ETHNIC CONSCIOUSNESS AND ALLEGIANCE TO THE STATE:
WEAK STATE, WEAK (ETHNIC) SOCIETY AND THE QUESTION OF DUAL LOYALTIES IN MYANMAR

OH YOON AH
(BA,Pol.Sci., Seoul National University)

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Summary

On the questions of nation-building and identity formation, existing literature tends to characterize the state-ethnic minority relations in Myanmar as a zero-sum game. While focusing on the armed conflict, most of the works emphasize all-out domination by the state or all-out resistance by ethnic minority elites. However, based on the data gathered in the Insein Karen community from 2002 to 2003, this study argues that the identity politics and nation-building process in contemporary Myanmar is much more complex than existing literature has suggested.

Myanmar is a country of extremely politicized multi-ethnicity. For much of the country's independent history, the state and ethnic elites have been engaged in a struggle for the control of ethnic minority populations through nation-building and counter-nation-building efforts. In Insein, the state of Myanmar tries to integrate Karens to the Myanmar nation-state while the Karen Baptist Church struggles to minimize such state influence. The assessment of the current status of Karen identity in Insein suggests that although Karen ethnicity is asserted through subjective self-identification, the actual substance of ethnic identity, such as language and cultural features, appears to be in decline. Despite the efforts of the Karen Baptist Church in preserving the distinctive hallmarks of Karen ethnicity to the maximum, the degree of ethnic identification in Insein does not live up to the expectations of the Church.

On the other hand, Karens in Insein appear to have developed a sense of belonging and loyalty to the Myanmar nation-state, although it is done in a very problematic manner. While the direct identification with "Myanmar" is still an uncomfortable issue for Insein

Karens, an indirect measurement suggests they have formed an attachment and allegiance to the Union of Myanmar. Yet, the extent of such identification is seriously limited to become a full-scale national integration.

The complex picture of identity and loyalty references in the Insein Karen community precisely points to the limitations of the state and the Karen Baptist Church. The inadequate nation-building model, lack of political legitimacy and low state capacity seriously compromises the chances of the state to attract Insein Karens to the model of Myanmar nation-state. For various political and economic reasons, Karen masses in Insein do not actively seek to conform to the Myanmar state, and by extension, the Myanmar nation-state. On the other hand, the political situation and internal tension relating to its political engagement also accounts for the limited influence of the Karen Baptist Church.

While the "weak" state and "weak" ethnic society are unable to impose their own will on identity formation in Insein, the social and economic processes of Myanmar society guides members of the Karen community in another direction. Karens in Insein have experienced a broader social reality that widens their perspectives and de-emphasizes a singular identity. The complexity in identity and loyalty formation of Insein Karens shows the limited influence of the state of Myanmar and the Karen Baptist Church, and demonstrates an unexpected role of social forces.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Problem of the Study

Some states are fortunate enough to have one nation and one state in their territories while other less fortunate states have two or more politically conscious nations. Regrettably, those less fortunate polities, in fact, constitute the majority of the world's countries. Though the modern international system is built upon the imperative of nation-states, the unstable cohabitation of nation and state has constantly created problems. Since the statehood is regarded as the genuine requirement for a nation's survival, a state with multiple nations often finds these nations, real or perceived, seeking to break away from the given nation-state, or at least to prevent the state from fully controlling the nations. Thus, the presence of politically awakened multiple nations poses a grave threat to state integrity, sovereignty and authority. On the part of nations, this is considered an issue whether or not they can secure their political, social, economic and cultural autonomy and development. Fully aware of this fundamental challenge, a state with multiple nations tries to "integrate" these "superfluous" nations through various measures while the nations may resist such state penetration at their best capacity. This arduous struggle between the state and "superfluous" nations lies at the very heart of conflicts and confrontations surrounding the issue of nation-building in many parts of the world.

This study attempts to examine such a struggle between the state and nations (i.e. ethnic society) through the case of Myanmar. As one of those less fortunate countries with multiple "nations", Myanmar has a history of particularly difficult state-ethnic minority

relations. Colonialism nurtured plural society without cohesive national identity for the future independent state and generated multiple sources of politicized ethnic identities and loyalties. The Japanese occupation from 1942 to 1945 and a chaotic decolonization process in the postwar period polarized multiethnic society of Myanmar and left the state with insufficient capacity to manage its multi-ethnicity. As a result, Myanmar had to struggle with the problem of "dual loyalties" and "multiple identities" in which the state could not dictate where the population's primary identity as well as loyalty should lie.[1]

For decades, the state of Myanmar has sought to integrate the country's various ethnic groups under the vision of a singular Myanmar nation-state. However, ethnic minorities ranging from the Shans, the Karens, the Kachins, the Mons to the Rakhines contested the state project of nation-building in various, often violent, ways. Ethnic insurgencies opposing the state's nation-building policy, many of which developed into separatist movements, started within a year of independence and some of these armed struggles continue to date. The long history of Myanmar's ethnic insurgencies shows the intensive nature of contention between the state and ethnic minorities over primary identity and chief loyalty.

Specifically, struggle over the populations' identity and loyalty is the struggle between the state and ethnic minority *elites* for the social control over minority communities. The ethnically inspired armed struggles in Myanmar have been led by various ethnic organizations; a few notable ones are: the Karen National Union, the Kachin Independence Organization, the New Mon State Party, the Shan State Army, etc. These organizations tried to either monopolize the loyalty of their respective ethnic communities or sought to keep their communities from integrating into the Myanmar nation-state. These ethnic organizations are

[1] Conceptually, this study uses dual loyalties problem, competition for identity and loyalty references, politics of nation-building, contentions over national integration interchangeably; for all these terms refer to the same political phenomenon faced by the central state in securing the primary identities of its citizens.

entrenched in each ethnic society and have an advantage over the newly born state in garnering support from members of their communities

The struggle between the state and ethnic organizations has taken the most violent form in Myanmar's border areas. After decades of insurgency and counter-insurgency operations, severe human rights abuses are commonplace in these areas, with continuing reports of extrajudicial killings, rape, disappearances, displacement and other tragedies common in a conflict zone. This situation naturally renders the understanding of state-ethnic minority relations directly confrontational, whose perspective has long dominated the literature on Myanmar's ethnic politics.

However, unlike the violent situation at the border, the relationship between the state and ethnic minority communities in mainland Myanmar[2] has been marked by relative political tranquility and stability. For nearly fifty years, there has been no ethnically inspired armed struggle in mainland Myanmar. Tight state control and comparative bounty of its resources may have given the state a certain political leverage over the ethnic organizations in this region. Furthermore, recent observations of mainland Myanmar (Fink 2001; Smith 2002) suggest that the ethnic minorities there, especially those in urban areas, do not necessarily limit themselves to their ethnic identities. This brings one to an interesting question: While the state and ethnic organizations in the periphery have clashed for decades over the politics of nation-building, what is going on in mainland Myanmar between the state and ethnic minorities?

This study attempts to answer that question through the case of a Karen community in Yangon, the capital of the state. Insein, the biggest Karen community in Yangon is chosen to illustrate the complex dynamics of identity and loyalty politics in mainland Myanmar. The

[2] In this study, "mainland Myanmar" refers to the area corresponding to *Burma Proper* or *Ministerial Burma* during the colonial period. After British annexation of Burma, the country was divided into two zones: Burma Proper in the lowland plains where most of the ethnic majority Burmans resided and *Frontier Areas* of mountainous border areas which was inhabited by minority groups.

Karens reside in both the border areas and mainland Myanmar and the degree of their community distribution is far greater than other ethnic minorities. In addition to its geographic location, the Karen community in Insein also serves well the purpose of this study to show the struggle between the state and ethnic elites since it has a very strong Karen Christian Church presence. Yangon is the religious center of Christian Karens in Myanmar who have been deeply engaged in Karen ethnonationalist movement. Whereas it is the Christian-dominated Karen National Union that has led the Karen armed struggle against the state along the border, in mainland Myanmar it is the Karen Baptist Church that took up the role to safeguard the ethnico-religious identity of Karens. The Karen Baptist Church is supposed to function as both a religious and a social institution with an interest to keep Karens away from the influence of the Myanmar nation-state. The investigation of Insein is thus to examine the struggle between the state and the Karen Baptist Church as to what extent each side can influence the identity reference of Karen community members and to explain the outcome of such examination.

The conventional understanding of the politics of nation-building in Myanmar has focused on the overt conflict between the state and ethnic minorities. Given the grave political and human cost of protracted civil war, such emphasis on all-out oppression and all-out resistance can be justified. However, a study of the struggle in mainland Myanmar which involves a *subtle* mechanism of domination and resistance is also needed to better understand the overall pattern of Myanmar's state-ethnic minority relations.[4]

[4] In this study, Burman refers to the ethnic majority group and Burmese, the name of the Burman language. Myanmar, rather than Burma will be used as the name of the country.

Topical Literature Review

The studies of Smith (1999) and Lintner (1990), in which the authors document and analyze the development of Myanmar's ethnonationalist movement in detail, are the major contributions to the study of Myanmar's ethnic politics. For the most part, their works remain the major source of information and reference in the field. They discuss not only national level confrontation between the state and ethnic society but also pay a significant degree of attention to the Karen question, namely KNU insurgency and Karen ethnonationalism.

Another set of literature about the country's ethnic politics and the Karen question, in particular, include a series of Rajah's works (1990; 1997; 2001; 2002). Especially, Rajah's recent writing (2002) critically examines the utilization of Christianity in the development of the Karen ethnonationalist narrative in the Karen elites' search for ethno–history, which would entitle them to an independent state. His analysis clearly shows the constructed nature of Karen identity and Christianity's crucial role in molding its political development.

At a general level, the marked tendency among literature on Myanmar's ethnic politics is the concentration of scholarly attention on ethnic violence in the border areas. The preponderant theme of these writings are issues of ethnonationalism, state aggression and the breakdown of governance in the border areas (Brown 1994; Falla 1991; Gravers 1999; Lintner 1990; 1994; Rajah 2002; Smith 1999; South 2003). Though the perspective and contents of these works vary significantly, they are limited in their analysis of the contentious relations between the state and ethnic society over nation-building in Myanmar.

First of all, the problem of this research tradition is the fact that it provides little information about the ethnic situation in non-civil war situation of mainland Myanmar. The emphasis on ethnic violence in the periphery is the consequence of not only the gravity of the

issue of violence itself but also the accessibility to the area of the researchers. Myanmar closed its doors to the outside world following the military coup in 1962, and consequently, it was difficult to obtain information on the country, including its ethnic situation. It was only through the rebel-held areas along the border that the international audience came to know of the situation inside the country.

Additionally, the focus on "insurgency" inevitably resulted in the polarized understanding of state-minority relations. Many writings have, implicitly or explicitly, assumed that the state-ethnic minority relations in Myanmar is a zero-sum game with hardly any room for the discussion of more complex issues such as accommodation, adaptation or transformation. Similarly, much of the research in this field, including Smith (1999) and Linter (1994), is based on the assumption that each ethnic group's identity is static; such research places too much emphasis on the fixed ethnic line.

Another problem with the popular perspective on Myanmar's ethnic politics is that most analyses tend to see the process by which ethnic society responds to state policy in fairly undifferentiated terms. It often proves effective to disaggregate a group into leadership and member level and examine relations between them in order to understand the nature and development of the group. However, in the literature on Myanmar's ethnic politics, the internal cohesiveness of an ethnic group positioned in opposition to the state is usually overemphasized and the desegregation of the ethnic society into, for example, the elite and mass level is often overlooked. It is striking that there has been little attempt to distinguish the KNU leaders from Karen villagers politically whereas a great deal of effort has been devoted to setting the state apart from its Burman citizens.

Taylor (1982) and Brown (1994) are exceptions because they explain the emergence of ethnonationalism and ethnic separatism in Myanmar by systematically distinguishing ethnic

elites and masses. Taylor notes that the ethnic conflicts in the 1950s and 1960s, which initiated the pattern of protracted ethnic insurgency, were over the control of allegiance and attachment of the minority peoples between traditional ethnic elites-modern elites in the case of the Karens- and the central state. In response to the developing Burman nationalism and Myanmar nation-building dominated by the Burman elites, ethnic minority elites used the ethnic issues as the basis for their claims to personal and political resources. Similarly, Brown argued for the necessity to differentiate the elite level politics from mass level dynamics to make sense the development of ethnonationalism. In his analysis, state penetration disrupts the local authority structure and social security in the periphery, consequently affecting the ethnic elites and mass public respectively. In a bid to resolve threats posed by state expansion, ethnic elites sought to re-establish themselves as leaders of movements for ethnic autonomy, whereas the masses were in search of communal unity and identity as a solution for social instability. These two movements have thus been translated into ethnic separatism as a result of the ethnic elites' mobilization activities. This perspective provides a convincing explanation for the ideologization of Karen ethnic consciousness in the periphery.

However, ethnic societies in mainland Myanmar are still treated as a holistic and cohesive entity by many researchers and Myanmar observers. The responses and reactions of ethnic society are, in most cases, those of ethnic leaders. The perception and attitudes of the masses rarely capture scholarly attention unless they are used to support the elite discourses. As a consequence, the issue of internal dynamics within an ethnic society is largely overlooked. In doing so, the extent to which the ethnic elites are able to command the allegiance and mobilize the mass public is not properly investigated.

Finally, it should also be acknowledged that the "social factors"[5] in shaping ethnic and national identity in Myanmar have been largely neglected in the existing literature. The emphasis on state oppression and ethnic resistance often obscure other forces at work. For example, the interethnic relations between the Burmans and Karens, which is one of such social factors, often remained on the sideline of the discussion of Myanmar's ethnic politics. In border areas, ethnic minorities are more likely to be insulated from Burman communities and the interaction with Burmans usually involves dealing with the military which is mainly manned by Burmans and geared for counter-insurgency operation. Therefore, the confrontation is usually framed as one between the Myanmar state and the Karens, whereas the Burman society is almost safely neglected.

However, in mainland Myanmar, especially in Yangon, ethnic minorities are constantly exposed to Burman society and inevitably interact with it. Karens in Yangon often live side-by-side with Burmans, where they deal with each other on a daily basis by attending the same schools and workplaces. Under such circumstances, Karens and Burmans find themselves competing and cooperating with each other. This adds another dimension to state-minority relations, invoking yet another point of reference for Karen lay community in forming their identity and loyalty. Despite this, the interaction between the Karen community and Burman society in mainland Myanmar is commonly disregarded.

The interethnic relations are only one aspect of the broader social reality facing ethnic minorities in mainland Myanmar. General social and economic environment can exert significant influence on identity formation of ethnic minorities. The underestimation of general social factors and interethnic relations in ethnic politics is largely caused by the paucity

[5] "Social factors" encompass interethnic relations, general social and economic relations among various social groups, and international forces outside ethnic minority communities. For example, they include interethnic relations between Burmans and Karens, patron-client network in Myanmar society, and forces of globalization.

of sociological research on Myanmar society. As Taylor notes, unlike studies on Indonesia and Thailand, sociological studies on class, interest and patron-client relation, which provide different perspective on interethnic relations, is almost absent in most western writings on Myanmar (1986: 27).

Research Rationale

This study is constructed in response to the limitations of existing literature as the foregoing discussion has shown. Paucity of scholarly works on state-ethnic minority relations in mainland Myanmar, non-differentiation of ethnic elites and the mass public within ethnic society, and scant interest in social factors on ethnic identity formation in mainland Myanmar forms the research rationale of this study.

Specifically, this study is mainly devoted to examining the relationship of the state, the Karen Baptist Church, and Karen ethnic society in Insein over the question of identity and loyalty formation. The primary goal of this study is to offer a disaggregate look at the membership, structures, functioning, and interrelations of competing loyalties in mainland Myanmar and thus contribute to the literature on Myanmar's ethnic politics. To this end, the extent to which the state and the Karen Baptist Church influence identity and loyalty formation of Insein Karen community will be investigated.

While the importance of the state in shaping ethnic politics readily justifies the rationale for looking into the role of the state, the incorporation of the Karen Baptist Church into the research framework might need a few words of justification. Viewing the Karen Baptist Church as a Karen ethnic organization in Insein with the potential to influence its

people is justifiable for two reasons: firstly, most Insein Karens are Christians; secondly, Christianity is inextricably woven into the modern political Karen identity.

Additionally, this study hopes to foster a better theoretical understanding of state-ethnic society relations of Myanmar by proposing the role of "social factors" in identity formation. Because of the paucity of data on Myanmar "society", most analyses of state-society relations in Myanmar are constructed on the assumption of a zero-sum game between the state and ethnic minority communities. However, there are strong indications that these relations are more complex than suggested by existing literature. It is hoped that this work would be able to reveal some of the less explored aspects of Myanmar's state-ethnic minority interaction.

Theoretical Framework: Weak State, Weak Ethnic Society and a Wider Society

The Problem of Weak State

An investigation of state-Karen ethnic society relations should begin with an attempt to understand the nature of the state and ethnic society of Myanmar. In this study, the state is defined as "an interrelated-but not always cohesive-set of legal, coercive, and administrative organizations within a society which coexist and interact with other organizations, but is distinguished from them in that it claims predominance over them and aims to institute binding rules regarding their activities" (Villalón 1995: 19). This is a modified version of Weberian definition of the state; the original definition suffered and was not applicable to the Third World context because many of the new states in Asia and Africa were unable to "empirically" meet the definitional standard of statehood (p. 19).

What is the nature of the power of the Myanmar state in dealing with ethnic minorities in light of this definition then? Mann (1984) distinguished two dimensions of state power in general. The first, "despotic" power is where the state is empowered to undertake a range of actions without routine, institutional negotiation with civil society (p.188). The second, "infrastructural" power is "the capacity of the state to actually penetrate civil society and to implement logistically political decisions through the realm" (p.189). According to this framework, scholars considering the fate of Myanmar since independence will draw the obvious conclusion that the Myanmar state has been "despotically strong" but consistently "infrastructurally weak" vis-à-vis ethnic minority society.

Distinguishing these two dimensions of state power in relation to ethnic minorities is critical to understanding Myanmar's ethnic politics. The popular perception of the Myanmar state failed to differentiate these two dimensions, and often remained fixated on the "despotic" power of the state. As a result, the relationship between the state and ethnic society was described as a simple zero-sum game of state oppression and ethnic resistance. However, a more sophisticated understanding of state-ethnic minority relations requires one to take into consideration of the full operation of state power.

The state of Myanmar has exercised despotic and infrastructural power in different manners in different governments. First, the despotic power of the state has been manifested to varying degrees by successive postcolonial governments: the parliamentary government (1948-62), military socialist (1962-88) and the current military rule since 1988. Despite the fact that the parliamentary government of 1948 to 1962 imprisoned political dissidents, suspended habeas corpus and shut down newspapers, it was the least reliant (of the country's post-colonial administrations) on despotic power because it was a civilian government elected through popular support (Callahan 1997: 54). The two following military governments, which

came to power without any of popular support heavily relied on despotic, especially coercive power, to govern the country and stay in power. The uninstitutionalized and heavy-handed exercise of power was clearly shown in its counter-insurgency campaign against insurgent groups over the decades and the onslaught of nationwide prodemocratic movement in 1988.

In terms of infrastructural power, the Myanmar state has indeed had a very poor track record. The parliamentary government lacked sufficient fiscal and administrative capacity to penetrate into minority areas and fully implement its state-building policy (Callahan 1997). In assessing the scope and intensity of the state during the parliamentary period, Taylor noted that "…state was displaced as the creator of political order and economic direction and lost its hegemonic position... no longer able to determine many of the conditions of social and economic life...[it] became a rival object for control by groups possessing different perceptions of what kind of society Burma should be" (1988: 217).

The military governments since 1962 have also failed to increase infrastructural power of the state. It could not even territorially infiltrate into minority areas, let alone penetrate them politically or administratively. From the parliamentary period and throughout military rule, the control of a large area of Myanmar's territory by insurgent groups allowed these areas to enjoy a significant degree of "autonomy" from the state. According to Steinberg, at least 60 percent of territory was outside Yangon's reach at varying periods (2001: 186). Various rebel groups established their own institutions of administration, education, trade, as well as armed forces. Some rebel-held areas even followed Thai time, which is thirty minutes ahead of Myanmar standard time, to deliberately defy a rule set by the state (Falla 1991). In addition, a significant control over rule-making power in mainland Myanmar also eluded the state. The existence of black market, or *hmaung-kho* sector (Kyaw Yin Hlaing 2002), which has been

prospering in government-controlled mainland Myanmar since independence indicates the state failed to regulate one of its population's most important activities.

The two dimensions of state power can be conflated to discuss the overall strength and weakness of a given state. In the research tradition of state-society relations, a state is described as "weak" when it has limited capacity to secure compliance of society and is unable to do so without resorting to despotic power. Because it lacks legitimacy and sufficient governing resources, a weak state often ignores or suppresses popular demands, thereby pursuing coercive, repressive and authoritarian policies; in contrast, strong and legitimate states are able to accommodate and respond to such demands (Villalón 1995: 19). Therefore, the propensities for the exercise of despotic power should be regarded as a reflection of political illegitimacy and infrastructural incapacity of the state.

In this context then, the state of Myanmar is unmistakably "weak". Since the military came to power in 1962, the state has been lacking permanent political illegitimacy problem and fiscal and administrative resources. The poor economic performance and deteriorating social conditions have further aggravated the problem. In addition, the state has significantly lacked "political capacity" since 1962 (Grindle 1996: 8). The lack of "political capacity" or the effective and legitimate channels through which it is able to accommodate societal demands and address social grievances means that the responsiveness of the Myanmar state has largely remained low.

Smith also notes how the state of Myanmar is primarily marked by its weakness vis-à-vis society.

> Indeed, it can be argued that the greatest weaknesses in modern Burma are the weaknesses of the state, and despite the sufferings of many communities, it is indeed the 'societies' – whether Buddhist or Christian, Kachin or Shan – that often appear stronger at the local or grassroots levels. In this respect, postcolonial Burma represents a vivid example of the political phenomenon known as 'weak state, strong societies', where central government has been unable to impose its will, except by the use of force (2002: 12).

Thus, the quest for state predominance is still an ongoing process in Myanmar, and that endeavor has brought the state into direct confrontation with ethnic societies especially in the areas of nation building, or national integration.[6] In nation-building, the success of the state's efforts to transform the various social groupings hinges on controlling population's identity and loyalty. How individuals align and arrange their identities and loyalties in a given society can profoundly affect "state permanence, integrity and sovereignty" (Taylor 1982: 9) and has been the fundamental issues in state-society relations. However, the state alone cannot determine the direction of individual's identity. The state initiative of national integration is naturally met with substantial resistance from the ethnic society, especially in parts of Asia and Africa, where deeply entrenched social organizations did not easily succumb to the pressure to surrender their control over the identity/loyalty of their subjects.

The Problem of Weak Ethnic Society

Given this then, how does one define (ethnic) society and what is the nature of Karen ethnic society in Myanmar? This study defines "ethnic society" based on the use of "society" or "civil society" in state-society relations literature with the added condition that what stands in opposition to the state is not just society external to the state but "ethnically" defined groupings.[7] More specifically, ethnic society in this context does not necessarily refer to all ethnic minority groups in mainland Myanmar; rather, for the sake of analytical utility, it is used to indicate Karen communities in question.

Karen society in mainland Myanmar is generally weak and tends to be overpowered by the state. Karen communities are not organized enough to defend or promote their common

[6] In this study, nation-building and national integration is used interchangeably.
[7] Civil society is defined as "a vast ensemble of constantly changing groupings and individuals whose only common ground is their being outside the state and who have … acquired some consciousness of their externality and opposition to the state"(Chabal 1986: 15; referred to in Villalón 1995: 24).

Karen interests. Aside from state repression and surveillance, its geographical detachment from the Karen State and KNU leadership has considerably weakened the Karen society's position against the state's hegemonic drive. The emergence of associational life for Karen communities in mainland Myanmar is also hampered by endemic societal poverty due to their majority population's engagement in low-productive agricultural sector. The problems are further compounded by religious differences and the disparity between urban and rural areas.

It is against this background that the Karen Baptist Church operates. Even though it is the most prominent and functioning social organization in Christian Karen communities in mainland Myanmar, the Karen Baptist Church cannot go beyond the limitations of its own ethnic society. It cannot represent or mobilize the entire Karen society because of it subethnic, geological, and religious fragmentation. Despite its effort in promoting pan-Karenness, its influence is confined within the boundary of Christian Karens. In addition, since it is risky to challenge the authority outright in mainland Myanmar, the Karen Baptist Church exercises great caution in its social conduct. Due to the political constraints of authoritarian rule and the ongoing civil war, the Karen Baptist Church may not be in a position to provide alternative identity for Karens in mainland Myanmar, but even so, they are at least able to make a great deal of effort to draw ordinary Karens away from the state effort, namely, that of national integration. The details of such efforts will be described in Chapter 2.

