

ATTACK OF THE BURMESE DOGS
ETHNICITY, JADE TRADE, AND CONFLICT IN THE SINO-MYANMAR
BORDERLANDS

Abstract. This paper addresses two questions pertaining to ethnicity. First, how do ethnic identifications, alliances, and conflicts play out in social worlds hosting ingrained ethnic hostilities? Secondly, how can we theorize the role of non-human agents in human conceptions of ethnicity and constructions of social-symbolic orders? The discussion is based on events related by Noor; a Rohingya man, who works as a jade trader in the border-town of Ruili in China's Yunnan province, opposite Myanmar's Shan state. The paper describes Noor's motivations for fleeing Myanmar, his experience of Buddhist-Muslim conflicts, his work as a jade trader, and his hobby as a fighting cock breeder. The final section discusses how Noor conceptualizes his ethnic identity and position in a wider social-symbolic order hosting antagonistic ethnic Others by making analogies between nonhuman agents and ethnic humans.

Keywords. Rohingya, Ruili, ethnicity, jade trade, borderland, social-symbolic order, human-nonhuman

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Introduction

This paper addresses two questions pertaining to ethnicity. First, how are ethnic identifications and alliances formed in settings characterized by ethnic conflicts? This question is based on an assumption that ethnic identification assumes urgency in ethnically diverse settings, where prolonged ethnic tensions may occasionally erupt in violent conflicts. In the multi-ethnic border area that comprises parts of Myanmar's Kachin and Shan states and China's Yunnan province, different ethnic groups are engaged in the cross-border trade of jade between Myanmar and China. While the jade trade stimulates alliances and business networks across ethnicities, ethnic conflicts prevail in the area, which range from cultural chauvinism to violence. This region thus provides a suitable context for examining the interplay between ethnic identifications, alliances, and conflicts.

Secondly, how can we theorize the role of non-human agents in human conceptualisations of ethnicity, and more broadly in the mental and practical human activity of constructing ordered social-symbolic worlds. While the construction of social and symbolic order relevant to social scientists is arguably a human activity, the ambition here is to explore how non-human, or 'natural', phenomena are employed in this 'cultural' process. Non-human or 'natural' phenomena are addressed here as worlds, which are integral and constitutive components in human life. But in the powerful doctrines of social constructivism, hermeneutics, and postmodernism, especially from the 1980s onwards, these worlds have to some extent been segregated from social analysis as secondary sources of symbolic matter used in human constructions of meaning and identity. Often based on research on non-Western and pre-modern ontologies, the past decade, however, has seen a variety of attempts at rethinking the relationship between the human and non-human, between culture and nature. Scholars from different disciplines have discussed how human and non-human worlds co-configure (Descola 2013), how human conceptions and the beings of material things are inseparable (Henare, Holbraad, and Wastell 2007), how a 'vital materiality' runs through and across both human and non-human bodies (Bennet 2010), and how we may think with non-human agents like forests (Kohn 2013) and insects (Raffles 2010), and stone (Cohen 2015). Based on a hypothesis that humans are inclined to construct social-symbolic worlds the elements of which fit somewhat orderly in relation to each other both in logical and moral terms, this paper acknowledges the nonhuman as matter for symbolic representations of ethnicity. But given that singularities of the non-human often configure events in ways that humans cannot always predict, and further that such singularities may make certain non-human phenomena better to think or represent

human worlds, the paper further suggests that non-human agents themselves to some extent induce certain human interpretations and representations.

The paper is made up of a discussion of events related by Noor, a Sunni-Muslim Rohingya man, who has fled instances of ethnic violence in the Arakan state of Southwest Myanmar. Noor eventually settled as a jade trader and fighting cock breeder in Ruili; a border-town in the Dehong Dai and Jingpo Autonomous Prefecture of China's Yunnan province, located just across the city of Muse in the Shan state of Northern Myanmar. Employing a 'personal narrative approach' (Chang 2014), the paper tells with Noor's own words a personal story of inter-ethnic conflicts and business alliances, which are underpinned by his geographical mobility. Recounting an incident where dogs attacked Noor's fighting cocks, the paper discusses how Noor makes sense of his ethnic identity and position in a wider social-symbolic order by conceptualizing his relations to ethnic Others in terms of analogies between non-human agents and ethnic humans. While invoking Lévi-Strauss' (1962) discussion of classifications of non-human agents as ways of making distinctions and social-symbolic order in human worlds, the paper further attempts to transcend a categorical gap between a meaning-giving human world and a raw being of a natural world, which is sometimes associated with structuralist-symbolism. This attempt is informed by Descola's (2013) suggestion of rethinking an anthropocentric ontology that has sustained a persistent dualism between human and nonhuman in the social sciences, and the paper proposes a closer attention to singularities of the nonhuman, rather than treating it as generic symbolic matter.

Noor: A Rohingya Jade Trader in Ruili

"Sometimes I think my life is like a movie." Noor turns his head from side to side with a wide grin, displaying a set of white teeth and a pair of sparkling eyes in a round face topped by a baseball cap. As I try to establish an overview over the stories Noor has told me during the past months, I am inclined to agree with him. Indeed, I could almost imagine parts of his life story as scenes in a movie starring his idol, the Belgian martial artist and actor Jean Claude van Damme. Yet, despite of being trained in martial arts - in his case Chinese Shaolin-style *gong fu* - Noor's life exposes few similarities with that of his idol.

The first time I meet Noor in Ruili's jade bazaar, he leads me by the arm to the privacy of an indoor jade shop, and starts telling me about the persecutions that his Rohingya people are

experiencing in Myanmar's Arakan state. He then shows me some pictures saved on the hard drive of his telephone. After browsing through images of scantily dressed Bollywood actresses, a picture of a decapitated Rohingya man pops up on the screen. The next image is of the charred bodies of three small Rohingya children, who were burned to death during recent violent clashes in Myanmar's Arakan state. One of Noor's friends says the pictures are from his village, and that his uncle and two brothers were killed in these riots. "This is what we fleeing from", Noor says gravely.

A Sunni-Muslim ethnic Rohingya, Noor fled his native village in Arakan state as a teenager after violent fights with a group of Buddhist ethnic Rakhine peers convinced him that Myanmar held no future for him. Eventually acquiring a Bachelor degree in psychology in Bangladesh, he worked for his uncle's company, which imported Burmese hardwood, notably teak and mahogany, to the Bangladeshi city of Cox Bazaar. The relationship between the two men deteriorated after Noor discovered that his uncle also smuggled in "No. 4" (a regional slang for heroin) from Myanmar. Noor then moved to Saudi Arabia, where for almost ten years he worked in the electronics store of another relative. In 2009, he travelled via Malaysia, Thailand, and Northern Myanmar's Shan state to Ruili in Southwest China, where approximately 15,000 Rohingya have found refugeⁱ.

In Ruili, Noor tapped into the trade networks of another uncle, who buys uncut jade stones from ethnic Kachin suppliers in Northern Myanmar. Noor sells the jade stones to Rohingya middlemen and Chinese buyers in China's Yunnan province. Eventually the stones are cut, carved and polished, before reaching Chinese consumers as jewellery or figurines. Besides from selling stones acquired by his uncle, Noor also operates as a jade broker for other Rohingya traders in Ruili. When he manages to find buyers for these traders' stones, he acquires 5-10 per cent of the sales price. The confrontational politics of ethnicity in Myanmar stimulates population displacement and shifting ethnic alliances that in some cases extend beyond Myanmar's national borders. In this context, Noor has employed his mobility, social networks, skills, and business experience to create a position for himself as what Egretau (2013) calls a 'border area broker' in the profitable trade of Burmese jadeite (the most valuable form of jade) in China. While Rohingya have come to Ruili as refugees during the past two decades, especially the Kachin, Shan and Yunnanese have a long history as suppliers, brokers and traders in the Sino-Myanmar jadeite trade. Common for the ethnic groups involved in the jade trade is the necessity of being flexible and capable of building alliances with different

ethnic and military groups in a multi-ethnic border area (see Chang 2011; Hlaing 2007).

While he showed me a picture on his phone of a Lebanese woman, whom he called his girlfriend and had chatted with online for a few years, Noor was unmarried at the age of 37. According to Noor, some Rohingya jade traders in Ruili marry Christian Kachin women, who then convert to Islam. Other Rohingya men have married Shan women. Such interethnic marriages seem to consolidate alliances in the jade trade. The majority of Rohingya in Ruili, however, seems predominantly endogamous, marrying within their ethnic group. Also, aside from the contexts of interethnic business relations and cockfights, I rarely witnessed Rohingya socialize with other ethnic groups in Ruili. One cultural reason for this may be that alcohol consumption is an important lubricant in cultivating social relations in Ruili, both among Han Chinese, Jingpo, Dai, and other ethnic minority groups. I occasionally encountered groups of 3-5 young Rohingya men in one of Ruili's discos, but they were left within their own group, and their attempts to dance with girls from other ethnic groups ignored. Some of my Han Chinese informants described Rohingya derogatively as "black people" (*heiren*), while local Yunnanese often referred to Rohingya as *kala*. The term *kala* originally referred to Muslims of South Asian origin in Myanmar (Chang 2014: 97). Chang's Yunnanese Hui Muslim informants in Myanmar's Shan State said they very rarely intermarry with *kala*, whom one informant described as "religiously more conservative and fundamental and secularly more cunning, quarrelsome, and untrustworthy" (Ibid: 124).

Ruili's Rohingya community is concentrated in the old jade bazaar, the *zhubaojie*, in the northern part of town. The community is stratified along such factors as occupational hierarchy, capital, networks, time of migration, age, religious observance, and gender, (women generally stayed in the house or shop, or operated food stalls, betel nut shops, or restaurants). But the perception of antagonistic Buddhist ethnic others were quite similar amongst Ruili's Rohingya, and it is on this basis that I present Noor as a representative of this community.

Noor does not hold a Burmese passport, but has acquired a temporary border identity card in Ruili. The card allows Rohingya to stay only in Ruili, where Noor rents a small room in a backstreet of the *zhubaojie* jade bazaar. Still, Noor frequently travels illegally, bringing Burmese jadeite stones to Chinese buyers in other jade trading centres in China's Yunnan province, including the cities of Yinjiang, Tengchong, and Kunming. He also spent five months in Pangkham (*Pangshang*) in Wa state (officially designated as 'Special Region No. 2' of

Burma's Shan state), dealing jadeite stones with the aid of a general from the United Wa State Army (UWSA).

Presenting himself as a 'good Muslim', who prays in the local Mosque daily, and refrains from wearing jewellery, drinking alcohol, and getting involved with drugs, Noor pointed out several Rohingya men in Ruili's jade bazaar, whom he said smuggle heroin into China from Myanmar's Wa state. According to Noor, the Wa people from the Burmese side of the border are so closely associated with the heroin business that they pretend to be Shan people, when they go to Ruili. Also the fact that Noor conducted the Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca (*haji*) twice, distinguishes him, and – at least in his own opinion – gives him a certain authority in the Rohingya community in Ruili's jade bazaar. Ruili hosts one mosque, which is located just opposite of the *zhubaojie* jade bazaar. The majority of its attendants are Rohingya, while the mosque also accommodates Yunnanese Mandarin-speaking Hui Muslims, as well as some Xinjiang Uyghurs and Pakistani gem traders.

The Rohingya is a stateless people, which after the Citizen Act of 1982 was not included as one of Myanmar's 135 officially recognized ethnic minorities. Not receiving a Myanmar passport, nor allowed to travel even to neighbouring villages without official permission, required to sign a commitment not to have more than two children, subjected to various forms of extortion and arbitrary taxation, land confiscation, forced eviction and house destruction, financial restrictions on marriage, and used as forced labourers on roads and at military camps, the Rohingya has been described by UN as one of the world's most persecuted minorities.ⁱⁱ While there are a little less than 1 million Rohingya people in Myanmar, around 400.000 have fled to Bangladesh, most of them during purges in 1978 and 1991-92. There are also around 111.000 refugees housed in camps along the Thai-Myanmar border, and more than 140.000 displaced Rohingya live in IDP camps in Myanmar, most of them around Sittwe, where they are dependent on international assistance (*Newsweek*, 5. November, 2015). Many Rohingya attempt migration across the Indian Ocean to Thailand, Malaysia, and Indonesia on rickety boats, but there have been charges that the Thai army on several occasions have towed the boats out to open sea and left the refugees there. Many Rohingya have died of hunger, thirst or drowning during these dangerous emigration attempts, while mass graves with Rohingya bodies have been uncovered in human trafficking camps in Thailand and Malaysia (*Human Rights Watch*, 1 May 2015; *The Guardian*, 24 May 2015).

Spurred by the rape of a young Buddhist Rakhine woman on May 28th 2012, allegedly by three young Rohingya men, a series of violent clashes between Rohingya and Rakhine ensued. According to Tun Khin, the President of the British Rohingya Organisation UK (BROUK), as many as 650 Rohingyas had been killed, 1,200 missing and more than 80,000 displaced a month later, on June 28th 2012 (*Rohingya Students and Youth*, 28 June, 2012).ⁱⁱⁱ A number of Buddhist monks' organizations, including the Buddhist nationalist group 969 headed by the monk U Wirathu, had allegedly taken measures to block humanitarian assistance to the Rohingya community. By 2014, human rights groups reported that aid was still being obstructed by Burmese authorities for the Rohingya detained in camps around Sittwe and elsewhere in the Arakan state (*Time*, 17 June 2014).

