



Interview with Ajarn Sai Aung Tun

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Ajarn Sai Aung Tun was one of the presenters at "The 1st International Conference on Tai Studies" in Mae Hong Son. He is the author of "History of the Shan State: From its Origins to 1962" (2008, Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books). I was able to conduct an interview with him some time after the conference. I'll give some short marks of the interview here, while you'll find the full interview in the intranet of SEATIDE.

Anselm: First I want to thank you to have found time for this interview. The project, that the RCSD is part of is a project funded by the European Commission studying processes of inclusion and exclusion within ASEAN and the upcoming AEC. How do you think will the AEC affect ethnicities within the region? You are an historian and know the Shan and their role in Myanmar very well. What kind of experiences of the Shan might be important experiences for the people in ASEAN to learn from?

Sai Aung Tun: Yes, you've been to Mae Hong Son and attended the seminar. You see there are a lot of Tai Yai people at the conference. This is the first time they had this kind of conference; talking about their problems, ethnic problems, social problems, educational problems...Well I should say that the Shan people who had migrated to Thailand have better living, because they don't have to worry about security, education, anything else. This is a good opportunity for them to learn whatever is available to them in this area. For example education: they can go to school, lower level, middle level, higher level, to university. If they learn, they try their best that is an opportunity. That's why I told them, you must take this opportunity to improve yourself educationally, tuitionally or any other aspect.

They have migrated not only to Mae Hong Son, but to other parts of Thailand, so many of them. Some being refugees, some being workers or engaging in other activities. Some migrated to earn the money, to send the money and maybe they like to go back to settle at their hometown, their native town. But the thing is, at the moment, here they have everything at their disposal. They try and work hard, they are getting money and they engage in many other manual works. This is for some something to learn about, it's good for them. They acquire the technique of building and also of other activities. So if they go back it will be good for their country. But I don't know if they want to go back or not.

So in our country, they introduce many reforms, if they are effective or not, I'm not quite sure, but anyway they come and try to introduce many reforms to upgrade or uplift the standard of living. The people do try to upgrade the economic condition, but I would say this is the beginning only. Later we might get the momentum, too, but not so soon. This is what I like to say, this is my point of view.

Anselm: When talking about the Shan, they are an ethnicity without having their own nation rights, in the sense of having their own nation state. There are several other ethnicities like this within ASEAN. What kind of opportunities can ASEAN provide to these ethnicities to probably improve their situation?

Sai Aung Tun: Well, if you know, Myanmar has many ethnic groups, more than a hundred. Out of these, Shan are a majority. Even in Shan State we have other minorities living together since the beginning of the Shan State very harmoniously. But the thing is, as you see, our system of running the government is neither centralized nor de-- centralized; it's a picture of both. But ethnic people would like to have what we call the de--centralized system of administration, what we call federal administration. They don't want to lose their identity, they don't want to lose their language, their tradition and so on. But to have a separate nation is not possible, because we have the right to stay within the Union not outside the Union. So that should not be mistaken about that concept. So the central government should also realize this, the correct type of policy on minorities. If the policy on minorities is correct and if equality is given to everybody and equal chance, equal standing, there will be no problem, either in education or administration or in economics or other aspects, too.

But in the old constitution of 1947 there is one chapter, chapter 10: the right of secession. The right of secession is included in that chapter 10. But there are a lot of procedure to go through to exercise this right. But people forget all these rules and regulations how to exercise this right. People thought it is easy, but in fact it is not easy. Legally we have to settle our differences, not illegally, not to take an arm and do the job. You have to go through proper procedure, proper legal procedure and then you'll come to the final solution. It is written in the constitution, but there is no way to exercise at all.

The central government is so afraid of this clause it would like to abolish this clause by all means, either honestly or un--honestly. They are too scared of this. But in fact it's not easy: we have a written document, but exercise this right is not easy. So this is how they made a mistake in the interpretation; so they are too scared. At the same time, how to solve this problem? How to solve this problem? According to the constitution, they have many procedures, democratic method or procedure. But since the government is a military government, they tried to solve the problem through military means and nothing else. That is the problem that we are having now. Politics in Myanmar is not in the hand of politicians. So the thinking is different. If you are a military man you are thinking in a military terminus. But this is a political terminus. So how do you decide it? So the military is in power, so they will interpret everything based on the concept of their thinking. That's all.