Scholars of state-society relations have long noted that the relationship between the state and society is not necessarily a zero-sum game. The weakness of one side does not always imply the strength of the other, and vice versa. It is important to note, therefore, that the weak state has coexisted with a weak society in Myanmar as far as Karens in mainland Myanmar are concerned. Basically, the political dynamics of this relationship lie between the

under-performance of the insecure state power, and an amorphous and poorly organized social organization.

"Social Factors"

However, the characterization of the state and ethnic society does not complete the framework for the investigation of the Insein Karen's identity formation. The findings of this study, which will be presented in Chapter 3, strongly suggests that there are forces other than the state and the Karen Baptist Church at work in molding identity and loyalty references in Insein. The additional domain to be explored is "social factors", which encompass interethnic relations, general social and economic relations among various social groups, and international forces. As will be elaborated in Chapter 4, some of these social factors which have influence on identity formation in Insein include interethnic relations between Burmans and Karens, patron-client network in Myanmar society, and forces of globalization.

Due to their geographic location in Yangon, Insein Karens have an intense interaction with a wider Myanmar society and the outside world. They are fully exposed to the civil-military divide that has prevailed in Myanmar society over forty years. They socialize, compete, and cooperate with Burmans in various ways, which facilitate their less confrontational views on other ethnic groups. Furthermore, Karens in Insein are increasingly exposed to the globalization process, notably the cultural aspect of the globalization, which has been steadily advancing in Myanmar since the 1990s after the current military government ended thirty years of isolation and opened up the country to the outside world.

This is an additional domain that needs to be addressed due to the peculiar condition of Insein and mainland Myanmar. In fact, "mainland Myanmar" denotes not just the proximity of its lowland regions from the capital but also a geopolitical concept referring to a

space in which the citizenry is under stabilized state control, and a special social space where different social relations exist from the conflict-plagued border areas. However, since this study is a preliminary step to investigate identity politics in mainland Myanmar, such social factors could not be fully explored in the main analysis. Therefore, this study only suggests the possible role of "social forces" in state-ethnic minority society in mainland Myanmar.

In sum, in mainland Myanmar, the relations between the state and ethnic minority society are more complex because the confrontation is more indirect; and there are multiple actors in the interaction. On the basis of these concerns, this study will look at identity and loyalty formation of Karens in Insein in the following way. The investigation first assesses the current identity and loyalty references of Insein Karens. And the result will be discussed with reference to the influence of the state and the Karen Baptist Church. In so doing, the focus is on the two pairs of relationships: the state and Karen community members, the Karen Baptist Church and Karen community members, as will be apparent in Chapter 4. However, since the analysis of identity formation in Insein from the perspective of the state and the Karen Baptist Church is incomplete, the later part of the analysis will briefly touch upon the others forces and their roles.

Research Questions and Main Arguments

The first question is: "To what extent have Karens in Insein been integrated into the Myanmar nation-state?" This question will be explored by uncovering the degree to which Insein Karens have formed Karen ethnic identity and Myanmar national identity respectively. Based on the findings from the first part of the investigation, the second question is

formulated: "Why is it that Insein Karens display incomplete Karen ethnic identity and an imperfect degree of integration into the Myanmar nation-state?" The first question is concerned with the assessment of identity and loyalty formation of contemporary Insein Karens whereas the second is the attempt to explain such evaluations.

The main arguments of this study are as follows: contrary to popular perspective Karen identity in Insein is very much fluid and even paradoxical. Although Karens in Insein partly conform to Myanmar national identity laid down by the state, they simultaneously seek to keep a distance from the state nation-building process. This not only defies the state of Myanmar but also disappoints the Karen Baptist Church, which has put enormous effort in preserving Karen ethnic identity and seeking to pursue greater disengagement from the state. These complex patterns of identity and loyalty in Insein are attributed to the differing degrees of influence and limitations of the state and the Karen Baptist Church, and other social factors.

Methodology

Survey research, interviews and library research were employed as means of collecting primary data for this study. Documents were obtained from the libraries of the National University of Singapore, archives of the Myanmar Council of Churches and the Karen Baptist Convention in Yangon. Myanmar government publications, press reports, and other academic publications were also used. Fieldwork was intermittently conducted in the Karen areas of Yangon, mainly in Insein, from June 2002 to January 2003, in tandem with several field trips outside Yangon. Preliminary research was conducted for the first two months to draft survey questionnaire and refine interview questions. The survey questionnaire was distributed to the community members of the Karen community individually. Interviews with community leaders (including

church pastors, seminary teachers, businesspeople, health care workers, university professors, lecturers, journalists and public servants) and members (students, wage workers and dependents) and numerous informal contacts with them were conducted throughout the fieldwork. From June to July 2002, the author set up residence in one of the Karen neighborhoods in Insein so as to facilitate closer observation of the community.

Respondents in survey and interviews were asked not only their attitudes and opinions but also their actual life stories.[8] Because of the political restrictions, it was impossible to select the sample by a random or systematic sampling method. Instead, the snowball sampling method, in which sampling is reliant on referrals from initial subjects to generate additional subjects, was employed. Although survey questions are quite extensive, the sample size is restricted to the small number of 75. Interviews and other circumstantial evidence were corroborated with survey data and other academic publications.

Limitations of the Study

This study is only a preliminary step in investigating the changing landscape of ethnic politics in mainland Myanmar. As such, there are limitations that need to be acknowledged and addressed. The key methodological limitation of the present study is that it is based on a survey which has a small sample size and not a random selection. Due to the political situation as well as limited personnel and other resources, a large sample with random selection, which would permit extrapolation of quantitative results, was not possible. While the freedom of speech and expression is suppressed by the state, any research on Myanmar is to be

[8] Please see Appendices for the survey questions.

excessively bound by political constraints on every research process, especially that of data collection.

Second limitation of this study, which concerns the analysis of survey results, is caused by the incomplete examination of structural factors of identity formation in Insein. Resource constraints on the state penetration into Insein, which is discussed in Chapter 4, could have been more detailed. The issue of state cooptation of local Karen leaders and administrative penetration still needs a full investigation. With regard to the Karen Baptist Church, the specific mechanisms through which the Church promotes Karen ethnic consciousness other than through its literacy program, for example, preaching or religious discourses, could have been examined.

Another issue that should be taken into account is the existence of non-Christian Karens, including Buddhists and spirit worshippers, who comprise the majority of the Karen population. Their recent political and ethnic surfacing after years of conspicuous silence and near absence in Myanmar's ethnic politics reflects the importance of power of mobilization and organization. Although some Buddhist Karens in the border areas formed their own armed groups in later 1990s when they broke away from the KNU, they have yet to successfully figure in Myanmar's political stage. The political invisibility of non-Christian Karens in mainland Myanmar continues due to their lack of a specific representative for their own cause. Even if they do oppose the government, they seem to confine themselves to cooperating with Christian Karen leadership for the common Karen cause. Religious and subethnic divides will be crucial issues relating to Karen ethnicity and ethnic mobilization on the occasion of opening up of political opportunity, such as political reform in Myanmar. In this regard, this study does not do full justice to the complexity of Karen question.

Given these restrictions, limited generalizability of this study is guaranteed. The findings are only suggestive of the possible trend in Insein and cannot be generalized as representative of other Karen communities or other ethnic groups in the country. In many respects, this study must be seen as a preliminary study in investigating state-ethnic relations in "government-held" mainland Myanmar. More detailed empirical investigation will be required, in order to give a more accurate state of affairs and detailed picture of state-society relation. At the very least, the findings of this study can be used to design further research on ethnic relations and politics of nation building in Myanmar.

Overview of Chapters

This study consists of five chapters. Chapter Two presents the background of state-Karen relations and introduces the Insein Karen community whose location in mainland Myanmar invites more complicated interactions between the state, the Karen Baptist church, the wider Myanmar society and ordinary Karens. Chapter Three investigates the Insein Karens' identity formation in two sections: the first examines Karen ethnicity and the second assesses their loyalty to the Myanmar nation-state. Chapter Four explains the extent of the Insein Karens' integration into the Myanmar nation-state with reference to the roles of the state and the Karen Baptist Church while considering the impact of social interaction between the Karen community and the wider Myanmar society. Chapter Five concludes the research from the perspective of weak state and weak society.

Chapter Two: Politics of Nation Building in Myanmar and Insein Karen Community

The confrontation surrounding Myanmar's nation-building process is shaped by a range of factors, from the basic ethnic composition of the country, structure of colonial rule, manner in which Myanmar's independence was negotiated and advanced, to the governance of the postcolonial state. While Myanmar is indeed one of the most ethnically diverse countries in the world, it was the colonial rule and post-colonial developments that transformed primitive ethnic categories into politicized ethnic identity.

This chapter outlines the historical development of the conflict over Myanmar's nation-building and situates the Insein Karen community in the context of such nation-building politics. Following the description of the historical background at the national level, the last section of this chapter introduces the localized history and ecology of Insein Karen community.

Demographic Patterns and Ethnic Geography

Myanmar has a large number of ethnic groups, indigenous, i.e., long present in the country, and those who have recently arrived. The indigenous ethnic groups include the Burmans, who are the most numerically prominent, the Mons, the Rakhines, the Karens, the Shans, the Kachins, the Chins, and a number of other minor groups. The "foreign" minorities include the late-coming Indians and the Chinese. The ethnic composition of Myanmar is as follows: while the dominant ethnic majority, the Burmans make up over 69 percent of the population, there are numerous groups of ethnic minorities whose individual populations are fairly small

compared to the Burmans (see Table 2.1). And yet, these ethnic minorities inhabit about 40 percent of contemporary Myanmar, mostly at the strategically important border areas.

Table 2.1. Ethnic Composition of Myanmar

Group	*Numbers*	*Percentage*
Burman	32602627	66.94
Shan	5092682	10.46
Karen	3036895	6.24
Rakhine (Arakanese)	2033099	4.17
Mon	1273023	2.61
Chin	994671	2.04
Kachin	693126	1.42
Kayah (Karenni)	216429	0.44
Others	2760939	5.67
Total	48703491	100.00

Source: Yan Nyein Aye 2000

In terms of religion, the Burmans have traditionally adhered to Theravada Buddhism so much so that Buddhism is regarded as an integral part of being Burman. Although the Rakhines and Shans are also devout Buddhists there is no religiously inspired institutional integration between these groups and the Burmans. Collectively, some 87 percent of the Myanmar population is Buddhists. On the other hand, there are also sizable Christian communities amongst ethnic minority groups such as the Karens, the Kachins and the Chins due to extensive missionary activities during the colonial period.

Scholars agree that the Mons were one of the earliest settlers of modern-day Myanmar. In fact, the Mons established the first civilization in Myanmar and introduced Theravada Buddhism into the country. The Burmans arrived much later from the eastern Himalayas

around the eighth or ninth century, and soon a long and complicated struggle for control of the country started between these two groups. In the eighteenth century the rivalry ended with the irrevocable victory of the Burmans, but while the Burmans were successful in obtaining control of the country, they were heavily influenced by Mon art and culture. The Burmans traditionally resided in mainland Myanmar while the various ethnic minorities inhabited the usually rugged and mountainous horseshoe-shaped frontier areas. Thus the geographic terrain has traditionally made it difficult for the administration at the central plains to access these ethnic minority areas in peripheries.[9]

Historical Background

The Burman nationalist movement (commonly known as "Burmese nationalist movement") of the colonial period profoundly shaped the successive Myanmar postcolonial states' nation building projects. Similarly, Karen ethnonationalism, which has posed a constant threat to Myanmar state in a form of the KNU rebellion, was molded through the political development during the British rule. The political and social environment in which Insein Karens interact with the state, the Karen Baptist Church and a wider Burman society reflects to varying degrees the evolution of Myanmar's modern history. This section will trace Myanmar's political and historical evolution so as to determine how it has shaped modern ethnic politics of the country.

[9] In their study of global insurgency since the 1960s, Fearon and Laitin pointed out the rough terrain is one of the critical conditions conducive to protracted insurgency in the twentieth century (2000).

Precolonial Era

A brief look at the precolonial history of Myanmar reveals that the politicization of ethnicity is very much a modern phenomenon. In the ninth century the first Burman Kingdom of *Bagan* was established on the banks of the Ayeyarwady River. Its population was mainly the Burman and since then, Burman kings have been the country's traditional rulers. On the other hand, there were various ethnic minorities in the frontier areas who maintained tributary relations with the Burman kings without falling under their direct control. The relationship between Burman kingdoms and these minorities were characterized by the political and social distinction between lowland wet rice communities (valley peoples) and upland swidden agricultural communities (hill peoples).

In that loose interaction between lowland Burman kingdoms and hill peoples, the principle which regulated the relations was not based on ethnic majority/minority distinction but the notion of *mandala*, which is "a circular conception of space in which potently charged centers are thought to radiate power outward and downward toward less-charged peripheries" (Gesick 1983: 2). In other words, the organizing principles of political alignment and social relations were based on patron-client relationship rather than ethnic or linguistic cleavages. Interaction was selective, intermittent and often loose. In contrast to the valley bonded people, hill peoples were viewed themselves "free" and autonomous. While Burman kings did inflict forced labor, extraction of goods and massacre in the course of their wars in hill areas upon hill peoples, these were not executed on "ethnic" minorities but on potential "subjects" of kings. Despite the ethnic minorities' horrible social memories, it should be noted that Burman peasants in the lowlands did not find their lives any easier than their counterparts in the

peripheries. Often times, Burman peasants bonded to the land suffered most.[10] These classical patterns persisted until the nineteenth century when the British abruptly dissolved the traditional Burman statehood.

In this regard, the claims of state leaders that Myanmar has been a nation for a long time, or that it had at least always been progressing towards a national cohesiveness have little historical grounds.[11] The historicity of legitimately safeguarding the "national" boundary as seen by the state is questionable. Similarly, Karen ethnic nationalists' claim that Burmans have always repressed ethnic minorities is undeniably charged with the modern notion of nationalism and ethnicity.[12] In fact, the population in traditional Myanmar was neither regulated along ethnic or national lines nor in favor of "ethnic" Burmans. Hill peoples were simply viewed as outsiders who did not attain the degree of civilization and enlightenment of the Burmans due to the "distance" from the palace (Gesick 1983: 2). This principle, however, changed radically during the colonial period.

British Rule: The Emergence of Burman Nationalism and Karen Ethnonationalism

The colonial rule from 1886 to 1948 profoundly affected future development of Myanmar's ethnic politics in a number of ways. The colonial method of applying different administrative systems to different regions fragmented ethnic groups in Myanmar. The British divided the

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[10] The heavy burden of tax-corvee-conscription often caused the flight of lowland pageants to "non-state" space in the hills (Scott 2000).

[11] "Endeavours of the Myanmar Armed Forces Government for National Reconsolidation", a publication of the military government clearly points to this notion in its introduction, "During the long history when Myanmar was an independent, sovereign nation, these many national races lived in unity and harmony, both in times of weal and woe. It was only when the country became a colony of the British did this unity breakdown due to the 'Divide and Rule' administrative policy of the British"(Yan Nyein Aye 2000: 3).

[12] The KNU claims that "Throughout history, the Burman have been practicing annihilation, absorption and assimilation (3As) against the Karens and they are still doing so today. In short, they are waging a genocidal war against us… Both the Mons and Burman brought with them feudalism, which they practised to the full. The Burman later won the feudal war, and they subdued and subjugated all other nationalities in the land. The Karens suffered untold miseries at the hands of their Burman lords. Persecution, torture and killings, spppression[sic], oppression and exploitation were othe[sic] order of the day"(The Karen National Union 1998).

colony into the central plains of "Burma Proper", where the majority of the Burman population lived, and a horseshoe of ethnic minority-populated "Frontier Areas"' in the periphery. In the former, the British abolished the Burman monarchical system and imposed direct rule. On the other hand, Frontier Areas were indirectly governed through local chieftains. The two zones were never integrated administratively, hence the potential fostering of a comprehensive Myanmar identity within elite circles did not occur (South 2003: 90). Thus, the distinction of Burman and non-Burman became ossified and was subsequently reinforced by the colonial experience.

Initially conceived as an anti-colonial movement, Burman nationalism laid the foundation for the vision of Myanmar's nation-building that its major elements continued to be upheld by successive postcolonial states. The modern Burman nationalist movement began with the formation of the Young Men's Buddhist Association (YMBA) in 1906. It later developed into the more political General Council of Burmese Associations (GCBA) in 1917 and the GCBA organized local chapters across colonial Burma and broadened the scope of nationalist movement.

Following the Great Depression and the Saya San rebellion, the Burman nationalist movement of the 1930s was led by a new generation of radical student nationalists who received Western-style education and absorbed European nationalism as well as socialism. The *Dobama Asiayone* (We Burmese Association), formed by students and intellectuals following the *Thakin* (lord or master) movement of the 1920s became the political center of nationalist movements from the 1930s onward. From this period's series of demonstrations and strikes arose Myanmar's future leaders of: Aung San, the founding father of the Union of Myanmar, U Nu, who later became the first prime minister of independent Myanmar, and Ne Win, who seized power from U Nu's civilian government in 1962 through a coup and reigned until 1988.

This new generation of nationalist leaders also sought to unite all ethnic groups within the colonial state boundary into a Burman nation, but their conception of independent Myanmar was based on the Burman political and cultural hegemony and allegedly ultimate assimilation of minorities (Tarling 1992: 289). The *Thakin* adopted as their slogan:

> "Bama pyi (the Burman country) is our country.
> Bama (Burman) literature is our literature
> Bama language (Burmese) is our language.
> Love our country.
> Praise our literature.
> Respect our language" (Kyaw Yin Hlaing 2003: 2).

The emphasis on the country's "unity", notably under the leadership of Burmans, developed in Burman nationalist movements throughout the early twentieth century. As the country became independent under the leadership of Burman nationalists, these elements became integral parts of state ethnic policy and continued to serve the nation-building projects of successive postcolonial governments in Myanmar.

On the other hand, the Karen ethnonationalist movement developed at odds with Burman nationalism. In fact, the emergence of Karen ethnonationalist movement (among mainly Christian Karens) predated Burman nationalism. The first Karen nationalist organization was the foremost modern political organization in Myanmar. The Karen National Association (forerunner of the KNU) was initially established in 1881 to promote Karen culture and well-being, in contrast, the first Burman nationalist organization, the YMBA, was organized some 20 years later. The early development of Karen ethnonationalist movement reflects the dramatic changes experienced by some Karens during the colonial period. While the British naturally disfavored Burmans, some of the ethnic minorities actively cooperated with the colonial government. Especially leaders of Christian Karens enjoyed social and educational advancement under colonial and missionary patronage, and were recruited into the colonial administration, educational system, health services and most conspicuously, the police

and armed forces. Due to their lack of political or cultural bonds with the Burmans, many ethnic minorities did not share the view of the Burman nationalists that their service for the British were "collaborative".

In addition, western notion of nationalism also deeply influenced Christian Karens. Like their Burman counterparts, Christian Karen leaders absorbed the idea of a nation based on self-determination through modern education; thus, they claimed that they had evolved as a nation and therefore were entitled to an independent state (Gravers 1996: 258). Even though Christian Karens were the "minority" within the Karen population, Christina leaders believed that they could create "pan-Karen" ethnonationalism. However, their aspiration for an independent Karen state was not in harmony with efforts of Burman nationalists to achieve independence within the whole territory of the colonial state and to subordinate ethnic loyalties within a single Burman-dominated state. Therefore, there was growing tension between Burman nationalist and Karen ethnonationalist movements to determine who was more capable of dictating the loyalty of the Karen community.

The greatly disruptive period of Japanese occupation from 1942 to 1945 turned this elitist structural opposition into violent communal strife, which resulted in the involvement of community "members". The Japanese Imperial Army entered Burma in late 1941, and the British had to withdraw to India. The Karens played a significant role in assisting British officers operating behind the enemy lines and as a consequence, the Karen community was often at odds with the Burmese Independence Army. Amid the social chaos prevailing then, there were at least two massacres done by Burman militias, condoned, if not assisted, by the Japanese authorities. This gave a great leverage to Christian Karen leaders to persuade members of the Karen community that their best fortune could not lie with a new independent state dominated by the Burmans.

Independence

The British returned to Burma in 1945 and soon the independence process began. While Burman nationalists organized under the rubric of the Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League (AFPFL) demanded a swift and complete departure of the British, many ethnic minority leaders feared such a move would threaten their authorities as well as communities. Many minority groups, especially the Karens, were unenthusiastic about the prospect of independence within the boundary of Myanmar and demanded their own independent state, but their cases were totally sidelined by both the AFPFL and the British government. For example, the Karen goodwill mission, which consisted of four lawyers traveled to Britain with a separatist demand in 1946, but the Labour administration in London did not respond.

Although the AFPFL, which was mainly manned by ethnic Burmans, was generally perceived to lack sympathy for ethnic minority aspirations, there were, indeed, several political attempts to address the ethnic question. Throughout 1945 and 1946, there were constant meetings and dialogues between the AFPFL and various minority political organizations. In 1947, a year before independence, a general consensus was reached by Aung San, the AFPFL leader and Burman independence hero, with leaders of the Shans, Kachins and Chins at the Panglong conference in Shan State. However, Panglong cannot be said to be representative of all the ethnic minorities in Myanmar because other ethnic groups, including the Karens, Mons and Rakhines were not represented. In exchange for their acceptance of the Union of Burma, Aung San guaranteed autonomy of minority groups present at the gathering. Despite the goodwill, "the Panglong agreement", as it is commonly called, could not fulfill its promise of political stability and ethnic harmony due largely to the inadequacies of the agreement and the political turmoil following Aung San's assassination five months after it. In the meantime, the KNU, which refused to take part in the Panglong drive, boycotted the 1947 constituent

assembly and armed violence had already broken out in Rakhine. The constitution drawn up later that year was influenced by socialist ideals of the state, and was accordingly federal in concept. Power was to be shared between former Ministerial Burma and the ethnic states and there would be a bicameral legislature, composed of Chamber of Deputies and Chamber of Nationalities. However, there were anomalies such as the fact that territorial provision of ethnic states with different degrees of secession rights was only granted to the Shans, Kachins, Karens and Kayahs (Karennis) .

Myanmar gained independence in January 1948. Within a year of independence, Myanmar was beset by a multitude of rebellions led by communists and disaffected Kachin and Karen units of Myanmar Armed Forces. The rebellion of the Karen National Defence Organization, the military wing of the KNU, especially, involved a "wholesale mutiny" (Smith 1999: 93) of the Karen Rifles; this, in turn, profoundly altered the structure of the Myanmar army. The conflict continued through three successive eras of government: parliamentary democracy (1948-62), military socialist (1962-88) and "transitional" military rule since 1988 (Smith 2002: 8).

The Politics of Post-Colonial Nation-Building: State Policies and Practices

Nature of Nation-Building

Nation- building is a process whereby the population's sense of belonging and prime loyalty to a nation-state is formed. It is defined as a process of brining together culturally and socially discrete groups into a single territorial unit and in so doing, a new national identity is established; this new national identity, in turn, overshadows or eliminates subordinates parochial or ethnic loyalties (Weiner 1967: 150-1). Broadly speaking, there are two types of

nation-building. The first is based on an ethnic understanding of a nation while the second reflects a civic or social understanding of a nation. Ethnically inspired nation-building aims to create a common national identity based on the ethnic identity of the majority and is often accompanied by "official nationalism" (Anderson 1991: 86) where the ethnic identity of dominant ethnic group is imposed on the rest of population. Civic nation-building has a more modest object of creating a common civic, national or patriotic identity, which is new and transcendent (McGarry and O'Leary 1993: 17). In practice, however, all nations bear the impress of both "civic" and "ethnic" principles and components, and in Smith's words, "represents an uneasy confluence of a more recent 'civic' and a more ancient 'genealogical' model of social and cultural organization" (Smith 1986: 149).

For the most part, Myanmar's nation-building, at least at the theoretical level, has imprints of both the civic and ethnic models of a nation. The federal framework of the "union" and tolerance, if not promotion, of cultural differences of various minority groups, so long as the authority of the government is not challenged, point to the civic aspect of its nation building. However, the state's intention of creating a civic nation-state in Myanmar quickly crumbled in the face of a complex socio-political situation, such as Burman political leaders' ethnic chauvinism, power struggles, legitimacy crisis and the general incapacity of the state. Most importantly, throughout successive postcolonial governments, the state of Myanmar consistently failed to clearly define the allegedly transcendent national identity of "Myanmarness" (Kyaw Yin Hlaing 2003).