When I arrived in Ruili in February 2013, there were still sporadic violent clashes in the Arakan state. During spring, the clashes spread as sectarian violence between Buddhists and Muslims of different ethnicities in other areas of Myanmar, including the cities of Meiktila and Mandalay. By June 2013, the violence in Myanmar did not seem far away from Ruili. There had been anti-Muslim riots in Lashio in the Shan state, and the Rohingya community in Ruili's jade bazaar closely followed newspaper updates and information from their families via smartphones. One day, Noor called and asked me to meet him at the teahouse. He agitatedly told me that a group of Buddhists armed with long knives and iron pipes had gathered at Muse, just 6 kilometres away across the border. They were trying to get into Ruili to attack the Rohingya. Buddhist monks had apparently joined the mob, carrying banners requesting the local predominantly Shan population to boycott Muslim-owned shops. A group of around 40 Buddhists planning an attack on the Rohingya had allegedly been apprehended by the Chinese police inside Ruili, and sent back across the border. Noor said: "I don't know why they hate us so much. We are peaceful people. We just do business here. But if they come here to fight, we will fight. We are prepared".

Due to his relatively good English language skills, his extensive network amongst Ruili's Rohingya jade traders, and his inviting personality, Noor became my main informant in Ruili's Rohingya community during my first fieldwork there in 2013. I met with Noor most days of the week in one of the teahouses in a street in the *zhubaojie* jade bazaar. Here, we would talk over cigarettes, Burmese milk coffee and coconut cake. Other times, I cruised Ruili's palm-lined roads and winding alleyways on the back of Noor's motorbike, visiting Rohingya jade traders

and polishers, riding alongside the border fence to Myanmar in Jiegao, or attending cockfights in the outskirts of Ruili.

Wen-Chin Chang (2014) employs a ‘personal narrative approach’ in stitching together stories of cross-border mobility, caravan trade, military conflicts, transnational Islamic identity, and gendered experiences of Yunnanese Chinese settled in Burma into an account of everyday life in a borderland region on the fringes of modern nation-states. Based on long-term fieldwork in northern Thailand and northern Myanmar, Chang presents the personal stories of transnational Yunnannese jade traders, miners, muleteers, Muslims, soldiers, workers, and others through lengthy transcripts of narratives of key informants. Chang notes how narration reveals fragments of realities, or distortions of realities (ibid: 10). Fragmentation, inconsistency, and contradiction in informants’ accounts consequently feature in, and are reflected upon throughout the book. Below, I recount parts of Noor’s life story and experience of ethnicity through his personal narrative. Representing partial, fragmented, and subjective narratives of one man, the paper is not a comprehensive study of displaced Rohingya ethnic identity, nor does it claim to be an ‘objective’ account of events. But with inspiration from Chang’s ‘personal narrative approach’, I do aspire to provide an insight into how such diverse experiences as those of inter-ethnic violence and alliances, migration, jade trade, and cockfighting are bound together and underpinned by a sense of ethnic identity among displaced Rohingya jade traders in Ruili. My exclusive focus on Noor’s narrative provides an intensive, rather than an extensive account of Rohingya ethnicity. While this approach may allow for less generalizability, its advantage is to expose both connections and contradictions between different domains of the informant’s life-world. Noor’s narrative is extracted from ten recorded interviews (totalling approximately 300 minutes), five videos (40 minutes), as well as spoken and written messages on the social media app WeChat from 2013 to 2016.

Inspired by Wacquant’s (1998) account of the gendered economic life of a black male urban American ‘hustler’, Rickey, I have kept the literal interview transcriptions in order to give the reader a sense of Noor’s vernacular style. The meeting with a cultural other in the in-depth interview allows informants like Rickey “a rare opportunity to pause and look at himself from the outside” (ibid: 5). I contend that a similar process occurred during my interviews and conversations with Noor, who was eager to tell an outside world about the predicament of his Rohingya people, but also to construct and present a narrative about his own social world and

identity.^{iv} I have structured Noor's narrative into the following themes: Ethnic identity and conflict; borders and mobility; jade trade and ethnic alliances; and attack of the Burmese dogs.

Ethnic Identity and Conflict

The origin of the Rohingya people is contested. While the prevalent Rohingya narrative of their ethno-genesis legitimizes their habitation in Myanmar's Arakan state, the version of their Buddhist adversaries delegitimizes it. Mirroring the official attitude of the previous government under Thein Sein, a Buddhist Rakhine political activist, whom I interviewed in the northern Thai city of Chiang Mai in 2015, rejected the existence of an ethnicity called Rohingya outright, and said they are Bengali people, who have recently migrated to the Arakan state from Bangladesh.^v The Rohingya people in Ruili, however, say they descend from Arab traders and have been in Arakan state for hundreds of years, most of the time peacefully co-habiting with, and even intermarrying their Buddhist Rakhine neighbours. Noor explained:

N: Before, brother, you know, through history from Arab country, from Yemen, Saudi Arabia, they come with big boats. Muslim traders, come to our Arakan state. So one thing happened. A very big boat come for trade. So the Buddhists were waiting, the Arabs say "help us, help us".

I: I heard the story I think. The boat went down, and then some local people helped them...?

N: Yeah, they invite them. The Rakhine King, he was very good man. He save them, and allow them to settle there. Arab is very handsome man, you know. So, the girls of Arakan Buddhists, they are very beautiful, very tall. So they married each other. Many generations now. In the Kings time, the Muslim fight together with the Buddhists. First victory, they are all Muslims.

I: Against whom?

N: Against other king, you know. That time there are a lot of kings.

I: A long time ago, before the British?

N: Yeah. They fight with victory. The Muslims are together. A special food was victory food. The name of the victory food is our Muslim food. The names of the people were all Muslims, from Pakistan, from Hindustan, from Bangladesh, from Arakan. That time they live together, not separate, they live like brothers.

In Noor's narrative, this past Buddhist welcoming of Muslims and their peaceful coexistence in the Arakan state is contrasted with the present condition of violence and suppression, which induces many Rohingya to flee the country:

N: Our war is not finished yet. The Myanmar government gives them [the Rakhine] power. The government helps the Buddhists. We are scared for our village, our parents, our relatives. For our Rohingya it's like a jail in our country. They cannot go another country, another province, another village. Some go to Bangladesh by boat. Some go to Malaysia and Thailand. They go by boat from Bangladesh, but the boats are very old. They are together 100 or 200 people in the boat. They [the coastguards] catch them. They take money from them, and send them to the ocean. They die on the ocean. They don't know how to go to Thailand and Malaysia. Maybe big waves.

Noor reflects that to change the predicament of Rohingya demands violence. Though allegedly allied with international Islamic militant groups, the Rohingya National Army (RNA) and other Rohingya militias do not constitute a military power comparable to the armies of ethnic groups like the Kachin, Shan, and Wa. An apparent option for Rohingya militants would be to join forces with other ethnic insurgent armies, which are fighting for independence or a more regionally autonomous federal system within Myanmar. But, according to Noor, most Rohingya are too scared to go to war:

N: I told him: "If we will get independent, you have to give blood. You have to go to war with government to get independent". Also Bangladesh, they had to do like this. We are Rohingya, why we cannot get independence? I want to tell all our Rohingya: "I am not Rohingya, I am Bengali. Because our people are not brave" [enough to go to war]. I tell to him. He is also Muslim, but not real Muslim. He is 3rd generation of Burmese Buddhist. Fake Muslim.

I: Does he go to the Mosque?

N: Yes. I think his mother is Muslim.

I: You think some Rohingya will join the Kachin [in their war]?

N: Yeah. Kachin told us "welcome Rohingyas, come join with us, then we start fighting Burmese government". Some Rohingya go there and fight with Kachin

I: Do they fight inside Kachin, or in Arakan state?

N: On the Kachin side. In Hpakant, Myitkina.

I: How many Rohingya there, do you think?

N: I saw with my uncle when I go from Yinjiang [in China] to Myitkina. I saw Rohingya. Where the bridge is [at Laiza, on the China-Kachin border]. There were some people there with beards, like Moses (laughing). 3-4 people. Muslims. There were also KIA [Kachin Independence Army] people.

Rohingya ethnicity by and large presupposes Muslim faith. Here, Noor further suggests that qualifying for Rohingya ethnicity depends on both ancestry and actions. Noor labels a 3rd generation descendant of a Buddhist a 'fake' Muslim, even though his mother is Muslim and he

attends the mosque. The action of attending the mosque thus does not seem sufficient to be considered a 'genuine' Muslim, which rather depends on ancestry. Moments later, however, Noor in a sense reverses this principle, suggesting that Rohingya ethnicity depends on bravery in actions against a repressive political regime notwithstanding ancestry. Noor employs the dominant discriminative labelling of Rohingya as Bengali in mainstream discourse in Myanmar to argue that people only deserve ethnic identification as Rohingya insofar as they are brave enough to go to war with the Myanmar government. The label of Bengali, in turn, signifies a lack of such bravery.

Kachin and Rohingya have a common enemy in the Burmese government army (*Tatmadaw*).^{vi} But this was the first time I heard suggested that Rohingya and KIA had made a military alliance. However, Noor's suggestion – which seemingly is based on him seeing 3-4 bearded men in the China-Kachin border-town of Laiza, (the beard indexing Islam for Noor) - is questionable. I have not encountered any media accounts confirming an armed alliance between Rohingya militants and the KIA, one of Myanmar's strongest ethnic insurgent armies, which has been engaged in armed fight against the Burmese army since the 1962 Ne Win military coup. When asked about an alleged Rohingya-KIA cooperation, KIA senior officer James Lum Daum told the *Irrawaddy* newspaper: "There are no Rohingya in the KIA area; there are no Muslims from Arakan State in Kachin [...] But there are several Arakanese [Rakhine] in Kachin". Likewise, Maung Kyaw Nu of the Burmese Rohingya Association of Thailand in 2014 said that there was no cooperation between an armed Rohingya group and the KIA at the moment (*Irrawaddy*, September 9, 2014).

In February 2015, I spent a month in Myitkina, the capital of Kachin state. A staff from the Technology and Advisory team of the Kachin Independence Organisation (KIO) told me about the Federal Union Army (FUA), which was set up a few months before by 13 of the ethnic insurgent armies to make a joint war effort against the *Tatmadaw*. He said that KIA sponsors many of the FUA's activities, including their meetings, with money from its jade business. The army includes Kachin, Kayin, Karen, Shan, and Rakhine armies, but my Kachin informant said it would be impossible to include Rohingya in the alliance, because it features a Rakhine army.^{vii} Another Kachin informant in Myitkina said that the KIA has kicked out some people from Kachin state, whom they described as "radical Muslims" linked to Al Qaeda. While this could suggest a (previous) Rohingya presence in Kachin, it also denies military cooperation between them and the KIA. My Rakhine informant in Chiang Mai said that Rohingya are now

receiving training from both Al Qaeda and ISIS in the Arakan state, close to the Bangladeshi border. Lintner (2002; n.d.) has previously pointed to an Al Qaeda connection and reported on military training camps for Rohingya, albeit these were located on the Bangladeshi side of the border.^{viii}

Many of the other ethnic insurgent armies in Myanmar have a good measure of sympathy from the international community, and do not seem to have an incentive to be associated with Islamic militants. Aung San Suu Kyi, leader of the National League of Democracy (NLD), which won the 2016 election, by and large avoided to address the Rohingya issue during her election campaign (*The Telegraph*, 19 June 2015). After the election, Suu Kyi's spokesman, U Kyaw Zay Ya, said that Suu Kyi's government "will not call the Rohingya people by that name because it does not recognize them as citizens", and that "using the controversial term does not support the national reconciliation process and solving problems" (*New York Times*, 6 May 2016). The official term proposed by Suu Kyi's government now is "people who believe in Islam in Rakhine State" (*Asean Economist*, 21 June 2016). Within Myanmar's landscape of ethnic insurgent groups few non-Muslim ethnic and political groups seem to have an incitement to ally with the Rohingya.

Myanmar's most important trading partner, China, has vast economic interests in the border states of Shan and Kachin, from where it imports natural resources, ranging from rice and hydropower to hardwood and minerals. A Rohingya man described the unequal trade relations thus: "Chinese take jade and wood from Myanmar. They build dams on our rivers to make electricity for China. But in Myanmar we are Aladdin. We have to use oil lamps". Also, long-term Chinese security concerns along the Shan state border intensified in 2015, as the armed conflict between the *Tatmadaw* and ethnic Chinese Kokang insurgents from the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA) re-erupted in the Kokang area of northern Shan state. The conflict entailed a surge of 40.000-50.000 Kokang Chinese civilians seeking refuge in China, and even a *Tatmadaw* warplane releasing a bomb that killed four Chinese farmers on Chinese soil (*New York Times*, 13 March, 2015). This incident and the military campaign against Chinese Kokang inside Myanmar obviously strained China-Myanmar relations, and during spring 2015, I saw Chinese fighter jets and armoured vehicles around Mangshi, some two hours from Ruili. The conflict in Kachin likewise poses a security concern for China. Around 80.000 Kachin refugees live in camps along the Chinese border. The KIA headquarters is situated close to the Chinese border in Mahlaikhang, and in an incident similar to

that in Kokang, three people were reported killed as shelling from the *Tatmadaw*, who were fighting the KIA, hit the Chinese border town of Laiza in 2013. Also, around 120,000 ethnic Jingpo live in China. An ethnic sub-group of Kachin, Jingpo in China might be drawn into the conflict if it escalates.

