves throughout Asia: in Japan (Banki 2006a, 2006b), India (Datta 2003; Bhaumik 2003; Baujard 2008), and Bangladesh (Abrar 2003; Ullah 2011). But there is

1 For linguistic simplicity and without any political connotation, I have chosen to hereafter use the English adjectives “Burmese” and “Burman”, instead of the vernacular terms “Myanma(r)” or “Bama(r)”. “Burmese” then refers to the wider citizenship and common language of the people inhabited Myanmar, while “Burman” more specifically designates the country's dominant ethnic group. Myanmar is indeed also inhabited by non-Burman (yet Burmese) ethnic minorities, such as the Karens, Kachins, Shans, and so on. Myanmar has been the official name of the country since 1989; in this paper, Burma will be used for the pre-1989 contexts.

a lack of the sort of comparative studies exploring the diversity of the drivers and patterns of these contemporary Burmese migrations, the multifaceted identities and sense of belonging cultivated by these heterogeneous communities in exile, and the transnational space, networks and influence they have carved out for themselves in their host countries. Above all, there is little comparative work relating the Burmese diaspora to concrete political and economic changes in Myanmar.

This research note² first delves into the pertinent diaspora literature and scholarship on overseas Burmese – which will be critically reviewed – to present a preliminary overview tracing the geographies of the various Burmese diasporic groups scattered throughout Asia. Who migrated, and when, where and why did they do so? It deliberately opts for a macro-level informative analysis (in an Asian context only), existing data sources being seldom reliable, if not contradictory or even nonexistent. It also serves as a call for broader comparative research on these under-studied Burmese overseas communities, beyond the emotional focus on the plight of Burmese refugees and migrants in Thailand or Bangladesh. Two preliminary research issues are identified. First, the contribution of the Burmese diaspora to political change and democratization in the homeland has been widely debated over the past two decades. Yet, despite a dynamic transnational activism and advocacy lobbying, there is still little evidence that overseas Burmese have had any influence on recent domestic developments in Myanmar. A polymorphous diaspora, the Burmese in exile have been more successful in mobilizing the international community around their cause than in fostering regime change inside the country. Second, there is, however, a growing interest in how the Burmese communities in exile have generated, and can in the near future continue to generate, social and economic change back home, either by “remitting” (following the Filipino model) or by “returning” (Timor-Leste model). One can then wonder whether the various Burmese communities abroad will be able to act as future “agents of development” for their homeland – particularly in the context of the post-junta opening-up

2 Acknowledgements: This is a revised version of a conference paper presented during the 2011 Annual Meeting of the Association for Asian Studies held in Honolulu, Hawaii, 31 March–3 April 2011. The author gratefully acknowledges funding received from the University of Hong Kong’s Committee on Research and Conference Grants in this regard. He would also like to thank Julie Baujard and Mael Raynaud for their friendly and helpful comments on an earlier draft, as well as the editors of the *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs*, M. Bunte and D. Camroux, along with Meenakshi Preisser for her copyediting and two anonymous reviewers for their insightful remarks.

observed since 2011 – rather than as mere agents of political change and democratization.

Relevant Definitions

In recent years, the notion of diaspora has developed into a central theme of academic and policy discussion. Derived from the ancient Greek word for “dispersion”, the term nonetheless remains difficult to grasp. While the word has not been construed as a mere synonym of any of them, diaspora encompasses a wide range of other terms: refugee, overseas community, exile, expatriate, immigrant, displaced or stateless person, and so on. Over-used, the concept still provokes lively debates (Vertovec 1997; Gilroy 1997; Anthias 1998; Tambiah 2000; Sheffer 2003; Shain and Barth 2003; Brubaker 2005; Cohen 2008). William Safran, a political scientist, is often cited as a pioneer in the field (Safran 1991). For him – and this article will follow his definitional proposition – a diaspora is an expatriate community with a history of dispersal (usually forced) that maintains a memory and various myths about a specific “homeland” and constructs a collective identity related to this homeland. It remains committed to the welfare of this homeland, to which it may return one day. It also tends to resist assimilation to the host country to which it has migrated. Through transnational solidarity networks, it supports its kin members’ emigration from, or repatriation to, the homeland, while attempting to influence developments there. Anthropologist James Clifford has further underscored the emotional connection to the “homeland” that a diaspora cultivates (Clifford 1994). Displaced diasporic groups often define themselves by passion “against” a phenomenon (disaster, conflict) or an entity (a nation-state, for instance) that has driven them out of their homes. Essential to the construction of a diaspora is this “diasporic consciousness”, structured around the idea of a cherished faraway homeland and created by a powerful external force (Malkki 1995; Gilroy 1997). As UCLA-based sociologist Rogers Brubaker synthesized, diasporas are therefore built around “three core elements” (Brubaker 2005: 5–6): *dispersion* (in space and time), *homeland orientation* (through the construction of a collective memory, the wish to return and influence the homeland), and *boundary maintenance* (preservation of ethnic ties and identity linked to the homeland, a reluctant assimilation to the host country).

Diasporas also often relate to ethnic commonalities, further argues Floya Anthias, adding that kinship solidarity and common identity are essential to distinguish diasporic communities from mere “transnational” or international groupings (Anthias 1998: 558). Diasporas are indeed products of – but also in turn produce – transnational processes. Nonetheless, a diaspora is not a mere transnational entity, and a sentiment of unity and belonging

is expected. The scholarship on transnationalism helps us to construe differences (Kearney 1995; Portes 1999; Vertovec 1999). But as Osten Wahlbeck insists, the concepts of transnationalism and diaspora should be regarded as nothing more than Weberian ideal-types (Wahlbeck 2002). Moreover, sociologist Robin Cohen from Oxford University has emphasized the necessity to consider both forced dispersal and voluntary migrations in the study of diasporas. In our globalized and interconnected world, trade, labour and economic needs are powerful driving forces behind transnational migration and the formation of diasporic groups (Cohen 1996, 2008; Al-Ali and Koser 2002; Kapur 2010).

Lately, the growing importance of diasporic groups in international politics has led scholars to re-examine the patterns of influence as well as the role of diasporas in policymaking, trade, and circulation of ideas (Tambiah 2000; Sheffer 2003). More specifically, how do diasporas relate to politics and development in their homeland? Globalization has facilitated the construction of closer linkages between the home and the host, it is claimed (Shain and Shermann 1998; Shain 2005). A case-based literature has emerged examining the political and economic contributions that diasporic communities – whether stateless or linked to a nation-state – can make toward what they call “home”. Extant studies have explored their role in conflict perpetuation and resolution (Shain 2002), separatist wars (Shain and Shermann 1998; Ellis and Khan 1998; Wise 2004; Wayland 2004), the socio-economic development of the homeland (Patterson 2006; Camroux 2008; Kapur 2010), and increasingly, democratization (Schmitz 2004; Koinova 2009). The transnational political influence of refugees has also received growing attention (Wahlbeck 2002; Van Hear 1998, 2009).

History and Nature of Burmese Migrations

The production of Burmese exilic communities is a recent phenomenon, mostly the outcome of postcolonial developments. Western and Burmese historiographies suggest that the successive Burmese ancient kingdoms had neither aimed to establish overseas mercantile empires nor promoted any long-distance colonization enterprises – in stark contrast to the Chinese, Indians and Europeans, for instance. Save for a few diplomatic envoys sent throughout modern Europe or imperial China, Burmese kings did not sponsor prestigious overseas expeditions. What is Myanmar today was shaped as a continental power, say historians, despite recent academic focus on the maritime kingdoms of Arakan (Rakhine). It produced neither large, business-oriented diasporas nor long-persecuted ones. Even during the colonial era (1826–1948), very few Burmese ventured throughout the British Empire, unlike Nepali Gurkhas, Baghdadi Jews, Indian Chettyars or Chinese Hok-

kien migrants. Despite having been exposed to Western education, Burmese nationalists did not favour long-distance anti-colonial activities in the early twentieth century. If you “exit” the homeland, it is for the sake of a quick prestigious return, conventional wisdom seems to claim (Zaw Oo 2006: 234). Aung San and the “Thirty Comrades” best epitomized this adage, when in 1941 they swiftly returned from Japan to form the Burma Independence Army and subsequently led the way to the country’s freedom.

Independence in 1948 drastically changed this pattern. A postcolonial civil war borne out of the competing secessionist agendas of a myriad of ethnic and/or revolutionary groups has led to major displacements of population ever since (Smith 1999; South 2008). Post-independence Burmanization campaigns led by the central Burman-dominated authorities (and strengthened with the post-1962 military rule) have also driven non-Burman communities across the country’s porous borders. Post-1988 crackdowns on pro-democracy movements pushed many Burmese dissidents into exile – regardless of their ethnic background. Above all, increased poverty generated by decades of self-destructive autarky and economic mismanagement by the military-run state has forced hundreds of thousands of Burmese to seek better fortunes in neighbouring countries or beyond. Looking at the past few decades, two broad types of transnational flows of Burmese origin can therefore be identified: (1) forced displacements of either Burmese elites looking for a more secure political environment abroad or uprooted ethnic people and religious minorities fleeing conflict zones, and (2) voluntary or forced socio-economic migrations of Burmese people in search of jobs and better educational opportunities.