That's not a solution. So what will be the solution then? Us, the people. Is this the correct solution or not correct solution? They have practice this since 50 years, it hasn't work. So you have to change the policy. If it will be a gradual change or drastic change, I don't know. That you have to change. In the basic thinking of the people, basic thinking, basic thinking of people of what has to be changed to fit into the environment, if it sticks to the old logic, you cannot really change. You think it is correct, but it's not. Readily, we have experimented it, so it's not correct. Whether we should introduce a change of not only to fight. The basic concept of thinking of all the people in the Union, unless you change that point, you cannot come to reconciliation. The basic thinking of "you're different from me, I'm different from you", how can we? We come to a compromise. That is very difficult to implement. To change the thinking of all the people, of all the minorities in Myanmar. How do we change that? This is, we have to be seriously thinking. Noone, nobody realizes that we need a new basic concept of thinking for the future. What about that? How can we change? You reform, you reform. You try to mend the situation to an upper level, not to a depth level. That is our problem. That is my point of view. I may be wrong, but anyway, there is a lot to do. We have a lot to do.

Anselm: When you are talking about changing the thinking, the concept of thinking, that usually takes a long time...

Sai Aung Tun: Sure, sure. I would like to see, what do you mean about changing the concept of thinking. My interpretation: "Love each other". You think of your parents as you are or as human being. You think of your friend as human being. I think of you as a human being, as brothers that are living in the same family. That is the basic change of thinking. You love your brother, love thy neighbor! Love your brother your member of family. Love, love. The love is the genuine love, not the artificial love. Artificial love wouldn't last long.

And our level of education is not the same. It's different. We have culture differences, many other differences. And we have other common things and different things. We have to see what are the common things. Then we can walk together, we can group together in a nation state. What is different from each

other? You must also see the difference. Which culture is better? Culture is good for everybody. Your culture, my culture, their culture. You can't see my culture itself. Culture is culture. No distinction in culture. For example you like to worship, you worship. You want to learn a language, you learn the language. You love to practice meditation, you practice. If you say "My language is better than your language, my literature is superior to your literature" that won't work.

So, minorities, they live in the mountains, in very remote corners of the country. But they have their treasure, their cultural treasure, they love very much. They love their language, their literature, their custom, their tradition. Custom cannot be made in one day to be custom. Tradition cannot be done within one day. Language, too. How long does it take to be able to communicate? You have to practice language. You have to practice with a teacher. Of course, too many years. Too many years that mean, you cannot do all this in one day, in a sudden movement. So they have to, they have to accumulate, they have to be very patient. Like the children practice to speak: it takes a long time. So these people have been practiced to speak. How should they abandon their language, how should they abandon their literature? They don't want to. If I ask you to abandon your language, you wouldn't do. So you must understand that kind of basic thinking, how to compromise, how to mutual existence. Human world is not built for one race, for one creature, not built for one animal. The world exists for every creature, for every human being, you see. So, this is what we have to rely on, this basic thinking. Peacefully coexist with each other as brothers. This is important. Unless we can create such kind of thinking we cannot be an harmonious society.

Anselm: That's very true. The question that I would have to that, what role could ASEAN play in that kind of connection to implement maybe some kind of "moral" scheme for ASEAN's nations to follow and respect minority rights?

Sai Aung Tun: UNO document has written in it Human Rights; rights for every human. You have the right to exist, you have the right to cry, you have the right to laugh, you have the right to learn your lesson, the right to preserve whatever you cherish. So it's written in the UN documents. ASEAN people, we have ten countries group together, with all the diverse culture and all that. We try to coexist as an association. For example in Indonesia they have Islam, like Malaysia, Brunei. They practice Islam. Thai, Cambodia, Vietnam, Laos, Myanmar practice Buddhism. But, we have to coexist, although we have different kind of religion. The same thing with economy; the world is shrinking nowadays. We got to try to understand each other, try to coexist.