However, the Chinese government seems to have few interests in supporting a Muslim people far from its national borders, and can justify its lacking critique of war crimes and human rights abuses in Myanmar with its official policy of non-interference in the domestic affairs of other countries. While the mouth of the recently completed pipeline that transports oil and gas from the Bay of Bengal via Ruili into China's Yunnan province is located in Arakan state, China negotiated the project with the Myanmar government, sidestepping both the Rohingya and Rakhine living in the area. Apart from humanitarian aid from international NGOs and military support from foreign Islamist groups, Rohingya people are thus more or less left to fend for themselves, also in the regional political landscape.

Noor argues that the displaced Rohingya have an important responsibility in providing support for their families back home. Few Rohingya people I talked to in Ruili have undertaken the dangerous journey back to the Arakan state to visit their family, as many are wanted by Burmese authorities and in any case have committed a crime by illegally migrating from the place, where their household is registered. While those who do go back carry money to give to the families of other Rohingya in Ruili, the most common procedure for remittances is to go to Muse and send money via a Myanmar bank. While Egretau (2012: 109) reported that Western sanctions on the Kanbawza Bank had caused limitations on money transfers within Myanmar, most Rohingya jade traders said they used that bank, which has branches in several Burmese cities, including Sittwe, the capital of Arakan state. However, Noor explained that even organising remittances from China is a risky venture, as informers loyal to the Burmese government have infiltrated Ruili's Rohingya community:

N: Our people really want America help us, Europe, Arab world help us. But they do not think about what is happening to Myanmar Muslims. That they are killing us. Chinese government and Burmese government make friendship. The Chinese government gets a lot of rice from Myanmar. Also very big and strong and expensive wood.

[Noor speaks with a man in Rohingya language, then continues:] Here, some people hate me.

I: Why?

N: Because I tell the truth. They stay here a long time. They have money, but they are not educated. So I tell the truth: "Brother, why you not give [alms], you have a lot of money". Some of the people cannot

eat rice, they are homeless, a lot of children are dead. So I tell them all: "Brother you must donate, if you are a rich person". Then another informer, he is also our Muslim, you know. He inform to government.

I: He stays here in Ruili?

N: Yeah, sometimes he comes here. So he informs directly to [the Burmese] government. And government calls direct to Muse. Muse government informs the Chinese government. Says "they are sending money to Arakan for war". But it's just for eating. They don't have home, they don't have rice. Children are dead, some are ill, so we send money for eating, for medicine. So the government suddenly tells us to stop sending money. A lot of problems brother, I cannot even explain you. Our prophet says that we are born from parents. We must die one day. So we are not animals, we are humans. Humans! Some are Christians, some are Muslims, some are Hindus, some are Buddhists. So why we hate each other? We need understanding and friendship as humans.

Like other Rohingya in Ruili, Noor's narrative circulates around a Rohingya predicament of enduring discrimination, persecution, and violence in the Arakan state. On writing, these concepts can seem abstract, but most Rohingya shared very concrete experiences. For instance, upon meeting a Rohingya informant again, when I returned to Ruili for my second fieldwork in 2015, he pulled up his shirt and showed me a fresh bruise across his back that he had acquired by being beaten with a stick during anti-Muslim riots in Mandalay. In the lengthy transcript below, Noor's vivid narrative of inter-ethnic violence that induced him to flee Myanmar is interweaved with his self-presentation as a peaceful guy, who nonetheless will fiercely fight injustices, when events force him to do so.

I: Did you also take the boat from Bangladesh?

N: No. I arrive to Bangladesh when I was a student, 9th grade. One morning my friends tell me that there is a problem in the shop. They sell Nan and Dahl [bread and lentil soup] and cigarettes. Many kind of goods. Some students come there to drink. They are Buddhist. They ask [the Rohingya shop owner] for money and cigarettes. The old man told them to go away. They didn't pay for what they bought. So he tells them "I am poor man, I have little shop. So why you don't pay for your goods?" And they beat him a lot. He was bleeding. So my friends tell me, "brother, come with us and fight". So I tell them "You must promise me, never tell anybody else about this". So we go. Some are afraid of fighting, so I tell them "don't fight". But my cousin, he is very brave, like a tiger. He also learns gong fu, I teach him. He is very dangerous. So we fight. They are four people, we are two. After the fight, they are very hurt.

After 14 days, one of my friends betrayed me. He tells our story to Rakhines. The Buddhists are also his friends, you know. He lives in Block 3. I live block 7. So we are same high school. But he betrayed me, cause I fell in love with a girl he also loves. We use masks when we fight, so they do not recognize me. But after he tells them who we are, they know. So I cannot go to high school for three days. My friend tells me that Buddhists from another high school are after me. 17 students. They have knives and sticks.

My headmaster told my friends: "Please call Noor, I want to ask him about the fight". The Buddhists are waiting for me there, they have long knives, you know. They tell me "you will die, we will kill you!" So I go into the high school to my headmaster's room. They are telling my headmaster, "your student beat our friend. We will kill him". Our headmaster is Buddhist. Headmaster told me that "in high school area you can't fight here, cause I have responsibility. You can fight outside of the high school area". So they promised me; "if we will find you anywhere anytime we will kill you". They know karate. But they are different man from me. I'm also angry, and tell them: "If you want to fight, come alone, not many men". So headmaster beat me with a stick. My headmaster tells me, "don't speak like that".

After maybe one month, they come to our town, and they have people who know gong fu and karate. I like karate a lot; 'Double Impact' with Jean Claude van Damne [a martial arts movie]. I watch everything. 'Black Moon', 'Streetfighter', 'Blood Sport', 'Kickboxer', all movies. My friends call me to see 'Double Impact'. We are outside a movie hall, and the Rakhine found me there. They bring sticks, knives. They tell me "if you move, we will kill you with knife". They are seven people, you know, they beat me. One woman there, she is my father's friend. They beat me, and she tells them "why are you beating him? You are seven people, he is one". She saved me. I was bleeding, you know. They beat me a lot. So the woman takes me into her home. She is Buddhist. Buddhists are very close with us, you know. She grew up together with my father. Then I go back to my home, and my mother knows all. She said, "I will tell your father". I'm very afraid of my father. My father is boxer, you know, and his arms, his muscles very, very big. He beat me with his hands, you know. He hit. I am very afraid, but I am very angry. So I take a long knife. It's our culture, also Buddhist culture, also Muslim culture. If someone hurt you, you take a long knife and go to coconut tree, mango tree, you know, and you cut there in the tree. When you go outside, every time you see [the cut], you never forget. When I go to school and I pass my home, every time I see the cut.

After two weeks, they come again to our town. Ten people. I wait for them a long time, but I don't meet them, cause my father tell me to stay at home. So one day they are eating noodles in restaurant. Four people. I see them and I feel very angry. So I wait for them to eat their noodles. They go into alcohol shop. They drink, and I am waiting, sitting here by a big tree. After 10 o' clock [pm] if you are outside in the street, the police will arrest you. Only our Muslims. They come out of alcohol shop, almost 11 o' clock. They are going to block 6, so I follow them. Between block 7 and block 6, I start fight. If you see how can I fight with four people! They are also strong, you know. I attack them like evil attacker, I fight with flying kick, back kick. They also have big umbrella. It's raining. They beat me with umbrella. Umbrella is very big. I defend with my hand, and I block and kick and rounded kick. Rounded kick is very dangerous, but these people are very hard. But finally I beat them, and I kick them a lot in the face.

Brother, we are very honest people. If something wrong happened in front of me, I always say "why are you fighting?" If my friends are fighting, I always say "no fight". I am always good. Also my friend, we take water from the well. We always do work. Also we help the old men, our seniors, you know. So our old men tells us that we are very good people. After that, the Buddhists never fight me. But old chairman of the block, he is very powerful. Also Buddhist. He has 9 children, 9 sons. The youngest one fight with me [he was an opponent in Noor's last fight]. He said, "who beat my son"? So they know about me, and they

come to my fathers shop. My father knows. My father is like a friend, he is also a chairman. They know each other. So he complains to my father. They say "if we find him, we will kill him". So my father came home and he beat me a lot with stick. He tells me that I must never quarrel again with another villager. He tells me: "Why you fight? My name will be bad. I am a chairman, you know". So he beat me a lot. He asked me "you want to run or not?" I tell him, "I don't want to live here. I am very afraid and very sad to live here in Arakan. I want to go to another country. If I live here, the Rakhine treat me bad, they kill me. So I want to go to another country". So my father tells me: "You are a bad boy, you are not my son". I tell him: "If I was doing wrong, you kill me! I didn't do wrong".

They start fighting. I don't accept fighting, but every day they come and abuse our Muslims. After go to toilet, you know, they throw those bad things [human faeces] in our home. So I tell them: "We are humans, we are not animals!" We never go to their temple and throw those bad things. Why they go and throw those bad things on our mosque, on our home? You know, the Muslims are rich in town. So they [the Buddhists] are jealous of Muslims. Muslims do business. We have good connections to Bangladesh, to Muslim countries. But the Rakhine, the Buddhists, don't have connections. So we are very powerful for business. All Muslims in Arakan. Not now, before. Now, we live there like in a cage.

On the face of it, Noor's story above might be taken as fights between teenagers that got out of hand. Yet, the conflicts are clearly underpinned by ingrained ethnic-religious hostilities. Noor's mentioning of a curfew that only applies to Muslims hints at a wider politically sanctioned discrimination that may exacerbate ethnic conflicts. The conflict in a sense begins with Buddhist alcohol consumption, which may have contributed to a rapid escalation of Buddhist offences against a Muslim shop owner; their refusal to pay him, their extortion of money and cigarettes, and their violent attack on him, Noor suggests that Rakhine hostilities against Rohingya are based on their jealousy on the business prowess and networks of Muslims. But he also perceives something deeper at play. When Buddhists throw human faeces at Muslim houses and mosque, Noor's response that "We are humans, we are not animals" implies that an act this abusive contains an intention of stripping the Rohingya of their humanity. The abuse consists in a calculated transgression of symbolic boundaries, where one of the most profane types of matter is imported into one of the most sacred material-symbolic domains, which disturbs a symbolic order. This bringing together of symbolically contrasting forms of matter – a matter of 'matter out of place' - instantiates the ethnic conflict in a crystal clear way, (presupposing a shared symbolic system).

Noor's violent response to violence supports his self-perception as a martial art fighter, who does not passively accept injustices committed to him. Beating up four guys alone with blows and kicks, Noor sees himself as "a different man" than the Rakhine Buddhists, who gang up

together and carry weapons. Noor's relation to his family counterbalances his impulse for violent retaliation. His father reacts with both paternal disappointment and violence, as Noor's fights affect his authority as residential neighbourhood Chairman, and by extension the reputation of the family. The narrative does contain examples of peaceful and friendly Buddhist-Muslim relations, as exemplified by the Buddhist woman who saves Noor in his second fight. But the powerful characters of the school headmaster and the residential neighbourhood chairman, both of who are Buddhists, structure events in ways unfavourable to Noor, who eventually considers emigration out of Myanmar his only viable option.

Borders and Mobility

Like most Rohingya men in Ruili, Noor took up jade trade upon arriving to the city. The most common entrance ticket to the trade is social contacts, in Noor's case to his uncle. The dramatic circumstances surrounding Noor's departure from Arakan state thus had not disrupted the functionality of his family ties.^{ix}

Situated in a valley approximately six kilometres opposite the town of Muse in Myanmar's Shan state, Ruili was an important node in the different routes that comprised the ancient Tea-Horse Road (*chamadao*), on which caravans transported tea, horses and other goods between Yunnan, Burma, Tibet, and India (see e.g. Zhang 2014; Sigley 2012, 2010: 535-538). Legend has it that Burmese jadeite was incidentally introduced to China through this road as a muleteer picked up a stone in the Kachin state and put it in his saddlebag as a counterweight to his cargo. Back in Yunnan the stone fell to the ground and broke, and the muleteer discovered a deep green colour of jadeite inside. During WWII, Ruili's importance as a link to Burma was cemented with the construction of the Burma Road from Lashio in Burma's Shan state via Ruili to Kunming, from where the road supplied the Chinese armies in the war-time capital of Chongqing with Western weaponry in their fight against the Japanese.^x With the communist takeover in China, the borders to Burma were closed and Ruili remained a sleepy border town for the next five decades.