In consequence, although it is unlikely that Myanmar state leaders had a clear master plan for "Burmanization" of the country, many minorities and scholars came to regard nation building in Myanmar as being based on an ethnic understanding of a nation. Brown argues that Myanmar is an "ethnocentric" state where a state acts as the agency of the dominant

ethnic group in terms of its ideologies, its policies, and its resource distribution (1994: 36). According to him, the ethnocratic state is one in which, 1) recruitment to the senior positions of the state machinery is disproportionately from the ethnic majority, and members of other ethnic groups can be recruited on the condition that they are assimilated into the dominant ethnic culture and values; 2) the national identity of the state becomes associated with the language, culture and values of the majority ethnic group. From a broad perspective, Myanmar state fits this profile and this is the result of the state's failure to accommodate and integrate ethnic minorities politically.

The postcolonial state of Myanmar drew up two separate constitutions in 1947 and 1974. Although each of its constitutions conceived a federal system with ethnic states, and enshrined the right of ethnic minorities to practise their cultures, in reality, the state dominated by ethnic Burmans promoted the identification of the state with the majority Burman group. Throughout successive postcolonial governments, Burmans dominated senior positions of the state, and Burman cultural attributes such as language, culture, history, religion and Burman moral values have been employed as the core elements for the elaboration of a Myanmar nation. Also, Burman hegemony was reinforced through monopolizing the "rule-making" process of society. Ethnic minorities were expected to, or forced to play by "Burman" rules or rules made by the Burman to rise in mainstream Myanmar society. The basic principles of state nation-building policy continued to varying degrees in each three government periods.

The Parliamentary Period

The constitution of 1947 stipulated that the new state would be formed as "the Union" of Burma under a federal structure. As pointed out by Silverstein, although the words "federal"

or "federalism" were not mentioned in the constitution, it contained many provisions in that direction (Silverstein 1980). Power was to be shared between the formal Ministerial Burma and ethnic minority areas. Ethnic states were created for the Shans, Karennis, Kachins and Karens with the Shans and Karennis accorded the secession right after a ten-year trial period. Each state's state council members would also serve in the union parliament, and the head of each state would automatically be a member of the cabinet. There would also be a bicameral legislature at the national level with a Chamber of Nationalities and a Chamber of Deputies.

Nevertheless, these constitutional provisions failed to satisfy ethnic minority leaders for various reasons. The heart of the problem lay in the lack of consensus over the principle of the Union:

> …[T]he relations between the government and minority elites and nationalists continued to deteriorate. The key reasons for this lay in a fundamental difference between minority leaders and Burman political leaders: Ethnic minorities were more interested in gaining benefits for themselves and their people than in preserving the Union, while Burman military and political leaders, on the other hand, appeared to propagate the view that their primary duty was the preservation of the Union (Kyaw Yin Hlaing 2003: 8).

In practice, state elites during this period sought to establish Burman-hegemony in the central government. Ethnic Burmans were favored and minorities were expected to accept Burman values and play by "Burman" rules to rise in mainstream society. Though several senior government posts were reserved for ethnic minorities, as shown in the presidency of Sao Shwe Thaike (Shan, 1948-53) and Mahn Win Maung (Karen, 1959-62), and the first Commander-in-Chief of Myanmar Armed Forces, General Smith-Dun (Karen, 1948-1949), the government was overwhelmingly dominated by the Burmans. Especially after the Karen insurrection in 1949, which led to the defection of Burma Karen Rifles, the armed forces were reorganized so that Burman personnel thoroughly controlled it. The structure of the central state dominated by ethnic Burman disillusioned many minorities.

Furthermore, the government tried to promote Burmese language[13] and, in some cases, Buddhism among minorities. The state apparatus such as the Ministry of Culture and the Mass Education Movement, the Ministry of Religious Affairs, and the *Buddha Sasana* Organization under state patronage promoted Burman culture and Buddhism whereas minority religions were not given any official support. Buddhist missionary activities were underway in minority areas, which mainly targeted animist minorities, drew a large number of Christian minorities' suspicion of the government (Kyaw Yin Hlaing 2003: 6). In 1961, the state even attempted to establish Buddhism as state religion, though the following military government immediately retracted it. Even though the promotion of Buddhism was closely related to electoral politics of that time and hardly driven by Burman-centric intention, it only succeeded at alienating minority leaders (p.9).

These problems are further compounded by the central government's lack of fiscal and administrative resources to meet the high expectations of development in minority regions (Kyaw Yin Hlaing 2003: 8-9).

While there was minimal state violence against ethnic minorities during the parliamentary period, there were indeed military intrusions to the periphery, especially in Shan State. After the communists took China in 1949, some Kuomintang (KMT) troops fled into northern Myanmar and operated with the covert support of the United States. In reaction, the government proclaimed martial law in 1952 in most of Shan State, and government troops were sent in to chase out KMT forces. In the course of this conflict, the central government also sought to displace the Shan traditional rulers, *Sawbwas* in a bid to modernize its local administrative system. This inevitably alienated Shan leaders and ultimately led to the Shan

[13] Language policies of successive postcolonial Myanmar governments are very complex (see Kyaw Yin Hlaing 2003).

rebellions. Myanmar armed forces also abused the local Shan population and acted like occupying forces, thereby generating grievances at the community level.

The Socialist Party Government

General Ne Win seized power in a military coup in 1962. The military government pursued two-fold strategies to rule the country: while it ostensibly sought to establish a monolithic system of one-party rule under the leadership of the Burma Socialist Programme Party (BSPP), it also launched all-out military campaigns against insurgent groups in the periphery (Smith 2002: 9).

In 1974, a new constitution was adopted. The former Burma Proper was reorganized into "divisions" and three new ethnic minority states of the Chin, Mon and Rakhine were drawn up. The constitution declared that "all groups had the right to preserve and protect their languages, culture, and religions, provided that they did not undermine the unity and solidarity of the national groups, security of the State and the socialist social order" (Silverstein 1997: 188).

Though it could be said that the socialist government did have a vision of an ethnically neutral Myanmar "socialist identity", this consideration was not realized due to the complexities of the political system. The emphasis on "Burmese Way to Socialism" lacked the political or cultural sensitivity to accommodate the needs of ethnic minorities. Moreover, concentration of power in the hands of General Ne Win severely undermined the state capacity to respond to societal demands and this led to the subsequent malfunction of many of state organizations. One of these consequences was the gradual closing down of ethnic minority language classes, which largely reflected the negligence of local state officials who

were supposed to promote ethnic minority cultures in minority areas (Kyaw Yin Hlaing 2003:13-7).

During the socialist period, Myanmar's economy continued to deteriorate until the United Nations declared it one of 'least developed nations' in 1987. The state capacity, or infrastructural power, considerably decreased and was aggravated by the pervasive corruption of the government. Moreover, the lack of political legitimacy made the socialist government intolerable of any opposition to it. This significantly affected the political capacity of the state to accommodate and address minority issues.

In the border areas where ethnic insurgents continued to clash with the government forces, more aggressive counter-insurgency campaign, including the infamous "Four Cuts" (*hpyat lei-hyat*) was introduced. It was a program to eliminate all forms of support to rebel groups by cutting their access to food, money, intelligence and recruits. It inflicted heavy civilian casualties in insurgency areas as many villagers were killed and displaced. In so doing, the central government tried to eliminate opponents of its nation-building process and increased the costs of the behavior to such a large extent that it was no longer worthwhile to challenge it (Davenport 1995). However, ethnic rebellions in the border areas continued despite heavy-handed military approaches. Almost all the minorities went into revolt at one point or another, so much so that by the late 1980s, 60 percent of Myanmar's territory was not securely under government control; this was a constant problem to the government even though those areas only represented 10 percent of the entire population (Smith 1999: 199; Steinberg 2001: 186). Protracted military confrontation demonstrated the state's weakness vis-à-vis ethnic societies and proved the state's military and infrastructural inability to penetrate the periphery.

The SLORC/SPDC

In 1988, Ne Win's military socialist regime collapsed in the face of nationwide prodemocratic uprising. But in September that year, the military reassumed power, brutally cracking down the protests and established the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC), which in 1997 was superseded by the State Peace and Development Council. Military leaders promised to introduce a multi-party system and market-oriented economy, and a general election was held in 1990. When the opposition National League for Democracy (NLD) led by Aung San Suu Kyi won a landslide victory, the military refused to hand over power by arresting over 80 MPs-elect and forcing dozens to flee. In 1993, the SLORC convened the National Convention to draw up a new constitution. But the NLD and several ethnic minority groups withdrew from the Convention meetings in protest at the restrictions on freedom of expression. The country is still presently without any constitution, and political situation has since remained at a stalemate.

Since it lacks political legitimacy and popular support, the military junta constantly engages in activities to legitimize its hold on power. Among its other deeds, state-building activities were launched in the border areas. Following the implosion of the Community Party of Burma (CPB) by ethnic mutinies in 1989, the state negotiated truces with many insurgent groups, and, in the next few years, ceasefire agreements spread to the Kachins, Mons, Palaungs, Paos, and some Shan elements. By 2002, over 17 ethnic armed groups signed ceasefires with the government. But military operations have continued in non-ceasefire areas in the Chin, Karenni, Karen and Shan borderlands. In a bid to impose its state-building process in former rebel-held areas, the state implemented various development projects in border areas and accordingly set up the Ministry for Progress of Border Areas and National Races in 1989 for that purpose. The development projects, for example, provided 326 new

primary schools, 41 middle schools and 12 schools along with 17 new hospitals, 74 dispensaries and 17 rural health centers to the ceasefire areas between 1989 to 1997 (Thein Han 1998: 218-21). The junta's development projects were also implemented in mainland Myanmar to enhance popular support for the regime among ethnic majority Burmans.

In tandem with development activities, the state also reinvigorated its nation-building propaganda effort. For instance, "Union Spirit" was promoted and declared by a government newspaper as:

> Concerning Union Spirit, … Head of State Senior General Than Shwe has given guidance, saying that Union Spirit is the will of the national races to consider themselves as the citizens of the Union of Myanmar regardless of their race and stock and the regions they are living in." As they all are the citizens of "the Union, the entire national races will have to strive for the progress of the entire Union (Maung Nwe Sit 2002).

Since 1998, it is compulsory for students at pre-university level to take a course on Union Spirit (Kyaw Yin Hlaing 2003: 19).

However, the revived state interest in nation-building during the SLORC/SPDC period had several limitations. Like its socialist predecessor, the political problems inherent in the SLORC/SPDC system undermined its own nation-building activities. After all, the military junta's revived nation-building effort was not a goal itself but a means of staying in power. The political insecurity caused by illegitimacy, limited state capacity, low political capacity and responsiveness, and widespread corruption undercut whatever goodwill the nation-building process had and further alienated minority groups.

Likewise, the state promotion of Buddhism, another important pillar of junta's legitimating activities, contradicted its own nation-building policy as it pushed away non-Buddhist minorities in the country. The state heavily invested resources in rebuilding and renovating Buddhist sites and buildings, providing for monks and nuns, and sponsoring various Buddhist ceremonies and rituals nationwide. Whether the promotion of Buddhism

gained Buddhist Burmans' support for the government is immaterial to the non-Buddhist, especially Christian, minorities because they felt that the state had marginalized them as well as their religion. While the state could not clearly determine the vision of Myanmar nation-state, the confusion between a Burman-centered model and a civic model eventually led to the alienation of minority groups who came to view the state policy as Burmanization or assimilationist.

The Politics of Post-Colonial Nation-Building: The Karen Baptist Church in Mainland Myanmar[14]

Historical Background: Christianity and Karen Ethnonationalism

Christianity is central to the formation of politicized form of modern Karen identity. The American Baptist missionaries who came to Myanmar in the early nineteenth century contacted the Karens after their initial failure among Buddhist Burmans and Mons. Soon, a great number of Karens converted to Christianity. The Baptist mission was so successful that soon it became the main denomination among Karen Christian churches in Myanmar, which include Seventh Day Adventist, Anglican and Roman Catholic. However, the majority of Karens remained Buddhists or animists, largely refusing to be proselytized. In fact, Christians never exceeded a third of the Karen population, and in 1965, the authors of *the Burmese Baptist*

[14] The Karen Baptist churches in Myanmar are organized under the confederation of the Karen Baptist Convention. The Convention is the body above all the Karen Baptists in the country and represents a massive institutional basis of the Karen Christian community. The organization of the Karen Churches is very well established and has international Christian connections. The Karen Baptist Convention was formally set up in 1913 as a result of an annual meeting of Burma Baptist Convention. It had been nearly a century since the first Karen convert, *Ko Tha Byu,* appeared in the year of 1828. According to church statistics in 2001, there are 17 regional associations from Myeik in the south to Pyin-Oo-Lwin to the up north. The biggest association is, not surprisingly, Yangon with 265 churches, closely followed by Pathein with 250. The statistics also says churches under the Convention number 1419 with 220,834 baptized members (Karen Baptist Convention 2001).

Chronicle estimated that only some 15 % of the whole Karens were Christians (Burma Baptist Convention 1963: 425).[15]

Christians are mostly found among *Sgaw* speaking Karens, who are the main subgroup.[16] Indeed, it is the Christian Sgaws who have been dominating the Karen political leadership since the colonial period. Christian Sgaws view themselves as representative of the Karens and fighters for the Karen cause. This was apparent in the fact that although the very first Karen nationalist organization, the Karen National Association (KNA) established in 1880 was open to all religions and Karen subgroups, its main driving force was Christianity.

The influence of Christianity over Karen ethnonationalism can be discussed in two major dimensions, which are still relevant to the current Karen Baptist Church and its involvement into identity politics in Myanmar. First, the Church's extensive education activities nurtured modern Karen elites. Following the British colonization of Burma, Christian-based schools opened up new opportunities for the Karens to rise in society and develop their modern nationalist consciousness accordingly. A village church was normally set up with a mission school in its vicinity and central boarding schools of high level were established in towns. While the first Christian school was set up in Yangon in 1820, missionary schools saw their first success in Tenasserim (now Tanintharyi Division) among the Karens. *The Burma Baptist Chronicle* (1963) records that the colonial government was very much impressed by the Church's education activities and even considered them "far superior" to the government schools (p. 118). When the British annexed Lower Burma in 1852, Bassein

[15] This shows a stark contrast to the cases of the Chins and Kachins, whose population are over 80% Christians. Buddhist and animist Karens often form consensus with Christian Karens in the interest of pan-Karen community, but the late 19th century history of Myanmar speaks of deadly collisions between Christian and Buddhist Karens, especially during the British "pacification" of Myanmar. Aside from religion, there is also subethnic division associated with religious faith. While most of the Christians are "Sgaw" Karens, many Buddhists and animists are "Pwo" Karens. The Sgaw Karen dialect and tradition was employed to localize the Bible.

[16] Karens have subethnic divisions of *Sgaw*, *West Pwo* and *East Pwo*, mainly along the linguistic line. For the full exploration of Karen subethnic categories, see Chapter 3.

(now Pathein) became a new center for Christian education with its successful Bassein Karen Baptist Association (pp. 167-179). In fact, the first Karen barrister and (Baptist) nationalist leader, Dr. San C. Po is from Bassein/Pathein District.

In the late nineteenth century, the Karen Baptist Church continuously explored the possibility of a full-fledged Christian college and their effort consummated with Judson College in Yangon. In the early stage of Christian mission, the modern system of education introduced by the Church was indispensable for social and political advance of the Karen and this tradition continues to date. The Church's strong emphasis on education still produces Karen social and religious elites from Christian Sgaw Karens. Buddhist and animist Karens never matched the Christian Karens in the political scene. The outward impression that the Karens are mostly Christian stems from the Christian Karens standing out from a largely uneducated population due to the power of their education and their well-structured organization.[17]

Second, Christianity constantly recreates the ethnic boundary between the Christian Karen and "Buddhist" Burmans and has the inherent tendency to resist the Burman dominated state of Myanmar. The spread of Christianity among minorities in colonial Myanmar in part reflected the minorities' choice to evade the political and cultural hegemony of the Burmans. The association of Christianity with "Western" power certainly facilitated the embrace of Christianity by the Karens in colonial Myanmar. After experiencing social

[17] Smeaton, who praised "loyal Karens of Burma", left a number of interesting observations regarding the confluence of education and religion, which nurtured the development of Karen ethnic nationalism. First, he noted that Christian Karens always linked the church with education and development, "They cannot understand a church without a school or a school without a church, or either of these without material advance in civilization …"(1920: 187) Furthermore, the Christian mission, once adopted by the Karen, became a "nationalistic" project. Smeaton noted this movement led to a call for unity and forging a nation of the Karen "They seem to have instinctively perceived that, to secure the benefits which they knew would result from the adaptation of Christianity, they must work as a nation"(p. 188). In Smeaton's words, the Baptist mission satisfied a great of "national" religious need of the Karen, and in so doing the religious change developed into nationalist movement (186). His summary points to the gist of this process. "Three processes have ever since been simultaneously in operation-Christianity, education, and civilization"(p. 186).

constraints under expanding Burman kingdoms, the Karens deemed the Western religion attractive and necessary in a land now colonized by a Western power (Gravers 1999: 22). Conversion to Christianity provided traditional Karen society with social as well as religious solution (Keyes 1979a: 20). Indeed, the Karen did their best to make the most of British "protection" and sought their patronage.[18]

Nevertheless, Christian Churches in Myanmar did not develop in conformity with Burman political authority; rather, it flourished in the absence of it. This is quite obvious when compared with its counterpart in Thailand. The Karen Baptist Church in Thailand, unlike its counterpart in Myanmar, did not question the sovereignty and legitimacy of the Thai state, which was not replaced by colonial power. Thailand did not allow social conditions in which Christian schools could spread uninhibited without paying respect to traditional forms of education as was done in the monasteries (Keyes 1979b). Thus, raising modern ethnic elites through church education was considerably restricted in Thailand.

Therefore, Christian churches in Myanmar, including the Karen Baptist Church, are in constant tension with the independent state of Myanmar. Even if one does not choose to see the Karen Baptist Church as overtly challenging state legitimacy or authority, it has to be acknowledged that the Church avoids engagement with the state as much as possible. Because of its historical development and the key role of Christian Karens in the current KNU, the Karen Baptist Church has a considerable role to play in preserving Karen ethnicity and insulating the Karen community from the influence of the Burman-dominated Myanmar state.

[18] The Church's relationship with the colonial power, nevertheless, was indirect and implicit. Nor was the Baptist mission actively supported by the colonial government. Rather, the colonial authorities viewed the Christian mission with deep suspicion as it was seen to stir up social and religious unrest in sensitive frontier areas (Lintner 1994: 44). Nevertheless, it is also true that the Karen Baptist Church enjoyed much freedom and privilege in colonized Burma. Besides, the colonial government did not hesitate to make the most of converted minorities, recruiting them into the army and colonial police and pitting them against the Burmans.

The Karen Baptist Church in Postwar Period and Early Independent Days

Christian Karen communities suffered severe communal violence during the Japanese occupation. Many churches and villages were burned and looted, and Karen Christians were suspected of pro-Ally activities because of their close relations with the Western missionaries. Political and social situation was chaotic in the postwar period leading to the country's independence, and early days of independence were plagued with a multitude of rebellions. Entire Karen communities, especially the Karen Christians, were dealt a heavy blow in the Karen insurrection in 1948. While the Karen Baptist Church was not directly involved, it did not discourage the community's involvement. Some Karen pastors and priests prayed for the safety of the young recruits upon their joining of the rebellion (Interview, January 5, 2003). Because the rebellion swept across the major Christian Karen areas, many Christian establishments were damaged and destroyed. More than three hundred Karen villages were burned during this social unrest (Burma Baptist Convention 1963: 308). Unburned villages were crowded with refugees and squatters occupied several Karen church compounds. Some of the situations were only normalized as late as 1959 (p. 308). Reconstruction efforts were carried out intermittently in the 1950s when chapels were rebuilt and schools re-opened.

Military Rule and the Karen Baptist Church

The militarization of the state in 1962 had a profound impact on the Karen Christian community in Myanmar. Once society was reorganized under the absolute control of the government, the autonomous space of society, including that of religion, significantly shrank. The greatest blow to Christian missionary work was the nationalization of religious-based educational institutions. Except Sunday schools offered at local churches, formal educational institutions and arrangements by the churches were eliminated following the military coup.

Mission schools across the country were all nationalized in 1964. The new measures not only constrained the ethnic minorities' semi-autonomous educational capabilities, but also restructured national education. The curriculum was drawn up by the central authorities with a strong emphasis on "Burmese Way to Socialism" ideology.

The 1962 Printers and Publishers Registration Law, coupled with the oppressive political situation and lack of government support, restricted publication in ethnic minority languages. Often the distribution of religious literature was also affected, and Christian pastors were harassed by state officials (Smith 1999: 205). The situation continues to date, even though the country has re-opened its doors to the outside world and eased its social control somewhat after 1988. However, as much as the state tried to regulate the majority religion of Buddhism, the subtle discrimination against minority religious including Christianity persisted. At least in mainland Myanmar, overt discrimination is fairly uncommon though not unheard of, and the Christian community also seems to have developed their own way of coping with the authorities. As Fink reports (2001: 222-4), harassments of church communities take place in various forms in central Myanmar, and in remote areas, where the central government is incapable of controlling local commander's excessive anti-Christian practices (Steinberg 2001:188), and there, Christians tend to accumulate grievances and discontents.[19]

Under these circumstances, the Karen Baptist Church had to struggle for its survival. Maintaining its religious identity under an oppressive state is a daunting task, but the Church is also tasked to assume another important role. Since 1962, it was the Karen (Baptist) Church who undertook the role of "ideologue" in promoting ethnonational consciousness in

[19] During the author's fieldwork, a foreign pastor visited one Karen Baptist church in Insein, and gave a special lecture to the congregation. The authorities did not intervene, but delivered to the host church a message of "we are aware of what's going on. Don't forget we're watching you." The lecture went on undisturbed, which was quite normal those days, but the church leaders were obviously upset and concerned. This is only another example of "subtle discrimination" against minority religions in mainland Myanmar.

mainland Myanmar through fostering various symbols of cultural distinctiveness such as language, literature, its distinctive dress and lifestyle (Brown 1994: 20). In contrast, the KNU that operated along Myanmar-Thai border and promoted Karen ethnonationalism and represented the Karen case internationally, never directly engaged central politics again after 1960s. Thus situated in mainland Myanmar without KNU support, the Karen Baptist Church is without any direct political agenda, but it remains deeply committed to the Karen ethnic identity based on Christian religiosity.

The Karen Baptist Church is a religious, educational and cultural center of Christian Karens, and structurally and symbolically, it defines "We Karens", in opposition to "They Burmans" by preserving ethnically specific language, culture and Christianity. The Karen Baptist Church in Myanmar represents a deep-rooted challenge to the national integrity of the state. Its very inception revolts against the idea of nation building based on Buddhist-Burman culture. It continuously creates and recreates ethnic boundaries between the Karens and the Burmans, and in so doing, seeks to keep the Karens away the Myanmar nation-state.

Mainland Myanmar and the Insein Karen Community in Yangon

Unlike other ethnic minorities in Myanmar, Karens can be found all over the country. Furthermore, a great number of "concentrated" Karen settlements are located in lowland plains of mainland Myanmar. Although titular Karen State has drawn much international attention as a site of ethnic strife and humanitarian crisis, it houses in fact less than half of Myanmar's Karen population.[20] Karens are spread all over the country, as a Karen

[20] It is difficult to determine the distribution of Karens in Myanmar, but in piecing together information provided by the state and Karen leaders, one can estimate that at least the number of Karens in the Karen State is less than half, or even less than quarter, of the whole Karen population in the country.

representative, after the first Anglo-Burmese war, stated in his letter to the Viceroy of India, "They are … scattered everywhere; are divided in every direction; at the sources of the waters, and in the glens above them" (Smeaton 1920: 153). Many Karens could be found in many areas of Lower Myanmar such as Pyay, Pathein, Hinthada, and Myaungmya. The capital city of Yangon has a sizable Karen population of about 270,000 (Yan Nyein Aye 2000: 114). It accounts for about 5 percent of Yangon population and is the biggest minority group next to the Indians and Chinese (p. 114). Yangon Karens mostly reside in three "Karen" quarters of Ahlone-Sanchaung, Thamaing and Insein. Among them, Insein has the biggest Karen community numbering some 143,000, which is 57 percent of the whole Insein Township residents.[21]

Insein is situated in the northwest corner of Yangon bounded by the Hlaing River. According to local sources, there is no meaning for the word "Insein" in Burmese, and it is believed to have come from a Karen word "*eeh seh*", which means "take root" or "stayed there for a very long time". It is a very tranquil and leafy place; in fact, the dense greenery in the area and a few scrawny chickens wandering the streets often give the illusion that it's part of the countryside.

The most astonishing sight in Insein would be its numerous churches. There are at least 270 Karen Baptist churches in Yangon (Karen Baptist Convention 2001), more than half of which are in Insein. Some of the oldest churches have congregations of over a thousand. Just as the city of Yangon overwhelms visitors with countless Buddhist pagodas and monasteries, Insein amazes outsiders with its various church buildings flanking the main road and every quarter of the neighborhood. Truly, Insein is the place of the Christian Karens. It is believed that most of the Karens in Insein are Christians, Baptists, in particular. Some of the

[21] Estimate of a former Insein Township officer (Interview, December 2, 2002).

churches in Insein were established several decades ago and have histories that go as far back as to the nineteenth century.

