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The role of native people in the development of Chaung Tha Beach Resort, Patheingyi Township

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Abstract

Native people play an important role in the initial development of a resort. During the development process, however, the role of these peoples gradually minimizes and shifts to the marginal jobs with the participation of outside capitals. This paper analyzed this process from a case study of Chaung Tha Beach Resort. Data are derived from structured and opened interviews conducted to local peoples, owners of economic activities those who are directly related to resort development and local authority concerns. The results reveals that (1) Chaung Tha changed from primary economic activities such as coconut plantation and fishing to service industry in the late 1990s, (2) With the development of resort, new capital investments came from Patheingyi and Yangon in many sectors while people (work force) from various parts of Ayeyarwady Region were migrated to Chaung Tha, (3) Only some educated native people or those who has connection with peoples from more developed regions could successfully adapted to newly emerged (service) economy, (4) Majority of native people are not well educated and could not compete with the newly migrated people in many jobs. Thus, the role of native people is gradually diminishing with the development of Chaung Tha. Contribution of local people to the development of Chaung Tha should be restored by means of promoting local cultures and identity such as production of *Theyetaw* cake, selling of Rakhine cuisine. This identity building and commodification of culture could support the sustainable development of Chaung Tha.

Key words: native people, exogenous development, Chaung Tha Beach Resort.

Introduction

Geographical study of tourism is recently emphasized on the economic, social and cultural impact of the area concerned. It is considered that tourist industry may create much-needed employment and income in a locality. Although most serious impact of tourism is environmental whether in the form of pollution, loss of habitat or erosion, it can also threaten the integrity of a locality's society and culture (Johnston, et al., 1995). Chaung Tha is a resort area famous for its beautiful and gentle slope beach. Its development history dated back only to two or three decades. Development process changed

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Chaung Tha from a village of coconut trees to a town of tourist industry within last 20 years.

Macro economic theories considered that economic activities gradually changed from primary to secondary and then to tertiary as an evolution. Economic development process is explained in two forms: exogenous and endogenous (Plummer and Taylor, 2001). In case of Chaung Tha, it is clearly exogenous. It means that development of the study area is based on the investment which comes from the outside area. For the native people, there were two drastic changes in their economy during this development process. First, they have to adopt newly emerged service economy while losing their traditional coconut plantation and farming. Second, this adaptation process became more difficult due to increasing competition for job with newly migrated people from outside area. In this situation, the role of native people in the development process of Chaung Tha area and their way of adaptation to the changing economy is worth examining as a process of exogenous development model. Since Chaung Tha is a famous seaside resort, geographical studies were already carried out from various points of view. Aye Myint, et, al. (1995) made a comprehensive study on the development of Chaung Tha Beach Resort and reveals the beautiful physical features (esp. beach) of Chaung Tha and improved transportation as major causes of recent development. Development of Chaung Tha beach and its contribution to the region was documented by Ye Ye Cho (2000). Recently, analysis on the physical features of Chaung Tha was made by Ni Ni Lwin (2010). However, there is no analytical study on the development of Chaung Tha related to its native people.

Research questions

Based on the above research background the research questions of this paper are defined as follows:

1. How Chaung Tha Beach Resort was developed?
2. What are the main causes that contribute to the development of Chaungtha Beach Resort?
3. What are the roles of native people in the development process of Chuang Tha Beach Resort?

Data and method

To be able to answer the above research questions, both primary and secondary data were collected from the study area through 3 field trips. During the first field trip (January, 2011), official data such as population, number of hotels, restaurants, etc. were collected from the Chaungtha Village Tract Peace and Development Council (now Chaungtha Village Tract Administration Office). In addition, extensive open interviews were conducted to the authority concerns and local people about the nature and development of the Chaung Tha. Based on the information and data derived from first field trip research questions, type of data collection and analysis methods were decided. During the second field trip (April, 2011), structured interviews were conducted to 373 households in their house by using random sampling method. Since there were 2577 households in the village it covers about 14.5 percent of total population. Thus, conclusion could be made as 95% probability level based on data. Open interviews were also conducted to some economically successful native peoples, about their history and causes of success. In addition, structured interviews were also conducted to 14 hotels, 28 guest houses, 37 restaurants and tea shops and 69 souvenir shops. Derived data were analysed by constructing database in Microsoft Excel. Some facts and figures were reconfirmed during the third field trip (June, 2011).