When borders were re-opened, a border trade zone was set up in Jiegao across the Ruili River in the southern part of Ruili in 1990, and cross-border trade rose sharply from the late 1990s, attracting investors from all around China. Mirroring China's general model of diffusing regional economic development from 'Special Economic Zones' (SEZs), a 'Special Export Processing Zone' was established in Jiegao in 2000.^{xi} All goods in the 1.92 square kilometres

zone are duty-free, goods for export are subject to preferential policies, and goods from a third country can also be transferred from customs into the zone for further processing or sale. The trade volume in Jiegao from 2001 to 2010 took up 60 percent of that between Yunnan Province and Myanmar, and more than 30 percent of that between China and Myanmar, while 5.2 million people travelled abroad from Jiegao annually, and 850.000 t vehicles entered China through Jiegao, which ranked first and third among all land intersections in China (*China Daily*, 18 October, 2010). According to figures presented by the propaganda department of Ruili's government, Ruili's official population was approximately 190.000 in 2012, but this figure only covered people with a household registration in Ruili, and thus did not include Rohingya and other groups from Myanmar working in Ruili,.



Figure 1. Map of Ruili and Muse. While most of the Sino-Myanmar border (yellow line) roughly follows the Ruili River, the Chinese border-town of Jiegao is located south of river. Source: *Google Earth*.

Many larger jade lots are transported south from the mines at Hpakant to annual gem emporiums organized by state-run Myanmar Gem Enterprises in Naypyidaw, or to jade markets in Mandalay and Rangoon. From Rangoon, the jade is often shipped to Hong Kong, and then sent to Guangzhou for carving, before entering upscale consumer markets in eastern Chinese metropolises like Guangzhou, Shanghai, and Beijing. These stones primarily come from mines controlled by the Myanmar government. Most Jadeite is transported into Ruili as skin-covered stones (*shitou*). A *Global Witness* report (2015: 25) marks eight overland border-crossing points, including the Muse-Jiegao border, through which jade enters China from Myanmar (marked as a circle crossed by a full green line in figure 2). There are two major overland routes from Kachin state to Yunnan. One route sees jade transported south from

Hpakant to Mandalay, and then northwest to Ruili on the old Burma Road. This route is employed by many of Ruili's Han-Chinese traders, who drive to Mandalay and buy jade stones. The stones are then usually freighted to Ruili by professional transporters, who have connections with the Burmese military at the road checkpoints. With the completion in 2016 of a series of modern highways, such stones can now be transported fast between Ruili and Hangzhou, some 2900 kilometres east, and from there enter markets for affluent investors and consumers on the Chinese east coast.

The re-eruption of fighting between the *Tatmadaw* and the KIA in June 2011 should be seen in the context of allegations that the Myanmar government used the 1994 ceasefire agreement with the KIA as a pretext to acquire further control over natural resource extraction in Kachin state, including over jade mines. While the fighting led many jade companies to temporarily cease their operations, the *Tatmadaw* conquered new jade mines from the KIA, and in September 2014 the government allowed mining companies to resume operations in the largest bulk of mines around Hpakant (Oo 2014). Buyers of government-controlled stones in Myanmar must pay 35 per cent of sales value in government tax in order to transport the stones legally to China, where a further 34 per cent tax of sales value is levied. If government taxes have not been paid in Myanmar, many traders pay transporters – usually Bamar Burmese - who bribe Myanmar government soldiers at checkpoints, but there is always a risk that untaxed stones might simply be confiscated. Other traders in Ruili, including some Rohingya, acquire jade stones from KIA-controlled mines. These are often smuggled into China via routes that run west, northwest and southwest from Myitkina, crossing the Chinese border at or close to Mahjiayang, Pianma, Gamwa, Gambaiji, Zhongmian, Tengchong, Laiza, Yinjiang, Longchuan, and Ruili. Kachin smugglers, who navigate dirt paths by motorbikes to avoid road checkpoints, are called *ge li po*, meaning “cart pushing man”, in the Kachin Zaiwa dialect. They are paid per weight of the stones transported, usually 200 *yuan* per 1, 5 kilograms, albeit prices often rise with the quality of the stones. Fees to the smugglers accounted for, Rohingya traders can usually sell such stones in Ruili considerably cheaper than taxed stones.

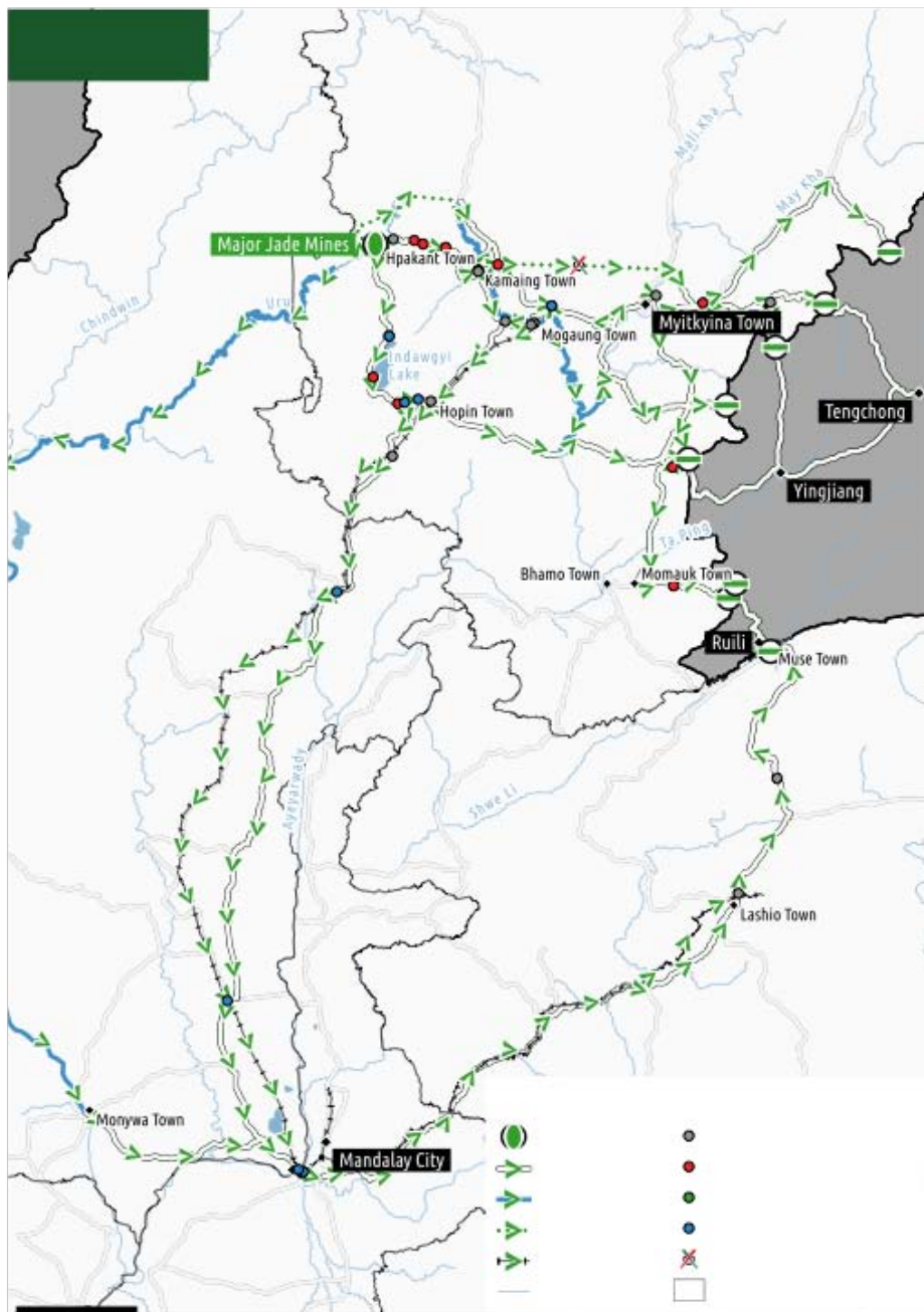


Figure 2. Overland Jade Transportation Routes from Upper Myanmar to China's Yunnan Province.
Source: *Global Witness* (2015: 25).

Chang (2014: 12) discusses how the concept of the ‘borderland’ has often been associated with periphery, wasteland, backwardness, and lawlessness, in contrast to ideas of center, civilization, progress, and law and order. Such ideas, which underlie state-building and stress national sovereignty and national boundaries, have been challenged from the 1960s onwards by a literature on liminal borderlands relating to gender, marginal people, culture, migration, environment, and underground trade, which highlighted the dynamism of the peripheral (Ibid: 13). Borders obviously matter for migrant jade traders like Noor. They may formally induce identity categories, compliant behaviour, and social order upon people somewhat in the way that state agents and political scientists imagine them to. But they also allow for informal economic opportunities, flexible social organisations and more elective self-identifications to develop in the everyday lives of people in borderlands.

Marking entry, and exit points to nation-states, national borders manifest and intensify differences between social, economic and legal regimes. They might be envisioned as ‘filters’ comprised by such components as legal frameworks, border officials, and material installations like fences and gates, which configure conditions of entry, and exit for goods and people. Also more intangible content may be ‘filtered’ at borders, and the Sino-Myanmar may be seen as a ‘moral filter’ for the cultural biography of jade stones among Han Chinese jade traders.^{xii} But by controlling and blocking flows at designated nodes, national borders in a sense precondition the establishment of alternative routes that may allow passage for that which is ‘filtered out’ at the officially sanctioned border gates.

The Muse-Ruili border concretises different prices for jade and other products, and thus creates economic opportunities for traders, transporter, border guards, and other officials. Jade may enter Ruili from Muse legally after being taxed inside Myanmar and at Chinese border, but according to numerous industry sources interviewed by Global Witness (2015: 24) 50-80 per cent of Myanmar jadeite is smuggled across the border to China untaxed, and thereby illegally. While it is obviously impossible to measure the exact size of this economy due to its informality, the estimate is plausible from the anecdotal evidence I have collected in Ruili. Likewise, the value of the jadeite trade on both sides of the border is impossible to estimate precisely. A report from the Harvard Ash Center estimated the sales of jade in Myanmar at about US\$ 8 billion in 2011 - nearly a sixth of the country’s 2011 GDP – while official government figures of exports that year stood at only USD 34 million. Based on new research and analysis, Global Witness (ibid: 6) reaches a much higher figure, estimating that the value

jade production in Myanmar in 2014 alone was as much as US\$ 31 billion. This figure equates 48 per cent of Myanmar's official GDP and is 46 times government expenditure on health. Part of the untaxed jade enters via the official border gates, its passage facilitated by bribes to border officials, while many traders traverse smaller roads, dirt paths, and rivers to cross the border at various un-policed points.

A necessity for many jade traders, mobility is unevenly distributed in Ruili. Han Chinese and ethnic minorities with Chinese passports can easily acquire a border pass in Muse, which allows them to travel to Myanmar to conduct jade trade. But both travel to Myanmar and life in Ruili is fraught with uncertainties for most Rohingya. The only formalization of their residency in China is the green-colour border-pass, which has to be renewed annually in Ruili and stamped in Muse once a week. That procedure can be a nuisance or risky, since most Rohingya can hold neither Burmese nor Chinese passports legally, and if they are caught in other areas of Myanmar than the site of their household registration, they may be arrested and deported back home to face potentially grave consequences. Noor often goes to Muse for jade business, or to attend cockfights. He explains the risks and nuisances involved in the process:

N: I go through the hole [a hole cut into the border fence] to Muse.

I: What happens if they catch you going through the hole?

N: It's not big problem brother. Only if Chinese guards catch you. You must pay them 500 yuan.

I: Why don't you go through the gate?

N: Cause the immigration asks me many questions. If they ask me if I have identity card [Burmese passport], I don't have. Bad immigration officer. They take passport sometimes, and ask for 500 yuan.

I: But you have to go to put the stamp in the passport right?

N: Yeah, but I also have a brother, he has good connection with the immigration in Muse. He feeds a lot of people with meat, chicken. They [the border guards] like fresh chicken with alcohol, you know. So one time, I told him "Brother take me there, cause I'm afraid they will arrest me". So he takes me there one time.

N: One time I quarrel with another officer. There are 3 gates to Muse. I go through White Elephant gate. It's very dangerous. They ask many questions. He takes my passport and takes me inside. Immigration officer asks me "where did you get this passport? [temporary Burmese passport]. Who made this passport for you?" So I tell him that I lost my ID card. So he said "you must take ID card here, if you don't take it here, we will arrest you". I tell him "my brother I lost that card, now I have temporary card". He asks me "which police station gives you this card?" I tell him that one of my relatives gave me this card. He asks about his name. I tell him that my relative is in Mandalay. So I make up one name of a police station in Mandalay. So he asks me, "where did you attend college?" I tell him "in Yangoon. I study psychology". He tells me "Oh, you are educated person". "Yeah, I was in Malaysia for working".

He tells me "you look like foreigner". He asks me "are you from Arakan?" If I tell him that I am from Arakan, he will arrest me. So I tell him "We are from mountainside, not town area, of Yangoon". So I told him some place name.

N: He did not give me my passport. He takes my passport. He says it's not real. He wants to take money from me, you know. I tell him: "I have temporary card [Chinese border passport] I will take for you". He tells me: "I don't trust you". So I tell him "If you don't trust me, you can take my telephone, I will come back again with my card". If I bring my card, he will ask many questions. So I come back here to Ruili. He takes my passport and also my phone. He tells me to come back with my temporary card, but I don't come back. So later I go through hole [in border fence]. Now Chinese government don't give us passport. Only token. Some of the migration officials come and discuss with Chinese migration. They ask: "Why you give those Rohingyas passport?"

I: Who tells them?