For US-based Burmese scholar Ardeth M. Thawngmung, ethnic Karen communities resisting assimilation by Burman-dominated postcolonial governments were postcolonial Burma’s first ethno-national group to be forced into exile (Thawngmung 2005). Mons, Karennis, and Shans soon followed in the 1950s, all escaping from an ever-expanding civil war into Thailand – and then the West, India and beyond. Insurgency and counter-insurgency operations further displaced Chin and Kachin populations beginning in the 1960s, when Christian-dominated minorities took up arms against the Burmese central government. Muslim Rohingyas joined the flows of refugees into Bangladesh, Pakistan, and beyond, starting in the late 1970s. Massive exoduses to Bangladesh were observed in 1977–78 and 1991–92 (Grundy-Warr and Wong 1997; Van Hear 1998: 201–203). Burmese of Indian and Chinese origin have also been targets of discrimination and hostile state behaviour. Many forcibly re-migrated back to India, Pakistan, Macau or Taiwan between the 1950s and the 1980s – but academia would consider these communities part of the Indian and Chinese diasporas, not the Bur-

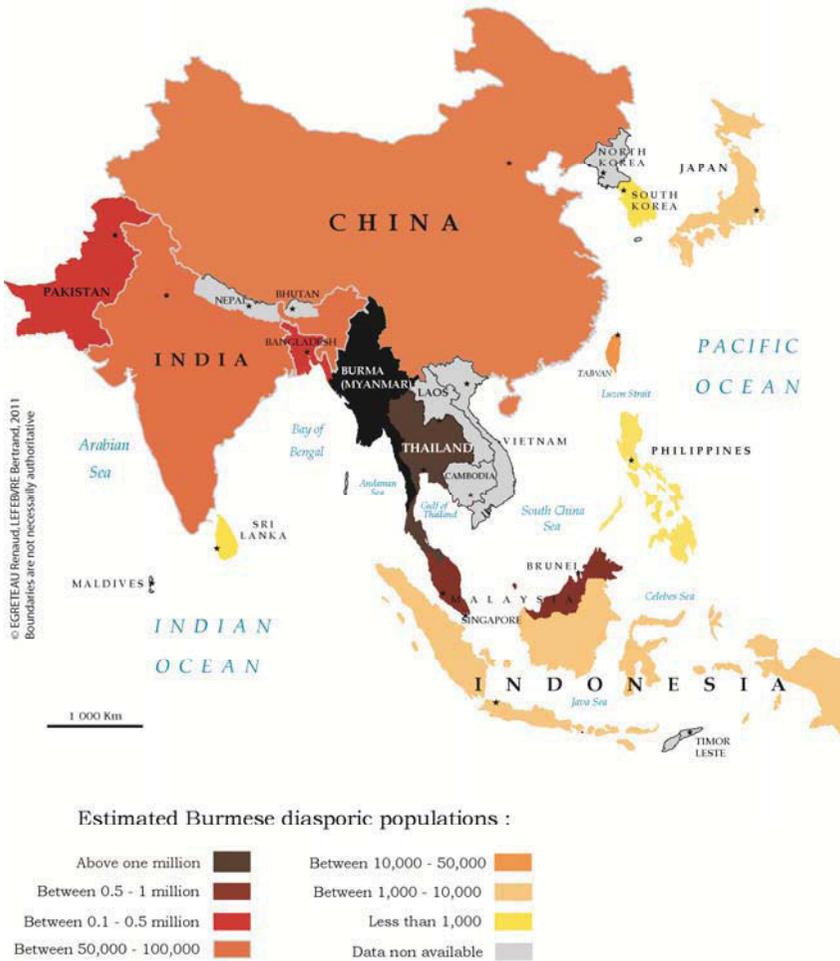
mese. A small number of Burman civilian elites have also opted for political exile, notably after General Ne Win's coup in March 1962. Thailand, Britain, the United States and India were the most favoured destinations. Deposed in 1962 and released from jail in 1966, former Prime Minister U Nu brought his clan to Thailand, the US and India until the 1980 amnesty, while former UN Secretary General U Thant's family settled in the US. Aung San Suu Kyi herself lived abroad for 26 years, in India, Bhutan, Japan and the United Kingdom. Refugee flows from Myanmar considerably increased after the pro-democracy upheavals of 1988 (South 2008: 81–82; Thawngmung 2005). Local geographies facilitated the migration of Shans, Akhas, Karennis, Mons and Karens into Thailand (Grundy-Warr et al. 1997; Banki 2009; Brees 2010), while India became the destination of choice for Chins and Kachins (Datta 2003; Baujard 2008; Alexander 2008), and Bangladesh for Rohingyas (Abrar 2003; Lewa 2008; Mathieson 2009; Espenilla 2010; Ullah 2011). Ethnic ceasefire policies promoted by the Burmese central government slowed the outbound migration processes during the 1990s and 2000s, but internal and transnational displacements have never fully ceased.

Cartography of the Burmese Diasporic Networks in Asia

No research has comparatively evaluated the size of the Burmese populations living abroad, not even in Asian countries. Existing data are scarce and unreliable, if not contradictory. At best, eclectic sources can be collected (academic papers, more or less reliable media reports, interviews among those in policy circles, NGO analyses, and fieldwork) in order to make an educated guess of the number of Burmese migrants or refugees in each Asian country. Combining sources, the best estimate this research note can propose is that there are roughly 3 million Burmese living in Asia.³ The bulk of these Burmese expatriate communities (both forced and voluntary) are found in Thailand (probably approximately 2 million), with significant groups in Bangladesh, Malaysia and Pakistan, smaller communities in India, China and Singapore. Elsewhere in East Asia (Japan, South Korea) or the Pacific region, Burmese exiles constitute only marginal minorities (see Figure 1).

3 According to recent Burmese parliamentary discussions, there are some 4 million Burmese living outside Myanmar as of 2012; however, this seems quite exaggerated (*Mizzima News Agency* 2012).

Figure 1: Burmese Diaspora(s) in Asia: Estimated Populations



Source: Compilation of various data by author (UN, newspapers, personal fieldwork).

Thailand

Neighbouring Thailand has taken the lion’s share of Burmese populations living abroad. Ethnic refugees fleeing civil wars, exiled political dissidents, economic migrants or students still find a straightforward shelter there – while the two other big neighbours Myanmar has to deal with, India and

China, offer rather more hostile geographies or less open polities for exile. Given the relatively easy access to the field, Burmese in Thailand have received a large amount of attention from international NGOs, UN agencies and academia (Lang 2002). In early 2012, there were still approximately 146,000 “official” refugees (UNHCR n.y. a). They are mostly ethnic Karens and Karennis, with smaller communities of Burman, Mon, Shan, Akha and Rakhine refugees, and their plight has been well documented since the construction of the first refugee camp on Thai soil in 1984 (South 2008: 82). But this figure belies the vast majority of Burmese migrants, who have fled Myanmar’s dire economy to find jobs and better resources in Thailand. It is estimated that between 1.5 and 2 million Burmese have entered Thailand over the past two decades (Banki 2009: 51; Myat Mon 2010: 34; Brees 2010: 284; Eberle and Holliday 2011: 371). A cheap, mobile and flexible economic force in a booming Thailand, they have also managed to mobilize a diversity of politically active associations – notably in Chiang Mai, Mae Sot and Bangkok, some with success (Arnold and Hewison 2005), others without much accomplishment (Toyota 2006; Eberle and Holliday 2011). Since the early 1990s, the Thailand–Myanmar border has offered Burmese migrants employment networks, political support, and opportunities to get an education and earn money to send back to relatives in Myanmar (Hyndman 2001; Turnell, Vicar, and Bradford 2008; Zeus 2011). This is the most thriving of Myanmar’s border areas, a place of increased transnational connectivity, well studied by recent academia (Brees 2009, 2010), with a fresh focus on Christian communities (Hortsmann 2011) and on the ethnic Shans (Jirattikorn 2011).

Malaysia

Malaysia is the second-largest recipient of Burmese migrants. But thorough academic research on this is lacking. According to conventional estimates, half a million Burmese live there today – most of them having migrated through Thailand since the early 1990s.⁴ Local NGOs suggest that they also form a vast pool of cheap labour, especially in peninsular Malaysia.⁵ In June 2012, approximately 91,400 asylum-seekers of Burmese origin were registered with Kuala Lumpur-based UN agencies – including some 34,000 Chins, 24,000 Rohingyas, and 3,300 Kachins (UNHCR n.y. b). Most dwell in

4 Quoting Malaysian government sources: “Trafficking and Extortion of Burmese Migrants in Malaysia and Southern Thailand”, *A Report to the Committee on Foreign Relations, US Senate*, 3 April 2009. See also: *Democratic Voice of Burma* 2011.

5 Author’s interviews with representatives from two Malaysian NGOs working with Burmese communities, Tenaganita and Suaram, Kuala Lumpur, September 2005.

the outskirts of Kuala Lumpur or have moved to the Cameron Highlands, particularly the ethnic Chins (Alexander 2008). As Malaysia's authorities have not signed the 1951 Convention on Refugees, the country mainly serves as a transit point for most asylum-seekers en route to Australia or North America. Since the 1990s, there has been an acute international focus on Burmese Rohingyas stranded in Malaysia (Lewa 2008; Mathieson 2009; Espenilla 2010).

