Project Methods

1. The life of independent public inquiry, open public debate, and open scholarship and research virtually ceased in Burma for the half century after 1962, when the military took over.

Public intellectual life, of course, did not cease. In Burma, it moved largely into the tea shops and in small magazines and journals where it continued, albeit muted and constrained. Outside Burma, it survived among diasporic scholars trained in universities in Europe, Thailand, the United States, Singapore, India, etc.

The context, then, for this journal is that it brings together what might be called the massive tea-shop intelligentsia of Burma with the returning diasporic community to reestablish the tradition of scholarly civic engagement, research, and debate illuminated by evidence.
We believe that if our aspirations are realized the Journal will become a flagship for the best work in social sciences, history, and literary studies in Burma and, at the same time, the place where students of Burmese and Burmese affairs in America and elsewhere can expect to find original work of historical depth and careful argument on contemporary issues.

2. The project has been elaborated by the organizing committee (now expanded to 16 members). As the political opening developed, our plans shifted in keeping with the expanding possibilities.

Most of our deliberations in Yangon and elsewhere have been devoted to what themes we might address in our workshops and first issues.
We have reached for themes of great contemporary interest that were, at the same time, historically deep, amenable to research, and had promise of engaging young scholars in Burma to aspire to the life of a public intellectual. Workshops around three themes have been scheduled (two of them in July and August of 2014. (See descriptions under “workshops” on the website)

Since the terrain of possibilities is constantly changing and because there is as yet no new media law guaranteeing freedom of expression we remain alert to need to adapt to the openings afforded us.

We hope the thi saq myin hnan will help both create and display the fruits of a growing, independent, and assertive scholarly community.

We see this initiative as addressing two problems: that of assisting in the training and mentoring of aspiring scholars in Burma and, at the same time, of creating with them a high quality journal on issues of high importance to the civic-minded public.
While avoiding direct political engagement and tendentiousness, the journal would ideally come to be seen as open to all serious work and non-partisan without ever being bland.

A digital as well as physical journal will allow interactive commentary *thi saq myin hnan*, would be run largely by scholars based in Burma.

**Project Mission**

The thematic workshops in Burma and the journal that emerges from each of them represent our central activity.

We hope to assemble groups of scholars from all over Burma, including its ethnic peripheries, whom the conveners of the theme will bring together for a few days of intensive exchange of papers and views.

We regard the community-forming process of identifying the wide range of invitees, the exchanges at the workshop, and the editorial meetings as at least as important, as the mere fact of holding a workshop and publishing a journal. (The primary language of the workshops and the journal will be Burmese thought we shall endeavor to invite
Editorial meetings will follow as the journal is assembled. The implicit agenda of each of these workshops and thematic journals is to coalesce the nucleus of young scholar-activists who will continue to meet, debate, and write and perhaps form an independent group of their own (with their own journal!). We aim, then, for the workshops and journal to be catalysts for scholarly community-making more than an end in itself.

We estimate that each of the workshops will have about 35 participants from all over Burma and that they will meet for a full three days. Those invited will bring draft papers on an aspect of the theme which they will share with their colleagues with the explicit purpose of collectively improving their exposition, argument, evidence, and the assumptions underpinning them.
The success of these workshops depends less on the quality of the work brought to them than on the degree of improvement resulting from the exchanges and subsequent editorial work.

The quality of the workshop leadership, the satisfaction of the participants, and the growth of formal and informal long-lasting intellectual ties after the workshop will also be a measure of our success.

Finally, the quality and impact of the journal itself (in Burma and abroad), which will reach a far larger audience than just the workshop participants, will be an important index of our success.

We hope that the daring themes (the Journal will not shy away from controversial topics), the high production values, and the controversy stirred by the journal and
amplified by digital feedback and exchange will represent landmark interventions in Burmese history and culture, and help make it and the society formed around it into an intellectual crossroads for the best work in the humanities, history and the social sciences in Burma.