N: Burmese immigration. They come to Ruili to discuss. They don't want us to have citizenship. The Chinese immigration listens to their words. So now they don't give us passport.

I: So what is this one [a green passport]?

N: This one is token.

I: How does the token work? Can you stay here with this one?

N: Yeah yeah. We can stay for nine month. It's Temporary Border Pass.

I: You have the red passport, right?

N: No, no. I don't have green, don't have red. I have nothing.

I: But you have this one [I point to the red passport]

N: Yeah, this one I have. Its my smartness. (laughs).

I: You buy, or?

N: My friend makes. He already has red one, you know. Fake one. I make this one [from his friends extra fake temporary Burmese passport]. I put my picture in another ID card.

I: So now you can stay forever?

N: No, no, no. For 9 months (Laughs).

Noor's account above shows risks and nuisances of crossing the border to Muse, but Rohingya people still crossed the border gates daily to have their border passes stamped or to do business in Muse. Also, the three holes cut in the border fence provided a relatively unproblematic way of crossing the border. I cruised past the holes in the fence numerous times, witnessing a steady traffic of border crossers, without ever encountering Chinese border guards there. Many Rohingya believed their situation would change for the better if Aung San Suu Kyi would win the 2015 election, but by 2016 that did not unequivocally seem to be the case. In May 2016, Noor said that Chinese authorities were tightening regulations, and only Rohingya with their own registered shop in Ruili could now apply for the temporary border pass, while

others risked being deported across the border if police caught them. The bribe to Chinese police to avoid deportation was now a steep 5.000 *yuan*. Still, other border crossings are more dangerous to cross than the Jiegao-Muse border. Below, Noor recounts a trip with his uncle to Kachin state, where they bought jade from Kachin traders. They went from Ruili to Yingjiang, and from there took a dirt path, before they crossed the border into Kachin state close to Laiza:

N: They are fighting in Laiza now. From Yingjiang to Myitkina. Through mountain. There is no road. Very difficult. On one side Burmese shoot and take money from people. The Kachin are not taking money. I really like Kachin people. They are also Muslims, you know, they come from India in the past. Also from Tibet. They [Kachin people] take me with a van there. We go to a long bridge. The bridge is broken. They shoot with artillery. They carry iron rope, like a bridge. They carry 15 people. On another side is Burmese checkpoint.

I: Can you go to Kachin now?

N: Still war now. Sometimes after the war, the government tells the people you can go now. If you go to Hpakant or to Myitkina, and you go out at night, you don't go to teashop. If they [the Burmese army] find you there, they directly shoot you. They already told me "if you go for trade, no problem. You can go for jade". But if you go through Kachin camp, if they found you, direct shoot. A lot of government informers there. They inform to Myanmar Intelligence.

N: I was very afraid when I went there. I told my uncle: "I am very confused about the people here". After 5 o' clock, you cannot go to another side, so we must stay there on the Burmese side. They are maybe 35 people near alcohol shop. My uncle said "don't be afraid, just be silent. I speak with them". My uncle tells the teashop owner "you buy them beer, how many beer they can take, you give them, I give you money". So they drink. And I am very scared, cause they do not like Muslims. So when we sleep, maybe they can shoot us. People ask us "you want to sleep here"? So we get a room. I don't sleep the whole night, cause I am afraid. So in morning, I wake up my uncle and tell him that we wash face and then go. There are a lot of motorcycles, you can rent, go to Myitkina, 30.000 [Burmese Kyat]. Road is mountainside. There are a lot of Kachin army on the road. They have a lot of camps there. Guarding the land. We leave 6 o' clock in the morning, and we arrive 7 hours later with motorbike [to Myitkina].

In the narrative above, Noor again emphasizes his sympathy with Kachin people, whom he here says descend from Muslim Indians and Tibetans. While there are also Kachin tribes in Northeast India, their alleged historical Muslim faith is doubtful. Before missionaries started to convert Kachin people to different forms of Christianity around a century ago, Kachin tribes were animists, and most of those nominally Christian still practice animist beliefs today. Speaking different Sino-Tibetan languages, Kachin are usually thought to have migrated southward from the southern mountainous area of present-day Tibet. But according to O

Hanson (1917: 18), their origin is generally thought to be located further northeast, in the highlands of Mongolia, and in the borderland of eastern Tibet and western Sichuan in present-day China. Over generous amounts of Myanmar beer in a Myitkina teashop, two KIA officials offered to me a myth of migration that placed their ethno-genesis much further east on the banks of the Yellow River in Northeast China; a site considered the cradle of Han Chinese civilization. The myth made my Jingpo friend sad. She saw it as manifesting a Sinicization of Kachin people, which with China's economic expansion into Myanmar has affected not only Kachin natural resources, landscape, economy, and society, but with this myth of origin also their minds and ethnic identity.

Noor and his uncle eventually made it to the Kachin capital, Myitkina, and finally to the jade mines at Hpakant. There are several Burmese military checkpoints on the approximately 120 kilometres stretch of road between Myitkina and Hpakant. Noor's uncle had connections there and could pay his way through, but they were questioned at one of the checkpoints. Eventually, they were allowed to pass by saying that they were Pakistani jade traders. Noor said that the military could have shot them if they knew they were Rohingya. Both the cases of Wa people pretending to be Shan in Ruili and Rohingya pretending to be Pakistani in Myanmar illustrate how suspicion, ostracising, and criminalisation of certain ethnicities in certain localities makes their 'nominal change' of ethnic identification feasible in certain situations. While this does not imply a change of ethnic self-identification in terms of identity, it does suggest considering ethnic identifications as contingently produced in different environments. The danger for Noor in Kachin state is not the KIA, but the Burmese army, which may "directly shoot" him. At the time of Noor's visit to Myitkina in 2013 and also during my visit in 2015, the Burmese army controlled Myitkina, and had set up military checkpoints throughout the city. One of the main skills for cross-border jade traders in the region is the ability to classify other people; to place them within a social-symbolic system of ethnic, political, and social categories that will tell you whether they are friends or enemies. But in the China-Kachin borderland around Laiza, Noor says that he is "very confused about the people", which makes it difficult for him to classify them and thus know their intentions and how to respond to them.

Jade Trade and Ethnic Alliances

As visualized below, Ruili's Rohingya jade traders can be stratified into seven major occupational classes, which structure different levels of potential earnings:

| Occupation | Activity and Capital |
|-----------------------|--|
| 1. Manual labourers | Grind small jadeite stones owned by others into cabochons and bracelets, which they then polish with resin |
| 2. Mobile vendors (1) | Sell jewellery (usually restricted to cabochons and bracelets) owned by others in the street. |
| 3. Mobile vendors (2) | Own small lots of jewellery (usually restricted to cabochons and bracelets), which they sell in the street. |
| 4. Shop owners | Sell jewellery from their own shop. |
| 5. Mobile brokers | Sell uncut jadeite stones owned by others to different buyers |
| 6. Businessmen | Own smaller lots of uncut jadeite stones, which they usually sell from their own shop or with the help of brokers |
| 7. Wholesalers | Own large lots of high quality uncut jadeite stones, some of which is sold in the rough, and some of which they have carved to jewellery. Most people from this group also have one or several shops in Ruili. |

Some of these classes overlap, and a jewellery street vendor could potentially earn more than a shop owner selling uncut jadeite stones. But as a general rule, traders who invest in their own stones earn more than traders brokering other people's stones; the higher quality jadeite brings in higher earnings for the vendor; and investments in uncut stones carry both higher potential profits and losses than jewellery. Noor's access to expensive, high-quality uncut jade stones via his uncle's investment capital and contacts with Kachin suppliers places him approximately in class 5 of this hierarchy. Aside from economic capital, business networks, skills and efforts, the position of the individual Rohingya jade trader in this hierarchy is structured by the time of their migration. The wealthier Rohingya businessmen have usually been in Ruili for longer than the less wealthy ones. As one example, Noor's maternal grandfather's cousin came to Ruili 20 years ago, and has established an extremely profitable jade business. He has also been appointed to the prestigious and politically influential position of Chairman of Ruili's Gem Trade Society (*Ruili zhubao shehui*). Newcomers to Ruili often start as polishers or mobile vendors of jewellery owned by other traders, and then potentially advance in the occupational hierarchy as they amass capital to buy their own stones.

The different occupational classes among Ruili's Rohingya jade traders engage in different temporal orders. For the polishers, time is money. The more time they spend polishing a stone, the sooner that stone will be finished, and they receive an agreed-upon payment from the owner of the stone. It is a monotonous job, which demands concentration, but lacks the creativity and added value involved in carving the stone into shape. Bracelets are often drilled out of a flat-cut piece of jade with a machine and then polished round, and cabochons are polished from a standardised template. The more demanding process of carving elaborate designs is by and large monopolised by Han Chinese jade carvers. While some polishers work out of workshops

in the Rohingya ghetto at the *zhubaojie*, others cut costs for rent by working from home. I visited a polisher with Noor, who worked from the floor of a small bamboo shed, around 12 square metres in size, where he lived with another polisher. The shed contained two small beds, a few kitchen utensils to be used in an outdoor kitchen, some electric drills for the polishing, and a bunch of stones they had been commissioned to polish. The polisher had recently kicked an eight-year heroin addiction, and had no capital to buy his own stones. He earned 800-1000 *yuan* per month from the polishing gig, just enough to sustain a life in Ruili.

The mobile vendors must also invest considerable time in finding customers, but they are not bound to one place, and their job is less tedious than that of the polishers. The jade vendors scour the streets of the *zhubaojie* and its perimeters, offering jewellery out of leather shoulder bags. Cabochons are usually set in cheap brass rings in order to allow buyers to try it on. After the purchase, buyers usually set the cabochons into rings of gold, white gold, or platinum, often adding some diamonds to the design. The ideal customer would be a Chinese tourist from a large city like Shanghai, Beijing, or Hong Kong, who buys the jewellery as a present or for personal use, and does not know the exact local price levels. During my first fieldwork in 2013, Ruili still received busloads of tourists looking to buy jade, but due to a general national economic slowdown and president Xi Jinping's anti-corruption campaign this source of customers had all but dried out during my 2014-2015 fieldwork. The more time mobile vendors invest in looking for and addressing potential customers, the higher the chance of them making a sale. This means that they have to be alert during the day, but a lot of their time is simply spent hanging out and waiting for potential customers to find their way into the jade market.

Comparatively, the mobile vendors and shops offering jewellery have a higher sales volume than the brokers and shops offering more expensive uncut stones. For the latter groups, days, weeks, and even months can go by without a single sale. However, when such a sale does occur, it may bring in a profit exceeding that of several months of work for the jewellery vendors and several years of salary for the polishers. The temporal order for brokers like Noor, then, is structured by long periods of waiting. Like all jade traders, brokers have to stay alert and try to make contacts and agreements with potential buyers, but the base of customers with capital and networks to invest in expensive raw stones is significantly smaller than that of jewellery vendors. This principle intensifies with the size, quality, and price of the stone. Owners of stones worth millions of *yuan* might wait for years, before their investments is

realized in a sale, but then a single such sale could potentially give them capital enough to live comfortably for the rest of their lives.

Visualizing relations between the quality of jade and its level of processing, work volume, sales volume, and profit, the model below shows how the access to, and ownership over high quality uncut jade decreases the amount of work and increases potential profits for Rohingya jade traders, whereas the work volume is higher and the profit lower for those who only have access to lower quality processed jade.

| Occupation | Processing of Jade | Work volume | Sales volume | Profits |
|----------------|------------------------------|-------------|--------------|---------|
| Polishers | Polished jewellery | High | High | Low |
| Mobile vendors | Polished jewellery | Medium | High | Low |
| Mobile vendors | Uncut stones, low quality | Medium | Medium | Medium |
| Brokers | Uncut stones, medium quality | Medium | Medium | Medium |
| Investors | Uncut stones, high quality | Low | Low | High |

Obviously, the workload for traders with access to, or ownership of high-quality jadeite stones cannot be measured simply in terms of sales volume, as it involves maintaining business relations with potential suppliers and buyers of jade. In 2014, Noor was in Kunming, the provincial capital of Yunnan province, where he tried to sell jadeite stones acquired by his uncle in Kachin state. Trading high quality expensive stones demands a good measure of patience. Noor stayed in Kunming for six months before managing to sell the stones. He kept the jade in his rented room, alongside two fighting cocks that he occasionally took out for cockfights in the city. When he left his room, he had a close Rohingya friend guard the jade stones in the room. Therefore I did not meet Noor, but we kept contact by calling and using the Chinese social media app WeChat (*Weixin*):

N: "I have nine jades. One I sell for only 9000 yuan. So remaining 8 stones. Also in Ruili arrived 15 new stones from Hpakant. So my friend will send to me. So I will receive and then sell. So you pray for me, my brother. I just want to sell and then back to Ruili.