This world is not created for you alone, for me alone, but for everybody. So we have to know this concept among the ASEAN people. The leader, without Indonesia, how can Brunei exist, without Brunei how can Indonesia exist or Malaysia? Such things link up to each other, mutually, mutually link up and mutually understanding has to be created. So common factor, common things should group together and make friend. Uncommon things leave aside, for your own people. This should be the policy, the solution for ASEAN.

Ok, now, within the country you have many minorities: in Laos, in Thai, in Malaysia and everywhere, you see, you have many different races or which practice different religion or that have different culture. You have to admit that, you have to accept the fact that it has to be written into the constitution, not in your mouth. Written and showed today to the people of your country. If it is correct, you have objection? If no, then ok, ok, then we will mutually coexist.

For example, 1962 our prime minister U Nu declared Myanmar as a Buddhist country and the Kachin leader rise up, rose up. And other minorities who are not Buddhist, rising up, because they don't want such kind of thing to be written in the constitution. The constitution must suit the situation. That's what they have to do. That is democracy. Not only in words, but in deed. We can solve the problem if we say "Oh, ok, worshipping any religion is free to everybody". It depends to the people who to worship what. You may be Buddhist, you may be Christian, you may be Animist, that's ok. A harmonious society, peaceful coexistence, that is what we need to do. That is the criteria of the constitution. And not only in words but in practice. You talk one thing and do a different thing: no, human are not dumb. Nobody is blind. Everybody has a brain. Maybe they are uneducated, they have thinking power as good as educated people. You don't undermine. Who destroyed Rome? The barbarians destroyed Rome. The Roman Empire was destroyed by Barbarians not by educated people. See they can make something wrong. If they don't call barbarians "barbarians", they won't attack you. Like the Romans say: "We are the master race. You are

barbarians.”, such things, you see. You have to start think and realize the fact of life, the fact, the reality of the situation, otherwise you won’t see. We are living in this Myanmar with more than a hundred ethnicities. Unless you have the correct policy, how can you run the country?

Anselm: It is very, very difficult.

Sai Aung Tun: Ok and then, out of a hundred ethnicities who would name a master race and barbarian? This is another question. Is the master Kachin, or is the master Kayin or are they barbarian? Can you say like that? No, not at all. They may be uneducated, They may be living in the jungle, in the mountain, but you don’t damn them as “barbarian”. They established their own thinking, their own culture, worship and so on. You have to take all this into account and try to formulate the most suitable policy. So that all people can live harmoniously together or peacefully coexist together.

Anselm: When talking about peaceful coexistence and harmony, like right now, when reading about Myanmar the hottest topic apart from the changes that are going on, is the violence between Muslims and Buddhists in Myanmar. Where whole townships get burned down by either group. I think it is a very sad story in a time when everybody thought it’s the beginning of a new era of Myanmar, that this kind of violence is rising up.

Sai Aung Tun: If you’re thinking in terms of logic, if you think in term of logic, or if you think in term of materialism, it is not surprising. Now human world begin with feudalism, then come capitalism, then come communism, then come militarism, then come religions. Look at history: in Europe you had feudalism, in Myanmar feudalism, in India you had system of feudalism or empire system, king system. This kind of ideology try to eliminate each other. Now, can you find feudalism in Europe now? No, it has been eliminated by whom? By a superior system of thinking. King, emperor and so on. How many king you have in Europe now? It’s been eliminated. In Europe, you practice capitalism. You’re taking capitalism as a guiding principle of the country. Russia picked up communism. There was big war, the Cold War, after World War II, the “--ism” fighting “--ism”, capitalism and communism fighting each other. Now, with the fall of the Warsaw Pact, communism is gone and the Soviet Union disintegrated. Now the question: with whom does capitalism fight now? Democracy and capitalism; democracy and capitalism can go together. Do you think democracy and communism can go together? No, communism and democracy cannot go together. Do you think that feudalism and capitalism can go together? No, that is why feudalism has gone away already in the world. Now, what remains? I tell you. What remains now, communism already gone, now capitalism survived. What type of capitalism to suit your country? Ok now, you have to be careful something: “--ism”, “--ism”, “--ism”. The superior “--ism”, capitalism or Islamism, capitalism and Buddhism, capitalism and animism... See, you’re like a boxer: one round feudalism, finished, one round communism. Now, the final round is between capitalism and religions. Now you’re going on 9/11, the twin tower been attacked in America. This is the beginning of the “--ism war”.