Bangladesh

Since the early 1990s, it has been regularly reported by the media, academia and NGO circles that between 200,000 and 300,000 Burmese Rohingyas have been residing in camps, slums or isolated villages in southeastern Bangladesh. They can be spotted around the bustling towns of Chittagong, Cox's Bazar, and Teknaf, bordering their "homeland", which consists mainly of Buthidaung and Maungdaw Townships (as well as Rathedaung and Sittwe, to some extent) in Myanmar's northern Arakan (Rakhine) State. Regular cross-border illegal migrations of these mobile populations make any thorough evaluation of their numbers quite difficult. Most are fleeing discrimination by Burmese authorities and alienation from the local, Buddhist-dominated Rakhine society – as most recently observed in June 2012 when sectarian violence once more erupted in there (HRW 2012) – or simply looking for labour opportunities. In January 2012, there were approximately 29,870 Rohingyas officially registered as refugees under UNHCR protection in Bangladesh, most living in the Kutupalong and Nayapara camps (UNHCR n.y. c). These are the last two refugee camps still standing following the last 1991–92 exodus. Their plight as a stateless Muslim minority has been well documented (Grundy-Warr and Wong 1997, Abrar 2003, Lewa 2008, Ullah 2011). They remain a serious bone of contention between the governments of Myanmar and Bangladesh (East Pakistan, before 1971). One also has to add a few thousand Buddhist Rakhine refugees to the picture: Indeed, a Rakhine elite in exile has burgeoned in Chittagong and Dhaka and is very much involved in pro-democracy activism, journalism and social work focused on ethnic Rakhine populations.⁶ Rakhine rural villages have also blossomed on Maheshkhalī Island, off Cox's Bazar. They shelter both old settlers and new migrants of Rakhine ethnicity and Buddhist faith – a few thousand in all today.⁷

6 And it is also quite hostile to Rohingya communities: author's interviews with representatives from the Rakhine Women Union (RWU), Arakan Liberation Party (ALP) and Burmese media in exile in Dhaka, October 2007.

7 Author's observations, Maheshkhalī Island, Bangladesh, October 2007.

Pakistan

Approximately 300,000 migrants with origins in Myanmar are said to be scattered in southern Pakistan, mostly in the port city of Karachi (Hasan 2010: 38). Most of them are Rohingyas, or of mixed Bengali–Burmese origins. Migrations into Pakistan increased after the collapse of East Pakistan in 1971, the authorities of the newly formed Bangladesh pushing the global stock of Urdu- and Burmese-speaking populations of its southeastern territory toward (formerly West) Pakistan. Forced migrations of Rohingyas also accelerated after the massive exoduses of this community out of Myanmar that occurred in 1978 and 1991. In the mid-1990s, there were said to be 200,000 Rohingyas and “Burmese Bengalis” living in Karachi alone (Bhaumik 2000; Flood 2008). Today they inhabit its southern outskirts, notably in the urban areas of Korangi and its residency settlements Barmiz (“Burmese” in Urdu) Colony and Arkanbad, or “Arakan city” (Banerjee 2006: 78). Yet, no authoritative study has documented the trajectories of these migrants of Burmese origin in Pakistan, save for the occasional NGO or journalistic report.⁸

India

Sharing a porous, 1,643-kilometre-long border with Myanmar, democratic India appeared a logical destination for Burmese political dissidents after 1988. Yet, due to inter-community violence, political instability and development failures plaguing its northeast, India has attracted many fewer Burmese exiles than has Thailand – save for unregistered Kachin migrants in Arunachal Pradesh and Chins in Mizoram State (Baujard 2008; Alexander 2008). As of 2011, it was estimated that between 70,000 and 80,000 Burmese were living on Indian soil (*The Irrawaddy-on-Line* 2011; *The Wall Street Journal* 2011). The great majority of them are Christian Chins. There are also a few Burmans, Kachins and Rakhine who are gathered in the southwestern suburbs of New Delhi, in Calcutta, in the northeast, and around particular Indian Buddhist sites such as Varanasi (Sarnath) and Bodh Gaya (Bhaumik 2003; Datta 2003). Only few marginal – yet vocal – Burmese pro-democracy outfits have taken root there, notably under the guidance of the popular Dr. Tint Swe, a medical doctor from Mandalay and a representative of the Burmese government in exile in India since 1990.⁹ India, not a signatory of the 1951 Refugee Convention, only “tolerates” refugees on its territory, encour-

8 A Rohingya recalls his flight from Arakan to Karachi in 1979: *International Herald Tribune* 2012.

9 Author’s interview, New Delhi, 15 August 2012.

aging them to resettle elsewhere (Baujard 2011). In 2011, the UNHCR in New Delhi acknowledged only 11,500 Burmese asylum-seekers and refugees, and was facilitating their resettlement to the West (UNHCR n.y. d).

Greater China and Taiwan

The situation of the Burmese migrants along the China–Myanmar borderlands is a complex one. Yunnan remains one of the most ethnically diverse Chinese provinces, where numerous tribes and ethnic minorities dwell and share common identity makers – but rarely ethnonyms – such as the Kachins and Jingpo, the Sino-Shans (*shan tayoke*, in Burmese), the Kokangs and the Was (Smith 1999: 38–39). It is estimated that in recent years between 35,000 and 40,000 Burmese (mainly Burmans, Shans, Palaungs, Kachins and Muslims) have migrated from northern Myanmar to Yunnan’s Dehong Prefecture.¹⁰ This thriving border area, along the “Burma Road” trade corridor, has witnessed an intriguing economic boom since the early 1990s. Most Burmese migrants have set up gem and jade businesses and grocery stores around the border checkpoint of Ruili, as well as in the towns of Jiegao and Baoshan. Among them, some 3,000 to 5,000 are said to be Burmese Muslims, including 1,000 Rohingyas.¹¹ A few also live further west in Xishuangbanna, in southeastern Yunnan. They have developed expanding transborder commercial networks using Yunnan as a transnational hub, especially for the trade of Burmese gems and jade (Egreteau forthcoming 2012). Interestingly, Hong Kong does not host a visible Burmese community. Despite the city being one of Myanmar’s largest commercial partners, only few Burman and Kachin businessmen (especially those involved in the gem trade or retail sector) and students end up living there permanently.¹² Today, political activism remains inspired mostly by local Hong Kongers and foreigners, not by Burmese exiles – for instance, the Hong Kong Coalition for a Free Burma, supported by the Democratic Party. Under Portuguese control, Macau welcomed several waves of Burmese Chinese returnees who fled Myanmar during the late 1960s, most after the Sino-Burmese crisis of 1967.¹³ They

10 Author’s interview with the president of the Myanmar Jade Traders Association, who is a local Burmese Muslim and key representative of the Burmese community in southern Yunnan, Ruili, May 15, 2012.

11 Ibid.

12 Author’s informal discussion with Burmese Chinese expatriates living in Hong Kong, May 2011.

13 A long-time Burma watcher, Prof. Donald Seekins (Meio University, Japan) witnessed waves of Burmese Chinese migrating back to Macau while he was a student

opened restaurants and grocery stores, many in the peninsula's northern district of Rotunda de Carlos da Maia, also known as Tres Candeeiros (Three Lamps).¹⁴ But they are part of the returning Chinese diaspora, not the Burmese one. New Burmese migrants have been reported to be domestic workers and employees of Macau's booming casino and hotel business, but no research has been done on this. Since the mid-1950s, the suburbs of Taipei have welcomed several waves of Burmese Chinese "returnees" (who therefore belong to the Chinese diaspora, not the Burmese one) (Lu 2008). The suburb city of Jhong-he, in Taipei's southeastern Nanshi Jiao Township, today hosts some 30,000 to 50,000 Burmese Chinese – especially Hua Hsin Street, renamed by Taiwanese locals the "Burmese street".¹⁵ It is a place also welcoming of Burmese newcomers who migrate yearly to Taipei and back, typically short-term students or businessmen trained in Taiwan and attempting (very profitably so far) to develop cross-country commercial networks.

Singapore

Singapore is often cited as a destination of choice for Burmese expatriates, especially for traders and students – but also for members of the Burmese ruling elite. A thriving financial centre, it also offers extensive English-based academic opportunities, Singapore also has a high demand for a cheap and malleable workforce. Between 50,000 and 100,000 Burmese are said to be residing in Singapore, including approximately 5,000 students (*The Straits Times* 2008a, *The Straits Times* 2008b, and *The Myanmar Times* 2009). From wealthy businessmen to maids, skilled nurses, petty shopkeepers and restaurants owners, the Burmese communities in Singapore are extremely diverse; but they are also rather discreet compared to the Filipino or Indonesian migrant workers. Social networking among the Burmese seems, however, to be on the rise, argues sociologist Eric Thompson (Thompson 2009: 363). Peninsula Plaza, near the City Hall MRT station, is home to many Burmese shops and restaurants. A Burmese diasporic enclave, the place is locally known as "Little Myanmar".¹⁶

there in 1967–68; author's personal discussion, Nago City (Okinawa), Japan, 24 February 2010.

