

PANEL

Beyond Guns & Territories: What Is Happening in Anyar?

Convener

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Panel Description

The Anyar region, often described as the “dry zone” of central Myanmar across parts of Magway, Mandalay, and Sagaing, has become a central arena of conflict since the military coup of 1 February 2021. Since the coup, the region has gained consistency as a socio-spatial entity and is often approached through armed actors, frontlines, territorial control, and shifting alliances. This panel proposes a different entry point: how ordinary people in Anyar live through, interpret, and reshape conflict in everyday settings (villages and small towns, markets and monasteries, farms and workshops, households and displacement sites). We start from a simple idea: Anyar is not a single, coherent socio-political space that “broke apart” after the coup. It has long been made and remade through local histories, ecologies, mobility, agrarian relations, religious institutions, state projects, and informal economies. Today, war intensifies these dynamics, but it does not replace them. While many are looking at where the armed conflict might lead, who the main actors are, and how opaque alliances and resource allocation are decided, we propose to pause and focus on how the conflict is affecting social, political and economic relations in the Anyar region. If Anyar appeared as a pacified, rural, traditional and Buddhist space, we now need new ways of thinking about the region by considering the multiple forces that affect local realities. Secondly, we need to go beyond the narratives developed since the 2021 coup which describe the region through the lenses of elite, guns and territory politics.

Focusing on everyday life helps us see how power is exercised and contested beyond the battlefield: through taxation and checkpoints, welfare and charity, rumor and surveillance, recruitment and refusal, property claims and market disruptions, and the moral economies that govern help, obligation, and punishment. The panel guiding questions include how everyday violence and governance shape daily routines in Anyar, from coercion and intimidation to protection, and how local authorities and armed groups rule through paperwork, taxation, “security” practices, and punishment. We also ask how care, solidarity, and moral obligation operate under strain: how kinship, neighborhood, religious, and mutual-aid networks respond to killings, displacement, vendetta, and recurring shocks. The panel is also an opportunity to further examines work, markets, and survival by tracing how farming systems, labor arrangements, trading routes, and credit practices are adapting, what is happening to prices, debt, land access, and migration, and how new infrastructures such as gates, tolls, permits, and “taxation points” reshape livelihoods. Relatedly, it explores how welfare is being reconfigured through existing and emergent forms of service provision, and what new inequalities or dependencies these arrangements produce. We are interested as well in local political representation: what new forms of representation and dispute resolution

5th INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON
BURMA/MYANMAR STUDIES
14-16 August 2026, CHIANG MAI UNIVERSITY

are emerging, and how they are negotiated, challenged, or refused in everyday life. Finally, we invite attention to knowledge, culture, and meaning-making, asking how people explain what is happening, narrate moral responsibility, imagine futures, and draw on religious repertoires, local epistemologies, and cultural practices to cope and make political judgments.