What war? Capitalism and Islamism. So after that, what will come? What will come? Either capitalism or Islamism, one will be eliminated. Now I begin to see. Capitalism is not important, maybe important. What about Christianity (sic), Buddhism and Animism, Hinduism, their turn will come soon to make friend or make enemy. See, now we are in that threshold of fighting or whatever it is. We practiced militarism in Myanmar. Do you think capitalism and militarism can coexist? Hard question, hard talk. You think that capitalism can coexist with militarism? You think that militarism can coexist with communism? You think that militarism can coexist with feudalism? You think that militarism can coexist with Buddhism? See, I don’t think that capitalism can go together with militarism. I don’t think that militarism can go along with communism. I don’t think that militarism can go along with feudalism. Ok, what do you think whether militarism can go along with Buddhism? The logic of “--ism”, one eliminate another. Antithesis, syhntesis. Now come antithesis, synthesis, militarism, Buddhism, democracy day. Democracy is for secular purposes. Religion is for...right to go to heaven or nirvana, either Christian or Buddhist. If you have strong type of militarism, extreme type of militarism, extreme types of Islamism, extreme types of Buddhism then they cannot coexist. They cannot coexist at all. That’s why we have this problem.

And then now, "--ism" to "--ism", Buddhism, Christianity, Islamism...how can they coexist peacefully? And militarism, this is something to think about. In the future we have a crusade war in this world. That crusade war, you remember, that Christians fight the, yes. I'm afraid that might repeat itself. In the next three or four century, not in the present. This is the beginning only. Why the Islam burn the church, why the people burn the mosque? Now, the beginning of religious world war is coming; beginning only, later we don't know. If Christians and Islam fight each other, where does Buddhism stand? Where will animism stand? We pray that we have no such war. If we have a war like this it will destroy all, finish.

Anselm: I think one thing is to fight extremism in any color.

Sai Aung Tun: Color, Apartheid in South Africa. Color is not important now. Religion is more important. Not important. Obama became president. It is not important. But religion is important. In some constitution if you're not Buddhist, if you're Muslim you cannot become president. I don't know this is coming. How can a Buddhist stand an election in Malaysia, or in Indonesia? I don't know. Maybe that is the final human play on the stage. How to solve all these problems. The leaders must...the process of history is coming. How to avoid, how to amend, how to accept, how to modify...you have to think about that. The future state men have to do a very good thing to rule the country.

In Myanmar, we Myanmar people, we have to solve our own problem. How do we solve? You must be, you must be not that extreme in your views, in your thinking. You must be able to, what we call, to accept the opposite elements. You must learn how to take your opponent as friend. You must learn to take you opponent as friend, not as enemy all the time. If you don't fix this, he is your enemy forever, is cruel forever, then you make mistake.

Anselm: Some people might consider ASEAN as one way to handle these problems. So some people say that people that are trading with each other are not fighting each other. If considering ASEAN and the upcoming AEC as a place where people trade with each other, that might be one step to prevent people from fighting each other. How would that affect ethnicities in the area? You have many different countries with many different political systems, like Laos, Vietnam with communism. Then you have Thailand with democracy, you have Myanmar on the way to democracy. You have different regions. How do you think ASEAN could play an important part in bringing the people in peace together, without probably overwhelming local people?

Sai Aung Tun: Well, not easy. But the main thing is that you have to have a liberal concept. Every government, everyone has to have a liberal concept. You see, if you have a good living, you have to consider that your friend would also like to have a good living. You have to be considerate to each other. Sometime, economically speaking, everybody, every country is looking for it's own economic benefit. Exploitation of resources, exploitation of human resources, exploitation of material resources, see, this is how to curb, to control all this craving, this greediness. I've been to Japan to see the Mazda factory. And the director of that factory explained to me that they have to increase the production year by year by year; no decrease; never stop to produce cars. You may have a car at your house, maybe one for yourself, one for your wife, one for your son. In one family you have five cars or three or four at least two cars. Is it necessary?