14 Author's observations, Macau, April 2011.

15 Author's observations, Taipei, September 2011.

16 Author's observations, Singapore, March 2012.

Japan

Japan seems a distant and unfamiliar destination for Burmese exiles. Age-old connections with war veterans have helped foster a positive image of Myanmar in Japan. But the era of “*birukuchi*” (Japanese for “crazy about Burma”) did not materialize in immigration policy privileges, even after the 1988 uprising. It is estimated that the Burmese population in Japan has long lingered around 10,000 or so – most of them without legal status (Lintner 1991; Seekins 2007: 141). Over the years – despite Tokyo having signed the 1951 International Convention on Refugees – very few Burmese have been officially granted refugee status: Bureaucratic burdens, xenophobic resistance and the convenience of an unregistered and cheap foreign labour force have long deterred any progress on that front. Hundreds of Chin, Kachin and Karen farmers have migrated to Chiba, Tokyo and Nagoya prefectures in recent years, as have dozens of Shans and even some Rohingyas (Banki 2006b: 42). Some have set up NGOs and religious associations such as the Kachin Christian Fellowship Church, the Karen National Union-Japan, the Chin Women Organization and the Chin National Community-Japan.¹⁷ Political scientist Susan Banki is one of the few scholars who have observed Burmese refugees there, highlighting their internecine rifts (Banki 2006a and 2006b).

Philippines

Hundreds of Catholic Burmese have found exile in the Philippines since the late 1980s. The Philippines is a signatory of the 1951 Refugee Convention, and therefore facilitates the assistance provided by the UNHCR to refugees on Filipino soil. The Philippines is the usual transit point of many Burmese would-be US asylum-seekers en route either to the US-controlled island of Guam or to California (Mirante 2001; Thawngmung 2005). Others pass through Manila before migrating to Japan or Korea (Banki 2006a: 331, 2006b: 40). Aside from those, approximately 200 Burmese students are reported to be living in the country in any given relatively recent year (*Mizuma News Agency* 2009).

South Korea

Like Japan, South Korea is an improbable destination for Burmese expatriates. However, with the post-1980s economic boom and Korea’s ageing population, the demand for cheap foreign labour, whether skilled or un-

17 Author’s e-mail exchange with CNC-Japan Chairman, March 2011.

skilled, has soared. In 2010, a new visa agreement was negotiated between Naypyidaw and Seoul that increased the number of Burmese migrants. By June 2011, approximately 4,000 Burmese had migrated under this revamped Employment Permit System (EPS) scheme (*The Myanmar Times* 2011a, and *Asia News* 2011). Some Burmese have become politically active while in South Korea. They are organized, along with Korean activists, most notably around the Burma Action Korea and the Free Burma Korea associations in Seoul. As for other valuable channels of migration, Korean Protestant and Evangelical churches have been extremely active along the Thailand–Myanmar border (Horstmann 2011). They have enhanced solidarity networks, encouraging (often newly converted) Pentecostal and Presbyterian Christian Burmese to migrate to Korea.

Last, Burmese migrants and refugees have also found unsecure shelter elsewhere in Asia, but documentation is lacking. The UNHCR acknowledged the presence of some 3,000 Burmese refugees in Indonesia as of mid-2011 – most of them en route to Australia (*The Jakarta Post* 2011). A few hundred Burmese students and monks live in Sri Lanka. Burmese exile media reported the resettlement of Burmese orphans there after the passage of the cyclone Nargis in May 2008 (*The Irrawaddy-on-Line* 2010). There is lack of data regarding the presence of Burmese overseas elsewhere in Asia – in Laos, Vietnam, Cambodia, Brunei, Timor-Leste and Nepal, in particular. But all in all, it can be argued that today some 3 million Burmese reside outside of Myanmar (see Figure 1).

The Burmese Diaspora, Agent of Democratization?

Recent scholarship on diasporas has explored how diasporic communities have shaped international affairs, and policymaking in their homelands and host countries. In particular, some scholars claim that conflict-generated diasporas increasingly engage with the democratization of their home countries (Schmitz 2004, Shain 2005, Koinova 2009). Diasporic political activism usually aims to publicize the cause of an exilic community, collect funds worldwide to then formulate policies that can pressure their home government and initiate political and democratic change. In doing so, a diaspora creates a transnational civic and political space that ignores borders and in which knowledge-sharing and the learning of democratization practices in exile are essential. Comparatively, the regional literature has recently shown great interest in Kashmiri, East Timorese, Tamil and Tibetan “long-distance” nationalism and pro-democracy activism (Ellis and Khan 1998; Wise 2004; Wayland 2004; Frechette 2007). In the case of Myanmar, it can be argued that some Burmese diasporic movements have proved quite influential in

mobilizing not only their communities in exile but also some Western states and international organizations (Dale 2011; Williams 2012). But as far as democratization in the homeland is concerned, mobilization by exiles has arguably proved far less successful (Zaw Oo 2006).

“Free Burma”: Transnational Activism in the Diaspora

Since the 1988 uprising, Burmese communities living abroad have opened up new transnational spaces for democratic dissent. Exiles and refugees, even if uprooted, often keep a direct connection to domestic social and political events, mostly through relatives or friends. Extant research has showed how, worldwide, Burmese exiled groups are mobilized around pro-democracy discourses (Thawngmung 2005; Zaw Oo 2006; Dale 2011; Williams 2012). The personal connections some Burmese exiles have built up with their host countries’ policy, economic and intellectual circles have also facilitated the formation of extensive transnational networks of collective action, all using their host countries as a bridgehead for their struggle. Transnational pro-democracy campaigns have been conducted unceasingly since the early 1990s. In the 1990s Burmese media in exile started to become a significant source of information (even if biased), a catalyst and channel for diasporic mobilization (Humphries 2009; Cho 2011). Even more crucial in expanding Burmese diasporic advocacy practices have been the virtual spaces enabled by new technologies. In the late 1990s, Internet and high-speed telecommunications created a Myanmar-focused cyberspace that has been very well instrumentalized by transnational activists (Zarni 2000; Zaw Oo 2006; Steinberg 2008).

Plentiful transnational political associations were set up during the 1990s to promote democracy in Myanmar while highlighting atrocities there. Some smartly joined hands with Western philanthropists and international human rights groups, such as Amnesty International and the Soros Foundation. In 1990 the Burmese government-in-exile (National Coalition Government of the Union of Burma – NCGUB) was formed, led by elected parliamentarians who had fled Myanmar after the junta rejected the results of the May 1990 elections. In 1992, the NCGUB, along with several Burmese opposition parties and ethnic armed groups – later joined by trade union associations and individuals – founded the National Council of the Union of Burma (NCUB) to bolster their advocacy work and coordinate international campaigns. In the same vein, the Alternative ASEAN Network on Burma (ALTSEAN-Burma), an umbrella organization founded in 1996, represents a joining of militant associations and human rights groups from various ASEAN civil societies. In 2004 it helped create the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Myanmar Caucus. Through this caucus, elected members

from parliamentary ASEAN countries (Indonesia, Thailand, and the Philippines) lobby their own governments to adopt more liberal policies toward Myanmar (Jones 2009). The Women's League of Burma (WLB, formed in 1999) is comprised of several ethnic-based associations of women of Burmese origin. It is one of the rare examples of a Burmese trans-ethnic advocacy group – most others having followed a strong ethnicization during the first decade of the 2000s. The All Burma Students' Democratic Front (ABSDF, formed in 1988), the Human Rights Education Institute of Burma (HREIB, since 2000), the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP, since 2000), the Ethnic National Council (ENC, since 2001) and various community-based NGO or foreign representatives of Burmese domestic political forces such as the National League for Democracy – Liberated Areas (NLD-LA) have consistently created more opportunities for political action within the Burmese diasporic space. These associations have long been assisted by foreign-led philanthropic institutions, as the worldwide “Free Burma” campaigns illustrate (Dale 2011). “Free Burma” militant coalitions – very vocal and well connected to the international media – have broadened their struggle through local branches in Thailand, India, Bangladesh, Japan, Korea, Taiwan, and the Philippines.

Although they constitute numerically small foreign enclaves in their host countries, Burmese exiled dissidents and their public organizations have managed to visibly champion pro-democracy policies outside of Myanmar, notes Zaw Oo, co-founder of the Vahu Development Institute (Zaw Oo 2006: 233). They have been most evidently influential in mobilizing Western governments: Without their transnational pro-democracy activism, the West would certainly not have defined its policies of sanctions against military-ruled Myanmar in the 1990s (Dale 2011; Williams 2012). But though they have patiently built up transnational information infrastructures, large-scale advocacy channels, and policy constituencies in a position to leverage policymaking in Western states, they have been less influential *vis-à-vis* Asian governments – above all in Myanmar itself – in terms of fostering democratic reforms. Looking at the past two decades, many authors have dismissed the domestic impact of politicized Burmese diasporic movements. Their mobilization for the democratization of the homeland has not transformed domestic politics the way it was intended. “Free Burma” movements have not achieved their primary goal of ending militarized violence in Myanmar, restoring democracy and toppling the decades-old authoritarian rule (Steinberg 2008).