[Noor sends me a picture of one of the jade stones]: This one is not sell yet, cause this one expensive. I told my customer 50.000, but they only want to give 16.000, so I don't want to sell it. Price is double from Ruili to Kunming. Also in Shanghai, Macao, Hong Kong. Very different price. Cause Ruili is border town. So in Ruili and inside of China very different price

Here, it is clear how mobility can translate into economic profit for jade traders like Noor. The value of jadeite stones often multiplies as they are smuggled from the mines at Hpakant

across the Chinese border into Ruili. Noor says that prices can be further doubled when the stones are transported the approximately 700 kilometres from Ruili to Kunming, and generally, the further east in China from Ruili a piece of jade is moved, the higher price it acquires. This transportation is risky for Noor, whose Chinese border pass restricts him to stay inside Ruili. There is a police checkpoint outside Ruili on the road to Mangshi, and another one outside Mangshi, which marks the border of the Dehong prefecture. This risky, but relatively straightforward way of conducting jade trade reminds us how in many parts of the world, people make their living from moving material products from one place to another, often crossing local, regional, and national borders. In his study of traders of different nationalities operating out of Hong Kong's infamous Chungking Mansions, Mathews (2011) aptly labels this process 'suitcase capitalism'.

In the spring of 2015, Noor was on a similar trading mission, this time to the Wa state, a border area some 800 kilometres southeast from Ruili. Also here, Noor encountered delays and eventually spent five months in the Wa state capital of *Phang Kham (Panghsan)* on the Burmese side of the border. This time, a customer, who did not pay for jade he acquired, caused Noor's return to Ruili to be delayed. I was in Sweden at that time, and we again communicated via WeChat:

N: Yeah brother, I am still in the Wa state, Pangshan. Here is also war between Myanmar government and Kokang people. Maybe 85 miles from here to Kokang. Someone betrayed me. He bought 28 pieces of jade from me, but he did not pay me yet. So I'm still waiting here. I discuss this with chairman from Wa state [general from United Wa State Army, UWSA]. Maybe he will settle our problem. I don't know before about the jade buyer. He was mafia, you know. He lied. He wants to buy my jades. I sell with my broker. He [Noor's broker] is also from Arakan state, Rohingya. So I know him a long time. So he calls him, and sells all my jades. Then he [the buyer] told me "I want to show my jade to my boss, so I want to carry your jade". I allow that. After he closes his phone so I cannot contact with him. After one month, I meet with him, and he explains me what happened. He says: "I have a lot of loss of my jade in my business, so I could not contact with you, so sorry". So I told Wa State Chairman. He told me "no problem, I will decide, I will take money from him". He promised me.

[A week later]. N: Yeah, chairman of Wa state, he told me he would help me about my jade. He told me that the man, who cheated me, he is Kokang people, not Wa people. The Wa people are very honest and very good people. Cause Wa government is very dangerous. If you rape a woman, they will kill you, for example. If you stole somebody's gold, they will punish you. Very good government.

N: I will be back after one month. Chairman told me I must wait one month, because the buyer has not money yet. So we make agreement, he will pay my money after one month, so I wait for money. Then I will buy again jade from Ruili and Yingjiang, and then I will come back again.

[A month or so later]: Now I am back in Ruili. I am waiting for my contact in the Wa state. He is the second president [of the UWSA]. He wants to buy one million yuan jade. I don't have, so I ask my friend to bring for him. They will come next week. [Noor sends me a picture of a jadeite stone]. This stone is one million yuan. If they buy, I will get broker price. The buyers are in Xishuangbanna. [the UWSA official is a broker for those buyers]. They want to buy most precious jade. They come from Shanghai, Guangzhou, Beijing. They are very big money. This is not my stone. The owner of the stone is Burmese people.

This trading venture underlined the importance of cultivating relations with powerful players of different ethnic and social affiliations in the jade trade. In the two deals mentioned by Noor, he directly and indirectly deals with people of five ethnicities; a Rohingya broker; a Wa army general, who acts both as a broker and conflict mediator; a deceitful Kokang jade buyer and alleged mafia member; Chinese jade buyers from Shanghai, Guangzhou, and Beijing; and Burmese jade suppliers. Trust is essential in the jade trade, and on this mission Noor encountered the risk of loosing investments to a buyer, who simply did not pay for his purchases. This risk was eventually fended off by his powerful contact, the general of the UWSA. As with other types of trade in illegal and highly profitable goods, the cultivation of business relations through social skills may need to be supplemented by threats, 'muscle', and the demonstration of a potential for conducting violence (see e.g. Adler 1993: 95; Wacquant 1998: 3).

Noor occasionally pointed out Rohingya men in Ruili's *zhubaojie* jade bazaar, whom he said were mafia members and heroin traders. In the interview below, which was conducted a year before Noor's trip to Wa state, I asked Noor why as a jade trader he does not wear jade jewellery? His answer underlines his observance of Islamic rules and his education level, which he argues distinguishes him from Rohingya people, who have gotten rich fast in the heroin trade:

N: Jade comes from our country, so we don't like. Me, I don't like any gemstones. Our Islam says that a man is not allowed to wear diamonds and gold. Allow only if you are travelling, and you don't have money. Our Islam only allows like a little ring, you can sell if you have problem. So I don't like. Also women are not allowed to wear jewellery. My mother asks me a lot when I was a student: "Son, a lot of your friends wear gold, ring, necklace. Why you don't wear?" I reply, "Islam does not

allow it". So my mother says "very good my son". She is proud of me (laughs). Some uneducated people, they don't care about Islam. So they wear gold and jade.

N: Some of the rich men in Ruili, before they were very poor in Arakan. So they arrive here, and they get rich. So they wear gold, jade. Before, they do business, you know, No. 4 [heroin]. Before 2007, Chinese don't know what is No. 4. They can carry to Kunming, Shanghai, Beijing. They can get a lot of money. They buy from Myanmar. From the borderside, Wa state people. They are like mafia. They have a lot of people in Ruili also. My friend is very close to them. He is Rohingya. He always asks me "you want to come with me to Wa state"? (laughs). So I tell him "I'm afraid. I don't want to go". He told me that there are a lot of army people. When he arrives there with jade, the army brings him inside Wa state. He is very popular in Wa state. He does not have big car, big house, he looks like a poor man. He is rich, but he lives like poor man. He said "you don't worry, I will introduce you to the General if you want to do business". So I tell him "I am afraid, I don't want to do No. 4 business" (laughs). Wa State is like terrorist area. They are at war, you know. There are Kachin, Shan, Burmese, all sorts of people, they are mix people there.

I: Is there a lot of No. 4 here in Ruili?

N: A lot. Chinese police, before they didn't know [about heroin]. Now, they check. Before Burmese government sells. When send from Ruili to Kunming, people put [heroin] inside computers and inside big fish. Before, if police catch you, they shoot at once. Now other governments tell Chinese government "don't shoot. Better to go to jail forever".

Noor's Rohingya friend seemed to have an import-export deal with his Wa contacts, bringing jade stones to the Wa state from Ruili, and returning with heroin. Jade and drug smuggling routes from northern Myanmar into Yunnan seem to coincide to a large extent. I was even told in Ruili that some smugglers hide heroin and amphetamines inside jade stones, which have been drilled hollow. After filling the stones with drugs, they are sealed with a layer of stone skin, and then hidden amongst ordinary jade stones. Noor disassociated himself from the heroin trade both on moral grounds and on fear, but his social world had interfaces with the worlds of heroin dealers, mafia people, and ethnic insurgent armies. In this interview, he said he was afraid to go to Wa State, but as we have seen, he went there one year later. Noor's self-representation seems to comprise a balancing between a personal moral codex tied to his Muslim faith, (which, for instance, makes him abstain from wearing jewellery), and a social and economic world of jade trading, which is tied up with illegal and illicit practices.

Changes are likely ahead for Ruili's *zhubaojie* jade bazaar, which has accommodated Rohingya refugees for the past decades. An official at the Propaganda Department of Ruili's city government described the *zhubaojie* as "too messy" (*tai luan*), and also warned of the risk of buying counterfeit jade here. The master plan of the government, he said, is to "improve the

environment” of the bazaar as part of promoting Ruili as a “national and international jade capital”. A current renovation of the *Zhubaojie* is replacing small alleyway stalls with larger jade shops flanking a “jade boulevard”, which runs southwards in a diagonal line from a newly constructed concrete-and-glass government building that sits on a small hill overlooking the market. In the southern part of Ruili, three recently opened adjacent jade markets may exemplify the future development of Ruili’s jade trade. Laid out in a grid of broad straight streets and guarded by security guards, the *Delong* Market hosts hundreds of jade shops and jade carving workshops, as well as an outdoor night market for uncut jade stones held in the street. The *Jinxing* market accommodates large multi-storey companies with elaborate exhibition galleries, shopping departments and carving workshops, as well as a shopping centre for furniture carved in hardwood like teak and mahogany. The *Yang Yang Hao* is one big company owned by an investor from Zhejiang province, which in buildings surrounding a large courtyard hosts a jade culture exhibition gallery, a large carving workshop that also functions as a carving school, a large department store for jade jewellery, and a hall with hundreds of uncut stones, many of which are priced at several million *yuan*. Since 2009, *Yang Yang Hao* has also hosted an annual public auction of raw jade stones, according to the company owner’s daughter the first of its kind in Yunnan province. Ownership of the larger jade companies seems dominated by wealthy investors from eastern Chinese cities provinces like Hong Kong, Guangdong, Fujian, Zhejiang, Beijing, and Henan. Trust being an essential component in Chinese business, these companies, which often turn over tens of million *yuan* annually, are usually operated by close friends or as family-businesses. While personal relationships remain crucial in the jade trade, these new large companies often employ professional printed and online advertising, stylish interior design, and shop assistants educated in jade culture to attract customers. In contrast, stalls at the *zhubaojie* are simply a table with jade stones or jewellery, while many *zhubaojie* shops comprise little more than a jade trader, an exhibition desk, and a storage room.

As Ruili’s jade trade is becoming more tightly regulated and incorporated into wider regional development plans, the city’s jade markets seem to be undergoing a transformation from what Geertz (1963) called a ‘bazaar-type economy’ composed of street markets and small-scale traders towards the establishment of market cities and shopping centres hosting large jade trade conglomerates. Underpinned by intensified mining in Kachin state and rising prices for jade in China, political attempts on the prefectural, and city-level to promote Ruili as

a centre for international and regional jade trade entail processes of intensification, concentration, and up-scaling of the jade trade into hubs of larger companies.^{xiii} One potential future effect of these processes could be more difficult conditions for less capital-strong smaller-scale traders, including many Rohingya.

Attack of the Burmese Dogs

Noor's favourite pastime activities were breeding fighting cocks and attending cockfights. The cockfights were held in Ruili and Muse on a rotational basis. Friday, Saturday, and Sunday saw cockfights in a Dai / Shan village in the southern outskirts of Ruili, while cockfights were held in Muse on Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday. I could not enter Muse legally, and only attended cockfights in Ruili. The organizers and most participants were Dai / Shan people, while also some Jingpo / Kachin people attended, alongside Bamar Burmese, Rohingya, and the occasional Uyghur. Han Chinese people were conspicuously absent in the cockfights I attended, and one Han Chinese jade trader called cockfighting a barbarous practice. Some elderly women sold refreshments to spectators, but women did not enter the cockfighting arena. The arena encompassed a circle, around 10 metres in diameter and fenced off by an approximately 40 centimetres high barrier, encircled by chairs and benches. Constituting a leisure site for male interaction, the cockfighting arena allowed for the cultivation of social networks across ethnicities, which could be functional in the jade trade.

Contestants were found by breeders holding the fighting cocks up against each other to see whether they got aggressive. Cockfighting rules vary in this region. In Ruili, opponents should be of relatively similar size, but Noor said that organizers in Muse would match cocks of different sizes, skills, and strength, and often know beforehand which cock would win. They could then cash in profits from inexperienced spectators betting on the losing cock. He further said that some breeders in Muse put tiger blood on their fighting cocks, which had the effect of making the other cock scared of attacking. Also in Muse, some breeders allegedly fed amphetamine to their fighting cock, which would give him more energy and make him less susceptible to pain. Noor described such practices as morally wrong. The morality of cockfighting for Noor almost seemed structured by the Sino-Myanmar national border, separating relatively honest people in China from cheating people in Myanmar. This moral geography to some extent corresponded to a separation between Chinese Dai and Burmese

Shan, although the Dai / Shan people, who dominated the cockfights is basically the same main ethnic group living on both sides of the national border. I asked Noor if cockfighting is illegal in China:

N: The government does not allow it. But the Shan are not afraid of Chinese police. They say: "We are fighting [with cocks] in our village, why you come here? This is just like a festival for us. If you come again, we will beat you!" Chinese police are afraid of them. They are Chinese Shan, they know Chinese language. Police also arrest me one time in the cockfight. They tell me "show me your passport!" But I cannot show my passport. So they arrest me. I go to police station, and they take 500 yuan.

Here, Noor points to the relative local power and autonomy enjoyed by Dai / Shan people, the largest ethnic minority group in Ruili, which as of 2012 constituted around 30 per cent of the city's population, and has a strong representation in the local government. While cockfights in Dai / Shan villages are subject to rules emanating in formal and legal frameworks, local rules and morals that posit the cockfight as a kind of cultural heritage - a "festival" tied to Dai / Shan ethnicity – seem to supersede the formal law. As a social field of action, the Shan village in Ruili could thus be described with Sally Falk-Moore's (1973) concept of the "semi-autonomous social field", of which one society may contain many (see Griffiths 1986: 38). As Noor experienced during his arrest at the cockfight, the legal semi-autonomy of the Dai / Shan village did not cover visiting Rohingya people.

