

Laboratories

Title:

Politics, ethics, and methods of research in post-coup Myanmar

Conveners:

Stéphen Huard (EHESS)

Format: Laboratory

Our intention is to pursue a collective discussion started in mid-2021 among the French community of researchers devoted to Burma/Myanmar studies. It is based on the desire of these researchers to reflect, in the form of a series of on-going workshops, round-table discussions, and regular meetings, on how to conduct research in a country marked by a political crisis since the coup d'état of 1 February 2021. In an attempt to develop and sustain a working group bringing together three generations of scholars who have done fieldwork either during the previous dictatorship (from the 1980s through the 2000s) or more recently during the democratic experiment of the 2010s, we would like to propose a laboratory for the forthcoming EuroSEAS conference in Paris. This opportunity would be dedicated to taking stoke of each-other explorations regarding the politics, ethics and methods of research in post-coup Burma/Myanmar and to collectively define new directions for the group. Therefore, we decided to choose the laboratory format, as it allows us to develop innovative cross-disciplinary and collective plans on a specific subject.

Plans for discussion and collaboration:

This laboratory brings together geographers, anthropologists, linguists and historians, to collectively discuss and reflect upon the politics, ethics and new methods for doing research in a country marked by a political crisis. After briefly summarizing the commonalities and differences between each other experiences regarding coups and violence in Myanmar since the 1980s, the discussion will focus on questions of methodology (remote fieldwork and ethnography, access to archives, uses of existing materials, change of subjects/problems, temporalities) on the one hand, and on reflexivity and positionality (ethics of research in a violent situation, protection of researchers and their informants, perpetuation of collective projects with Burmese colleagues, perception of violence) on the other hand. Finally, we aim at questioning critically the specificities of Francophone research on Burma/Myanmar.

Participants:

Aurore Candier (historian, CASE), Bénédicte Brac de la Perrière (ethnologist, CNRS), Alexandra de Mersan (ethnologist, INALCO), Maxime Boutry (social anthropologist, CASE), Nicolas Salem-Gervais (geographer and linguist, INALCO), Chloé Bails (PhD candidate in political anthropologist, EPHE), Lauriane Simony (historian, Sorbonne Nouvelle Paris 3)