One family has one television, some have five television. Is it necessary? I don't know. How modern people, how modern lifestyle is going on nowadays...now you produce five cars for a family. How about the raw material? You have to dig out from the ground to make one family able to own five cars. Ok and then the producer would like to sell more cars than necessary. Then: Are we wasting raw material or are we making use of raw material properly, according to the size of the raw material, of the resources? Nobody thinks about that. Should we keep the raw material underneath the earth, underground, for our future generation. Or should we use of all material today? Or shouldn't we reserve this underground for the new generation? How do you see? How do you control the factory owners. Can you go and tell the factory owners: "You produce too much? We have too many cars already, you use too much raw material. We keep the raw material for our young generation". What would that factory owner say to you?

They will say: "Oh, I have employees. My workers will be jobless. I cannot stop this." Ok, when you do not stop, when are you going to stop? Their concept is fixed in their head. You're afraid that your workers, that the amount of money you pay them...ok, that is the only, that is a fixed lifestyle. That's why

you make mistake. In the future I worry about. The future is exhausting, depleting the forest. It is because of over--logging, over--using all this material. They don't think about the future. They think: "Tomorrow, how many car? Today one million, tomorrow two million, day after tomorrow three million." That's what they think. They don't realize they are wasting our raw material, they think they are making good progress. This is the concept of the present human being. So we going to have that trouble. Not that we are like Thailand.

And then again you are poor, you are rich. The rich and the poor, to have and have not, the issue to have and have not. The have people want to have more and more. The have not people will try and try and try to have, but not successful. People in South America, they catch the fish, they don't eat it. They make the cat food for the North American people. They starve, but they don't eat fish, because they have to make cat food for North America. People with extra--money they don't eat cat food. They eat good food. South American don't have a chance to eat, even cat food, because they have to make that cat food. So this is how we are going on nowadays. Now you divide the world into two parts: rich and poor. Myanmar people and Myanmar government people, lesson received: we have to eliminate poverty. Oh, when did poverty exist in Myanmar I asked. Because the Western people say you have to eliminate the poverty. But you have to see they have no poor people, all are rich. Poor people are poor. How to eliminate poverty. If they themselves are poor, how can they eliminate the poverty?

Ok, now you're giving aid to a poor country, how many per cent of your income do you give to aid in your country? I don't know. If you give aid, free aid, do you expect to get something back? See: I give you money, I take your fruit. I take the root of your tree in your country. Give and take. Myanmar people sell their logs, raw material. They sell one log, the rich will buy this piece of log. They'll make a piece of furniture and sell it in Myanmar at a high price. You sell your log for 1000\$, you buy it back you have to spend 2000\$. The aid you're giving to people doesn't mean aid anymore. That's how the world is happening now. To whom should you blame.

Accumulation of wealth, you have all the technology, you have all the technicians, you have all the means of production at your hand, with a snap of your finger you get everything you want. But when in a poor country, even to cut one tree that don't even have an electric saw. This is the difference between the have and have not country. So would you say the have countries should be happy, because they are rich? You would say that have--not should not be happy, because they are poor? How would you eliminate the two fighting each other? If you are so poor and have no food to eat, why does your neighbor have good food to eat? How would you feel? You're eating meat everyday, he is eating peas everyday. I don't know what the people who eat meat everyday would think about people who are eating peas everyday. What are the people who are eating peas everyday think about the people who are eating meat everyday? I would like to eat meat like you, I would like eat peas like you. Ok. So try to get the means to get meat, try to the means to get peas. This is the basic problem of human society. How do they reconcile each other.