Noor often emphasized that Rohingya and Shan people have good relations, but also said that some Shan people are organized in mafia groups and involved in drug business, extortion, and robbery, and that you must be careful not to be cheated by Shan people in business. In 2013, Noor kept two fighting cocks at a fenced construction site outside Ruili, where his cousin was building a house, and two cocks in his room in Ruili. Another fighting cock was kept and fed by a Shan man in Muse.^{xiv} Noor paid the man 500 *yuan* per month for taking care of his cock. One day Noor told me his fighting cock was supposed to fight in Muse the coming week, but that he had to postpone the fight. He had not been in Muse for 25 days, and when he went there he saw a scratch on the head of his fighting cock. Noor was convinced that the Shan man had been using his cock for fighting. He now had to let the fighting cock rest for 2-3 weeks. "He lied to me", Noor said. "He said he takes care of my cock, but he is fighting with him. You

cannot trust these Shan people”. A few days later, Noor moved the fighting cock to his cousin’s construction site outside Ruili.

Noor earned money on breeding and selling fighting cocks, and he gambled money on cockfights, mostly those featuring his own fighting cocks. But the fighting cocks were more than mere moneymaking creatures for Noor, who expressed an emotional and somewhat symbiotic relation with them. He would sometimes sit with a fighting cock in his lap during our talks in the teahouse, gently caressing his feathers, occasionally lifting him up by holding his chest and let him flap his wings. He explained:

N: I massage the cock every day to make him stronger and make him win [in cockfights]. Massage his neck. I give him meat, prawn, rice, paddy. He sleeps on bamboo to make his claws stronger. He is also swimming. He is like a dragon. If you want to fight with a cock, you must take good care of him. He’s like a child.

Noor accentuates the agility and ferocity of his fighting cock by likening him to the mythological dragon, but also suggests that he is like a human child, who is dependent on good care. The fighting cock thus seems to possess both nonhuman and human characteristics and needs. Noor gave his fighting cocks names like Rambo (the warrior protagonist of four action movies), Tyson, (after former heavy weight boxing champion Mike Tyson), The Undertaker (a villain character from American wrestling entertainment), and Hitler. Taking inspiration from a symbolic universe of human heroes and villains, Noor’s chosen names signify the fighting skills and personality of his fighting cocks. He further attributes characteristics to fighting cocks based on their ‘ethnicity’. For instance, he said that Vietnamese cocks are small and fast, Shan cocks are large and strong, Uyghur cocks are big but often slow, while Chinese cocks lack aggressiveness.

In Raffles’ (2010: 74-116) discussion of cricket fighting in Shanghai, the participants assume a perspective, where they are both similar and different to crickets, an apparent contradiction which “simply persists as a fact of existence and does not require resolution” (ibid.: 215). The crickets here are not just ‘interpreted’ into some pre-existing cosmology, but are rather co-creators of it. The ontological entanglement between breeders and crickets “is possible only because of the insects themselves, which are not merely the opportunity for culture but its co-authors” (ibid: 100). In a quite different ethnographic setting, Willerslev (2007: 89-119) discusses how Yukaghir hunters mimic their animal prey, courting and luring it

like they would a sexual partner. Thinking and acting like animals in certain contexts here imply a transient human-nonhuman metamorphosis. In order to be successful in cockfighting, Noor needs to understand the needs and personality of his fighting cocks. This requires of him to temporarily assume a non-human perspective. As Raffles suggests, this implies a step beyond a symbolic-hermeneutic paradigm, in which the singularity of the fighting cock gives way to its role as generic matter for interpretation in a human symbolic universe. In anthropology, the symbolic-hermeneutic paradigm to a large extent builds upon Lévi-Strauss' famous maxim that the use of natural species like vegetables and animals as totems is "not because they are 'good to eat' but because they are 'good to think'" (Lévi-Strauss 1962: 89). Here, the social distinctions created by the use of different totem species take primacy over the distinctive qualities of the totems. Conversely, one of the implications of the recent 'ontological turn' in anthropology is an attention to how the singularity of the non-human co-configures human conceptions.^{xv} Noor's distinctions between fighting cocks in terms of their fighting skills, personality, and ethnicity are obviously made using pre-existing linguistic categories, but those categories are also activated and reinforced on the basis of the characteristics and behavior of the individual fighting cocks. This perspective concerns an active role of the non-human in co-configuring human social-symbolic orders, but does not reject the existence or workings of such orders. For Noor, some norms and taboos concerned fighting cocks as a generic 'species', rather than the characteristics of singular cocks.

The diet of Noor's fighting cocks to some extent resembles that of Rohingya people with the exception that they also eat uncooked food. Noor feeds his cocks a combination of staples (rice) and 'dishes' (prawn, mutton), mirroring Rohingya cuisine, which usually features steamed rice and meat dishes cooked in a mildly spicy curry-sauce. The Muslim taboo against eating pork is extended to the fighting cocks. Noor said that the fighting cocks would die if they ate pork; it is like poison to them. As we have seen, Noor conceives of certain practices of Burmese Shan people related to cockfighting as immoral. He mentioned as another example that Shan people will eat a fighting cock if he dies in battle. "But we Rohingya never do that", Noor laughed. "The dead cock must be buried. We humans should not eat it". Cultural rules and taboos are of course often broken. Noor said that Islam does not allow cockfighting and that some Rohingya scolded him for attending and betting on cockfights. But this was a rule Noor was willing to break.

Unlike cockfighting in some other Southeast Asian countries, knives are not attached to the spurs of the fighting cocks in Ruili and Muse. This means that the losing cock only rarely dies during the fights, and that fights last longer. Many of the fights I witnessed lasted for more than an hour. The cocks fight by pecking with their beaks and kicking forward with their spurs, the latter form of attack being the most harmful. The cocks fight in rounds of 15 minutes followed by a 5 minutes break, during which the breeder cleans the cock's throat with a feather, blows air into his beak, feeds him meat and water, and blows water onto his anus to make him more aggressive. When one of the cocks gets injured or is too tired to attack, he has lost the fight. This decision is taken by a referee, which is not allowed to bet on the fight. The spectators offer odds – for instance 300 to 500 *yuan* – that change as the fight proceeds, and opponents can accept those as individual bets. The bets are noted down and settled after each fight. Noor strictly observes a rule that once a fighting cock has won six fights, he will retire and not fight again. Noor referred to such cocks as 'Master cocks', and uses them for breeding new fighting cocks.

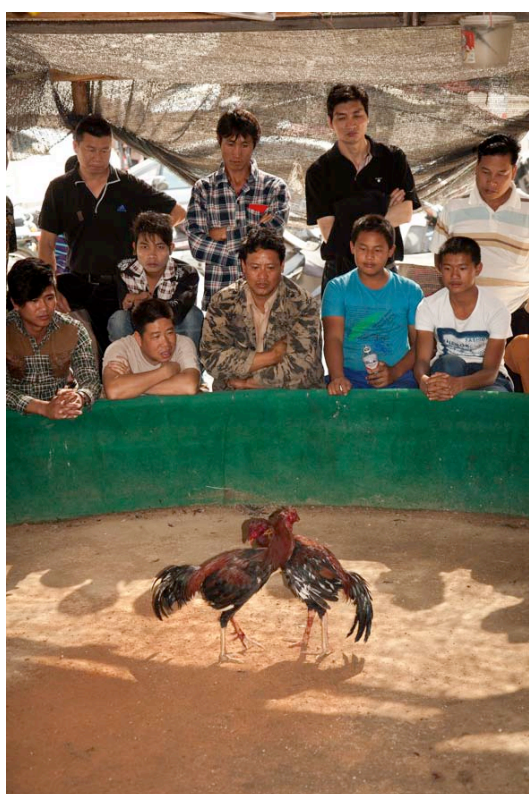


Figure 3. Cockfight in a Dai / Shan village outside Ruili.



Figure 4. During breaks, the breeder nurses the fighting cock.

Rambo, the fighting cock that Noor suspected had been illegitimately used for fighting in Muse by the Shan breeder, had won five fights, and thus only lacked one win to become a

Master cock. Noor moved Rambo to a construction site located halfway up a small hill around five kilometres east of Ruili. Noor's cousin is married to a Shan woman, who bought the plot, and is building a house there. The plot is around 15 metres wide and 30 metres long. A brick wall covered in concrete encircles the plot, hosting an entrance made up by an iron gate. At the time of my visits, the first floor of what would be a two-floor residential building had been completed, and accommodated four rooms next to a separate toilet building. Opposite the toilet building is a space covered by a rounded metal roof, which functions as kitchen. Here, Noor's fighting cocks, hens, and chicken strolled around, pecking at rice strewn on the concrete floor. At my first visit, I was surprised to learn that the crew of workers building the house are Buddhist Bamar Burmese, but Noor said that they got along well, and we all spent a pleasant afternoon playing Burmese caneball (*chinlone*) at the construction site.

One day Noor called and asked me to accompany him to the construction site. Three dogs had entered the construction site and attacked his fighting cocks and hens. Rambo was severely bitten, his tail feathers and parts of his lower back missing, and another fighting cock had been killed, alongside two hens. Noor and his cousin were present during the attack, and I filmed as they re-enacted the events:

N: There were three dogs. They dig under the fence and attacked the cocks and hens. I feel very sad now.

I: Did Rambo fight back?

N: Yeah, of course. He returns the fight. He is not afraid. But they are three dogs. We only kill one of them. Two of them escape. They are dangerous. Dogs don't eat chicken, but these dogs are like wolf.

I: How did you kill the dog?

N: We chase the dogs. The two big dogs climb the stairs [to the roof of the building]. I tell my cousin "when they come down you must hit them on the head or neck, not leg". The neck has nerves, if you hit there, he dies. Its like gong fu, you cut the nerves. My cousin waits at the gate. I come to the roof with long knife [machete]. The dogs are hiding, lying down. They pretend to be good dog. I go there, I feel very angry. So I hit one dog on the head. But he's not bleeding. The knife is not sharp. The two dogs run down. My brother hits one of them, but they escape under the fence. The smallest dog doesn't escape, he hides inside the toilet. So my cousin made a noose of rope. I really feel angry. If I don't kill him, they will come every day and kill the cocks and the hens. So I must kill him. If I kill this one, the other ones are afraid and don't come back. My cousin catches him with rope. Hangs him. He's hanging, but not dead [Noor's cousin demonstrates how he caught the dog with a noose around his neck, then hung him up in the air]. Then I hit his neck with iron stick. I

really feel sad. I don't kill any animals. But yesterday I kill cause I am very angry. They also came here the day before. They kill small cock, like Thailand cock, kill three hens and the fighting cock. We bury them here.

[Noor applies iodine to the wounds of the Rambo and the injured hens, and feeds them Paracetamol pills dissolved in water]. The hens are all scared now. They think the dog is coming, so they don't eat. They are ready to hide. They jumped to a hole in the ground. They are very clever. First we thought that also the hens are dead. But after we found them in the hole, the dogs could not catch them there. I think the black hen will die, cause she is not eating. Ramboo is still eating. He is not afraid. He is a warrior. If a dog bites a chicken, he cannot eat mutton. Same for people. Other meat is okay, like beef. But if I feed him mutton now, he will die.

I: Do you think Rambo hurt the dog?

N: Yeah yeah, he tried to kick him. If only one time he can kick the dog well, then the dog will not attack him again. The dog will be afraid. I planned to take him fighting one month later, but now I cannot, cause he doesn't have tail or wings. He cannot fight well now.

[We go down the stairs. Noor goes into a room, where the construction workers had been sleeping. He comes out and laughs nervously] N: The workers left. Went to Myanmar. They are afraid.

I: Of the dogs?

N: No, no, of us.

I: Of you?

N: (laughs nervously). No, of us...Muslims. Cause Muslims and Buddhists are fighting, so they think that we will kill them. So I explain to them. "No, we don't fight you. We live together like family".

I: Do you know where the dogs came from?

N: They are Burmese dogs! In the village up there are Burmese people [Noor points up the mountain], Very bad people. They are drinking and making trouble with Muslims. I think those dogs come from up there. My cousin fights with them before. They abused him. They had been drinking, so he called police. Police is Shan people, they arrested them. The Burmese are also afraid of Shan people. Some Shan people from Muse come through the border fence to steal in Ruili. For instance if you go alone on the street in the night, they come 5 people with knives. Steal money, also motorbike. They also kill policeman in Ruili. They are playing in computer café. They fight with someone. Police come and tells them not to fight, and they kill him with knife. They take drugs in the computer café. My cousin's wife is Shan woman. He cannot buy land here, so he told his wife "I want to buy land in your name". She agrees and he bought this land 8 years ago. He paid 240.000 yuan. He builds a house here. He wants to keep jade here. He will have his relatives stay here for security. They must have guns.