The greater Yangon area has various high level church organizations such as the Karen Baptist Convention, the Myanmar Baptist Convention, and Myanmar Church of Councils. National Karen Christian leaders reside and operate in Yangon, and throughout the year, members of Karen Christian communities from all over Myanmar come to Yangon for conventions, trainings and fellowship.

Many of main institutions reproducing Karen ethnic-religious leadership are located in Insein. This is evident in its seminary compound, called Seminary Hill, where three theological seminaries are located. The Karen Baptist Theological Seminary is one of the three and has been the center of Baptist leaders in Myanmar for many decades. Founded in the early nineteenth century when American Baptist missionaries launched their first mission, the Seminary has served as a key institution to produce Karen Baptist leadership under different names. Fifty years ago, Seminary Hill was once the site of a civil war between the Myanmar state and Karen ethnonationalists. Insein was the stage of historic outburst of the Karen rebellion in 1949, when the Karen armed forces occupied Insein and besieged Yangon for more than three months. At the time of uprising, Myanmar was already shattered by a multitude of insurgent movements. Although the communist rebellion that began in 1948 was of much greater force, it did not pose a direct threat to the capital. On the other hand, because it seized the capital for a period of time and was well supported by Karen communities across the mainland, the Karen rebellion kept the government insecure and paranoid for many years. The siege, often called "Battle of Insein", had a damaging effect on the psyche and perceptions of Burman military and political leaders on the Karen separatist movement (Smith 1999: 137).

As a consequence of this rebellion, the Karen separatist movement went permanently underground and moved to the Thai-Myanmar border. During "Battle of Insein," the Karen resistant groups set up their headquarters at the seminary compound during the fighting. The Theological Seminary was destroyed, and it was rebuilt a few years later. In this regard, Insein and Yangon can be considered the center of Christian Karens and the Karens in mainland Myanmar.

In addition, it is also important to note that the Karen community in Insein is both a locally rooted one and a sanctuary for national level Christian Karen elites. There are a great number of "lay members" who have inhabited the place since the late nineteenth century, and this gives certain locality to the community. Karen elders believe Insein was established around 1850s when seven Pao Karen families from Thaton (a town 160 kilometers east of Yangon) settled at a place now known as Insein Township Hospital. Another group of Karens from the Delta region of Pathein and Maungmya (west of Yangon) who came to work at the locomotive workshop near the railway station eventually joined these Pao Karens.

Interestingly enough, Insein is located in the vicinity of Mingalardon International Airport and Highway bus terminal (also known as *Sawbwagyigone)*, marking the end of the Yangon's city landscape. Heavy traffic also passes through Insein to northern Myanmar, to Bago, Pyay and Mandalay. Insein train station is situated near a bustling wet market. Although Yangon has been expanding rapidly in recent years, Insein is still regarded as a place straddling the borderline between the bucolic and the urban. However, this location does not give any economic benefit to Insein residents, for the activities of handling passengers and other businesses are all conducted in the few safe quarters away from Insein. In terms of economic activities, Insein is more like a residence area where most of the income-generating activities are done outside. Many of Insein residents commute to inner Yangon for work, and a few

work in garment factories north of Insein. Every morning, the main road of Insein is crammed with buses full of commuters. In addition, on a particular day of the week, long lines build up in front of grocery stores for government-subsidized cooking oil.

Although the place is not as rapidly developing or seemingly prosperous as some parts of Yangon, it is not necessarily squalid either. There are a few small food shops and tailors. Near the shops are trishaw drivers waiting for passengers. Around the corner of many side streets are food vendors. A very interesting new addition is an email café along the main Yangon-Insein road. In recent years, there has been frequent though modest construction and renovation of residences. Those who can afford this usually have family members who were formerly or currently working abroad. A lot of Karen families in Insein have family members and relatives abroad, including a disproportionate number of seafarers on foreign shipping lines.

Insein, or more accurately Insein Township as an administrative zone, is deeply involved in political landscape of Myanmar politics. It houses the infamous Insein prison where many political prisoners have been detained and tortured. In fact, the name of Insein is almost synonymous with jail on many occasions. Insein's political landscape is further complicated by the recent state project of "monumental Buddhism" (Seekins 2002: 26) around the country. The SLORC/SPDC government has promoted Buddhism to gain political legitimacy since it assumed power in 1988, which resulted in gigantic scale of construction and restoration of Buddhist buildings and pagodas.

Some of the most noteworthy and well-publicized "legitimating activities" (Kyaw Yin Hlaing 2002) took place in Insein's vicinity. Recently, it came to accommodate two "white elephants" that were captured in Rakhine State in 2001 and 2002. White elephants in traditional Burman kingdoms symbolize the power of the king, and SLORC/SPDC leaders

hailed the discovery of these elephants as highly "auspicious" for the country, and probably for their regime. Just across the elephant garden, a gigantic monolithic Buddha image is enshrined under the great temple built on the top of Min Dhamma Kon hill. Ever since the marble stone was discovered near Mandalay in 2000, the carving and transport was undertaken under strong state patronage. In this respect, state presence and its new initiative are unmistakably around Insein.

However, at the same time, Insein's Karen community appears to be surprisingly insulated from all these occurrences. Residents of Insein did not show any religious excitement in these places. A Christian Karen interviewee said, "I come here (Min Dhamma Kon hill) when I have a guest from outside Yangon. It is a quiet place with a nice view. When our family last came here with a family friend, my little daughter liked it very much because it was very windy. This place is covered with marble and on top of a hill; so even on a very hot day, you can enjoy a cool breeze" (Interview, May 17, 2002). Since most of the Karens in Yangon directly exposed to these gigantic nation-building projects are Christians, they are weary of this method of propagating nation-building, thus they are largely untouched and unmoved by it. Perhaps, this reflects the degree of disengagement of Karen society from the nation-building process in Myanmar.

The demographic characteristics of Insein also suggest its interaction with the wider Myanmar mainstream society. There are a number of Burman residents, who are often dominating township administration. Other ethnic minorities such as the Chins and the Mons are present and have their own Chin and Mon Christian churches. The most interesting landmark in Insein would be *Ali-nga-zein*, an impressive Karen Buddhist monastery. It is a Buddhist compound with an architectural hybrid of Buddhist, Islamic, European, Khmer influences, though not necessarily combined tastefully. Yangon Karens, regardless of their

religious or subethnic background, celebrate Karen New Year in this monastery, probably the most important Karen event in the year.

The location and ecology of Insein enables a strand of interaction between the state and Karens, between the Karen Baptist Church and Karens, and between a wider Myanmar society and Karens. It is against this backdrop that Karen ethnic society in Insein faces the issue of identity formation. Its multiple connections to Yangon's political, economical and social landscapes renders Insein an ideal stage for complex dynamics of "dual loyalties".

Chapter Three: Challenged Ethnic Boundaries and Problematic Allegiance to the Myanmar nation-state

This chapter investigates the first question of the study, namely the extent to which Karens in Insein have been integrated into the Myanmar nation-state. The investigation of the extent to which Insein Karens feel a sense of belonging and loyalty to Myanmar is divided into two sections: It evaluates the current status of Karen "ethnic" identity of Insein Karens before proceeding to assess the extent of their allegiance to the Myanmar nation-state.

The evaluation in this chapter is based on interviews, survey research and participatory observations conducted mainly in Insein from May 2002 to January 2003. About twenty people were interviewed and surveys with a sample size of 75 were carried out. Karen population of Insein is estimated around 143,000.[22]

Respondents' age range from 16 to 69, and about half of the survey respondents are below the age of 30. Those who are under 30 are mostly students whereas those above 30 have various occupations ranging from public servants (16.7 percent), members of the private sector (16.7 percent), religious workers (11.1 percent), professionals (8.3 percent), domestic helpers (5.6 percent), to housewives (1.4 percent). Most of the respondents have formal education as 43 percent have either graduated or are now attending university. Many of these are children of public servants (58 percent) while others are from peasant families (21.7 percent).

The assessment aims to touch upon the most frequently discussed parameters of ethnic/national identity. The assessments may not be completely comprehensive, and it is

[22] Estimate of a former Insein Township officer (Interview, December 2, 2002).

uncertain whether the trends will be sustained. Nevertheless, they speak generally of some very interesting points within Myanmar's ethnic politics and, used collectively, they can undergird a broad-based assessment of the success and failure of Myanmar's nation-building project.

Ethnic Boundaries of Insein Karen Community

According to Brass, ethnic identity can be examined in three ways: in terms of objective attributes, with reference to subjective feelings, and in relation to behavior (1991: 18). Examinations based on objective attributes assume that distinctive features of language, territory, religion, diet, and dress are present in an ethnic group. The subjective dimension concerns the self-identification of individuals with a particular ethnic group. Finally, the behavioral dimension suggests ethnic identity is essentially revealed through interaction with other ethnic groups.

In terms of subjective self-identification, Insein Karens identify with Karens. They subjectively regard themselves as belonging to the Karen ethnic group. All of the respondents and interviewees regarded themselves as Karens. Because ethnic background functions as a basic social category in Myanmar society, identifying oneself with one particular ethnic group is deeply embedded social practice, and this does not necessarily have strong political connotation unless it is mobilized by ethnic elites, as it has been in the border areas. Therefore, simply accepting this "self-identification" does not reveal anything about politics of nation-building in Myanmar. It is, however, necessary to assess the content and boundary of ethnic identity in an indirect manner by looking at objective attributes and behaviors.

This section presents the present-day situation of ethnic identification among Insein Karens especially in the areas of objective cultural attributes and behavioral pattern. It first explores the objective attributes of Karen ethnicity such as language and common cultural heritage. The factors of distinctive language, myths and folk story are also traditionally recognized and used by the Karens to define them as distinct from other ethnic groups (Keyes 1979: 11). The final part of this section is concerned with attitudes toward mixed marriage, a topic, which clearly shows the behavioral pattern of "boundary-making" of Insein Karens.

Language Issue

The possession of a distinctive language is regarded as one of the primary features of an ethnic group. However, there is no single unified Karen language. Karens are mainly linguistically divided into the subethnicities of *Sgaw*, *West Pwo* and *East Pwo*. Because these Karen languages are mutually unintelligible, Karens from different subgroups often have to communicate with one another in Burmese. Karens in Yangon mostly belong to Sgaw group, which is the dominant subgroup in Karen. There are also some West Pwo Karens in the capital but they are numerically scarce and socially invisible.[23] Since most of the Karen residents in Yangon and Insein are Sgaw, the term, Karen language, hereafter refers to Sgaw Karen.[24]

Several characteristics about language issues on Karen ethnicity are shown in Table 3.1. First of all, it should be noted that the prevalence of the Burmese language in Insein is such that although almost every Karen resident there speaks Burmese, not all speak Karen. In the

[23]West Pwos are dispersed across the delta area while East Pwos mainly inhabit Karen state. There are other minor subgroups which are often counted separately. Designating ethnic subgroups is a political task (as the ethnic classification of the state is often criticized as divisive by minority groups) and classification alters according to the sources. Many Karen leaders in Yangon believe that the state "plots" to divide the Karen by recognizing more sub-groups and set them apart from the core Karen groups.

[24] Because of the dialectical differences, Burmese often serves as the language of communication among Karen subgroups. This has become an issue among Karen leaders and instead Sgaw seems to be on its way to "the" Karen language due to the Christian hegemony and for some linguistic reasons. However, East and West Pwo Karens do not seem to be entirely convinced that Sgaw should become *lingua franca* of the Karen.

survey, all of the respondents could speak and read Burmese, but not all of them were communicable in Karen.[25] Still, many of them are bilingual. 60 percent of survey respondents were bilingual in Burmese and Karen in that they spoke both languages at home. Even during the interviews and survey session assisted by an interpreter, interviewees and respondents often switched back and forth between two languages. However, the extent to which Karens in Insein speak Karen on a regular basis is still questionable.

Table 3.1. Language

	Percent of Respondents Who		
	Young	Elder	Total
speak both Karen and Burmese at home	67.3	50	60
consider themselves to speak good Karen	79	65	68
find Karen more comfortable than Burmese	54.5	35	49.3
dream in Karen	60	50	57.3
literate in Karen	74.5	90	78.7
have read Karen recently	21.8	45	28

Though the majority of Karens consider themselves Karen speakers, their range of proficiency and use may vary considerably. With regard to the proficiency of the Karens, as previously discussed, there are great concerns in Insein about the younger generation's command of the Karen language.[26] Community leaders firmly believe that young Karens are much less competent in Karen; it is perceived that even though many of the youth speak Karen, their level of proficiency is poorer than their parents'. Elders complain young people are insufficiently interested in Karen culture and some hold that young people value the Burman and English languages more than they do Karen. A Karen elder commented, "The youth

[25] Survey questionnaire was available in Burmese and English.
[26] In this study, the elder generation refers to those who are above the age of 40. The young generation indicates the rest.

'enjoy' speaking Burmese." The Karen leaders and elders claim the situation is almost that of "language crisis", and fear that this may consequently lead to an "identity crisis".[27]

However, survey data and interviews suggest that young Karens are not necessarily becoming monolingual Burmese speakers. About 67 percent of the young respondents (below the age of 40) spoke both Karen and Burmese at home while the total average was 60 percent. Yet, 79 percent of the young respondents considered themselves good Karen speakers and about 55 of young respondents said they were more comfortable communicating in Karen than Burmese. 60 percent of young respondents said they usually dreamt in Karen, which suggests their affinity to the language. Elder respondents showed similar responses to the same questions, with one exception: only 35 percent of them felt more comfortable speaking Karen than Burmese (Table 3.1). This is quite paradoxical given the elder generations' claims on the language issue.

As for reading and writing proficiency, about 75 percent of young respondents and 90 percent of elder respondents were literate in Karen. However, only about 22 percent of young respondents have read Karen texts recently. The situation of the elder group is slightly better with 45 percent. However, since most of the (Sgaw) Karen writing is related to religious activities, the figure itself is subject to careful interpretation. Keyes reported that while Karens in Myanmar published a wide range of works in the 1960s, with the exception of the Bible and other religious reading materials, there is a general paucity of Karen secular literature in mainland Myanmar (1979: 17).

The key issue behind the concerns of the Karen leaders and elders over the language proficiency of Karen youth might not lie in the declining ethnic consciousness of the young

[27] There is a sense of urgency and desperation as a Karen elder commented, "If things keep going unchecked, the Karen will disappear!" However, the situation is not confined to the Karens only. Due to the nationwide deterioration of education system over decades, elder generation of Myanmar, regardless of ethnic background believe they are better educated than the country's younger generation.

Karens, as framed by the Karen elders, but rather, in the overall deterioration of the education system in Myanmar. Regardless of ethnic background, the elder generation in Myanmar tends to perceive itself to and is generally perceived to have better educations than younger generation who went to school after 1970s.[28] It is very likely that elder generation of Insein Karens speak better both Burmese and Karen than the younger generation.

There is no indication that young Karens are gradually shifting towards a monolingual Burmese mode of expression. For many Karens in Insein, Karen is spoken on a daily basis and holds a special place in their dreams. Also, it is expected that the Karen language will continue to be used as a symbol of Karen ethnicity and most of Karens will continue to identify with the Karen language. However, Karen language does not assume a predominant role in communication among Insein Karens. Burmese is more widespread and has become a major means of communication in their daily lives. Even though one agrees than Karen plays no less important role than Burmese as a medium of communication, it is hard to deny that Burmese has a huge presence in Insein Karens' daily life. In the end, the real popularity of Karen language remains as a question and the language issue is likely to remain as a source of concern for Karen leaders in mainland Myanmar.

Culture and Folktales

The extent of cultural consciousness of one's own ethnic group is another area where the degree of affinity to one's ethnic identification can be indirectly assessed. The awareness of one's ethnic culture is often claimed by sociologists as one of the main parameters for ethnicity along with language (Hutchinson and Smith 1996: 6).

[28] A prominent Karen elder noted on the perception of other Karen leaders that, "They tend to think all the good things belong to before 1962 (the year the military took power)" (Interview, December 5, 2002).

There are several cultural symbols of Karen ethnicity. One of them is concerned with Karen ancient oral literature, which is often referred to as "ancient poems" or *tha* in Karen. This is a kind of oral tradition consisting of tales, legends and mythical stories related in verse and was formerly recited on formal occasions (Marshall:1997/20: 34). These poems are famed for containing some elements reminiscent of Christian theology such as the monotheistic understanding of God and possessing a concept of Creation similar to the Biblical account. Many believe the poems' resemblance to the teachings of Christianity facilitated the mass conversion of the Karens in the nineteenth century.[29] Even today, Karen Baptist pastors employ this folklore to help proselytize non-Christian Karens. "The common cultural heritage", a church leader noted, "serves well as a uniform strategy for evangelical efforts".[30]

Another tradition is the story of *Toh Meh Pah* (Boar Tusk), a mythical ancestor of the Karen.[31] The actual extent to which it really binds the Karen people together is hard to measure, but it is widely cited as the center point of Karen folktale or oral history. The story is widely spread among the Karen elites in Yangon; Falla also noted that this tradition was taken seriously in the KNU area in the late 1980s (1991:11-13). It is unsurprising to find both Karen elites and KNU Karens sharing this account since many Karens in the KNU were originally from Yangon or other parts of mainland Myanmar. However, not every Karen in Insein today is aware of this legend.

[29] The resemblance, in fact, was established through a highly selective process. See Rajah (Rajah 2002).
[30] It is another form of coexistence that occurs between the church's religious imperative and ethnic nationalist aspirations. More is discussed in Chapter 4.
[31] The story goes, with slight variations, an old man named "Toh Meh Pah" gained magical power from a boar tusk and decided to find his family a new land. He finally found the right place, but when he was leading the family there, his family lost him and they couldn't enter the land of promise. Smeaton dedicated a whole book chapter to this story (Smeaton 1920).

Table 3.2. Karen Cultural Awareness

	Cultural and History Awareness		
	Younger	Elder	Total
Karen ancient poems	20	55	29.3
Toh Meh Pah story	76.4	70	74.7

Table 3.2 shows that only 20 percent of the young respondents were aware of Karen poetry, this is contrasted with the elder generation's indication of 55 percent awareness. Toh Meh Pah enjoyed higher recognition across generations (about 76 percent of the young and 70 percent of the elder) than the legends of "God" and the Creation. In the course of interviews and survey, many of the senior respondents offered to recite parts of the poems. In contrast, the majority of the young have only passive knowledge of these legends, some merely said they had "heard about them". Similarly, the young respondents aware of the name "Toh Meh Pah" usually cannot recount the whole story.[32]

Mixed Marriages

Ethnic endogamy is considered as one of the main structural mechanisms for maintaining boundaries in relation to other ethnic groups (Keyes 1979:14). The attitudes to interethnic marriage could illustrate the intensity and extent of the ethnic boundary that its members want to actually maintain. In this respect, attitude to mixed marriages, as a behavioral dimension of ethnicity, is a better indicator of ethnic consciousness than issues of language or cultural awareness. In his anthropological research on the Karens in Thailand, Kunstadter found that despite the widespread assimilation process to the Thai society, there was a marked preference among Karens for endogamy (1979: 145). He argued that the change in the area of language,

[32] As with the language issue, there are widespread concerns over the extent of younger generation's knowledge of Karen ethnic history. A Karen elder lamented, "It's very likely that we may be the last generation to remember these stories."

culture and social convention should be considered with this "barrier" of endogamy to explain the ethnic identification trend.

For the most part, mixed marriage is not a widespread phenomenon in Karen community. Rather, it is actively discouraged and highly disapproved. There is a pronounced tendency to encourage marriage with Christian Karens in Insein; marriage with Buddhists and Muslims are frowned upon. On many occasions, people would recount "bitter" stories of their cousins or relatives who married outside the Christian Karen community.

Table 3.3 Attitudes toward mixed marriages

	Percent of Respondents Who Said They
wouldn't marry a Burman	84
endogamy is desirable	93.3

A set of questions designed to explore the attitudes toward mixed marriages first asked interviewees and respondents whether they deemed it is desirable for Karens in general to marry fellow Karens. Then, they were asked whether they would marry an ethnic Burman (for those already married, the alternative question was whether they would like their children to marry Burmans). The assumption for that question was that all Burmans were Buddhists. Religious distinction was not included at this stage. Table 3.3 indicates sweeping responses toward endogamy (both ethnically and religiously) for both questions. About 93 percent of the whole respondents said endogamy within Karens is desirable and 84 percent of the respondents said they would not marry Burmans.

Next, respondents were put in a hypothetical situation where they were given the following categories from which they must choose their life partner: 1. Burmese Christian, 2. Karen Buddhist, 3. Mon, 4. Chinese, 5. Indian, 6. Muslim. Since the response would be too predictable otherwise, the option of Karen Christian was excluded to see how the respondents

weigh ethnicity in relation to religion. It was easily expected that respondent would choose between option 1 and option 2.

Table 3.4 indicates that about 45 percent of respondents chose Karen Buddhists as their life partners while about 33 percent said they would rather marry Burman Christian. It appears that respondents weighed ethnic background heavier than religion. Furthermore, those who chose Karen Buddhists were very likely to have done it hoping that their partners would ultimately convert to Christianity. Several interviewees expressed this belief, "I want to still marry Karen Buddhist because we share common culture, and I will later try to convert him or her to a be Christian" (Interview, May 29, 2002).[33] The fact that as many as one third of the respondents chose "Burman" Christians suggests that Karen "ethnic" identity in Insein may not be as strong as Karen ethnonationalism is claimed to be. It is also worth noting that 21 percent declined answering that question. One could conjecture that many found the question "inappropriate" to answer and therefore omitted it.

Table 3.4. Partner Choice

	Partner Choice		
	Male	Female	Total
Burman Christian	25.7	40.0	33.3
Karen Buddhist	45.7	45.0	45.3
Others (Mon, Chinese, Indian)	0	0	0
N/A	28.6	15.0	21.3
Total	100	100	100

In addition, gender breakdown shows that while the category of Karen Buddhist received almost the same level of support from male (about 46 percent) and female respondents (45 percent), Christian Burmans were favored by about 26 percent of males and 40 percent of

[33] However, there are actually many cases where especially Christian wives had to leave the Christian faith to pacify Buddhist in-laws.

females. It suggests that female respondents tend to put more significance on religion than males in choosing their life partner (Table 3.4).

Summing up, with respect to mixed marriages, the majority (about 93 percent) of the respondents expressed reluctance to marry outside (probably Christian) Karens. Social anthropologists have observed that exogamy is more frequent among large ethnic groups than in smaller ones. The latter are apparently more afraid of being submerged and dissolved by the larger cultural environment, thus losing their distinctiveness (Kolstø 1999: 37). As long as all Burmans are perceived as Buddhists, respondents refused to consider marrying them.

In sum, the assessment of ethnic identity of Insein Karens shows that Karen ethnic identity is not as intact as journalists and Karen ethnonationalist leaders at the border areas claim. Karens in Insein have uneven commitment to Karen ethnicity in terms of subjective identification, objective attributes and behavioral dimensions. In terms of objective ethnic features of language and culture, the actual substance of ethnic identity is being significantly challenged. As for behavioral pattern, ethnic endogamy is generally supported, yet religion is also an important consideration independent of ethnic background. Mainly subjective identification attests to its claim that they strongly identify with Karens. All in all, ethnic boundary of Insein Karens is being challenged.

Allegiance to the Myanmar nation-state

If ethnic identity of Insein Karens is not as strong as it is claimed, then their loyalty to the Myanmar nation-state has to be reassessed as well. Does the challenged ethnic identity indicate integration of Insein Karens into the Myanmar nation-state? In order for the Insein Karens'

level of integration into the state to be established, a separate assessment for national identity is needed because weakened ethnic identity does not necessarily mean growing national identity. Ethnic consciousness and allegiance to the state operate at different levels, and as such, require separate investigation. This section explores the extent to which Insein Karens attach a sense of belonging and pledge prime loyalty to the Myanmar nation-state. It begins with the self-identification issue which has become more problematic in recent years due to the politicization of the term, "Myanmar" under the SLORC/SPDC government. It is followed by the examination of identity and loyalty under five thematic domains. Finally, it deals with the scope of "motherland" which shows the boundary of one's territorial identity.