Ok, talking about Myanmar: some are very rich, some are very poor. The distribution of wealth is not equal. So how much could you sacrifice for the betterment of the poor people? How much, how much money can you provide for everything, for education, for everything involved? That contribution to the poor will come consently or by force or by other means, you see. Good question: you have money, will you give me money? I am poor. This is the point. So I saw a lot of people when they see a beggar, they turn their face away. Beggar: "Please give me one kyat". Even it's only one kyat, they turn their face away. And when you give one kyat to him or her, oh, she or her will send you blessing, a big amount of blessing: one kyat. If 1000, then you get more blessing. This is human weakness. How much of your money will be gone if you give one kyat, one kyat to the beggars that are begging you? Do you think the beggar likes to beg because he doesn't have job? Nobody of them has found a good job, all out of their limit, so he begs. How to eliminate that class of people? There must be some kind of policy to eliminate that class of people: no beggar!

If you believe in the incarnation, you come back to live, because you love to be human being. No matter if rich or poor, you come back, come back: another concept. When are you fed up with all this cycle of good and bad, then where do you go? Nobody knows. See, democracy is a kind of "--ism" for secular people for government. The Greek people had developed democracy for government, they were experimenting with democracy while they had city states. In Greece they tried to do democracy. How to solve human problems, they were the first people to rely on democracy. The concept of democracy is the best form of government to solve human problems. Democracy, democracy, democracy. The will of the people is the final solution. Ok, the city state people could practice what we call "direct democracy". You come and get, ehm, here "I come to you and talk and say we agree (clapping his hands)". Ok, but city state

become bigger and bigger, became empire, became a nation, you can't practice "direct democracy", you practice "indirect democracy". So now people, Western people are practicing "indirect democracy".

So far it is the best way to govern a country, up to now. That is why we pick up democracy. But you are born on the soil of democracy, you are accustomed to the practice of democracy. You learned what democratic principles are. Your family knew all the democratic practices and you see and mature as a democratic human being. You know which people to choose, which people not to choose. So far it is working very well. But for those who are unfamiliar with the practice of democracy, who are just about to know about the system of democracy, from dictatorship to democracy, from feudalism to democracy, from religion to democracy, from militarism to democracy, they have a hard time. Very difficult situation. They encounter many difficulties. They are not used to, they are not prepared to accept the votes. They are prepared to, they are prepared to welcome militarism, to welcome dictatorship, but they are not prepared to welcome democracy. They are misusing the democratic concept: "Democracy means I can do whatever, whenever I want to do". The ruler or the rulers they don't have the maturity or basic knowledge of democracy. So to cultivate the knowledge and the culture of democracy, it will take some time. Only then, democracy will work well in Myanmar or any other country in Southeast Asia.

When looking at Southeast Asia, Brunei has king, Thailand has king, now Indonesia has president, Myanmar has president now, Cambodia has president. How about Laos? Communist party. Vietnam is Communist, Cambodia is Communist (sic), it's all complication. Anyway, we have to peacefully coexist as human being. You can't be extreme, because you cannot be isolated: politically, economically, socially. You have to mix and work with all these people. That's why the ASEAN association came up, to mutually help each other. And at the same time if they are not united as ASEAN, who will in their domestic problem? Maybe American, or Japanese or Chinese, I don't know. That's why to make a block among themselves. Because you fear imperialism. They learned their lesson from imperialism. All these ASEAN country have been once under the domination of the Western or the Eastern (sic). So they have learned a bitter lesson and they don't want that history to be repeated, so they make an association, to defend their country. We will remain in this ASEAN society, it's more secure as when we are separated and not in this group, we will be in danger. They group together.

Now, what happened? Some problem with South China Sea. Some problem with Japan, Korea and China and between Vietnam and China. There are some problems. But this problem coming up, because of the vital interest of to get oil. You want to get oil, you want to get oil, you want to get oil (pointing in different directions). You cannot sacrifice your vital interest. You cannot compromise, because you cannot compromise your vital interest. "So China Sea belong to me since king 'so and so'". No, no, we need resources so we have to have leadership to declare our vital interest. How to compromise? And in term of association and in term of individual country? So the Western block (sic) is watching, the Eastern block (sic) is watching, India is watching very carefully. So these countries need oil, if you have oil, then I buy from you. If I can't have oil, I'll buy from you. We have been discussing too much already. What was the specific question again?

