

SOCIO-ECONOMY OF NAMHSAN TOWNSHIP

Ph.D. (DISSERTATION)

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ABSTRACT

Many nationals who live in *Namhsan* Township area are *Palaung*, Chinese and *Li-shaw*. In *Namhsan* Township, 88 percent of the populations are *Ta-Ang (Palaung)*. *Namhsan* Township is 5332 feet above sea level. It is so beautiful mountain town. According to the oral history of *Palaung*, *Namhsan* town was founded in *King Mindon's* reign, in January 1865. The aim of this dissertation is to bring out the role of history of *Namhsan*, economic condition, religions and traditional culture. This dissertation is an attempt to reveal and identify the connection between economic life of *Namhsan* people and tea leaf, to describe the meaning of value on tea leaf in *Namhsan* people, and illustrate the traditional culture especially of those who live in *Namhsan*. In *Namhsan* Township, tea planting and production is the main source of income. The tea leaf is considered to be a metaphor of Township at present. The King *Alaung Sithu* who was one of the famous kings in Myanmar, gave the seeds of tea to *Ta Ang (Palaung)*. Then they started to cultivate the tea as their main crop and after that, their life has been mainly related to the tea plantation. Because of the giving the tea seeds by King *Alaung Sithu*, they held the festival in memory of King *Alaung Sithu* annually. Tea leaf is not staple food for *Ta Ang (Palaung)* but it is important one. There is quite difference between the perception of tea leaf in other people and the *Ta Ang (Palaung)*. They love tea plant and they satisfy their lives living with tea plantation business. *Ta Ang (Palaung)* nationals are born, grow up, and die under the tea plant. They consider *Laphet* as their benefactor. There are two festivals concerning *Laphet* (tea leaf) in *Ta Ang (Palaung)*: Community (အံ့)

Kathein pwe and *Lwai Sai* pagoda festival. By studying these festivals, find out their perception of Tea Leaf in their lives. The symbolic importance of tea leaf has been deeply embedded in the *Ta Ang's* traditional belief and daily life: tea leaf as their soul, tea leaf as their benefactor, and tea leaf as self. Now *Namhsan* Township allow together under the umbrella of Palaung Self-Administered Zone. In *Namhsan* region, as *Ta-ang (Palaung)* seriously believe in Buddhism, there is a monastery in every village however small it maybe. Nearly 99 percent of the township populations are Buddhists. They have the customary rules to be followed in their daily life, socio-economic matters and social occasion of joy or grief.

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