Problem of Self-Identification and Verbal Statement

In fact, self-identification with the Myanmar nation-state among Karens is almost impossible to measure directly. Due to the strong anti-government sentiment, a great number of Karens in Insein, especially the elders or ethnically conscious individuals usually do not explicitly state that they are "Myanmar" (in English), which is regarded as a neologism introduced by the SLORC/SPDC. The simple utterance of "I am Myanmar" is, on many occasions, a topic of controversy. Many Karens do not consider the questions, "Are you Myanmar?" or "Do you think Myanmar is your motherland?" appropriate,[34] in contrast, Burmans do state, "I am *Bamar* (Burman)" and "I am Myanmar" when they are asked to identify themselves. The moment they are asked these questions, many of Insein Karens evade answering them directly by saying, "I am a Myanmar citizen; I fill up the nationality box of immigration form with "Myanmar"; Myanmar is where I live." They try to evade this frame of questioning and refuse

[34] Insein Karens, especially old generation, are well-educated; therefore they are very conscious of politics and Karen's troubled relations with the state. This "political awareness" has to be kept in mind in reading the responses of Yangon Karens.

to accept standardized questions.[35] The contention as to the "question" itself shows one aspect of confrontation between the state and the Karen ethnic society.[36] The fear of appearing to support the military government results in the reluctance to identify with anything related to the state. A segment of the Karen community, however, does declare, "I am Myanmar and Myanmar is my country." Particularly, members of the younger generation seem to have less reservation in using these expressions.

However, due to the controversy surrounding the name of "Myanmar", the ethnocentric nature of "Myanmar nation", and finally the historical underdevelopment of the concept of citizenship, the inquiry of "Are you a Myanmar?" proves far from productive. No individual Karen would state, "I am a Myanmar citizen, but I am ethnically Karen to the extent of a Malay Singaporean saying, "I am Singaporean, but ethnically (or "racially" as is preferred in Singapore) Malay." And the very fact that many Karens are reluctant to admit that they belong to the Myanmar nation-state reveals the state's failure in shaping national identity and mobilizing consent.

Investigating Identity and Loyalty References

However, it is still necessary and feasible to assess, although indirectly, a sense of belonging to the Myanmar nation-state in Insein. People may not explicitly verbalize it, but attitudes belie some of the self-contradictions. In this attempt of "evaluation", while indicators of identification cannot be perfectly objective, some interesting aspects of the issue are revealed. In designing the question, several denominators were used to assess the extent of

[35] However, when a Karen has an occasion to introduce him or herself overseas, they are more likely to say, "I'm Myanmar".

[36] Another difficulty encountered during the fieldwork was that the extremely politicized nature of ethnic relations in Myanmar imposed a mask of "modal" accounts on public. The informants and respondents tended to give "correct" answers. Karen insurgency is relatively well known internationally so that Karens in Yangon had a kind of "modality" in explaining their experience for foreign consumption.

identification with the nation-state. In this subsection, there are five categories to measure the extent of loyalty and identity references. These thematic domains in which national identity manifests itself are: 1. Social identity, 2. Identification with political configurations, 3. Social psychological identification, 4. Solidarity and common destiny, 5. Sacrifice for the nation-state.

1. Social Identity:

Identity is often defined as a social category (Fearon and Laitin 2000: 848) or reference group (Hooper 1976). It often indicates membership of a community which is linked to typical social and cultural attributes, and this helps predict and explain a variety of social behavior. The first question in this section was concerned with the primary reference group of Insein Karens. Respondents were asked to select a group with whom they felt a close affinity to: 1. Myanmar, 2. Burmese speakers, 3. Karen, 4. People who have the same profession, 5.People who have the same religion, 6.People who share your hobby, 7. Don't know.

Table 3.5 Reference Group by Generation

	Who do you feel most closely affiliated with?		
Response	Younger	Elder	Total
Burman	0	0	0
Burman speaker	3.6	0	2.4
Karen	16.4	40	22.7
Co-professional	16.4	35	21.3
Co-religionist	49.1	10	38.7
Co-hobbier	7.3	5	6.7
D/K	3.6	10	5.3
N/A	3.6	0	2.7
Total	100	100	100

Even though the question has moved away from the contentious option of "Myanmar" by offering the less politicized alternative of "Burmese speaker" as a primary reference group, only about 3 percent of the respondents support this category (Table 3.5). Generation breakdown (Table 3.5) shows that only about 4 percent of the young respondents chose the

category of Burmese speaker while none of the elderly respondents did so. "Those who have the same religion as me" stands out as the most preferred reference group among the young with about 49 percent of them chose this category. It is followed by "Karen" and "those who have the same profession as me" with about 16 percent respectively. In contrast, 40 percent of the elders felt most closely affiliated to "Karen" although "Those who have the same profession as me" is the close second of 35 percent.

Table 3.6 Reference Group by Profession

	Who do you feel most closely affiliated with?						
Response	Student	Public Servant	Professional	Religious Worker	Domestic Helper	Other Private Sector	Housewife
Burman	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Burman speaker	0	0	0	0	25	0	100
Karen	0	25	33.3	62.5	75	33.3	0
Co-professional	0	66.7	33.3	12.5	0	25	0
Co-religionist	86.2	0	16.7	12.5	0	8.3	0
Co-hobbier	13.8	0	0	0	0	8.3	0
D/K	0	8.3	16.7	12.5	0	8.3	0
N/A	0	0	0	0	0	16.7	0
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

On the other hand, breakdown by profession (Table 3.6) shows that the most preferred reference for student group is "those who have the same religion as me". For public servants, it was "those who have the same profession as me" (about 67 percent); for professionals, "Karens" and "those who have the same profession" made a tie (about 33 percent); for religious workers, it was "Karens" (63 percent); for domestic helpers, it was also "Karens" (75 percent); for those in private sector, it was "Karens" (about 34 percent) followed by "those who have the same profession" (25 percent); for housewives, it was "Burmese speakers" (100 percent).

2. Identification with Political Configurations: *Union vs. Secession*:

Opinions about the idea of the Union, a counter-concept of secession, were measured by the respondents' perceptions of the Union Day celebration. Union Day commemorates the signing of the Panglong Agreement in 1947 between the incoming Myanmar independent state and several ethnic minority groups. As discussed in Chapter 2, the Panglong Agreement was the major political consensus achieved between Burman political elites and minority leaders on the formation of the Union.

Table 3.7. Attitudes to Union Day Celebration

	Union Day Celebration
Responses	
Positive	44
Negative	28
D/K	12
N/A	16
Total	100

When asked how they assessed the Union Day celebration, 44 percent of the respondents said they viewed it positively (Table 3.7). This is interesting given the recent criticism the Union Day celebration receives regarding Burman-dominated nation building activities of the state of Myanmar, especially SPDC government.

> [E]thnic groups were being subordinated to a new overarching central concept of Myanmar culture, for all combined to dance the same dance, waving the same Burmese flag, sing the same song in the same Burmese language, under the frequent chorus of 'Us Myanmar'... the only permissible differentiating characteristic was a different costume colour for each ethnic group. (Houtman 1999:100)

Therefore, when 44 percent of the respondents assessed the significance of Union Day positively, it may reflect the importance of the event attached by the individuals to this specific occasion. Also, although interviewees were critical of the government effort to suppress the uniqueness of ethnic diversity in the celebration, they still said, "The celebration

is necessary to remind us that we are part of the Union and Union spirit should prevail." Surprisingly, this is largely identical to the basic concepts of state initiated nation-building propaganda. Three of the young interviewees used the metaphor of flower garden to appreciate and emphasize "unity in diversity". They said, "We don't want a separate and independent state of our own because it is better to live in the Union with other ethnic groups. It's like a flower garden that looks more beautiful with a number of different flowers."[37]

3. Social Psychological Identification:

Nationalism, including ethnonationalism, in a broad sense is a social psychological phenomenon, which is predicated upon the distinction between "us" and "them". Firstly, respondents were asked if they would feel offended should foreigners defamed Myanmar "as a country". People may resent outside criticism or become apologetic even though they are critical of their own country and society. Kolstø took the point further by likening it to a case where "you may even *love* a country you don't see any reason to be proud of, much as you may love your delinquent brother or a pitiable drunkard of a father" (1999: 238) (emphasis original). In the case of Insein Karens, only about 26 percent of the respondents said they would be offended by the criticism against the country (Table 3.8). In fact, 56 of respondents said, "Myanmar deserves it".

[37] The question, "Do you personally want to live in a Karen independent state or in a Union of Myanmar" had to be withdrawn from the questionnaire after local Karens found it "unsafe" to answer. .There are two other questions which had to be left out as well. They are "Do you personally agree or disagree with the KNU activities?" and "Do you regularly follow the news from the border? However, these questions were used during the interviews with discretion. Also, what is interesting is most of the interviewees who say they want to live within the state framework are seminary students, who are trained to be the next generation of Karen leaders.

Table 3.8. Identification with the Myanmar Nation-State

	Percent of Respondents Who
	Total
would feel offended if Myanmar is defamed by foreigners	26.4
would support Myanmar national sport team in a football match	57.3
what is beneficial to Myanmar is also beneficial to them	76.0
think ordinary people in Myanmar have gone through common experience over the past fifty years regardless of ethnic background	37.3
think they have a common destiny with the people who live in Myanmar	52.0
would defend Myanmar if there is a war	82.7
would feel relieved when back to the country from overseas trip	75.4
would feel more comfortable in Kachin State than Thailand	58.7

Secondly, respondents were asked to respond to this question: "When you watch a football match between Thailand and Myanmar, which team would you support? Modern sport has a social and political significance, often discussed as a nation-building agent and source of nationalist reproduction (Anderson 2001). Sport on the international level is commonly used to assert national prestige and promote national unity against a common opponent, thereby eventually contributing to the construction of nationalist sentiments. The clear demarcation of sport between "us" and "them" serves to remind people of their common destiny (Billig 1995). Football probably has the greatest mass appeal and often epitomizes the nationalist sentiment. The popularity of football in Southeast Asia is no less than any other region and has been increasing over the years. People in Myanmar have been traditionally fond of this sport, and children are often seen playing football in empty lots. It was against this background that the level of support for "national" sport contingent was explored. Many of the interviewees and respondents said they would root for Myanmar's national football squad. About 57 percent of the respondents said they would support Myanmar when the football match is between Myanmar and Thailand (Table 3.8).

4. Solidarity and Common Destiny:

Since it is hard to bind a multiethnic society by cultural identity, political process or "civic" understanding of a nation as discussed in Chapter 2, is often introduced to form a new nation-state. This implicitly or explicitly connotes social contract as members of ethnic groups surrender the option of secession in order to secure their own social stability and economic prosperity. Though the politics of secession is often conditioned by the dynamics in comparisons of the immediate cost and benefit of membership and secession (Bartkus 1999), individuals should have some common grounds with the rest of society so as to keep them in the current political structure.

Politically generated and functioning "national identity", is the collective identity through which individuals feel a sense of collective uniqueness and solidarity. Members may share a sense of common (relatively recent) historical experience and common destiny. In immigrant societies like the United States, Australia and Singapore, the idea of a political community based on a "common destiny", which is predicated upon the heritage of geographic unity, is deeply embedded in social life. This is often to the extent that members of the political community feel bound by it and express a sense of belonging to the community.

First, respondents were asked whether they thought what is beneficial to Myanmar is also beneficial to them. As one can see from the figure in Table 3.8, 76 percent of the respondents shared the belief that what benefits Myanmar is also beneficial to them. However, when asked if they thought they had common experience in the last fifty years with the country's other ethnic groups, only about 37 percent replied in the affirmative (Table 3.8). Finally, when asked whether they believed they had a common destiny with the people who lived in Myanmar, only 52 percent of respondents replied positively (Table 3.8).

5. Sacrifice for the Nation-State:

Respondents were asked whether they would fight for Myanmar when there is a war with neighboring countries. Nationalism and nationalist sentiment is at the core of extreme association to one's country as it determines one's willingness to sacrifice in the "national" cause. The power of nationalism not only makes people willing to kill but also die in a nation's name (Anderson 1991: 7). Interestingly, about 82 percent of respondents said they would defend Myanmar in times of war (Table 3.8). The intensity and motive of the response could vary. Contrary to the majority opinion, some interviewees had reservations about sacrificing themselves for the defense of Myanmar. One young Karen said, "I don't think Myanmar stands a chance to win a war against any of its neighbors, I may simply flee the country."

The picture emerging from this evaluation is quite complicated. First, the investigation of primary reference group of Social Identity category shows that respondents identified strongly with religion (Christianity) (about 49 percent) than the Karen ethnicity (about 23 percent). It echoes the findings regarding mixed marriage in the previous section in which religion played as important a role as ethnic background in selecting a spouse. Secondly, less than half of the respondents (44 percent) viewed the Union Day celebration positively. Thirdly, only about 25 percent said they would feel offended if foreigners defamed Myanmar. However, 57 percent would support Myanmar's national team in an international football match. Fourthly, while 76 percent of respondents said what benefits Myanmar also benefits them, only about 37 percent thought they had common experiences in the last fifty years with other ethnic groups in the country, and 52 percent said they had a common destiny with the people who lived in Myanmar. Finally, 83 percent of respondents said they would defend Myanmar if war broke out.

What should be noted is that there is a great deal of self-contradiction in the respondents' identification with the Myanmar nation-state. They would root for Myanmar's football team, but they would not feel offended when foreigners defame the country. While 76 percent believe what is good for Myanmar is also good for them, only 52 percent agree that they have a common destiny with those who living in the country. These contradictions may suggest the imperfect nature of national integration among Insein Karens into the Myanmar nation-state because people hesitate to consent to fully identify with and pledge loyalty to the Myanmar nation-state

Scope of "Motherland": Kawthoolei vs. Myanmar

Political geographers have long noted the importance of bounded territory in nationalist imagination (Storey 2001). Territory is a fundamental requirement for a nation's existence, and features in nationalist narratives in myriads of ways (p.79). At an individual level, people establish links with places, and this "sense of place" often serves as an integral component of self-identity (p.19). Furthermore, when the connections between people and place are linked to the political project of nationalism, it often results in the generation of particular landscapes and territorial imagery symbolizing the nation (p.79). In fact, nationalist discourse is replete with allusions to soil and land or more specificly to particular places or landscape features, and the scope of such a territory is often emphasised.

However, what should be noted is the fact that the "scope" of such a territory is not immutable. There is a tendency to identify with the present territory of one's nation-state independent of historical contents. In most cases, it involved an expansionist tendency whereby people and nations find it difficult to give up territorial claims of perceived lost "ancient" land, yet hardly consider the issues of pieces of land newly incorporated into their

territory. In a sense, if people identify the boundary of their homeland with the territory of their modern-state where they presently belong to but may have nothing to do with the area their forebears resided, it would indicate that their sense of belonging has more or less transformed in accordance with the modern political configuration.

Karens' homeland is conceived as "Kawthoolei", which has been "imagined" by Karen ethnonationalist movement.[38] Unlike the Shans and the Kachins whose populations are concentrated into one corner of the country, the "territory" of the Karens is a tricky issue in that Karens do not have a territory in which they constitute a clear majority; this is because the bulk of Karens live in mountainous Karen State as well as lowland delta areas. Following the Second World War, Karen ethnonationalists began to conceptualize the idea of "Kawthoolei". In September 1945, in a memorandum sent by the Karen Central Advisory Board to the returning colonial government, Karen leaders asked for a creation of "The United Karen States" administered by the Karens directly under the Governor; this comprises the whole Taninthayi Division, Nyaunglebin Sub-Division in Pegu Division and the Karen areas in Thailand between Salween River and Chiang-Mai (Universities Historical Research Centre 1999: 68-70). Karen leaders proposed in another memorandum that parts of the Irrawaddy and Pegu Divisions largely inhabited by Delta Karens were to be part of independent Myanmar but to be administered by the Karens (p.61). It was certainly an overblown claim, as pointed out by Herbert Dunkley, then Acting Chief of Justice in Myanmar:

> The Resolution is absurd. How can the Secretary of State for Burma, of the whole British Government for that matter, decide to include parts of Thailand in a new Karen state? As regards the areas in Burma which the Revolution mentions, all the hill areas where the Karens predominate are already included in the Second Schedule to the Government of Burma Act, with the possible exception of a small part of the northeastern part of the Pegu District. There is no case whatsoever for including any further part of the Tenasserim Division…The Resolution significantly leaves out that part of Burma where the most advanced Karens all reside, namely the Karen Areas of Myaungmya and Pyapon Districts. This is where

[38] The KNU also uses Kawthoolei for its claimed territory (The Karen National Union 1998).

> most of the atrocities took place…The whole basis of this Memo disappears by reason of this omission, as all other Karen areas are protected in the way the memorialists desire (pp.70-71).

The extent to which this idea has become actually popularized among Karen masses is not known, and it is very likely that ordinary Karens only recognize discrete Karen "areas" such as Karen State, Taungoo district, Pathein, Hinthada, Myaungmya, but not as one "Kawthoolei". Nevertheless, the aspiration for independent "Kawthoolei" has been crucial to the Karen ethnonationalist movement led by the KNU in the last fifty years.

However overblown the territorial claim of Karen ethnonationalists in 1945 (and its present standing inherited by the KNU) may be, it certainly does not measure up to today's territory of Myanmar. Karen ethnonationalists have never laid claim over Myanmar as a whole. In this context, the extent to which Karens in Insein have stretched their "sense of place" to encompass the current boundaries of Myanmar allows one to assess how far they have transformed their sense of belonging in accordance with the present Myanmar nation-state. To ascertain this, two questions were asked: Firstly, respondents were asked if they agreed to the statement "I would feel glad and relieved when I am back from overseas trip, for this is my home" (Table 3.8).[39] About 75 percent of respondents said they would share this view. Generational, educational and professional breakdown did not show any significant variations.

Secondly, asked whether they would feel more comfortable in Kachin State than in Thailand, about 59 percent of respondents said they would (Table 3.8). Interestingly enough, while 35 percent of the elder generation replied positively, as much as 67 percent of the

[39] Throughout the survey and interviews, the word, "Myanmar" often became a subject of the controversy. Since the nation building is not yet complete, the concept of nation is habitually confused with that of the state or, occasionally, the regime. Aside from the legitimacy of the name change from Burma to Myanmar, the controversy also revolves around its possible ethnic connotation to the "Burman". Many ethnic opposition groups and Karen leaders in Yangon believe "Myanmar" is "loaded" with Burman-centric tendency and not a neutral, ethnically blind neologism as the state claims. Nevertheless, the new name and the rationale behind it are widely accepted by the ordinary Karens in Yangon to a certain degree. If not thoroughly questioned, people wouldn't doubt the controversy behind this name.

younger generation also responded in the affirmative. Kachin Sate is situated in northern part of Myanmar bordering China, and has been never been regarded as part of the Karen homeland. But, it is ultimately within the boundary of the Myanmar nation-state. From the responses, it is possible to suggest that the imagination of Insein Karens' perception of motherland in this respect largely corresponds with the modern nation-state of Myanmar.

From the perspective of Karen ethnonationalism, the entire territory of present-day Myanmar does not necessarily have any special meaning for the Karens, but some Karens in Insein apparently attach some significance to this lump of geographical entity, which is far from "Kawthoolei". Even a respondent who regarded herself as a strong Karen cultural activist said, "For everybody, their native country is the best place for a saying reads e*ast or west home is the best*"(interview, December 21, 2002). It is interesting to find that in her geographic imagination, her native country is Myanmar, not just Karen State.

Conclusion

Insein Karens' ethnic identity is facing a challenge and their identification with the Myanmar nation-state is still problematic. The content of their ethnic identity is in serious decline, as the language issue has suggested, and the effectiveness of ethnic endogamy also remains a question. The boundary of Karen ethnicity in Insein is mainly maintained by self-asserted subjective identification. On the other hand, there are indications of support among Insein Karens for an identity related to the Myanmar nation-state. Myanmar identity appears to be emerging in certain areas, yet the emerging picture is far from sufficient to establish that Insein Karens developed stable attachment and solid loyalty to the Myanmar nation-state. Insein Karens show a myriad of self-contradictions with regard to allegiance to Myanmar. In

the end, it can be established that Insein Karens are neither as strongly attached to their own culture and ethnicity as they claim nor are they as fully integrated into the Myanmar nation-state as the state desires.

This raises a serious question to both the state of Myanmar and the Karen Baptist Church, which have eagerly sought to induce the Karen lay community to their respective identity visions. Even though Insein Karens have developed some sort of identity in response to the Myanmar nation-state, a close examination reveals that the references are quite different from the intentions of the state. The alleged loyalty to the Myanmar nation-state is more of a form of loyalty to the territorial entity named Myanmar than any actual allegiance to the national collectivity built upon the Burman dominated core. The fact that ethnic minorities in Insein only "passively" identify with Myanmar in territorial terms must be discouraging news to today's Myanmar nation builders as it resembles a residual choice. Though Karen ethnic consciousness is pronounced in terms of self-identification, the actual content of ethnic identity is constantly being challenged. The fact that some segments of Karen community identify with the Myanmar nation-state also controversially signifies the limited influence of the Karen Baptist Church in preserving political Karen ethnicity.

If this is so, why do Insein Karens only partially conform to the identity and loyalty references of the state and the Karen Baptist Church, and why do they deviate from them? How can one explain this incomplete success and simultaneous failure of the state and the Karen Baptist Church in influencing identity formation of Insein Karens? This question will be discussed in Chapter 4.

Chapter Four: Explaining Incomplete Loyalties: The State, the Karen Baptist Church and the Insein Karen Community

The Insein Karens' compromised ethnic identity is further complicated by their incomplete identification with the Myanmar nation-state. This contradiction questions whether the Myanmar state and the Karen Baptist Church have actual influences in the formation of the Insein Karen community's identity. Thus arises the present study's second question, "Why is it that Insein Karens display incomplete Karen ethnic identity and are imperfectly integrated into the Myanmar nation-state?" Indeed, what causes the Insein Karens' incomplete ethnic identity and national identity? The answer may lie in the social and political dynamics surrounding Insein Karen community.

In fact, the findings of Chapter 3 are interesting because they show that Insein Karens' identity and loyalty references live up to neither the aspirations of the state nor the Karen Baptist Church. This suggests two things; first, the social control, in other words, influence, of the state and the Karen Baptist Church over the Insein Karen community has limitations in the area of identity formation; second, there are other factors that might be held accountable for the equation of identity formation in Insein.

This chapter aims to consider the extent to which the state and the Karen Baptist Church influence Karen lay community in Insein. This will be analyzed along the three mechanisms of social control, i.e., sanctions, rewards and symbolic measures (Migdal 1988: 25). By looking at the state and the Karen Baptist Church's usage of these dimensions in expanding their influence, one will better understand where the state and the Church have achieved and failed in directing the Insein Karen community. After exploring the "limitations"

of these two major institutions, this chapter will also look at how social factor plays a part in the dynamics of identity formation in Insein.

State-Members of Insein Karen Community Relationship: State Control and Societal Disengagement

As the most powerful institution in society, the state is able to exercise to a significant extent the combination of sanctions, rewards and symbols so as to influence the nation-building process in Insein. However, the state does not exclusively determine the dynamics of nation-building as society's reaction impacts heavily on the eventual success and failure of the project.

Sanctions

The relationship between the state and Insein Karen community over the nation-building issue is basically embedded in the broader political environment of the country. The existence of ethnic insurgency and the innate political problems within each government often led the state to resort to heavy-handed methods.

Since Yangon is beyond the insurgency areas, military operations are not a daily reality for Insein Karens. The KNU does not have influence in Insein, as it is unable to reach outside Karen State. Still, Insein Karens are well aware of the fact that government will not hesitate to come right after them if they are involved in any ethnic insurgency movement. Social control is considerably tight in Insein as the township administration is dominated by ethnic Burmans; foreign visitors have to report themselves to the authorities if they want to stay in Insein for some time.

Sanctions on taking part in centrifugal movement are heavy. For example, one is liable to be served with a jail term if he or she is innocently contacted by a KNU agent (Interview, July 22, 2002). People feared being regarded as affiliated to anti-government activities or insurgent groups for they know too well what the consequences would be. The request from the respondents to omit questions related to the KNU from the questionnaire reflects the people's fear of state sanctions.

The state had a relatively firm grip on mainland Myanmar, and obviously inside Yangon. For example, there were quite a few aborted KNU secret operations in Insein. Several agents were continuously sent there to mobilize Yangon Karens. However, due to the well developed surveillance systems instituted after post-independence civil wars, these infiltration efforts never succeeded. As a matter of fact, there has been no unrest in Insein for over four decades (Interview, 14 March, 2002).[40]

However, at the same time, there are certain "relaxations" in Insein regarding state sanctions; so long as state authority remains unchallenged, non high profile dissidents were not put under outright sanctions. For example, a former KNU officer retired in Insein has a peaceful life. He joined the KNDO resurrection in 1949 and left the KNU in late 1950s. After serving in the correction camp briefly,[41] he became a seaman on a foreign shipping line and he appears to be doing quite well as he is able to support his family (Interview, May 30, 2002). Although state does not apply sanctions as visibly and as frequently as it does in the border areas, it ensures that it is able to punish any member of Insein Karen community if it goes out of line and challenges the state.