Anselm: I think, because we are talking very long, thank you very much! Maybe as one last question relating to the Shan and ASEAN. When we were at the conference you told us about the history of the Shan migrating from central China, to Southern China then all over Southeast Asia. It is probably a history that Southeast Asian people: to be on the walk. With the introduction of the nation state migration across borders became probably less easy for the people.

Sai Aung Tun: Yes, people migration begin with the begin of human history. Migration meant you migrate to a new place, because there is good soil, there's good water. If I go and stay there, I have better living, which is why most people leave for a new place. Another migration is being persecuted, religiously or whatever, so you don't want to stay and migrate. There are many reason. And finally, if there is ethnic cleansing like there was in Bosnia, Croatia, this is the worst reason for people to migrate. The boat people in Vietnam migrated. So many reason why people migrate. But the Karen or the Shan also migrate. From the Northeast of China, as I told already, they came from Outer Mongolia, then they migrate into North-east China, they found there good water. So they migrate to that area and establish *baan* and *muang*. They were the first people to migrate to. Among the first groups to migrate the Miao Yao, among twelve groups I have checked, have migrated, they established village there and there and there. Shan established *baan*

and *muang*. They have had rivalry among themselves. Rivalry, rivalry, rivalry and then finally all have been alienated by the *Qin Shi Huang* who absorbed to make the first empire in China. Other Shan minority living under him as good citizen, as good farmer. But those who did not want to stay under the *Qing* migrated South crossing the Yellow River coming to Yangtze River and then to Yunnan.

But not only Shan, other minority, who do not want living under the *Qing* empire, they migrated. Because the *Qing* empire was very aggressive ruler. He made the Great Wall in China, he made network of road, everything. But at that time no technology; you have to use human resources. You have to use the human resource to build the Great Wall of China. Even with the technology now, to build something like the Great Wall is not easy. At that time you need so many human labor, so many have been included in building the Great Wall. But if I ask a question: how many have died? We don't have a list, but so many died. Those minorities they didn't want to be forced to do that. They migrated down to different parts of Southern China, including the Shan people. Shan are most, a majority within the minorities. They migrate to Sichuan, Guangxi and Guangzhou and now Guangxi. Have you visited Guangxi?

Anselm: No.

Sai Aung Tun: You better go. Guangxi is the biggest autonomous of Zhuang people. All these minority people, finally they are not able to resist against the Han people, that had been dominating, dominating, dominating, Where minorities go, Han people go and establish their civilization. That always has happened. Finally now, all over China, minorities have nowhere to go. So China finally has been consolidated by Mao Zedong, Chiang Kai-Shek and then Mao Zedong, all these minorities have not been eliminated, but they all in the autonomous state, being cornered. You see, they are fixed to stay there. According Chinese law, to Chinese constitution, many autonomies. They try to control the minorities through the means of autonomies.

The Shan people migrated down, down, the last they stay in China was Nan Chao, after that, they do not have any nation. So they migrated down after Kublai Khan attacked Nan Chao. The final migration of Shan people to Vietnam, to Laos, to Thailand, to Burma and to Assam in India. So fortunately or unfortunately only Thailand and Laos are independent countries. Some Shan or Tai Luang or Tai Dam in Vietnam, they make Vietnam as their adopted country. We in Burma make Burma our adopted country and Assam adopted country in India. Only Thailand and Laos are independent countries. Now in China they have autonomous rights even for Tai people. The Tai people in China are free to trade, to educate, to do everything, except in politics. They have freedom to do whatever they like, except politics. Ok, now we don't count to Laos and Thailand, because they have independent country, their own nation. But the people in Vietnam, in Burma, the Tai in Assam, do they have the same autonomous right like the Tai have in China? This is the problem.