Aung San Suu Kyi's third liberation from house arrest (November 2010) and the civil/military transition that followed the dissolution of the junta-led State Peace and Development Council of General Than Shwe in March

2011 did not have much to do with pressure from the outside world and the Burmese exilic movements. External and transnational forces played only a small role in the post-junta transition and the formation of a reform-minded government led by the ex-general Thein Sein, experts argue (Steinberg 2012; Selth 2012). This was very much a top-down process initiated by a new generation of military officers who followed the 2008 constitution and the 2003 *Roadmap to Discipline-flourishing Democracy* to the letter – two programmatic political agendas devised by the previous military regime (Callahan 2012). Most observers were surprised by the breadth of the reforms announced by Thein Sein's administration after March 2011, and by the subsequent dynamism of the political transition from direct military rule to more subtle praetorian governance. This was something very few international and Burmese activist movements had wished for; regime change, rather than a gradual transition controlled by the Burmese top military leadership, has always been promoted from abroad by the pro-democracy diaspora. Only few Burmese exiles, often lambasted for their views, have advocated for such an incremental policy approach – for instance, Myanmar-born analysts from the Vahu Development Institute (Chiang Mai) and various Burmese academics from abroad (Singapore, Hong Kong).

Divisive Politics, at Home and Abroad

Burmese dissident movements in exile have proved quite successful in exporting the question of democracy in Myanmar to the wider diaspora. But in doing so, they have also brought along their multiple sensibilities and Myanmar's contentious politics. Undercurrents of ethnic, communal and personality-based divisiveness have consistently plagued the Burmese diasporic communities – echoing the inside situation. Since the 1990s, bitterly polarized politics in exile have much impeded collective actions, despite the high visibility of the pro-democracy struggle (Steinberg 2008; Williams 2012). Even Aung San Suu Kyi, her role and the mapping of her political strategies, have been vividly debated among overseas Burmese. This uncompromising activism of some Burmese organizations in exile has thus increasingly been denounced, especially internally. In a landmark article for instance, Michael Aung-Thwin, an academic of Burmese origin, denounced the pro-democracy “jihadism” some activists have encouraged (Aung-Thwin 2001). In fact, despite the fact that almost all communities have a common goal, Burmese politics are as divisive in the diaspora as they are at home. As political scientist Ardeth Maung Thawngmung has emphasized, Burmese overseas communities tend to simply “recycle home politics” when resettled abroad (Thawngmung 2005). This impedes a broader and more effective leverage of the diaspora at home.

Ethnic divisiveness and intra-community rivalries are often exacerbated in exile, reckon both Gabriel Sheffer (2003: 237) and Yossi Shain (2005: 44). It is even more obvious when the prospect of a quick return to the homeland becomes a distant dream. In Thailand, the city of Chiang Mai (and, to a lesser degree, Mae Sot) has been a transnational hub of Burmese dissent since the 1990s. But it has also become one of the most visible sites of intra-community divisions. The emotional dichotomy between insiders and outsiders has been further amplified by sectarian identifications within the diaspora (Beatty 2010). After failed attempts to unify the Myanmar-focused transnational networks under a pro-democracy flag (often Burman-led), the ethnicization of Burmese exile politics has been strengthened throughout the 2000s. The various Burmese diasporic organizations promote different – and often contending – agendas, beset by bitter memories of the deeper rifts long observed in the homeland (Williams 2012: 134). For instance, ethnic groups abroad often underscore their cultural, civil and socio-economic rights as minorities in Myanmar – rights that have to be defended in the face of a Burman majority. Inge Brees has suggested that the various non-Burman ethnic groups in exile, feeling they were not granted enough space or political attention compared to dominant Burman dissident elites, have articulated their diasporic activism according to their own ethnic-based interests (Brees 2010: 293). They focus their struggle on the re-invention of a Burmese “federal” state. Ethnic Karens highlight the atrocities their kin are the object of in combat zones, whereas Christian Chins promote religious freedom. Kachin NGOs have produced key reports on social issues plaguing their homeland, such as drug and women trafficking. This has also palpable in regards to Shan nationalism in northern Thailand (Jirattikorn 2011) and Rohingya activism, the latter viscerally struggling against Rakhine militants.¹⁸

In contrast, ethnic Burmans in exile seem far more inclined to stress global political and civil rights and the need to end the military rule in Myanmar (Brooten 2004: 185, Brees 2009: 39). They favour the spotlight provided by Aung San Suu Kyi – a Burman – and the fight for democracy, not federalism. In their host country, Burman and ethnic Burmese exiles also compete against each other for better access to resources, or attention from international refugee agencies and the political leadership of their host societies. In Tokyo, for instance, Susan Banki has highlighted the way the various Burmese communities have been jockeying for the same transnational space of recognition, while vying for access to financial assistance and direct dia-

18 Author’s discussions with representatives from the Rakhine Women Union (RWU), Arakan Liberation Party (ALP) and the Arakan Rohingya National Organization (ARNO) in Dhaka and Chittagong, October 2007.

logue with the Japanese authorities (Banki 2006b). Therefore, the romanticized image of a transnational cohesion within the Burmese democracy movement collapses in face of the political realities of the host country and the divisive impact of ethnic activism. In Japan, and also in Thailand and India, Chin, Kachin, Shan and Burman refugees compete with others for legal recognition or resettlement in third countries. And they tend to prioritize the interests of the ethnic group they belong to rather than committing to a “pan-Burmese” solidarity. In New Delhi, the political lobbying activities of the Burmese in exile have long been led by the Burmans. But the more vocal and well-organized associations helping refugees are the ones led by the Chins (Baujard 2008). Anyone who has observed regular political gatherings of Burmese over the past decade would have noticed their social and ethnic divisions, as well as their inability to act as a unified group, which impedes their leverage.

In face of the gradual ethnicization of Burmese-exile politics, it therefore remains chimerical to envision a unified “pan-Burmese” diasporic political space. Besides, the more divisive the diaspora is and remains abroad, the less stable and pacified their homeland will be in the future if they return, according to the literature (Williams 2012: 141). In-depth research will thus be needed to further analyse these intra-community divisive politics and their long-term impact on the democratization of the country, especially in light of the post-2011 political opening-up. Some observers have indeed started questioning the relevance of the Burmese transnational activism since the country started to witness dramatic – and positive – change in 2011 and 2012 (*The New York Times* 2012; see also an online report released in November 2011 by the *Mizzima* media group (*Mizzima News Agency* 2011)). If Burmese exiles return to a post-junta Myanmar, would they bring home the contentious and divisive agendas they have cultivated abroad?

The Burmese Diaspora, Agent of Development?

Beyond politics, an emerging scholarship has pinpointed the long-distance social, cultural and economic influence a diaspora exerts on its home society (Tambiah 2000; Al-Ali and Koser 2002; Patterson 2006; Cohen 2008; Kapur 2010). Diasporic groups can act as “agents of development” for their homeland, writes Robin Cohen (2008: 168–69). As much as political activism, financial – but also social – remittances sent back home by globalized diasporic groups have direct and multi-dimensional effects on the socio-economic development of their homeland. Development can be fostered *by* the diaspora, *through* the diaspora or *in* the diaspora, further argues Rubin Patterson (2006: 1897). Although divisive politics prove resilient among

overseas Burmese, the latter have made significant socio-economic contributions to their respective communities back home and demonstrated major individual or collective social achievements in their host societies over the years, an aspect that this note aims to stress. In light of the recent post-junta opening up, the Burmese diaspora now faces two choices: Either the overseas Burmese can follow the Philippines model, which would imply that most exiles remain abroad, work there, earn money but send it back to Myanmar (remittances contribute to 13 per cent of the Philippines GDP, see Camroux 2008: 9), or they can emulate the Timor-Leste model, with the elites groomed abroad, but then returning home with prestige to take up leadership positions, government jobs, invest and create new businesses (Wise 2004: 174).

Remittances and the Development of the Homeland

Most Burmese in exile have remained much connected to their homeland, through relatives or friends. Many have earned and saved money as migrant workers, expatriate traders, students or cross-border smugglers. They can then send substantial financial remittances back to Myanmar – most of the time informally (bypassing international financial sanctions imposed by the West has proved quite a challenge). Burmese legal migrants registered with Burmese embassies abroad have long been required to remit between 30 and 50 per cent of their (declared) salaries through the Myanmar Foreign Trade Bank (Myat Mon 2010: 35).¹⁹ Most have not though, and informality has prevailed. Australian academics Turnell, Vicar and Bradford have studied the extent of such financial remittances made by Burmese workers in Thailand. They have underlined their primary objective: ensuring the basic survival of kin who remain in the homeland, without paying taxes to the Burmese military-run state (Turnell, Vicar, and Bradford 2008). Many Burmese domestic maids, skilled nurses and students in Singapore and Malaysia are replicating these processes from their respective host countries (Toyota 2006). Burmese Muslim gem and jade traders, including Rohingyas, have been expanding their commercial networks in Yunnan since the 1990s (Egreteau forthcoming 2012). Some have built up wealthy networks that have enabled them to send the money earned in China back to Myanmar – including to Rakhine State, where most of their relatives remain.²⁰ However,

19 However, the Thein Sein government announced in August 2011 a sharp reduction of this income tax for Burmese expatriates: *The Myanmar Times* 2011b.