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[40] Another example might be the early 1990s Delta unrest, which resulted in the death of hundreds of Karens. The KNU transported arms by sea from its stronghold in Karen State to Delta area near Pathein and tried to launch armed resistance against the government. It was later aborted and consequently, the military government launched massive killings of suspected insurgents and arrested many Delta Karens.

[41] When asked about his life in the camp, he said, "By the late 1950s, people were no longer bloodthirsty, so it was okay." His family returned to Yangon before he did for the sake of his children's education.

Symbolic Dimension

There is no denying that the state of Myanmar has been largely unsuccessful in providing consistent and convincing nation-building discourse for ethnic minorities. Its emphasis on Buddhism and Burman domination has disillusioned minority groups. Its lack of political legitimacy made the public skeptical of its symbolic campaigns. The public, including Insein Karens, are critical of the illegitimate government of the SLORC/SPDC; therefore, the propaganda of the government is often treated with great skepticism. Though state leaders and their legitimating activities are televised everyday, people simply do not pay any attention to them. Insein Karens, like most of the people elsewhere in the country, are more concerned with following TV dramas than locally televised news. Thus, it comes as no surprise that they also skip the front pages of *The New Light of Myanmar*, the government newspaper, which are replete with generals' photographs and their daily activities.

Nevertheless, a breakdown of the symbolic dimension of state penetration into the Insein Karen community shows a more complex dynamics. Certain parts of state propaganda have indeed penetrated into the minds of this minority community mainly through the powerful tool of education.

Table 4.1. State Propaganda Acceptance

	Percent of Respondents Who
	Total
agree to the version of history taught at (state) school	85.3
named a Burman for historic figure in Myanmar history	76

While people in Myanmar are not generally taken in by state propaganda, they tend to inconspicuously internalized the officially endorsed country's history and culture gradually. The survey in Insein strongly suggests this. When asked if they agreed to the version of the country's history taught at school, about 85 percent of the respondents replied positively (Table 4.1). And when they were asked to name any historic figure from "Myanmar" history,

76 percent camp up with Burman politicians and kings, e.g., General Aung San and King Anawratha, who founded the first "Burman" kingdom. Karen figures accounted for less than 6 percent (Table 4.1). It is very obvious that some of the respondents, in all likelihood unconsciously equated Myanmar history with Burman history, which is in line with the state vision of a Myanmar nation-state built upon Burman history. The experiences of totalitarian countries where extensive political propaganda and campaign were employed by the state in order to control the public show that while people usually get disillusioned quite easily, some elements of the official propaganda are indeed unconsciously imbibed into the minds of the citizens.

Limited State Appeal

In order to transform the population to fit it into its vision of a nation-state, the state needs to possess attractions other than sanctions or symbolic measures that can lure people to conform to its idea. And the state's ultimate attraction for its citizens comes from its ability to provide otherwise unavailable goods and services (Villalón 1995). In a poverty-laden situation, individuals may, to a great extent, request various services of the state ranging from the essential to the trivial.

The poverty and scarcity in Myanmar provides a strong motive for society to approach the state so as to gain access to state resources thereby gaining benefits that may improve their quality of life. Control over scarce resources under conditions of poverty is the state's most powerful tool in dealing with its citizens. However, when the same scarcity also applies to the state, it places significant limits on the state ability to influence society, including its influence on nation building process. Therefore, the politics of appeal does not assist the state effort in inducing the people to develop an attachment or allegiance to the Myanmar nation-state.

Although Myanmar is rich in resources, it is one of the poorest countries in Asia, with an annual GDP of US$6 billion and a per capita income estimated at less than US$400 a year by World Bank (based on 1997 figures). Myanmar was designated a "Least Developed Nation" by the UN in 1987. The perennial poor economic performance reflects financial, organizational and political weakness of the Myanmar state. The incapability of the state to provide basic services to society is all too clear. In the 2002 UNDP human development report, Myanmar was ranked 127th of 162 countries. The country's physical and social infrastructure is extremely inadequate (Smith 2002: 21-2) and is reflected in the everyday life of the Insein Karens and many others throughout the country. These hardships might include the following:

- Power shortage in Myanmar is notorious. Even in the capital city of Yangon, twenty-four-hour supply of electricity is regarded a sign of enormous social privilege. With the exception of a few neighborhoods inhabited by families of senior state officials , most Yangon citizens suffer from unreliable electricity supply. The social consequence of this state failure is that many of households and workplaces opted for the direction of "self-provision" of electricity. A colossal and noisy diesel generator or a huge battery has become household essentials in Myanmar to those who can afford it. When the state unveiled its plan to increase hydroelectric capacity so that every household can have full electricity supply by 2005, people poked fun at it and joked that by 2005 almost all households in the country will be equipped with diesel generators. The failure of the state to provide the basic service of electricity significantly undermines the state's appeal to people, including Insein Karens.
- Except the main Yangon-Insein Road, many of the side streets of Insein are not paved. Because local authorities do not provide road pavement, it is up to the

> residents who may or may not pool their resources to get their own drives "paved". Depending on the residents' financial situation, the neighborhood landscape could vary from a suburban town to a dusty village. What is more problematic is that the state is not only incapable of providing basic services to its citizens; it even has the tendency of wrecking this neighborhood effort. For example, local authorities, for some reason, tore down a ditch bridge at the entrance of a Karen quarter along Yangon-Insein Road, and when the damage was done, residents were ordered to repair it at their own expenses. Residents resented it but were powerless to protest against the government. The financial and administrative incapacity of the state is compounded by its whimsical implementation, thus sending strong signals that there are no benefits to be drawn from the state and that staying close to it could be costly. This factor also strengthens the Insein Karens' tendency to disengage themselves from the state.

On a more crucial note, the degree to which the state of Myanmar is able to exert its appeal to Karens is considerably compromised by the wide availability of other options for individuals to improve their quality of life. There are a few opportunities outside the government-endorsed avenues in Myanmar. Although business activities inside the country are also under military influence, Myanmar has both a growing private sector and a sizable population of migrant workers outside its territory. Furthermore, the "self-provision" activities of house construction and renovation in Insein are mostly financed by the remittances from Karens working overseas.

Villalón noted, "societal failure to conform to state demands is at least as likely to be the result of a perceived irrelevance in terms of potential benefits as from outright hostility"

(1995: 107). This seems particularly relevant in this case, for if the state is unable to establish and dispense clear benefits to its citizens, society tends to keep a distance from the state.

Besides, such limitations of the state's appeal are often amplified in the area where one of the most lucrative careers is found: the military. The practice of discrimination in the military against Christians discourages Insein Karens from further identifying with the state. While foot soldiers stationing in the countryside are reportedly denied sufficient provisions of food, clothing, shelter, prestige, and regular income (Fink 2001: 143-58), the career of military officer continues to be one of the few job opportunities, and a prerequisite for climbing up social ladder in Myanmar. In a situation where the military captivates the state and society, joining the military is seen as a means to gaining access to various resources otherwise unavailable. Therefore, despite the widespread uneasiness about the military's involvement in political affairs, military careers appear very attractive to young people in poverty-laden Myanmar. However, Karens as well as other Christian minorities have complained of the presence of a glass ceiling for Christian officers. There are disagreements as to when in their careers this practice becomes apparent, but it seems more or less established that Christian officers have slim chances to get promoted beyond the rank of captain (Interview, June 20, 2002). This further alienates Insein Karens from identifying with the government, and with the Myanmar nation-state.

Because the state of Myanmar offers benefits in such a restricted manner and fails to establish clear benefits for ordinary citizens, not so "well-connected" Insein Karens do not see any clear reason to eagerly approach the state; therefore they do not have a strong motivation to support its nation-building initiative. In other words, the poor performance of Myanmar state, or successive Myanmar governments, has contributed to the Insein Karens' maintaining a distance from both the state itself and its vision of the political community of the Myanmar

nation-state. Where the serious political grievances among Malaysia's ethnic minorities did not result in their attempt to destabilize the systems that have generated much economic prosperity (Brown 1997: 516), Myanmar lacks the state affluence to attract its minorities to do the same and conform to its nation-building policy. Had Myanmar been more affluent, it would have been able to offer economic benefits to the general public as Malaysia has; thus bringing about a totally different politics of nation-building and state-ethnic society relations.

All in all, the performance of the state in terms of sanctions, symbols and material benefits does not induce Insein Karens to actively identify with the Myanmar nation-state for various reasons. While the state's heavy-handed approach and nation-building propaganda have indeed checked centrifugal tendency in Insein, the Insein Karens as a whole still perceive the benefits of joining Myanmar society as low and continue to fear the state's perceived Burmanization. This keeps the Insein Karens from approaching the state, and ultimately discourages them from identifying with the model of Myanmar nation-state as proposed by the state.

Karen Church-Lay Members Relationship: Ostensible Authority and Limits of Influence

The nature of the ties binding the Church and its followers is central to an understanding of the Karen Baptist Church's success in influencing Insein Karens' identity formation. While the influence of the Church as a community organization is clearly justified, any explanation pertaining to the interaction between the Church and lay-members hinges ultimately on the Church's control over its members. Though the Karen Baptist Church remains the most

prominent Karen organization for Christian Karens in mainland Myanmar, the identification pattern in Insein, as discussed in Chapter 3, indicates that its influence over identity formation is not as strong among Christian Karens as it had been anticipated. This section will discuss the role, influence and limitations of the Church by looking at the manner in which it exercises sanctions, rewards and symbolic measures to control the lay community, following which, the internal tension caused by its political involvement will be explored.

Symbolic Dimension: Limited Influence

Obviously, the power of the Karen Baptist Church comes ultimately from its religious authority. The religious divide between Buddhism and Christianity serves to reinvigorate ethnic-religious fortification of many Christian Karens in mainland Myanmar, and the Church stands on its forefront. Besides symbolically presenting and "re-presenting" Karen identity by imbuing it with Christianity, the Karen Baptist Church has long been engaged in a multitude of projects aimed at promoting and preserving Karen ethnic identity. It has pursued an "ethnic socialization process", which encompasses the processes by which an individual learns and internalizes attitudes, values, and knowledge of an ethnic group and come to identify with the group. The following two subsections will investigate whether the church's "ethnic socialization process" has any significant influence over Insein Karens' identity formation.

Karen Literacy Drive

In a multiethnic setting, mastering the language and cultural knowledge of one's ethnic group is by far one of the most important components of ethnic socialization. Karen literacy programs constitute the core of the Karen Baptist Church's efforts to maintain Karen ethnic identity and keep the Insein Karens away from the state. Promoting and preserving Karen

language and culture has been an integral part of church activities and Karen religious life. Since the teaching of minority language and culture is gradually disappearing from Myanmar's public school system, the only place where people could practice Karen literacy outside their home, is the church.[42] The church is the community center of Insein Karens, where individuals interact with other Karens and are exposed to religious scripts, rituals, and fellowship activities in Karen language. While the church environment and its literacy program are not on par with professional state organizations such as state schools, it is effective enough to promote the Karen language. Various language and culture programs are offered at Sunday schools or summer schools specially catered to the younger generation. According to the survey, about 61 percent of the respondents said they learned Karen at local church (Table 4.2).

Table.4.2. Participation in Karen Cultural Activities at Churches

	Percent of Respondents Who
	Total
learned (spoken and written) Karen at churches	61.3
learned about Karen culture at churches	72
participated in Karen cultural activities organized by churches	74.7

Non-linguistic forms of culture also comprise an important part of the Karen literacy campaign. As part of its cultural awareness program, the Karen Baptist Church organizes a series of classes, workshops and competitions to promote Karen cultural heritage. These activities range from traditional dance, music to colorful ethnic costume design. Karen bronze drum, buffalo horn and energetic traditional dances are regarded as representations of traditional Karen culture today. This is obvious in Karen New Year celebration which literally

[42] Teaching of minority languages at public schools deteriorated and became later suspended due to the increasingly volatile political situation and lack of government support (Kyaw Yin Hlaing 2003).

and symbolically brings Karens in Insein together through its many cultural activities.[43] This annual New Year ceremony is the biggest event for the Karens. Buddhist and Christian Karen community leaders jointly organize it, although Christian leaders tend to play a more active part. The Church's commitment to Karen culture is reflected in the survey result. 72 percent of the respondents said they learned about Karen culture at local churches and about 75 percent participated in Karen cultural activities organized by churches (Table 4.2).

However, establishing various programs and actually affecting an impact on identity formation are two different things. As discussed in Chapter 3, Karen language proficiency and cultural awareness is far below the expectations of church leaders and Karen ethnonationalists. Furthermore, declining Karen literacy has a practical impact on lives of Insein Karens. Many young Karens attended Burmese-medium Karen-run churches because they are not literate in Karen. While some of these Karens may switch to Karen-medium churches after learning the language, most stayed with their original churches even after they have mastered it (Interview, June 4, 2002). In fact, many churches in Insein are bilingual and more churches are adopting Burmese as their medium of service.[44]

Although another independent research is necessary to determine the Karen Baptist Church's failure at successfully promoting Karen literacy, it seems that the Karen community's intense interaction with Burman society and the lack of government support for Karen language education may have resulted in the declining interest of Karen language and culture especially among the young generation.

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[43] The Karen bronze drum, known as *Klo* is not, in fact, a musical instrument. It was used to read the oracle. The knowledge as to how to make Karen bronze drum is already lost. Even amongst existing animist and Buddhist Karen communities, drum craftsmanship seems to be a thing of the past. Karen elders in Insein were pessimistic about any possibility of survival of such craftsmanship. For more information on the Karen bronze drum, see (Cooler 1995; Marshall 1997 Reprinted from the 1922 edition with a new forward).

[44] Even more disturbing to eyes of Karen leaders is the young generation's apparent fondness of speaking Burmese. After attending Sunday service conducted in Karen language, many of them chat with their peers in Burmese the moment they step out of the chapel.

Socialization Agent

The church's potential role as an agent of religiously-and-ethnically-oriented socialization goes beyond the areas of language and culture promotion. The Karen church is a strong agent with the capacity to exert influences in shaping an individual's Karen ethnic identity. Like the Black church in the U.S., the Karen Baptist Church can get involved in the socialization process. In fact, studies of the role of religion in the lives of African Americans note the significance of Black churches in terms of "spiritual activities, family functions, social and economic activities, community services, opportunity for self-expression and validation, and mental and physical well-being" (Brown and Gary 1991: 412). Through its intensive and extensive programs and activities, the church performs a number of social functions, and some areas of operation, in particular, have a direct effect on ethnic fortification. The Karen church provides an individual with clues of ethnic identity so as to link him or her to the past and the future by offering group values, a place in the universe, and a sense of recognition or "somebodiness" (Brown and Gary 1991: 412) in a religious but highly ethnic-specific context.

Table 4.3. Influence of the Church Leaders

	Percent of Respondents Who
	Total
think church leaders have the most influence over my thinking who I am	5.3
think church leaders most make me identify with the Karen	2.7

However, this is only what the Church "could" potentially achieve within the community. Empirical evidence suggests that there may be setbacks to this process. To the question, "who has the most influence over your thinking of who you are?", only about 5 percent of the respondents chose church leaders (Table 4.3). Furthermore, only about 3 percent answered church leaders gravitated them to identify with the Karen.

The Church has a symbolic authority over its Christian Karen community and thus seeks to keep Christian Karens away from the influence of the state. However, the real extent of influence of the Church, and the real degree of symbolic domination appears to be considerably limited. Despite its potential drawn from organizational resources, the Karen Baptist Church is clearly limited in its attempts to minimize Karens' integration into the Myanmar nation-state.

Social Benefits of Approaching the Karen Baptist Church and Sanctions

In principle, the Karen Baptist Church as a community institution has a leverage vis-à-vis Christian Karen lay community because of its capability of mobilizing and distributing much needed resources in society. Aside from religious activities, its social and community services undeniably increase its influence. Churches and Christian communities can extend social support to individuals by providing advice, material aids and services, exchange of services and assistance. The Church can create modest economic activity by providing employment opportunities and fund raising programs within the community. However, the real extent of social benefits of approaching the Karen Baptist Church in Insein does not seem to be palpable. In addition to that, as for the economy generated by the Church, a Karen community leader in Insein mentioned that less than 5 percent of Insein Karens are directly working for churches or Christian establishments (Interview, December 21, 2002).

The church also carries out a number of educational functions through adult education seminars, and forums for development of leadership and organizational skills. While these programs are largely religious in orientation, they also contain social and practical contents that can be used outside a church setting. In fact, the Karen Baptist Theological Seminary's English course attracts a large number of students, including some non-Christian

Burmans. However, the extent to which these programs reach out to ordinary Karens in Insein and how well received they are may not be as significant as the church leaders claim. How far individual Karens are induced to conform to the model of "Christian-Karen" promoted by the Church remains to be seen.

While the Karen Baptist Church does not clearly reward those who conform to its norms and guidance in identity formation, it also does not or cannot impose sanctions or punishments to those who deviate. As a social organization, the Karen Baptist Church is able to employ non-coercive forms of sanctions such as public disapproval within church community or ostracization. However, it does not seem to be the case in Insein. For example, a Karen who mitigates between those who "came back from the border" (who left the KNU) and the local authorities over the settling arrangements in Insein lives harmoniously in the Insein community. Though neighbors sometimes talk about him behind his back, he stays close to church pastors and the congregation. In another case, although a Karen elder supportive of ceasefire agreement between the KNU and the state is often criticized by hardliner church pastors or other elders, he is still highly respected in the Insein community. Whether this is indicative of the liberal practice of sanctions or the limitedness of the Karen Baptist Church in influencing community needs further investigation.

Institutional Limitations: Church and Politics

Despite the fact that the Karen Baptist Church is considerably committed to preserving Karen ethnic identity away from the state influence, its involvement in ethnic politics is significantly constrained by its very own institutional limitations as a religious organization. In fact, any consideration of a religious institution engaging in politics must include the problem of internal tension between religiosity and social engagement. The Karen Baptist Church is

primarily a religious institution, and this gives it a particular character in its approach to the dual loyalties problem of the Insein Karens.

It is important to note that in spite of its potentials and outwardly defiant outlook, the Karen Baptist Church was not, and is not directly involved in any political or ethnonationalist movement. Even during the prodemocracy movement in 1988 and general elections in 1990, the church or individual ministers were rather reluctant to involve in politics, which was in stark contrast with many Buddhist monks at that time. The Karen National Congress for Democracy (KNCD), which was mainly organized by Christian Karens, contested in the 1990 election but couldn't win a single seat. It is not clear how much support Karen politicians could garner through the church network, yet this support, if any, cannot be taken for granted.

Even the benefit of strong association between Karen ethnonationalism and religion is not always straightforward. The Karen Baptist Church has its own priority as a religious institution, which is not necessarily identical or even beneficial to political cause of ethnonationalism. At the theoretical level, it still remains to be seen whether strong attachment to religion discourages the political activism of the community's religious-oriented members. In the debate on the relationship between religiosity and political engagement of Black churches in the US, some scholars link religiosity to socio-political passivity in that religious concerns tend to be anti-intellectual and other worldly, and religion serves as an opiate rather than a motivation towards pressing social problems (Vedlitz et al. 1980: 368). This line of thinking emphasizes the sacred or other worldly orientation of religion, seeking salvation in the after life or tacitly accepting fate. Indeed, this is precisely the type of complaint some Karen activists have raised against the Karen Baptist Church leadership.[45] Karen cultural activists sometimes feel that church leaders are uncooperative in the Karen cause. Indeed, the

[45] The complaints are often expressed in the following manner: "church leaders and pastors only pray, that's all they do."

church's involvement in ethnonationalist activities seems to be quite selective. For some church leaders, evangelism comes before pan-Karen solidarity or nationalism. They view the common Karen culture as a platform for converting animist Karens, and this evangelical rationale is elicited in its church-run Karen literacy campaign.

Obviously, religious institutions do have human and institutional resources to mobilize its followers. Others argue that within the American Black church, "the leadership and prestige of Black religious officials, the support of some religious organizations, and a substantial following of religious Black citizens" greatly contributed to the success of the Civil Rights Struggle (Vedlitz et al. 1980: 369). Obviously, these arguments point to the institutional capacity and mobilizing potential of the church. More specifically, churches in Insein are able to provide a "venue" for a large gathering of mainly "Karens". Karens in Insein gather at churches on a regular basis to define and redefine their "community" in physical and symbolic terms.

The internal tension between faith and social engagement experienced by the America Black church does strike a chord when compared to the situation of the Karen church in Myanmar. Even if the Karen Baptist Church were endowed with sufficient financial and human resources to effectively shape the identity of its followers, it would be a still primarily a religious institution, not a political one. Besides, as a community institution, it has to protect its members from the ruthless state's possible suppression. The Church cannot risk its religious and social survival. Obviously the Church produces Christian Karen elites who are well equipped with Karen ethnonationalist discourse through its seminaries and church networks. However, it may not be able to change the public's attitude or perceptions toward

identity.[46] Its position as a religious institution causes another limitation to the Karen Baptist Church in fully committing itself to taking part in the struggle for Karen ethnicity. Despite its achievements, political situations and the internal tension caused by its institutional limitations continue to constraint the Church's effort.

The Karen Baptist Church has devoted much effort and resources to promoting Karen linguistic and cultural literacy in a hope that it is able to keep the Karen lay community away from the influence of the Myanmar state and check its integration into Myanmar society. However, despite its effort, the influence of the Church appears to be considerably limited.

Social Factors: Social and Economic Process as an Agent of Ethnic Construction and Deconstruction

The more closely one examines the interaction between the State and Insein Karen community, and the Karen Baptist Church and Insein Karen lay community, the more evident are the limitations of the influence of these supposedly powerful institutions.

Instead, what emerges is the social and economic process, which presents quite a different context to the identity and loyalty references to Insein Karens. While both the state and the Karen Baptist Church are too weak to bring about fundamental changes in this pattern, identity formation in Insein has been faced with a new environment in the 1990s. This section explores the contributions of social changes to the identity formation of Insein Karens.

[46] Recognizing this limitation, the church's "social engagement" to promote Karen ethnonationalism is bound to its concentration on social and cultural programs. One Karen elder commented that the contribution of the Church nowadays to Karen ethno-nationalism stems from its involvement in Karen literacy programs and not political movements (Interview, June 11, 2002).

Principle of Social Relations: the Real Extent of Conspicuity of Ethnicity

Despite the high profile given to the country's ethnic divide, a closer look at Myanmar "society" reveals that there are often other principles of more regulatory power over social relations. One such principle is the patron-client network, which is not necessarily based on ethnic division. Throughout post-colonial Myanmar, the clientelistic patronage networks involving state officials and members of society regulated a large number of social and business relations. Especially in the country's economic sector, where cronyism prevails, patron-client relationship has a huge presence. The benefit of the "well-connected" in the business sector throughout successive Myanmar governments is already well explored (Kyaw Yin Hlaing 2002). In the social arena as well, the advantages of the "well-connected" is observable when it comes to promotions in one's career and opportunity to work abroad. In a country where the military captures the state and the state dominates the major arenas of society, this is often translated into civil-military divide around which social relations revolve.

The prominence of this social relation became more apparent after the SLORC took power in 1988. The state opened up to the private sector and consequently, increased business opportunities and interests considerably expanded clientelistic networks. Even before the 1990s, the clientelistic network has worked independently from the ethnic divide on many occasions. For example, some members of the ethnic minorities, who in most cases are resource-rich Kachins or Shans, have close connections with the military senior officials and their wealth prevents them from being turned away on the ground of ethnic background. Since the military took control of the country in 1962, this patron-client network has often been interpreted as a civil-military divide in social relations. A retired Karen employee of a state enterprise recalled that throughout his career the problem was mainly between the

military and civilian staff rather than between Burmans and Karens (Interview, December 21, 2002).

Table 4.4. Ethnic Discrimination

	Ethnic Discrimination		
	Percent of Respondents Who		
	Younger	Elder	Total
think Karen background has affected their education and career	12.7	30	17.3
think life betterment has been affected by ethnic background	54.5	35	49.3
personally feel ethnically discriminated in the public sector by the government	21.8	55	30.7
personally feel ethnically discriminated in the private sector by Burmans	9.1	25	13.3

Another way to assess the extent to which ethnic background is a significant principle of social relations is to look at the issue of ethnic discrimination. In the survey, when respondents were asked whether their ethnic background had affected their education and career, only about 17 percent of the respondents responded positively (Table 4.4). This was followed by a question aiming to assess a broader impact of ethnic background on the individual's life. When asked whether the betterment of their lives were affected by ethnic background, about 50 fifty percent answered in the affirmative (Table 4.4).