We have our autonomous or federated state in Myanmar. But do we have the same right as the Tai people in China have? Do we have the same right as the Assamese in India have? Do we have the same rights like the Tai Dam, Tai Kao in Vietnam? I do not know; I do not know or I do not, or to what extent? Why people continue to migration? Why Tai people, the Shan continue to migration to Thailand or to Laos or to other parts of the world? Why Tai people in China migrated to Laos? Why do the Ahom people, or Assam people migrate to Thailand or Laos. Why did Tai Dam or Tai Kao from Vietnam migrate to Thailand? Why? Why did Shan migrate to Mae Hong Son? Why? Are there any good reason to migrate or without reason? Just for leisure or happiness? Now you have to think! Why do you leave your home in Germany and come to stay in Thailand?

Anselm: To study.

Sai Aung Tun: Ah, that is something to think about. Why? They have their home, their land, their farm and their plantation and their monastery...why do they abandon all this and migrate to Mae Hong Son? You find out the reason. Without finding the reason you won't make judgement. Ok, those, who cannot afford to migrate, who don't have the means to migrate, who don't have the energy to migrate, what happened to them? You have to think, you have to think. Now comparatively speaking about Tai in Mae Hong Son and Tai in Shan State? Who are happy? See, this is comparatively speaking. If we would have the same rights as other minorities elsewhere, would we, would we have migrated? Statistically speaking, why do a lot of people migrate to Thailand? Why? Why many people migrate to Thailand? There should be

good reason to justify their migration. I don't think you would have migrated to Thailand abandoning your home, you come to visit, you want to go back one day. Because you cannot abandon your native country.

Would the Shan, the Tai people leave their land they love, the home they love? Why? Why? Good reasons, they have good reasons. If they can afford, they earn a living nicely. Where there is law, legal, law, religious and political, fair, would they migrate? Who would abandon his house, his farm? This is what people have to think about, if you want to solve the problem. How many Burman people migrated to Thailand? Not to see each other, no. More than Shan, 4 Mio. people. Why do all these people migrate to Thailand? Why does Thailand accept all these Burmese people as worker, as refugee, whatever it is? Why? There are also reasons. They need people, they need workers. Thai people have raised their living standards, they don't want to do manual work anymore. They like to ask people for a really cheap salary.

Why people still migrate to Thailand? It's a good question. I can still manage to survive. Among all these difficulties, among all this hardship, I am a die-hard man and I stand and stand and stand. Who else will have such will power to withstand. We are surrounded by all the difficulties, hardship and problems. How long can you endure all this? So they migrate. Father migrates, mother migrates, son migrates, daughter migrates, the whole family. Can you blame them? This is human thinking.

Like you have the Bosnian War, the ethnic cleansing, you are born to die, you are born to be slaughtered like an animal. How UN organization can help? The role of the UN, how much effectively it can help? The NATO interfered. The human history, when the Warsaw Pact and the Soviet Union disintegrated, whole power politics switched. They bombed Bosnia, they bombed. If there would be Warsaw Pact, they wouldn't have bombed. This is the behavior of super power. Sometimes we have to be careful of super--power, the ego and egoistic... they bombed Bosnia. Some say: "Oh this is a mistake." Why? Why did they bomb? You don't need to bomb, but you bomb, unnecessary you bomb. You bomb Iraq, you bomb Assad (sic), see this is the human behavior, super--power behavior. Without counter--check, without balance your behavior becomes daring. Nobody checks you, your behavior becomes different. Where do we go now? How many block we have in this world now. No Warsaw Pact, no neutral block. Ok, China now becomes powerful, Russia becomes powerful, America becomes powerful: three power. Second grade power: Korea , Japan, England: second rank, maybe India. The world is changing its patterns of alliances.

But who will survive? The country with consideration, the considerate country. What does considerate mean? Fair, fair, give and take mutual aid, mutual consideration, mutual consultation. Not like China behave to Burma. Behave as if they own the country, they exploit everything. Now, what happened? It happened in Myitson; you see, fairness is very important. I have fairness for you, even if you don't have fairness. I must be fair to you. I must explain to you, not to the full extent, to give a chance for you to improve. Now I explain to the full extent, because you're ignoring. "Should we do that?" This is human acting, human morality. If you don't keep that acting, human morality, no law, then you are not a civilized being. Ok.

Anselm: Thank you very much! Thank you for your time!