20 Author's discussions with Rohingya jade traders in Ruili, China, August 2011 and May 2012.

studies showing how remittances are spent inside Myanmar are still scarce. There is also a lack of consensus on how to best evaluate their local impact.

Beyond financial remittances, transnational flows of ideas and social capital produce new forms of long-distance influence for a diaspora, claims the scholarship. In particular, the “social remittances” developed by Peggy Levitt demonstrate how movements of social behaviours and cultural beliefs from host to sending countries can influence the latter (Levitt 2001). Inge Brees has applied this innovative approach to the approximately 2 million Burmese migrants living in Thailand (Brees 2010: 288–289). She stresses the value for those in Myanmar of the transfer of ideas, ways of thinking, or social beliefs, notably via snail mail, the Internet, TV and radio, but also by way of holiday visits, cross-border daily exchanges and, more globally, education and knowledge acquired abroad. Many foreign-sponsored schools in Thailand offer trainings in human and civil rights, environmental issues, information technologies and computers, along with English (McLean 2004: 336–337). Western philanthropy has allowed for foundations to finance the education of young Burmese abroad – notably through the Thabyay Education Network, the Foreign Affairs Training School of NCUB, Earthrights Schools, the US National Endowment for Democracy, and the Soros-funded Open Society Institute. All the trainings received by the Burmese diaspora abroad may positively affect the homeland, at present or in the long run.

Returning?

Arguably, the myth of return is one of the strongest characteristics of a diaspora (Safran 1991; Van Hear 1998). Diasporic discourses often stress the desire to come home. Whilst there are exiled groups who do effectively cut linkages off, adopt new citizenships and assimilate to their host societies, other diasporic communities keep emotional connections with the homeland, hoping to return. Daniele Joly terms the refugee who aims to establish permanent settlement in his/her host society a “Rubicon” migrant, whilst the “Odyssean” refugee instead nurtures the goal of returning (Joly 2002). The recent post-junta transformations seem bound to rekindle the relationship between the Burmese post-junta state and the wider Burmese diaspora. Newly elected President Thein Sein has steered Myanmar along a reformist path since March 2011 (Callahan 2012). He has since repeatedly appealed to the Burmese in exile to return and work for a “new Myanmar”. In a speech delivered in August 2011, he pleaded:

We will make reviews to make sure that Myanmar citizens living abroad for [any reason] can return home if they have not committed

any crime. And if a Myanmar citizen in a foreign country who committed crimes applies [to return] home to serve terms, we will show our benevolent attitude in dealing [with] his case (*The New Light of Myanmar*, English version, 2011: 8).

More recently, *The New Light of Myanmar*, still the Burmese state mouthpiece, in a landmark editorial tried to convince the Burmese migrant workers, students and dissidents in exile to promptly return: “Come back! [...] If you cherish your motherland, [...] join us! (*The New Light of Myanmar* 2012: 2).

The combination of money, ideas, expertise and new social behaviours learned in exile and then brought back to Myanmar by and through the various returning Burmese diasporic groups may well indeed impact the country’s development path. It will surely be critical to its long-term stability and pacification. After decades of state-run political and economic mismanagement, the collapse of a once-proud education system, and endless military-led violence, the country needs skills and expertise that still cannot be found within its borders. It is necessary to groom non-military Burmese elites who are acquainted with the twenty-first-century global and interconnected world, who have knowledge of modern administrative, political and democratic governance, and who are familiar with new technologies and the complex art of business management. Capacity has to be greatly improved inside the country, and local institutions (beyond the armed forces) along with the emerging civil society have to be strengthened from the inside, too, to create balance and alternatives to Myanmar’s old military-dominated and oligarchic system. Another unspoken reason for wanting to attract the diaspora back is that in a country bruised by colonial and nationalist legacies, xenophobia remains a powerful ideology. With the help of the outside world, an indigenous development of the country has to be fostered, but it should not be left only to foreigners. The Burmese rulers have repeatedly responded xenophobically to outsider-led development and economic growth – in colonial and postcolonial times.

The Burmese diaspora – the “Odyssean”, but more probably the “Rubicon” Burmese exiles – may therefore have a major role to play in the post-junta landscape of Myanmar. Some prominent dissidents have already returned. A handful of former student leaders of the 1988 pro-democracy uprising, for instance, returned in early 2012, including the founders of the Vahu Development Institute (*Agence France-Presse* 2012; *The Myanmar Times* 2012). In doing so, they followed the Timor-Leste model, which saw key Timorese leaders in exile returning to govern (Wise 2004). Other well-known Burmese political exiles have also decided to channel back and forth between Yangon and their place of exile – for instance, high-profile managers of various Burmese media in exile (*Mizzima*, *The Irrawaddy*, *Democratic*

Voice of Burma) and even a few prominent ethnic politicians.²¹ But as of mid-2012, the majority of key diasporic leaders remained more sceptical, reluctant to return. No general amnesty has been officially announced by Thein Sein's administration – like the one granted in 1980 by General Ne Win, which allowed deposed Prime Minister U Nu to return from his Indian exile. Very few Burmese refugees have come back despite the impatience shown by Thai and Bangladeshi authorities to close down UNHCR-run camps along their borders.

Worse, in June 2011 a new conflict paradoxically emerged in the China–Myanmar borderlands, with the breakdown of the Kachin Independence Organization's 17-year-old ceasefire. It has since produced some 75,000 internally displaced people and Kachin refugees (*The Bangkok Post* 2012). Mistrust lingers, and diasporic discourses sceptical about the post-junta transition are dominant.²² In the short term, the Philippines model therefore seems the most practical option for the wider Burmese diaspora. Myanmar has been changing in surprising ways recently, and this should be recognized by Burmese exiles who will now be able to interact more closely with their homeland, although they often do not yet envision a swift return. More are remitting rather than returning. For this to continue, easing transnational transfer of money between Myanmar and the rest of the world is imperative. The definitive relaxing of international financial sanctions imposed by Western states against the country will thus be expected by potential Burmese remitters.

Concluding Remarks and Future Research

The past twenty years have witnessed a proliferation of diasporic communities originating from Myanmar. The Burmese polymorphous diaspora has followed different paths of migration out of the country, pressed by a wide range of motivations. Burmese exiles, migrants or refugees have chosen – or were forced to – different places of exile throughout Asia (and beyond) and have established contrasting relationships with both their host countries and homeland. They have faced varied diasporic experiences, from the Rohingya boat people in Malaysia to Burman nurses in Singapore, Chin refugees in India, Karen dissidents in Thailand or Kachin jade traders in Yunnan. They engage differently with their respective Burmese homelands also, sometimes

21 Like Aung Zaw, editor of *The Irrawaddy* (Aung Zaw 2012), and Harn Yawngwe, a Shan political leader (Harn Yawngwe 2011).

22 Author's discussion with Dr. Tint Swe, NLD member in exile in India, New Delhi, August 2012.

through competing transnational networks. Some have tried assimilating into their host societies, but most have maintained a peculiar sort of diasporic consciousness and solidarity, the latter being chiefly built on ethnic and community ties. Multi-sited, these communities of Burmese origin might include today some 3 million migrants, refugees, exiles and expatriates. They have had an increasingly complex set of impacts on contemporary Myanmar, too – but this remains difficult to measure. At first, the post-1988 struggle for the democratization of the homeland would have appeared unifying. But the proclivity to favour ethno-national groups over trans-ethnic ones has prevented unification, even abroad. The more political the various Burmese diasporic movements emerge, the more divided they stand. Above all, if they proved quite influential in mobilizing their own communities in exile as well as in some Western states, as far as democratization in their homeland is concerned, their mobilization has proven arguably less successful.

Nevertheless, even if the transnational and diasporic mobilization for the pro-democracy cause has proved less fertile than envisioned during the 1990s, one should not underestimate the socio-economic dimension of these consistently evolving migrations from and to Myanmar. After years of self-imposed isolation, Myanmar and its diasporas have progressively expanded their interconnections within an ever more globalized Asia. This should be the focus of new academic research. Overseas Burmese students, workers, trainees and dissident exiles do influence the Burmese homeland today – whether they return home or simply interact with it. It is likely, it can be argued, that their leverage will expand in light of the political opening of the post-junta landscape that has been observed since 2011 – although the Filipino model of remitting in mid-run rather than swiftly returning home may remain in place in the coming years. The significance of the diasporic transnational networks to and from the Burmese homeland needs to be further documented, at least to better construe their potential and to anticipate the realization of their role as “agents” of development and, in the long run, as participants in the democratization of their homeland. How do we measure this transnational impact? How do we better evaluate the diasporic influence of Burmese exiles on their homeland? The dissolution of the 22-year-old “military junta” has opened new doors, especially for the academic world. New opportunities for field research now exist beyond the traditional focus on the Thai–Myanmar borders and the case of the Rohingyas; the in-depth comparative studies of these Burmese diasporic groups and their complex interactions with their homeland(s) that are now increasingly possible to undertake should be better able to capture the pivotal im-

portance these diasporas may gain in the future, as they might hold one of the precious keys to Myanmar's long-due democratization.