The first question was concerned with ethnic discrimination specifically in education and career while the second dealt with a broader sense of life betterment and ethnic discrimination. The perceived level of ethnic discrimination is considerably low; this is indicative of the extent to which ethnicity actually acts as a determinant of social life in mainland Myanmar. And the response in education and career corresponds with many anecdotal episodes of Insein Karens. Many of the civil servants and professionals said that

they have not encountered ethnic discrimination.[47] A father of a recently retired civil servant reflected on his daughter's successful career:

> We always taught her to be honest and hardworking. And she was just what we had hoped for. Not only she was gifted in her field, but also she worked very hard. Over time her supervisors and colleagues recognized her performance. When it was her time to sit for an exam to study abroad under government sponsorship, she went through all the stages successfully and won the chance. She was outstanding and nobody referred to her ethnic background (Interview, May 30, 2002).

While the general perception of being discriminated on ethnicity is relatively low, there are differences in discriminations between public sector and private sector. About 31 percent of the respondents said they felt ethnically discriminated in the public sector by the government whereas about 13 percent of the respondents responded they felt ethnically discriminated in the private sector by Burmans. Generational breakdown shows that the older generation tends to report a higher incidence of discrimination with 55 percent speaking of ethnic discrimination in the public sector. Still, ethnic discrimination is not as pronounced as suggested by popular perspective on ethnic relations in Myanmar.

This analysis, therefore, highlights the difficulty in sustaining the argument that ethnicity is the most powerful guideline for social and economic interaction than patron-clientelistic network in Insein. For the most part, the military regime and those who are "connected" with it constitute a party that can be distinguished from the rest of society. Though one must be warned against any sweeping generalization, evidence suggests that, as a social guideline in mainland Myanmar, ethnicity is no more powerful than patron-client relations or the civil-military divide. Consequently, it may have played a role in diluting the ethnic consciousness of Insein Karens.

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[47] What is interesting is that when they were presented with the question of "do you think the Karen and ethnic minorities are discriminated in their workplace?", most of these interviewees responded positively. However, when the question was directed at themselves, most of them said, "no". There are several possibilities to explain this discrepancy. First, the respondents were not comfortable to expose they were discriminated. Second, they perceived the situation on a more general and group based level, even though in an individual level ethnic discrimination is not pervasive.

Globalization Factor: De-Emphasizing Singular Identity

The opening of the country following the political upheaval of 1988 brought about a series of controversial changes to the social landscape. Growing number of visitors to Myanmar have reported on the changed landscape of the country, especially in Yangon and other tourist areas. While it is certain that the political situation is grim and economy is declining, day-to-day life in Yangon has undergone dramatic change vis-à-vis the pre-1988 period. This is the result of limited liberalization under the SLORC/SPDC. The regularization of the border trade and the openings available to both the indigenous and foreign private sectors in the economy allowed for the development of a different social and economic environment in urban areas. Though political reform has been stalled, several symptoms of the "open economy" and limited liberalization are worth noting.

After nearly 30 years of isolation from the international society, Yangon's streets are now full of "global" cultural and consumer products. One can see VCD rental shops in every street corner stocked with newly released Hollywood films that are mostly pirates from China; American pop songs fill the air; and people are crazy about English football stars. This is only one aspect of the phenomenon of globalization.

It is the cultural aspect of globalization that is noticeably advancing among Myanmar citizens. Change is physically evident in the major cities. The majority of the population still wear *longyi* as part of their everyday dress, but more and more people in Yangon are shifting from *longyi* to western clothes; many people are listening to the music that has a worldwide appeal, and watching Hollywood movies through satellite channels and pirated VCDs. Many of the young interviewees said they spent weekend watching VCDs with their friends. Every neighborhood in Yangon has a private VCD theater in which one can watch movies at a very affordable price (20 to 30 kyats). The increasing number of parabola antenna across the capital

means the establishment of the ubiquitous presence of CNN, MTV and other global media, which is often mitigated by the regional Thai and Chinese channels. There are new hotels, office buildings, residence complexes and other urban structures marking permanent changes in the city's landscape. The changed face of the city does not necessarily guarantee any social or cultural, or the hoped for political transformation, but it doubtlessly creates an opportunity for the individuals to get access to new information.

The growing importance of English is another sign of deepening globalization. In fact, Karen residents in Insein appear keener in learning English than improving their Karen. Many of them devote considerable effort and time to English tuition, but no one took up private classes for Karen language. A good command of Burmese may give a Karen an edge in finding and securing a job, but the advantage of speaking English far surpasses the privilege of speaking good Burmese. On many occasions, it was found that the emphasis on learning English and its subsequent use for pursuing employment or education abroad was far stronger than the Karens' consideration for their indigenous language and culture.

Besides, the increasing number of tourists and the growth of tourism industry, although controversial and feeble, made an impact on the hitherto isolated country and its people. Tourism is one of the few industries to which ordinary Myanmar citizens have direct access to and it provides local people with precious income-earning opportunities. Beyond that, contact with foreign visitors also offers the local people the opportunity to broaden their perspective of the world.

Obviously, the impact of globalization should be qualified. In Myanmar, the impact of globalization largely tends to be limited to the cultural sphere; the political and more important economic advances of globalization have yet to occur. Also, scholars have argued that globalization is not universal because "not everyone experiences it or at least not in the

same way" (Storey 2001: 117). Not every member of the Karen community possesses the time, money and social position, which allows or encourages them to live in a world with CNN or MTV. It could be said that globalization in Myanmar is, at best, basically an urban phenomenon. Globalization has probably yet to touch the Karen villagers in rural areas, but for the Insein Karens who are increasingly exposed to the outside world, this is a new reality. They are regarded as the most educated and socially accomplished, and therefore, among the country's Karens, they are the ones most exposed to the outside world.

Despite these limitations, globalization and its accompanying social change have contributed to the Insein Karens' changing the worldview. In doing so, it encourages a movement away from the singular emphasis on Karen identity. Various social and economic forces are at work in the "diversification" of individuals' concerns and interests. An individual does not have to be either Karen or Myanmar, as there could be other references of identity and loyalty, and as such, individuals may not have to profess strong attachment or allegiance to any one particular group. The broadened perspective challenges the state and the Karen Baptist Church's claims of the exclusive identity of individual Karens. Forces of globalization, therefore, add another dimension to the identity and loyalty process by providing different possible "references".

Interethnic Relations: Commonalities and Interaction

The interethnic relationship between Burmans and Karens in contemporary Myanmar is often regarded a marginal issue compared to the relationship between the state and the Karens. However, given the daily interaction of the Burman-dominated society and the Karen community, the relationship between these two should be factored in the equation of the Insein Karens' identity.

Insein has not seen any communal tension between Burmans and Karens for a long time, and interethnic relations have been marked by relatively peaceful coexistence rather than fierce competition or antipathy. There is no denying that there is some deep-rooted ethnic prejudice and negative stereotyping of each other, and the Karens are underdogs in competition with Burmans who are sometimes condescending towards Karens. However, this has not developed into any political problem.

Table 4.5. Socializing with Burmans

	Socializing with Burmans		
	Percent of Respondents Who		
	Younger	Elder	Total
have Burman friends	98.2	95	97.3
have more than ten Burman friends	67.3	70	68
whose best friend is Burman	56.4	5	42.7
don't go to pagodas or talk to monks			70.6
invite Burman friends to Karen festivals	78.2	70	76

Insein Karens extensively socialize with Burmans as is evident from the fact that over 97 percent of the respondents said they had Burman friends (Table 4.5). In addition, 68 percent of the respondents had more than 10 Burman friends. When asked if they go to Buddhist pagodas or talk to Buddhist monks, about 71 percent of the respondents said they did not (Table 4.5);however, they all said that they normally attended *Shin-byu* or *Shun-kywei*, which are Buddhist Burmans' ceremonies accompanied by feasts in their Buddhist friends' houses.[48] Also, 76 percent of the respondents said they invite Burman friends to Karen festivals (Table 4.5).

Insein Karens not only interact and socialize with Burmans on a day-to-day basis, they also read Burmese novels and magazines and listen to Burmese music. This is in sharp contrast to the border areas where Karens generally live insulated from all other ethnic groups.

[48] *Shin-byu* is the novitiation ceremony of a young boy and *Shun-kywei* is a ceremony offering food to Buddhist monks. Both are accompanied by lavish feasts in the host's house.

More importantly, Karens tend to regard Burmans as the "in-group" rather than the foreign minorities of the Chinese and Indians. To the question, "Among Burmans, Chinese and Indians, who do you think is one of us?" 72 percent of the respondents chose Burmans (Table 4.6). Indians and Muslims are regarded to be the most distant from the Karens.[49]

Table 4.6. In-group and Out-group

	One of "Us"		
	Younger	Elder	Total
Burmans	76.4	60	72
Chinese	3.6	5	4
Indians	0	0	0
None of above	12.7	10	12
All	1.8	0	1.3
D/A	0	5	1.3
N/A	5.5	20	9.3
Total	100	100	100

The constant and intense interaction with the Burman public may have a significant influence on Insein Karens' identity formation in relation to the Myanmar nation-state. Interaction with Burmans in social relations may assist to broaden the scope of Insein Karens' identity references thus causing them to identity themselves with the country where they live together with Burmans.

Conclusion

The lengthy analysis of the triangular relationship between the state, the Karen Baptist Church, and the Insein Karen community in this chapter was to answer the question: *Why is it that Insein Karens display incomplete Karen ethnic identity and imperfect degree of integration into the Myanmar nation-state*?" The outcome of identity formation among Insein Karens is neither the one

[49] Indians (*kala*) are usually looked down upon in Myanmar society. This is also the case in Insein. The idea of asking a question regarding group boundary between indigenous and alien minorities was inspired by Dr. Kyaw Yin Hlaing at NUS.

created by the state nor the resulte hoped for by the Karen Baptist Church. The forces of the Myanmar state and the Karen Baptist Church contain diverse factors in influencing Insein Karens' identity formation: one could see some work in favor of Karen ethnic identity and others against it; some successfully operate in the interest of forming Myanmar national identity and others are detrimental to it.

Firstly, part of the state propaganda of nation-building appears to have an impact on Insein Karens through the educational system. Also, its coercive power and sanctions effectively undermines Karen ethnonationalist sentiment in Insein. Yet, lack of political legitimacy, poor government performance and limited state capacity fail to attract Insein Karens to identify with the state proposed nation-state. All in all, the influence on the part of the state to Insein Karen community on the matter of Myanmar national identity is still problematic. Secondly, though the Karen Baptist Church exerts great effort in preserving Karen ethnic identity by providing the drive in Karen literacy in its search for an alternative social and religious center for Insein Karens, its endeavor does not have direct influence over Insein Karens' identity formation. Obviously, the constraints within the political situation prevent the Karen Baptist Church from undertaking any active exploration of Karen ethnonationalism. It is further compounded by the Church's unease in stepping out of its religious role and dabbling in political involvement. Contrary to popular perspective, the Karen Baptist Church is not able to influence Insein Karen community as much as it wants to. The limitations of the state and the Karen Baptist Church resulted in the imperfect formation of Karen ethnic identity and Myanmar national identity of Insein Karens. Their political and institutional self-contradictions and weaknesses prevented any of the two institutions taking the dominant position vis-à-vis the Insein Karen community. Furthermore, the limitations of

the state and the Church also suggest there are other forces in the dynamics of identity formation.

A range of social factors emerge to account for such influence. The pervasiveness of patron-client relations, or civil-military divide, may have led Insein Karens to primarily define their social relations not in terms of interaction between Burmans and Karens, but rather interactions between the military government and the rest of society. The advancement of globalization in the 1990s changed the worldview of Insein Karens and de-emphasized the singular Karen identity. Also, the personal interaction between Burmans and Karens on a day-to-day basis facilitated the formation of a sense of community among themselves.

Chapter Five: Weak State and Weak Ethnic Society: Uncertain Identities and Loyalties

This study attempted to examine the problem of nation building in mainland Myanmar through the case of Insein Karen community in Yangon. In approaching such a problem, this study adopted a slightly different strategy from existing literature. It moved away from the current literature dealing with the armed struggle between the state and ethnic armed organizations in the border areas, and instead focused its attention on the normalized situation between the state and Karen ethnic society in mainland Myanmar. Chosen based on its location at the complex geopolitical juncture in the capital city of Yangon, the Insein Karen community illustrates the development of the problem of dual loyalties amidst interactions between the state and ethnic society. Because Insein is at the heart of mainland Myanmar, its several political and social environments are in stark contrast with the border areas. Due to the well-established state presence in Insein, state control takes a less violent form in a situation where Karen communities are not under the influence of the KNU, but under the normalcy of the Karen Baptist Church. Moreover, Insein Karens are exposed to various general social factors on a daily basis.

Furthermore, the disaggregation of Karen society in Insein between elites and masses allows a detailed understanding of identity formation within ethnic society. This makes it possible to differentiate the interaction between the state and Karen Baptist Church and the interaction between the state and Karen masses. This distinction, in turn, allows for the investigation of the social interaction between ordinary Karens and general social forces.

Based on this approach, this study was able to raise more specific questions at the outset. They are: "*To what extent have Karens in Insein been integrated into the Myanmar nation-state*?"

and "*Why is it that Insein Karens display incomplete Karen ethnic identity and an imperfect degree of integration into the Myanmar nation-state?*" The assessment of the current status of identity formation among Insein Karens suggests that though Karen ethnic identity is asserted by subjective self-identification, the actual content of ethnicity, such as language and cultural features, is in decline. Despite the efforts of the Karen Baptist Church to preserve distinct Karen ethnicity to the maximum, the extent of Insein Karens' identification with Karen ethnicity fails to live up to the Church's expectation.

On the other hand, Insein Karens have developed a sense of belonging and loyalty to the Myanmar nation-state, although it is done in a very problematic manner. While the direct identification with "Myanmar" is still an uncomfortable issue for Insein Karens, an indirect measurement suggests that they have formed an attachment and allegiance to the Union of Myanmar. Yet, the extent of such identification is seriously limited to become a full-scale national integration.

The situation is such that Insein Karens show a high degree of inconsistency with regard to their sense of belonging to the Myanmar nation-state. The identification process runs in multiple directions, and this reflects the hesitancy to reject Karen ethnic identity and fully support Myanmar national identity.

The complex picture of identity and loyalty references of the Insein Karen community therefore points to the limitations of the state and the Karen Baptist Church. The inadequate nation-building model, lack of political legitimacy and low state capacity seriously compromises the state's ability to attract Insein Karens to the model of the Myanmar nation-state put forward by the state. As discussed in Chapter 4, Karen masses in Insein do not actively seek to conform to the Myanmar state, and by extension, the Myanmar nation-state.

On the other hand, the political situation and internal tension relating to its political engagement also constrain the degree of influence of the Karen Baptist Church.

While the "weak" state and "weak" ethnic minority society cannot impose their will on identity formation in Insein, the social and economic processes in Yangon have guided members of the Karen community in another direction. Karens in Insein have experienced a broader social reality that broadens their perspectives and de-emphasizes a singular Karen identity. This unexpected "contribution" of social and economic processes to identity formation suggests that more attention needs to be paid to the societal aspects of state-ethnic minority relations in Myanmar.

The process of nation-building in any polity, be it functioning or malfunctioning, is full of contradictions, contentions and accommodations. Myanmar is no exception to this rule and yet its result has been extremely disastrous. The self-contradicting nation-building model, lack of political legitimacy and low state capacity, coupled with the country's perennial political crises has created an environment hostile to the formation of sound political foundations of national integration. While the influence of the Karen Baptist Church is also limited, the ultimate trajectory of the politics of identity remains uncertain. Whether Karens in Insein will develop more consistent and coherent attachment and allegiance to the Myanmar nation-state depends largely upon Myanmar's political and economic evolution in the years to come.

The complexities of the situation cautions one against the conclusion that Karens are either simply integrated into Myanmar society or strongly resisting such integration. Perhaps the question is not just whether they are integrated or not, but which political and social factors are responsible for the uncertain identities and loyalties.

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Appendix A

Survey Questionnaire (English)

1. Gender
   1. male, 2. female

2. Age

3. Subgroup of the Karen
   1. Sgaw, 2. East Pwo. 3. West Pwo. 4. Kayah, 5. Others (including mixed blood within Karen)

4. Religion
   1. Baptist, 2. Catholic, 3. Anglican, 4. Buddhist, 5. Others

5. Hometown
   1. Yangon, 2. Delta, 3. Karen State, 4. Taungoo District 5. Others

6. Profession
   1. Student, 2. Government Servants, 3. Professional 4. Religious Worker 5. Domestic Helpers, 6. Other Private Sector 7. Housewife 8. Others

7. Educational background
   1. Primary (up to 5th standard) 2. Middle (6th to 10th), 3. Higher Education, 4. Further

8. Parents' profession
   1. Student, 2. Government Servants, 3. Professional(e.g., doctor, analyst) 4. Religious Worker 5. Peasants, 6. Other Private Sector

9. How would you rate your Karen language fluency?
   1. Excellent
   2. Good
   3. Fair
   4. Poor

10. Can you read and write Karen?
    1. Yes. 2. No 3. reading only

11. If you are Sgaw, can you speak Pwo, or if you are Pwo, can you speak Sgaw?
    1. Yes. 2. No

12. If you are Sgaw and speak Pwo (If you are Pwo and speak Sgaw), how would you rate your fluency?
    1. Excellent
    2. Good
    3. Fair
    4. Poor

13. If you are bilingual of Burmese and Karen, which one do you feel more comfortable with?
    1. Karen 2. Burmese 3. Both 4, Don't know

14. Which language do you dream in?
    1. Karen 2. Burmese 3. Both 4, Don't know 5. Others

15. Have you read any Karen novel or magazine recently?
    1. Yes. 2. No

16. Name any historic figure in Burma/Myanmar history.
    1. Burman Kings, 2. Aung San, 3. Others, 4. Don't know 5. Karen figure

17. Name any historic figure in Karen history.
    1. Saw Ba U Gyi, 2. Ko Tha Byu, 3. Others, 4. Don't know

18. Do you know there is an ancient poem of the Karen and what it is about?
    1. Yes. 2. No

19. Do you know Toh Meh Pah and his story?
    1. Yes. 2. No

20. Do you know Saw Ba U Gyi?
    1. Yes. 2. No

21. Do you know about the 1949 Insein rebellion?
    1. Yes. 2. No

22. Do you know why and how the Karen "insurgency" has started?
    1. Yes. 2. No

23. Would you feel more comfortable in Kachin state than in Thailand?
    1. Yes
    2. No
    3. Don't know

24. Would you agree that the state can hand over some parts of Kachin state to China?
    1. Agree very much
    2. Agree partially
    3. Rather disagree
    4. Don't know

25. Some people say, "I travel foreign countries here and there, but I feel so glad and relieved when I am back to this country." Would you agree with these people?
    1. Agree very much
    2. Agree partially
    3. Rather disagree
    4. Don't know

26. Do you think ordinary people in Myanmar have gone through common experience or hardship over the last fifty years regardless of ethnic background?
    1. Yes, 2. No, 3. Don't know

27. Do you think what is beneficial to Myanmar will be also beneficial to you?
    1. Yes, 2. No, 3. Don't know

28. If there is a war between Burma and Thailand, would you defend Burma?
    1. Yes, 2. No, 3. Don't know

29. If you watch a football match between Thailand and Myanmar, which team would you support?
    1. Myanmar, 2. Thailand, 3. Don't know

30. Would you feel offended if Burma is defamed by foreigners?
    1. Burma deserves it.
    2. I would feel offended too.
    3. Don't know

31. Which of the following do you agree to?
    1. I have a common destiny with the people who live in this country.
    2. I don't necessarily have a common destiny with them because people in this country are so different.
    3. I have a common destiny only with my own ethnic group(race).
    4. Don't know

32. Do you think the leaders of the KNU are the leaders of the Karen? If not, who do you think are the leaders of Karen people?
    1. Yes, 2. No, 3. Others

33. Do you follow the news of Karen nationalist movements in border areas?
    1. Yes, 2. No

34. Would you agree that being Karen is compatible with being Myanmar/Burmese?
    1. Agree very much
    2. Agree partially
    3. Rather disagree
    4. Don't know

35. Do you exercise conscious efforts to display your Karen-ness in Burman public?
    1. Yes, 2. No, 3. Don't know

36. (To Karen Christians) If you have to marry one of the following, who would you choose?
    1. Burman Christian
    2. Karen Buddhist
    3. Mon
    4. Chinese
    5. Indian
    6. Muslim

37. (To Karen Buddhists) If you have to marry one of the following, who would you choose?
    1. Burman Buddhist
    2. Karen Christian
    3. Mon
    4. Chinese
    5. Indian
    6. Muslim

38. Would you agree that it is desirable Karens should marry Karens?
    1. Agree very much
    2. Agree partially
    3. Rather disagree
    4. Don't know

39. Would you date a Burman man/woman?(Would you like your children to marry Burmans?)
    1. Yes, 2. No, 3. Don't know

40. Do you agree to the notion that the Karen are
    1. Simple-minded, honest, hard-working and loyal
    2. Gullible, not meant for business, subservient
    3. Ethnic stereotype is irrelevant

41. Do you go to state schools?
    1. Yes, 2. No,

42. Do you agree to the version of the country's history you learnt at state school?
    1. Agree very much
    2. Agree partially
    3. Rather disagree
    4. Don't know

43. Where did you learn your spoken and written Karen?
    1. Home, 2. Church, 3. School(private), 4. Others, 5. Can't speak or write 6. Home and Church

44. Which language do you use at church?
    1. Karen
    2. Burmese
    3. Both Karen and Burmese
    4. Others

45. Did you learn of Karen culture at church?
    1. Yes, 2. No,

46. Did you participate in Karen cultural activities organized by church?
    1. Yes, 2. No,

47. Do you have any Burmans friends? At school or in the workplace?
    1. Yes. From School, 2. Yes. From Workplace, 3. Yes. Both Places, 4. No Burman friends

48. How many of your friends are Burmans?
    1. Many (over 10) 2. A few (between 4 and 10) 3. few (1 to 3) 4, None

49. Which ethnic group is your best friend from?
    1. Karen, 2. Burman, 3. Others

50. What do you do at the weekend?
    1. Stay at home
    2. Go to church
    3. Home and Church
    4. Hang out with friends

51. Did you ever participate in state-sponsored organization and activities?
    1. Yes, 2. No,

52. Which language do you speak at home?
    1. Karen
    2. Burmese
    3. Both Karen and Burmese
    4. Others

53. Do you go to church regularly?
    1. Yes, 2. No,

54. Do you talk to church leaders frequently?
    1. Yes, 2. No,

55. Do you go to Burmese festivals?
    1. Often, 2. Occasionally, 3. Seldom, 4. Never

56. Do you invite Burmans to Karen festivals such as Karen New Year's Day?
    1. Often, 2. Occasionally, 3. Seldom, 4. Never

57. Do you go to pagodas or talk to Buddhist monks?
    1. Often, 2. Occasionally, 3. Seldom, 4. Never

58. Who do you discuss politics most with?
    1. Family
    2. Peers(at school or in the workplace)
    3. Church/community leaders

59. How often do you discuss politics with your parents?
    1. Often, 2. Occasionally, 3. Seldom, 4. Never

60. How often do you discuss politics with your peers?
    1. Often, 2. Occasionally, 3. Seldom, 4. Never

61. How often do you discuss politics with your church leaders?
    1. Often, 2. Occasionally, 3. Seldom, 4. Never

62. Do you think your Karen background has affected your education or career?
    1. Yes, 2. No, 3. Don't know

63. Who has the most influence over your thinking of who you are?
    1. Family
    2. Peers(at school or in the workplace)
    3. Church leaders
    4. Others

64. Who do you agree with most about political matters?
    1. Family
    2. Peers(at school or in the workplace)
    3. Church leaders
    4. Others

65. Whose opinion do you respect most about political matters?
    1. Family
    2. Peers(at school or in the workplace)
    3. Church leaders
    4. Others

66. Who most makes you identify with the Karen?
    1. Family
    2. Peers(at school or in the workplace)
    3. Church leaders
    4. Others

67. What worries you most at the moment?
    1. Family problem
    2. Education problem
    3. Job problem
    4. Economic problem
    5. Political affairs
    6. Others (please specify)

68. Who do you think you can share your problems with most?
    1. Family
    2. Peers(at school or in the workplace)
    3. Church leaders

69. Do you think your Burman friends or colleagues face the similar problems to yours?
    1. Yes, 2. No, 3. Don't know

70. Do you think your life betterment has been affected by your ethnic background?
    1. Yes, 2. No, 3. Don't know

71. Who do you think the government discriminate and oppress?
    1. Karens only
    2. Ethnic minority in general
    3. Anyone who disobeys the government regardless of ethnicity

72. Who do you feel most closely affiliated with?
    1. Burmese
    2. Burmese speakers
    3. Karen
    4. People who have the same profession
    5. People who have the same religion
    6. People who share your hobby
    7. Don't know

73. Do you personally feel ethnically discriminated in the public sector by the government?
    1. Yes, 2. No, 3. Don't know