Noor's re-enactment of the dog attack may help illuminate the roles that the nonhuman may play in the construction of social-symbolic order in a setting of ethnic diversity and potential conflicts. If we follow Geertz' (1973) famous example of the interpretation of the wink of an eye as either a biological (re)-action or a cultural sign, there are two possible explanations for the events at the construction site. In the first explanation, three dogs acting out of instincts went for a meal of chicken. But we sense that Noor would not be entirely satisfied with this explanation. Something beyond normal animal behaviour seemed at play in Noor's explanation. Noor said that dogs usually do not eat chicken, but that these dogs "were like wolves"; that is, seemingly acting against their normal instincts and inclinations as a species. Even facing three "wolf-like" dogs, Noor's favourite fighting cock, Rambo, bravely fought like a warrior. Also, both the dogs and the hens expressed a distinctive cleverness. The hens hid in a hole as if they could anticipate that the dogs could not find or reach them there, and the dogs were almost like human actors; when threatened, they pretended to be "good dogs".

Noor did not seem to know for certain where the dogs came from, but he still classified them as Burmese dogs. It seemed quite clear that this classification was based on conflicts with a group of Buddhist Burmese people living further up the hill, who had previously abused Noor's cousin. Unless the dogs were extremely well-trained, we could reasonably expect them to have attacked the cocks and hens acting on their own will and instincts. But by associating the dogs with an antagonistic group of Burmese people, Noor implied a correlation between the attack of the dogs and a vicious intent of the Burmese antagonists. It was as if the intention of the Burmese people was instilled in the dogs and thereby exercising their distributed agency in a causal milieu by attacking cocks and hens, which in turn were a kind of extension of Noor himself as a Rohingya. This reminds us of Gell's (1998: 20, 36-38) discussion of the art object as a 'secondary agent' in the sense that it embodies and concretises human intensions and agency, and I believe we could extend this analysis of 'things' to a broader category of the nonhuman, including animals.

Levi-Strauss' (1966: 34) famously argued that different phenomena "acquire meaning only if they are integrated into systems". In Levi-Strauss' structuralism, meaning is contrastive, created through classificatory associations and distinctions. Noor made sense of the dog attack by placing both the dogs and the cocks in a wider symbolic system of categories that included contrastive ethnic animal and human roles and affiliations, including predator and prey. In a purely symbolic-hermeneutical analysis, the characteristics, impulses or intentions of the

animals do not take analytical primacy. For instance, Geertz's (1979) famously analyzed the Balinese cockfight as a meaningful event that told the Balinese about the 'social matrix' in which they live, including the local status hierarchy. The cockfight here becomes a symbol; a representation of a certain human reality: "Its function, if you want to call it that, is interpretive: It is a Balinese reading of Balinese experience, a story they tell themselves about themselves" (Geertz 1979: 218). While my analysis of how Noor conceived of the dog attack owes much to Geertz's analysis, I wonder if Geertz – or Noor for that matter - would have reached a different conclusion, had he witnessed, say, a bullfight? With inspiration from new materialist and ontological approaches, I would suggest that exactly the biological forms, instincts, and potentials of dogs and chicken as respectively predator and prey facilitates Noor's imagination of the conflictual relationship between ethnic Rohingya and Burmese. Pedersen (2007: 26) discusses shamanic costumes among Darhad Mongols as a 'socio-cognitive scaffolding' that allows people to "'see' themselves and their relationships from perspectives that would otherwise be literally inconceivable." In this analysis, things are more than representations of specific kinds of social knowledge; rather "they are the vehicles whose very form and substance make that knowledge possible" (ibid). The respective biological potentials of dogs and chicken, I suggest, in a similar manner concretizes Noor's visualization of a social world that comprises 'predatory' ethnic others. This social world was not exclusively anchored in a particular place. Unfolding events across the border in Myanmar influenced interethnic relations in Ruili. This was clearly demonstrated by the fact that the Burmese construction workers, with whom Noor and his cousin had previously enjoyed friendly relations, decided to leave for Myanmar, because they were afraid that the Rohingya would kill them after violence escalated inside Myanmar.

Noor's mentioning of Shan violence and criminality in Ruili in a sense anticipated an event that would happen later. In the fall of 2015, I was in Sweden and could not get a hold of Noor for two weeks. One day, his brother, who lives in Texas, sent me a video clip of Noor lying sleeping or unconscious in a hospital bed. Both his legs and one arm were covered in gaze. Noor's brother wrote that Noor had been attacked with knives and was in the hospital in Ruili, but that he didn't know more about what happened yet. A week later, Noor sent me the following message:

N: Yeah my friend, some of my enemies attack me in Ruili. About money. I ask about my money, he owes me money. So he calls a lot of Shan people. Bad guys. So they attack me in front of our

mosque. I'm very hurt. So pray for me. When I'm in good health, I will contact you.

[A week later Noor wrote again]: Six men attack me at night with iron stick and long knives. The attackers were Chinese Shan people. Contract killers. I'm single without weapons. Some people tell me there are also Burmese people, but I did not recognize them well. One is arrested, the other ones not. They attack me for money. They also robbed a good motorbike.

I: Who ordered the attack?

N: He is Rohingya man from Ruili. He is uneducated Muslim. He called Shan people to kill me. I will revenge all. But I cannot fight yet, just practice. My Wa friends are telling they will come and catch them.

Although Noor is still recovering from deep cuts on his arm and legs, him swearing vengeance could suggest that he is not done fighting yet. This paper is not a comprehensive study of displaced Rohingya ethnicity, and my data does not support an accurate assessment of how 'typical' Noor is of Rohingya people in Ruili. While the experience of Buddhist antagonism is widely shared in interviews I conducted with other Rohingya, the intense passion for cockfighting and the distinct warrior ethos perhaps more narrowly reflects Noor's personality and character. Rather, I have attempted to show how one particular displaced Rohingya experiences his ethnic identity and positions himself in relation to other ethnic groups both in Myanmar and China. Many Rohingya fled to Ruili, because conditions in especially the Arakan state were dangerous or intolerable for them. Almost all Rohingya in Ruili found work in the jade trade via their social networks. Their success in this trade is for many preconditioned on their ability to create business alliances across ethnic affiliations. As we have seen, Rohingya maintained business relations with different groups, including Bamar Burmese, Shan / Dai, Kachin / Jingpo, Wa, and Han Chinese, which in some cases seemed to be supported by interethnic marriages. The jade trade in that sense fosters not only economic opportunities for Rohingya, but also some degree of social integration in China.

On the other hand, Noor also indicated how the jade trade is entangled with mafia-like organisations and ethnic militias engaged in other illegal activities, including drug trade. Most of the Sino-Myanmar jade trade constitutes a vast informal economy, and very loosely regulated flows of large sums of money seem to carry with them a potential for violence that may temporarily dissolve common ethnic and social affiliations. According to Noor, the last violent attack against him was carried out by Dai / Shan thugs, but ordered by a Rohingya man. While the big money involved in the jade business may stimulate new conflicts, we have also seen how ingrained ethnic conflicts that emanate inside Myanmar have a potential for spilling

across the border. This paper has argued that one concrete way in which Noor conceptualized such conflicts was by envisioning the relation between ethnic humans in terms of an analogous relation between animals. This may serve as an invitation, also to scholars of ethnicity, to scrutinize closer the multiple ways in which particularities of the nonhuman influences human conceptions of our selves, other humans, and our environment.

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Notes

ⁱ A smaller community of around 600 Rohingya jade traders are reported to reside in Jinghong, the capital of Xishuangbanna Dai Autonomous Prefecture in the South of Yunnan province, most of them arriving since the late 1990s. Many of these jade traders allegedly acquire their jade stones from family members and friends in Ruili

ⁱⁱ "Myanmar, Bangladesh leaders 'to discuss Rohingya". AFP. Jun 25, 2012.

ⁱⁱⁱ A Buddhist Rakhine political activist, whom I interviewed in Chiang Mai, proposed a more conspiratorial version of the events in the Arakan state in 2012. He said that one of the Muslim men, who allegedly raped the Rakhine girl, was gay, and hung himself in the prison cell. He then pointed to an important temporal element in the events; namely that the ethnic violence erupted just as the pipeline transporting oil and gas from the Arakan coastline up to China was about to be completed. His own political group in the Arakan state is opposed to the pipeline construction, as the profits are expected to go into the pockets of the military generals, rather than compensate the people who live in the area for their loss of land and possible environmental damages. Rakhine political groups had thus staged protests against the pipeline. But all that was sidelined, once the ethnic violence was ignited. My informant suggested that China had demanded of Burmese political leaders to finish their part of the pipeline in time and without complications, and that the Burmese regime as a response faked a rape of a Buddhist schoolgirl by Muslim men in order to ignite ethnic violence that would divert attention from political protests against the pipeline.

^{iv} Discussing developments towards what they call the 'interview society', Gubrium and Holstein (2001: 5-11) argue that especially after World War II, individuals have become accustomed to adding information, opinions, thoughts and feelings to public opinion, which has posited the individual and subjectivity as sources of information to be examined in surveys and interviews, leading to a democratization of opinion (ibid: 5-11). While this may be so for especially Western citizens embedded in democratic societies, I believe the eagerness with which the Rohingya people I interviewed in Ruili shared their experiences had a lot to do with the fact that they were not accustomed, or expected to have a voice in public opinion in Myanmar.

^v Buddhists monks and several hundred other protesters recently marched to the US Embassy in Yangon to demand it stop using the term Rohingya – an ethnicity they argue does not exist - and instead call the Muslims in Arakan state for "Bengalis". (*Asean Economist*, 30 April, 2016).

^{vi} A ceasefire agreement from 1994 between the Burmese government and the KIA collapsed in 2011, and fighting resumed, which resulted in the deaths of thousands of people, and the displacement of over 100.000 civilians in Kachin state, most of them currently living in IDP camps along the Chinese border. At the time of this interview with Noor, there was fighting around the Kahin capital of Myitkina and the jade mines in Hpakant. When I visited Kachin a year later, the government controlled Myitkina, and had conquered the majority of the jade mines.

vii Some months earlier, in November 2014, the *Tatmadaw* attacked a KIA training camp for officers close to the KIA headquarters at Mahjiayang in Kachin state. According to a KIA spokesman, 22 officers-in-training were killed and 15 more were wounded (*AlJazeera*, 20 November, 2014). The shelling happened close to an NGO operated by a friend of mine. She went there to witness the body parts being collected onto a truck and the subsequent burial, and told me that several of those killed and wounded were from other insurgent armies aligned to the KIA in the FUA.

viii Satp.org (n.d.) <http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/publication/faultlines/volume14/Article1.htm>; *Asiatimes*, http://www.atimes.com/atimes/South_Asia/DI21Df06.html

ix Noor's use of kinship terms like 'brother' and 'cousin' were often extended to close friends and fellow villagers from his hometown in Arakan State. But as far as I understood, Noor was related by blood to three men working in Ruili's jade trade; an uncle, a cousin, and a maternal grandfather's cousin.

x The American journalist, Carl Crow, in 1939 travelled the full distance of the road from Rangoon to Chongqing, and provides a vivid description of the hardships of travelling the road, as well as its vital importance for the Chinese war efforts, (see Crow 2009).

xi George Crane (1994: 72) argues that the SEZs have become models for China's new economic identity, which "will inspire people to produce, consume, and invest in ways supportive of growth while preserving extant political institutions". Crane describes the SEZs as defined in terms of exceptionalism and imperatives of the new, attenuating the economic meaning of socialism to "near literal insignificance, a sign without a referent" (Ibid: 84). On the regional level, Aihwa Ong (2004) sees the SEZs as outcomes of a reterritorialization of the national socialist space in order to generate capitalist development and eventual political integration of Greater China. Ong's argument about political integration pertains mainly to China's relations with Hong Kong, Taiwan and Singapore. Yet, the establishment of SEZs in border regions like Ruili, and recently also on the border with Vietnam in the Guanxi province and along Inner Mongolia's border with Mongolia and Russia, where Chinese mining companies now extract and buy nephrite, can also be seen as manifesting and driving a process of reterritorialisation, in the sense of creating cross-border economic regions fuelled by border trade and involvement in natural resource extraction in neighboring countries by Chinese companies.

xii Calling Myanmar-China border a 'moral filter', I point to evidence in my empirical material that in the narratives of elite Han Chinese jade traders in Ruili morally embarrassing facts and conditions related to the extraction and trade of jade in Kachin state – such as the armed conflict between the KIA and *Tatmadaw*, the dangerous working conditions for miners, ecological devastation in the mining areas, and the rampant drug abuse and HIV infection spreading regionally from the mines – are erased from biography of the jade stones, once they have passed through the Chinese borders. Upon entering China, the jade stones are instead inserted into Han Chinese nationalist narratives about the practical and cosmological history of jade in China during the past 8.000 years.

xiii Due to increased Chinese demand for jade, the selling off of jade mining concessions to Chinese investors, and the industrialisation of mining techniques, mining activities have been up-scaled massively in the past decade. According to figures presented by Kyi (2015: 6), jade production in the Lonekhinn-Hpakant jade mine area rose from 5942.1 tons in 2000-2001 to 23014.08 tons in 2009-2010, and Kyi (ibid.: 17) assesses that the jade deposits at the Hpakant region only have a decade left at the current tempo of mining.

xiv Noor used the Burmese term of Shan people to refer to Dai / Shan people from both sides of the border, while the Chinese term is Dai people (*dai zu*).

xv I have discussed this issue with regards to how the material singularity of jadeite stones – in terms of the opaque layer of skin that covers the jadeite inside – creates an indeterminacy, which induces particular conceptions and practices of valuation of it in China (Kloppenborg Møller, *forthcoming*).