References

- Abrar, C. R. (2003), Still Waiting for a Better Morrow: A Decade of Burmese Refugees in Bangladesh, in: P. R. Chari, M. Joseph, and S. Chandran (eds), *Missing Boundaries: Refugees, Migrants, Stateless and Internally Displaced persons in South Asia*, New Delhi: Manohar, 87–98.
- Agence France-Presse* (2012), Exiles emotional upon return to Burma, 10 February.
- Al-Ali, N., and K. Koser (eds) (2002), *New Approaches to Migration? Transnational Communities and the Transformation of Home*, London: Routledge.
- Alexander, A. (2008), Without Refuge: Chin Refugees in India and Malaysia, in: *Forced Migrations Review*, 30, 36–37.
- Anthias, F. (1998), Evaluating 'Diaspora': Beyond Ethnicity?, in: *Sociology*, 32, 3, 557–580.
- Arnold, D., and K. Hewison (2005), Exploitation in Global Supply Chains: Burmese Workers in Mae Sot, in: *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, 35, 3, 319–340.
- Asia News* (2011), Burmese immigrants, hope for the future of Korea, 11 August.
- Aung Zaw (2012), Myanmar critic reflects on trip back home after 20 years, in: *The Wall Street Journal*, 20 February.
- Aung-Thwin, M. (2001), Parochial Universalism, Democracy Jihad, and the Orientalist Image of Burma: The New Evangelism, in: *Pacific Affairs*, 74, 4, 483–506.
- Banerjee, P. (2006), Women Trafficking and Statelessness in South Asia, in: *Refugee Watch*, 27, 74–93.
- Banki, S. (2009), Contested Regimes, Aid Flows, and Refugee Flows: The Case of Burma, in: *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs*, 28, 2, 47–73.
- Banki, S. (2006a), Burmese Refugees in Tokyo: Livelihoods in the Urban Environment, in: *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 19, 3, 328–344.
- Banki, S. (2006b), The Triad of Transnationalism, Legal Recognition, and Local Community: Shaping Political Space for the Burmese Refugees in Japan, in: *Refugee*, 23, 2, 36–46.
- Baujard, J. (2011), Refugees or Diasporas? The Indian Policy on Refugees: The Case of Delhi, in: Eric Leclerc (ed.), *From International to Transnational Political Actors: Case Studies of the Indian Diaspora*, New Delhi: CSH-Manohar, 65–85.

- Baujard, J. (2008), *Identité 'refugié', identité transversale. Les réfugiés à Delhi au sein des dynamiques institutionnelles, communautaires et associatives*, Thèse d'Ethnologie (sous la direction de François Robinne), Marseille: Université de Provence.
- Beatty, L. M. (2010), Democracy Activism and Assistance in Burma: Sites of Resistances, in: *International Journal*, 65, 3, 619–636.
- Bhaumik, S. (2003), The Returnees and the Refugees: Migration from Burma, in: Ranbir Samaddar (ed.), *Refugees and the State: Practices of Asylum and Care in India, 1947–2000*, New Delhi: Sage Publications, 182–210.
- Bhaumik, Subir (2000), Refugees smuggled to Pakistan, in: *BBC South Asia News*, 8 February.
- Brees, I. (2010), Refugee and Transnationalism on the Thai–Burmese Border, in: *Global Networks*, 10, 2, 282–299.
- Brees, I. (2009), Burmese Refugee Transnationalism: What Is the Effect?, in: *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs*, 28, 2, 23–46.
- Brooten, L. (2004), Human Rights Discourse and the Development of Democracy in a Multiethnic State, in: *Asian Journal of Communication*, 14, 2, 174–191.
- Callahan, Mary P. (2012), The Opening in Burma: The Generals Loosen Their Grip, in: *Journal of Democracy*, 23, 4, 120–131.
- Camroux, D. (2008), *Nationalizing Transnationalism? The Philippine State and the Filipino Diaspora*, Paris: Etudes du CERI, No. 152.
- Cho, V. (2011), Searching for Home: Explorations in New Media and the Burmese Diaspora in New Zealand, in: *Pacific Journalism Review*, 17, 1, 194–209.
- Clifford, J. (1994), Diasporas, in: *Cultural Anthropology*, 9, 3, 302–338.
- Cohen, R. (2008), *Global Diasporas: An Introduction*, 2nd edition, London: Routledge.
- Cohen, R. (1996), Diasporas and the Nation-State: from Victims to Challengers, in: *International Affairs*, 72, 3, 507–520.
- Dale, J. G. (2011), *Free Burma: Transnational Legal Action and Corporate Accountability*, Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press.
- Datta, S. (2003), Myanmarese Refugees in India: An Enquiry into their Condition and Status, in: O. Mishra and A. J. Majumdar (eds), *The Elsewhere People: Crossborder Migration, Refugee Protection, and State Response*, New Delhi: Lancer's Books, 125–135.
- Democratic Voice of Burma* (2011), Tun Tun, Burma Campaign Malaysia: 'Migrants Rights? No', 20 January.
- Eberle, M. L., and I. Holliday (2011), Precarity and Political Immobilisation; Migrants from Burma in Chiang Mai, Thailand, in: *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, 41, 3, 371–392.

- Egreteau, R. (forthcoming 2012), The Burmese Jade Trail: Transnational Networks, China, and the (Relative) Impact of International Sanctions against Myanmar's Gems, in: N. Cheesman, M. Skidmore, and T. Wilson (eds), *Myanmar's Transition: Openings, Obstacles, and Opportunities*, Singapore: ISEAS Publications.
- Ellis, P., and Z. Khan (1998), Diasporic Mobilisation and the Kashmiri Issue in British Politics, in: *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 24, 3, 471–488.
- Espenilla, J. J. F. (2010), Injustice Ignored: A Case Study of the Irregular Sea Migration of the Rohingya Boat People, in: *Asia Europe Journal*, 8, 45–59.
- Flood, Derek (2008), Refugees as Migrants: The Rohingya in Pakistan, in: *The Huffington Post*, 12 May.
- Frchette, A. (2007), Democracy and Democratization among Tibetans in Exile, in: *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 66, 1, 97–127.
- Gilroy, P. (1997), Diaspora and the Detours of Identity, in: K. Woodward (ed.), *Identity and Difference*, London: Sage Publications, 299–343.
- Grundy-Warr, C., and S. Y. E. Wong (2002), Geographies of Displacement: The Karenni and the Shan across the Myanmar-Thailand Border, in: *Singapore Journal of Tropical Geography*, 23, 1, 93–122.
- Grundy-Warr, C., and S. Y. E. Wong (1997), Sanctuary under a Plastic Sheet: The Unresolved Problem of Rohingya Refugees, in: *IBRU Boundary and Security Bulletin Autumn*, 5, 3, 79–91.
- Grundy-Warr, C., A. Rajah, S. Y. E. Wong, and Z. Ali (1997), Power, Territoriality, and Cross-Border Insecurity: Regime Security as an Aspect of Burma's Refugee Crisis, in: *Geopolitics and International Boundaries*, 2, 2, 70–115.
- Harn Yawngwe (2011), An exile returns, in: *The Irrawaddy-on-line*, 10 November, online: <www2.irrawaddy.org/article.php?art_id=22429> (10 August 2012).
- Hasan, A. (2010), Migration, Small Towns and Social Transformations in Pakistan, in: *Environment and Urbanization*, 22, 1, 33–50.
- Hortsmann, A. (2011), Sacred Networks and Struggles among Karen Baptists across the Thailand–Burma Border, in: *Moussons*, 17, 85–104.
- Human Rights Watch (2012), *The Government Could Have Stopped This: Sectarian Violence and Ensuing Abuses in Burma's Arakan State*, Washington DC: HRW Publications.
- Humphries, R. (2009), Saffron-robed Monks and Digital Flash Cards: The Development and Challenges of Burmese Exile Media, in: Derrick M. Nault (ed.), *Development in Asia: Interdisciplinary, Post-neoliberal and Transnational Perspectives*, 237–258.

- Hyndman, J. (2001), Business and Blundgeon at the Border: A Transnational Political Economy of Human Displacement in Thailand and Burma, in: *GeoJournal*, 55, 39–46.
- International Herald Tribune* (2012), Government has not done enough for us since our arrival in Pakistan, 3 August.
- Jirattikorn, A. (2011), Shan Virtual Insurgency and the Spectatorship of the Nation, in: *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 42, 1, 17–38.
- Joly, D. (2002), Odyssean and Rubicon Refugees: Towards a Typology of Refugees in the Land of Exile, in: *International Migration*, 40, 6, 3–23.
- Jones, L. (2009), Democratization and Foreign Policy in Southeast Asia: The Case of the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Myanmar Caucus, in: *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, 22, 3, 387–406.
- Kapur, D. (2010), *Diaspora, Development, and Democracy: The Domestic Impact of International Migration from India*, Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Kearney, M. (1995), The Local and the Global: An Anthropology of Globalization and Transnationalism, in: *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 24, 547–565.
- Koinova, M. (2009), Diasporas and Democratization in the Post-communist World, in: *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, 42, 1, 41–64.
- Lang, H. J. (2002), *Fear and Sanctuary: Burmese Refugees in Thailand*, Ithaca NY: Southeast Asia Program, Cornell University.
- Levitt, P. (2001), *The Transnational Villagers*, Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Lewa, C. (2008), Asia's New Boat People, in: *Forced Migrations Review*, 30, 40–42.
- Lintner, B. (1991), Burma: One-way 'Open Door', in: *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 4 July, 28–29.
- Lu, H.-c. T. (2008), Festivalizing Thingyan, Negotiating Ethnicity: Burmese Chinese Migrants in Taiwan, in: *Journal of Burma Studies*, 12, 29–62.
- Malkki, Liisa H. (1995), *Purity and Exile: Violence, Memory and National Cosmology among Hutu Refugees in Tanzania*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Mathieson, D. S. (2009), Plight of the Damned: Burma's Rohingya, in: *Global Asia*, 4, 1, 87–91.
- McLean, K. (2004), Reconfiguring the Debate on Engagement: Burmese Exiles and the Politics of Aid, in: *Critical Asian Studies*, 36, 3, 323–354.
- Mirante, E. (2001), The Castaways: Refugees Stranded on the Island of Guam, in: *Burma Debate*, 8, 1, 12–17.
- Mizzima News Agency* (2012), Up to four million Burmese working abroad, 22 August, online: <www.mizzima.com/news/world/7816-up-to-4-million-burmese-working-abroad.html> (28 August 2012).