74. Do you personally feel ethnically discriminated in the private sector by Burmans?
    1. Yes, 2. No, 3. Don't know

75. Do you feel moved when you listen to National Anthem?
    1. Yes, 2. No, 3. Don't know

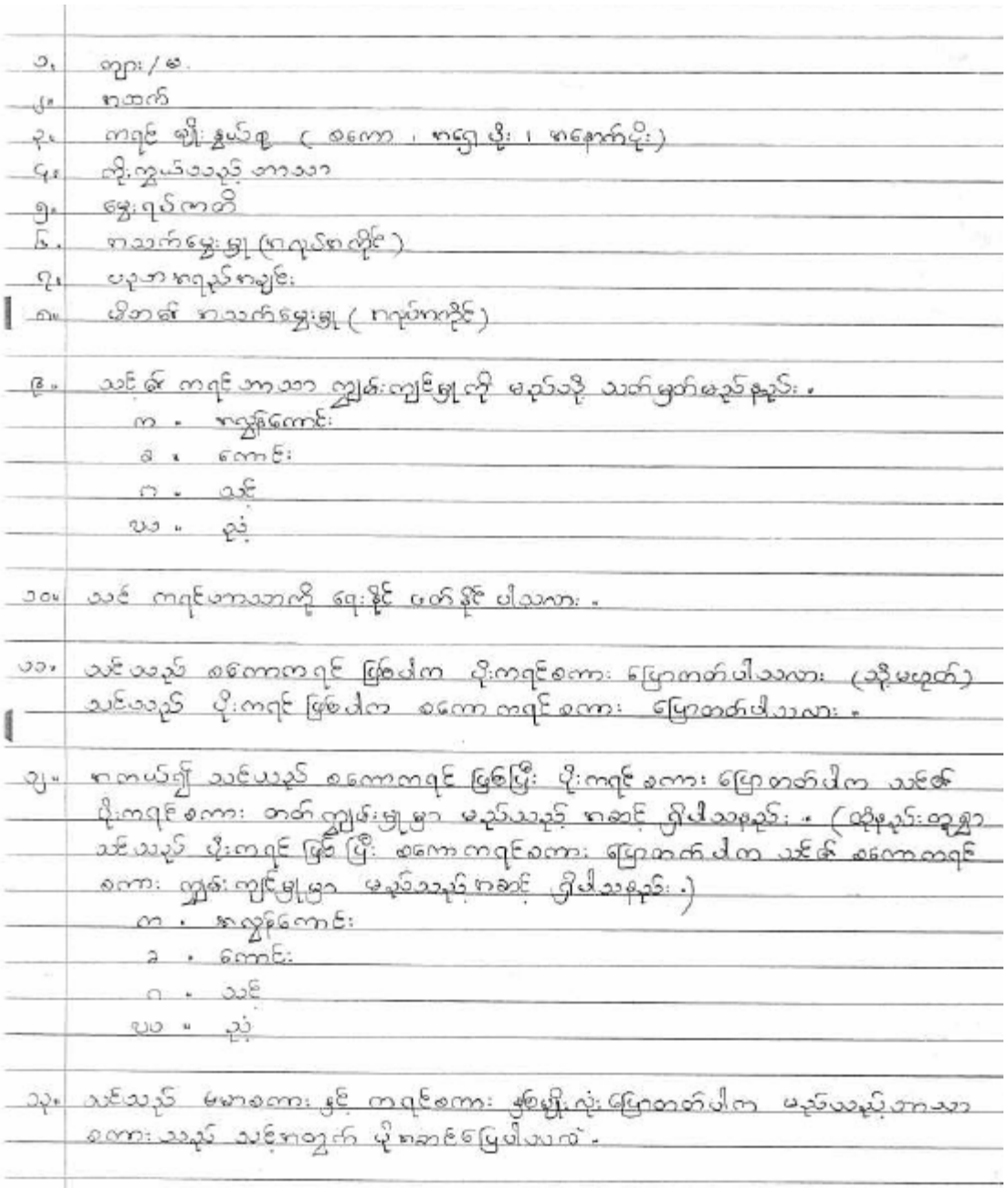
76. What do you think about the Union Day and its celebrations on TV?
    1. Affirmative, 2. Negative, 3. Don't know

77. Among Burmans, Chinese and Indians, who do you think is "one of us"?
    1. Burmans, 2. Chinese, 3. Indians, 4. None, 5, All 6. Don't know

78. Which language was this survey conducted in?
    1. English, 2. Burmese

Appendix B

Survey Questionnaire (Burmese)



၁၄။ သင့် မိဘများ မှာ မည်သည့် ဘာသာစကားကို ပြောဆိုပါသနည်း။

၁၅။ ကျောင်းက သင် ကရင်ဘာသာဖြင့် ရေးသားထားသော စာအုပ် သို့ သတင်းစာ ဖတ်ထား
ပါသလား။ ကျောင်းစာ ဖတ်လေ့ရှိသလား။

၁၆။ မြန်မာ သမိုင်း တွင် ထင်ရှားသော ပုဂ္ဂိုလ် တစ်ဦးနှစ်ဦး ကို ဖော်ပြပါ။

၁၇။ ကရင် သမိုင်း တွင် ထင်ရှားသော ပုဂ္ဂိုလ် တစ်ဦးနှစ်ဦး ကို ဖော်ပြပါ။

၁၈။ သင်သိသော ကရင် ရှေး ကဗျာ တစ်ပုဒ် အကြောင်း ရှင်းပြပါ။

၁၉။ ထီးမဲထား နှင့် သူ့ အကြောင်း ကို သိပါသလား။

~~၂၀။~~ စောဘဦးကြီး ကို သိပါသလား။

~~၂၁။~~ ကင်းမိန့်တိုက်ပွဲ အကြောင်း သိပါသလား။

~~၂၂။~~ ကရင် ခေါင်းဆောင်များ ဘာကြောင့် တောခိုခဲ့သည် မည်သို့ တော်လှန်ခဲ့သည်တို့ကို
သိပါသလား။

၂၃။
သင် ခရီးသွား ရမည် ဆိုပါက ကချင်ပြည်နယ် သို့မှ သင့်အတွက် ဘယ်နိုင်ငံ တစ်ခု ပိုမို
သက်တောင့်သက်သာ ဖြစ်မည်ဟု ထင်ပါသလား။
က။ ဟုတ်ကဲ့
ခ။ ဟင့်အင်း
ဂ။ မသိပါ

၂၄။ နိုင်ငံတော်က ကချင်ပြည်နယ် တိုက်ခိုက်ခံနေသော ကို အာရုံ ပြည်သို့ ပွဲ ပြောင်း ပေးမည်
ဆိုပါက သင် သဘောတူ ပါသလား။
က။ အလွန် သဘောတူပါတယ်
ခ။ တစ်စိတ်တစ်ဒေသ သဘောတူပါတယ်
ဂ။ လုံး၀ သဘောမတူပါ
ဃ။ မသိပါ

၂၅။ လူတချို့က သင့်ကို "ကျွန်တော် နိုင်ငံခြားတိုင်းပြည်များ ရောက်ဖူးပါတယ် ဒါပေမဲ့ ကိုယ့်တိုင်းပြည် ပြန်လာရမယ် ဆိုရင် ဝမ်းသာပြီး စိတ်ချမ်းသာပါတယ်" လို့ ပြောခဲ့မယ် ဆိုရင် သင့်သဘောထားက သူတို့နှင့် တူညီပါသလား

က။ အရမ်း သဘောတူပါတယ်

ခ။ တစိတ်တဒေသ သဘောတူပါတယ်

ဂ။ လုံးဝ သဘောမတူပါ

ဃ။ မသိပါ

၂၆။ လွန်ခဲ့သော နှစ်ပေါင်း ငါးဆယ်အတွင်း မြန်မာနိုင်ငံ၌ သာမာန်လူတန်းစားများသည် လူမျိုးရေး ခွဲခြားမှု မရှိဘဲ တူညီသော အခွင့်အရေး အခက်အခဲများကို ဖြတ်သန်းခဲ့ရသည်ဟု သင်ထင်ပါသလား

၂၇။ မြန်မာနိုင်ငံ အတွက် အကျိုးရှိမည့် အရာ သည် သင့်အတွက် အကျိုးရှိသည်ဟု ထင်ပါသလား

၂၈။ မြန်မာနိုင်ငံ နှင့် တခြား နိုင်ငံ စစ်ဖြစ်မည်ဆိုပါက သင် မြန်မာနိုင်ငံ ကို ကာကွယ်ပါမည်လား

၂၉။ မြန်မာ အားကစားအသင်း ကို သင် အားပေးလေ့ ရှိပါသလား (တကယ်လို့ ထိုင်း နှင့် မြန်မာ ဘောလုံးပွဲ ယှဉ်ပြိုင်ကစားပါက သင် ဘယ်နိုင်ငံ အသင်း ဘက်မှ အားပေး မည်နည်း)

၃၀။ နိုင်ငံခြားသားများက မြန်မာနိုင်ငံ အား ဝေဖန် ပြောဆိုပါက သင် စိတ်ဆိုးမည်လား

က။ မြန်မာနိုင်ငံ နှင့် ဆိုင်ကြောင်းသည်ဟု မှန်ပါတယ်

ခ။ ကျွန်တော်/မ စိတ်ဆိုးပါတယ်

ဂ။ မသိပါ

၃၁။ အောက်ပါတို့မှ မည်သည့်အချက် ကို သင်သဘောတူပါသလဲ။

က။ ဤနိုင်ငံအတွင်း နေထိုင်သူများ အားလုံး နှင့် တူညီသော ရည်မှန်းချက် ကျွန်တော်/မ ရှိပါတယ်

ခ။ ဤနိုင်ငံတွင် နေထိုင်သူများ ကွဲပြား ခြားနားသည့် အတွက် သူတို့နှင့် တူညီသော ရည်မှန်းချက်ရှိရန် လိုသည်ဟု မထင်ပါ။

ဂ။ ကျွန်တော်/မ တို့ရဲ့ လူမျိုးစုဝင်များ နှင့်သာ ရည်မှန်းချက် တူပါတယ်

ဃ။ မသိပါ

~~[illegible]။~~ [illegible] ပုံပြင်ဟောင်းများသည် ကရင်လူမျိုးတို့၏ ပုံပြင်ဟောင်းများမှ ဆင်းသက်လာသလား။ သို့မဟုတ်လျှင် မည်သည့်သူသည် ကရင်လူမျိုးတို့၏ ပုံပြင်ဟောင်းများမှ သင်ယူပါသလဲ

~~[illegible]~~ နယ်စပ်ဒေသများ၌ ကရင်လူမျိုးသား [illegible] များ၏ ကြောင်း သင်သိထားပါသလား

၂၄။ ကရင်လူမျိုးနှင့် ဗမာလူမျိုး လိုက်လျောညီထွေ ဖြစ်လာသည်မှာ သင်သဘောတူပါသလား။
က ။ ကျိန်းသေ သဘောတူပါတယ်
ခ ။ တစ်စိတ်တစ်ဒေသ သဘောတူပါတယ်
ဃ ။ လုံးဝ သဘောမတူပါ
င ။ မသိပါ

၂၅။ ဗမာတို့ကြားထဲတွင် သင်၏ ကရင်ဖြစ်ကြောင်း [illegible] ကြိုးပမ်း [illegible] သည့် [illegible] ခံစားမှုရှိပါသလား။

၂၆။ (ကရင် ခရစ်ယာန်များ ဖြေဆိုရန်) အောက်ပါတို့မှ တစ်ယောက်ယောက်ကို သင်လက်ထပ်ရမည်ဆိုပါက မည်သူ့ကို သင်ရွေးချယ်မည်နည်း။
က ။ ဗမာ ခရစ်ယာန်
ခ ။ ကရင် ဗုဒ္ဓဘာသာ
ဂ ။ ရှမ်း
ဃ ။ တရုတ်
င ။ ကုလား
စ ။ မူဆလင်

၂၇။ (ကရင် ဗုဒ္ဓဘာသာများ ဖြေဆိုရန်) အောက်ပါတို့မှ တစ်ယောက်ယောက်ကို သင်လက်ထပ်ရမည်ဆိုပါက မည်သူ့ကို သင်ရွေးချယ်မည်နည်း။
က ။ ဗမာ ဗုဒ္ဓဘာသာ
ခ ။ ကရင် ခရစ်ယာန်
ဂ ။ ရှမ်း
ဃ ။ တရုတ်
င ။ ကုလား
စ ။ မူဆလင်

၈။ ကရင်များသည် ကရင်အမျိုးသမီးချင်းသာ လက်ထပ်သင့်သည်ဟု သင်သဘောတူပါသလား။

က။ အရမ်းသဘောတူပါတယ်

ခ။ တစိတ်တဒေသ သဘောတူပါတယ်

ဂ။ လုံးဝ သဘောမတူပါ

ဃ။ မသိပါ

၉။ သင် ဗမာ အမျိုးသား / အမျိုးသမီး တို့ နှင့် ထိမ်းမြားမှု ပြုမည်လား ။ (ချစ်သူထား မည်လား)
(သင့်ကလေးများကို ဗမာများနှင့် လက်ထပ်ခွင့် ပြုမည်လား)

၁၀။ ကရင်လူမျိုးများသည် အကောက်ပါကျက်တို့နှင့် ကိုက်ညီသည်ဟု သင်သဘောတူပါသလား

က။ ရိုးသား ၊ မြင့်မြတ် ၊ ကြိုးစား ၏ သဘာဝ

ခ။ လှည်းများဖြင့် လှုပ်ရှား ၊ အလုပ်သဘော မဆက်ကြ ၊ အသွင် တူကြိုးပမ်းသူများ

ဂ။ လူမျိုးရေး ပုံစံခွဲခြားမှု နှင့် မသက်ဆိုင်

၁၁။ ကျိုးရကျောင်း တက်ဖူးပါသလား ။

၁၂။ ကျိုးရကျောင်းတွင် သင်ကြားသော နိုင်ငံသမိုင်းဘာသာရပ်ကို သင်သဘောတူပါသလား

က။ အရမ်းသဘောတူပါတယ်

ခ။ တစိတ်တဒေသ သဘောတူပါတယ်

ဂ။ လုံးဝ သဘောမတူပါ

ဃ။ မသိပါ

၁၃။ သင် ကရင်ဘာသာစကား နှင့် စာပေ ကို မည်သည့်နေရာတွင် သင်ယူခဲ့ပါသလဲ ။

၁၄။ ဘုရားကျောင်းတွင် သင် မည်သည့် ဘာသာစကားကို အသုံးပြုပါသလဲ ။

က။ ကရင်

ခ။ ဗမာ

ဂ။ ကရင် နှင့် ဗမာ

ဃ။ အခြား

၁၅။ ကရင် ယဉ်ကျေးမှုကို ဘုရားကျောင်းမှ ထက်မြောက်စေပါသလား ။

၆။ ဘုရားကျောင်းမှ ကြီးမှူးကျင်းပသော ကရင်ယဉ်ကျေးမှု ဆိုင်ရာ ပွဲလမ်းသဘင်များတွင် သင်ပါဝင်ခဲ့ဖူးပါသလား။

၇။ သင့်တွင် မြန်မာ သူငယ်ချင်း ရှိပါသလား။ ကျောင်းမှာလား၊ လုပ်ငန်းခွင်မှာလား။

၈။ သင့်တွင် မြန်မာ သူငယ်ချင်း ဘယ်နှစ်ယောက်ရှိပါသလဲ။

၉။ သင့် အရင်းနှီးဆုံး သူငယ်ချင်းသည် ဘာလူမျိုးလဲ။

၁၀။ စနေ၊ တနင်္ဂနွေ ကားလပ်ရက်တွင် သင် ဘာလုပ်သလဲ။ ဘယ်နေရာကို သင်သွားတတ်သလဲ။

၁၁။ နိုင်ငံတော်က ကျင်းပသော လှုပ်ရှားမှုများ၊ အဖွဲ့အစည်းများတွင် ပါဝင်ခဲ့ဖူးပါသလား။

၁၂။ အိမ်တွင် မည်သည့် ဘာသာစကား ပြောပါသလဲ။

က - ကရင်

ခ - မြန်မာ

ဂ - ကရင်နှင့် မြန်မာ

ဃ - အခြား

၁၃။ ဘုရားကျောင်း မှန်မှန် တက်ပါသလား။

၁၄။ ဘုရားကျောင်း အကျိုးဆောင်များနှင့် မကြာခဏ စကားပြောပါသလား။

၁၅။ မြန်မာ ပွဲတော်များ သွားပါသလား။ (ခရစ်ယာန်များ မဖြစ်သော်ငြား ဗုဒ္ဓဘာသာပွဲတော်များ သွားပါသလား)

၁၆။ မြန်မာများကို ကရင် ပွဲတော်များသို့ ဖိတ်ခေါ်ပါသလား။ (ဥပမာ ကရင်နှစ်သစ်ကူးပွဲတော်)

၁၇။ ဘုရားသွားပါသလား။ [illegible] သံဃာတော်များနှင့် စကား ပြောပါသလား။

၅၈။ သင် နိုင်ငံရေး အကြောင်း မည်သူ နှင့် ဆွေးနွေးပါသလဲ
က။ မိသားစု
ခ။ မိတ်ဆွေများ / လုပ်ဖော်ကိုင်ဖက်များ (ကျောင်း / အလုပ်)
ဂ။ ဘုရားကျောင်း / လူမှုရေး ခေါင်းဆောင်များ

၅၉။ သင် နိုင်ငံရေးအကြောင်း မိဘများနှင့် မကြာခဏ ဆွေးနွေးပါသလား

၆၀။ " မိတ်ဆွေများ / လုပ်ဖော်ကိုင်ဖက်များ "

၆၁။ " ဘုရားကျောင်း အကြီးအကဲများ "

၆၂။ သင် ကရင် ဖြစ်ခြင်းကြောင့် သင့်ယုံကြည်ချက်များ နှင့် အလုပ် ကို ထိခိုက် သက်ရောက်မှုရှိပါ သလား။

၆၃။ သင့်ကိုယ်သင် ဘာလဲ ရဲ့ သိကောင်း အကျွမ်းဝင်ဆုံး နိုင်ဆုံး မှာ ဘယ်သူလဲ။
က။ မိသားစု
ခ။ မိတ်ဆွေများ / လုပ်ဖော်ကိုင်ဖက်များ (ကျောင်း / အလုပ်)
ဂ။ ဘုရားကျောင်း / လူမှုရေး ခေါင်းဆောင်များ

၆၄။ နိုင်ငံရေး ကိစ္စများတွင် သင် ဘယ်သူ နှင့် သဘော ကိုက်ညီဆုံးလဲ။
က။ မိသားစု
ခ။ မိတ်ဆွေများ / လုပ်ဖော်ကိုင်ဖက်များ (ကျောင်း / အလုပ်)
ဂ။ ဘုရားကျောင်း / လူမှုရေး ခေါင်းဆောင်များ

၆၅။ နိုင်ငံရေး ကိစ္စများတွင် မည်သူ့ ထင်မြင်ချက် ကို သင် အလေးထားဆုံးလဲ
က။ မိသားစု
ခ။ မိတ်ဆွေများ / လုပ်ဖော်ကိုင်ဖက်များ (ကျောင်း / အလုပ်)
ဂ။ ဘုရားကျောင်း / လူမှုရေး ခေါင်းဆောင်များ

၆၆။ သင့်ကိုယ်သင် ကရင်လူမျိုး ရဲ့ ခေါင်းဆောင် ရန် ထင်ရှားသူ
က။ မိသားစု
ခ။ မိတ်ဆွေများ / လုပ်ဖော်ကိုင်ဖက်များ (ကျောင်း / အလုပ်)
ဂ။ ဘုရားကျောင်း / လူမှုရေး ခေါင်းဆောင်များ

၆၇။ ခုလောလောဆယ် သင့်ကို စိတ်ပူစေသည့်အရာ

က။ မိသားစု ပြဿနာ

ခ။ ပညာရေး ပြဿနာ

ဂ။ ကိုယ်ရေးကိုယ်တာ ပြဿနာ

ဃ။ စီးပွားရေး ပြဿနာ

င။ နိုင်ငံရေး ကိစ္စများ

စ။ အခြား (ကျေးဇူးပြု၍ တိကျစွာ ဖော်ပြပါ)

၆၈။ သင့် ပြဿနာများကို သင် ဝေမျှနိုင်သည့်သူ

က။ မိသားစု

ခ။ မိတ်ဆွေများ / လုပ်ဖော်ကိုင်ဖက်များ (ကျောင်း/အလုပ်)

ဂ။ ဘုရားကျောင်း / လူမှုရေး ခေါင်းဆောင်များ

၆၉။ သင့် မောင်နှမများ / လုပ်ဖော်ကိုင်ဖက်များသည် သင်ကဲ့သို့ အလားတူပြ
(69) ဿနာများ ရင်ဆိုင်ရသည်ဟု ထင်ပါသလား။

၇၀။ သင် လူမျိုးစုဝင်သည့် သင့်အသိုင်းအဝိုင်းက ဓလေ့ကောင်းများကို ထိန်းသိမ်းစေသည်ဟု
(70) ထင်ပါသလား။

၇၁။ ကိုရီးယား လူမျိုးရေး ခွဲခြား ဆက်ဆံမှု ဖြစ်သည်ဟု သင် ထင်ပါသလား
(71) က။ [illegible]

ခ။ လူနည်းစုများ အားလုံး

ဂ။ လူမျိုးရေး ခွဲခြားမှုမရှိ ကိုရီးယား ကော်ပိုရိတ်သူများ အား ...

၇၂။ မည်သူနှင့် သင် ... ဖြစ်သည်ဟု ထင်သလဲ
(72) က။ မိဘ

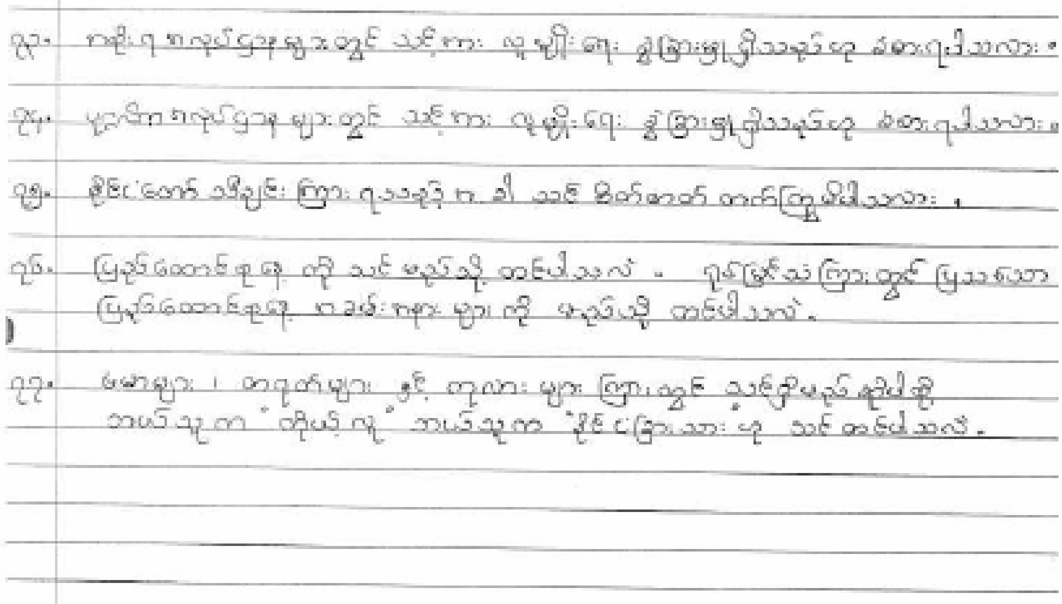
ခ။ မောင်နှမ ဆွေမျိုးသူများ

ဂ။ ကျောင်း

ဃ။ [illegible]

င။ သာသနာ ... သူများ

စ။ [illegible]



၃၃။ ကျေးရွာ အလုပ်ရှာနေရာတွင် သင့်အား လူမျိုးရေး ခွဲခြားဆက်ဆံခဲ့သည်ဟု ခံစားရပါသလား။

၃၄။ မြို့ပြ အလုပ်ရှာရာများတွင် သင့်အား လူမျိုးရေး ခွဲခြားဆက်ဆံခဲ့သည်ဟု ခံစားရပါသလား။

၃၅။ နိုင်ငံတော် သမ္မတ ကြား ရှိသည့် ... သင် ... ကြုံတွေ့ဖူးပါသလား။

၃၆။ မြန်မာ့ ... ကို သင် မည်သို့ ထင်ပါသလဲ။ ... ကြားတွင် ... ... ကို မည်သို့ ထင်ပါသလဲ။

၃၇။ မိဘများ၊ ဆရာများ နှင့် ကျောင်းသားများ ကြားတွင် ... ဘယ်သူက "တိုင်းရင်း" ဘယ်သူက "နိုင်ငံခြားသား" ဟု သင် ထင်ပါသလဲ။