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With the support of a Mellon Recruitment Award, I traveled to Myanmar between May and August 2018 for my doctoral predissertation research exploring informal justice provision in Myanmar. Building on nascent quantitative literature suggesting that Burmese people at all levels of society prefer to avoid formal legal processes in favor of communal dispute resolution forums, my dissertation seeks to contribute qualitative research into the ways that justice is articulated and achieved outside of judicial realms.

My predissertation work began in Yangon, Myanmar's largest city and former capital. As the center of political activism, Yangon offered numerous opportunities to learn more about Myanmar's contemporary political and legal networks. During a two-week intensive language course designed for foreign researchers, I was able to practice speaking about sensitive political topics in a culturally tactful manner conducive to engaging with rather than alienating people from all political stripes. My time in Yangon also contributed to my understanding of the problems inherent in Myanmar's formal justice system during court observations of political trials. This period of observation helped me better understand the nature of trials in Myanmar, contributing to a more nuanced understanding of why most Burmese choose to avoid such forums.

I spent the remainder of my time in Myanmar exploring potential research sites in smaller urban areas. While Yangon is the uncontested center of political activism in Myanmar, the resources Yangonites possess-whether fiscal, social, or legal-are not common throughout the rest of the country. As such, my research aims to elucidate forms of justice outside of that cosmopolitan center. I sought to explore research possibilities in two other cities: Mandalay, the largest urban center in northern Myanmar; and Taunggyi, the capital of Shan State. Traveling throughout upper Myanmar allowed me to meet with potential research collaborators to discuss the forms of legal activism currently happening in- and outside of Burmese courts. These opportunities have significantly shaped and refined my research interests as I prepare to formalize my doctoral project proposals over the coming year.