- Mizzima News Agency* (2011), Foreign-based dissident organizations reorganizing their missions, 28 November, online: <www.mizzima.com/news/inside-burma/6226-foreign-based-dissident-organizations-reorganizing-their-missions.html> (10 August 2012).
- Mizzima News Agency* (2009), Burmese community hit in Manila floods, 1 October, online: <www.mizzima.com/news/regional/2845-burmese-community-hit-in-manila-floods-.html> (28 August 2012).
- Myat Mon (2010), Burmese Labour Migration into Thailand: Governance of Migration and Labour Rights, in: *Journal of the Asia Pacific Economy*, 15, 1, 33–44.
- Patterson, R. (2006), Transnationalism: Diaspora-Homeland Development, in: *Social Forces*, 84, 4, 1891–1907.
- Pollock, J., and Soe Lin Aung (2010), Critical Times: Gendered Implications of the Economic Crisis for Migrant Workers from Burma/Myanmar in Thailand, in: *Gender and Development*, 18, 2, 213–227.
- Portes, A. (1999), Conclusion: Towards a New World – The Origins and Effects of Transnational Activities, in: *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 22, 2, 463–477.
- Safran, W. (1991), Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return, in: *Diasporas*, 1, 1, 83–99.
- Schmitz, H. P. (2004), Domestic and Transnational Perspectives on Democratization, in: *International Studies Review*, 6, 3, 403–426.
- Seekins, D. (2007), *Burma and Japan since 1940: From 'Co-Prosperity' to 'Quiet Dialogue'*, Copenhagen: NIAS Press.
- Selth Andrew (2012), Burma reforms: foreigners can't take much credit, in: *The Lowy Interpreter*, 30 January, online: <www.loyyinterpreter.org/post/2012/01/30/Burma-reforms-foreigners-cant-take-credit.aspx> (10 August 2012).
- Shain, Y. (2005), *The Frontier of Loyalty: Political Exiles in the Age of Nation-State*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Shain, Y. (2002), The Role of Diasporas in Conflict Perpetuation and Resolution, in: *SAIS Review*, 22, 2, 115–144.
- Shain, Y., and A. Barth (2003), Diasporas and International Relations Theory, in: *International Organization*, 57, 3, 449–479.
- Shain, Y., and M. Shermann (1998), Dynamics of Disintegration: Diaspora, Secession and the Paradox of Nation-States, in: *Nations and Nationalism*, 4, 3, 321–346.
- Sheffer, G. (2003), *Diaspora Politics: At Home Abroad*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Smith, M. (1999), *Burma: Insurgency and the Politics of Ethnicity*, Bangkok: White Lotus.

- South, A. (2008), *Ethnic Politics in Burma: States of Conflict*, London: Routledge.
- Steinberg, David (2012), Myanmar: On Claiming Success, in: *The Irrawaddy-on-line*, 15 February, online: <www.irrawaddy.org/archives/81> (10 August 2012).
- Steinberg, D. (2008), Globalization, Dissent, and Orthodoxy: Burma/Myanmar and the Saffron Revolution, in: *Georgetown Journal of International Affairs*, 9, 2, 51–58.
- Tambiah, S. (2000), Transnational Movement, Diasporas, and Multiple Modernities, in: *Daedalus*, 129, 1, 163–194.
- Thawngmung, A. M. (2005), *Recycling Home Politics: The Burmese Diaspora in North America*, paper presented during the 2005 APSA Annual Meeting, Washington DC, September 2005.
- The Bangkok Post* (2012), HRW: Kachin refugees need help, 26 June.
- The Irrawaddy-on-Line* (2011), The Delhi Dilemma, 17 February.
- The Irrawaddy-on-Line* (2010), Burma's Nargis Children Unhappy in Sri Lanka, 1 October.
- The Jakarta Post* (2011), Indonesia hosting close to 3,000 refugees: UNHCR, 21 June, online: <www.thejakartapost.com/news/2011/06/21/indonesia-hosting-close-3000-refugees-unhcr.html> (10 August 2012).
- The Myanmar Times* (2012), Exiles return after two decades, 13–19 February.
- The Myanmar Times* (2011a), Korean 'dream' a reality, finally, Volume 564, 28 February–6 March.
- The Myanmar Times* (2011b), Overseas Myanmar watchful on income tax cut, 12 September.
- The Myanmar Times* (2009), Myanmar in Singapore Celebrate New Year, 13–19 April.
- The New Light of Myanmar* (2012), 28 July, 2.
- The New Light of Myanmar* (2011), 18 August, 8.
- The New York Times* (2012), Dissidents' new fear in Myanmar: irrelevance, 21 February.
- The Straits Times* (2008a), Myanmar community gets bigger, 3 May.
- The Straits Times* (2008b), Myanmar activists not above the law, 23 August.
- The Wall Street Journal* (2011), As Krishna visits Myanmar, refugees recount plight, 21 June.
- Thompson, E. (2009), Mobile Phones, Communities and Social Networks among Foreign Workers in Singapore, in: *Global Networks*, 9, 3, 359–380.
- Toyota, M. (2006), Health Concerns of 'Invisible' Cross-Border Domestic Maids in Thailand, in: *Asian Population Studies*, 2, 1, 19–36.

- Turnell, S., A. Vicar, and W. Bradford (2008), Migrant-worker Remittances and Burma: An Economic Analysis of Survey Results, in: Monique Skidmore and T. Wilson (eds), *Dictatorship, Disorder, and Decline in Myanmar*, Canberra: ANU E Press, 63–86.
- Ullah, A. A. (2011), Rohingya Refugee to Bangladesh: Historical Exclusions and Contemporary Marginalization, in: *Journal of Immigrant and Refugee Studies*, 9, 2, 139–161.
- UNHCR (n.y. a), online: <www.unhcr.org/pages/49e489646.html> (10 August 2012).
- UNHCR (n.y. b), online: <www.unhcr.org/my/About_Us-@-Figures_At_A_Glance.aspx> (10 August 2012).
- UNHCR (n.y. c), online: <www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/page?page=49e487546> (10 August 2012).
- UNHCR (n.y. d), online: <www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/page?page=49e4876d6> (10 January 2012).
- Van Hear, N. (2009), The Rise of Refugee Diasporas, in: *Current History*, 108, 717, 180–185.
- Van Hear, N. (1998), *New Diasporas: The Mass Exodus, Dispersal and Regrouping of Migrant Communities*, London: UCL Press.
- Vertovec, S. (1999), Conceiving and Researching Transnationalism, in: *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 22, 2, 447–462.
- Vertovec, S. (1997), Three Meanings of ‘Diaspora’, Exemplified among South Asian Religions, in: *Diaspora*, 6, 3, 277–299.
- Wahlbeck, O. (2002), The Concept of Diaspora as an Analytical Tool in the Study of Refugee Communities, in: *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 28, 2, 221–238.
- Wayland, S. (2004), Ethnonationalist Networks and Transnational Opportunities: The Sri Lankan Tamil Diaspora, in: *Review of International Studies*, 30, 3, 405–426.
- Williams, D. C. (2012), Changing Burma From Without. Political Activism among the Burmese Diaspora, in: *Indiana Journal of Global Legal Studies*, 19, 1, 121–142.
- Wise, A. (2004), Nation, Transnation, Diaspora: Locating East Timorese Long-distance Nationalism, in: *Sojourn*, 19, 2, 151–180.
- Zarni (2000), Resistance and Cybercommunities: The Internet and the Free Burma Movement, in: Anne De Vaney, S. Gance, and Yan Ma (eds), *Digital Communications and New Coalitions around the World*, New York: Peter Lang, 71–88.

- Zaw Oo (2006), Exit, Voice, and Loyalty in Burma: The Role of Overseas Burmese in Democratising their Homeland, in Trevor Wilson (ed.), *Myanmar's Long Road to National Reconciliation*, Singapore: ISEAS Publications, 231–262.
- Zeus, B. (2011), Exploring Barriers to Higher Education in Protracted Refugee Situations: The Case of Burmese Refugees in Thailand, in: *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 24, 2, 256–276.