Development of Chaung Tha as a Beach Resort

Chaung Tha is located at the eastern side of Bay of Bengal. There are mountains those are continuation of Rakhine Yoma along the road of Patheingyi-Chaung Tha. Chaung Tha Beach is located along the narrow strip between mountain and sea. Administratively, it is included in the Shwe-Thaung-Yan Sub-township of Patheingyi District. The formation of sandy slope is very gentle in the facing side of Bay of Bengal (Figure 1). It is about 2.5 kilometer long. Although sandy slope is found in the southern side where Chaung Tha Creek is flowing into the Bay of Bengal near Aungmyingalar Kyun, tidal flow is relatively swift and slope is irregular. Mangrove forests are found along the Chaung Tha Creek while sandy beach was originally occupied by coconut trees. There were some farm lands near the mountainous western part. But, these farm lands were also changed into residential lands with town expansion project.

Tha became accessible for people who are living in the urban areas. Although there is no exact date for the development of Chaung Tha as a beach resort, people came there to spend their holiday since the 1970s. At that time there was no hotel and restaurant in the area and people used houses of local people to stay in Chaung Tha.

In 1982 bridges were constructed along the road and passengers and goods could be transported by truck (Dyna) between Chaung Tha and Patheingyi. In 1985, Uto Bridge was constructed and it contributed much to the development of Chaung Tha (Aye Myint, et. al, 1995). After 1988, government upgraded existing beaches of Ngapli (Rakhine State), Setse (Mon State), Maungmagan (Tanintharyi Region) and extended new beaches such as Chaung Tha and Ngwe Saung in Ayeyarwady Region, and Letkhotgon in Yangon Region, Kantharyar in Rakhine State (Mi Mi Kyi, et. al, 2002). In 1990 passenger bus lines started to running along Patheingyi-Chaung Tha Road. In 1991, Yangon-Patheingyi Road was opened. Completion of this road enhanced people from various part of Myanmar more accessible to Chaung Tha (Aye Myint, 1995). Since Chaung Tha became popular as a beach resort and number of visitors increased, some accommodations such as guest houses, and facilities such as restaurants and other souvenir shops were opened in Chaung Tha.

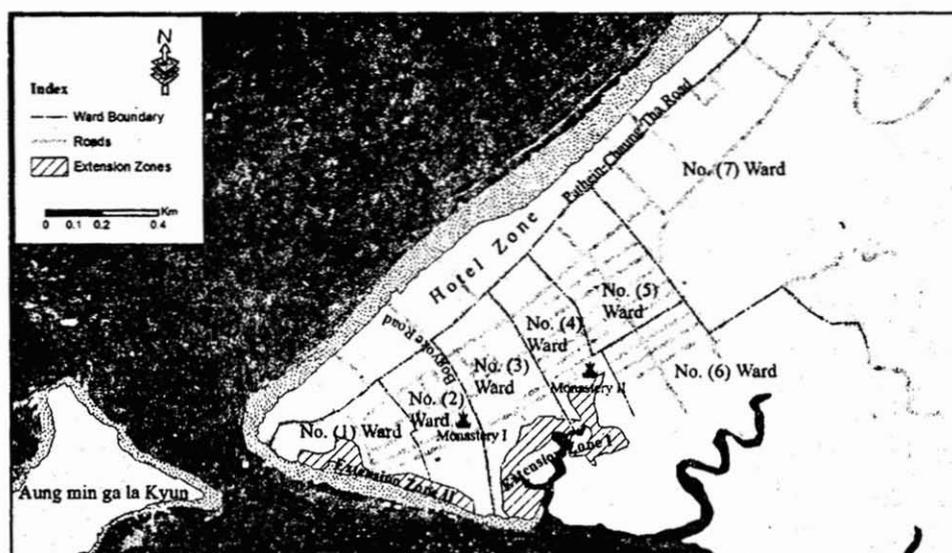


Figure (2) Plan map of Chaung Tha Beach

Source: Google Earth Image (2008) and Interviews.

Myanmar Hotel and Tourist Agency opened Chaung Tha Hotel (now Lai Lai Hotel) in 1991. Number of foreigners visiting to Chaung Tha was also increasing after 1990. With increasing number of visitors, coconut gardens were gradually replaced by guest houses and restaurants. To accommodate the increasing number of visitors, the government designated Chaung Tha as a beach resort and expanded the village into a small town in 1997. With these improvements, many hotels and guest houses were opened. Although guesthouses and restaurants were opened by native people in the early stage of development, majority of investment come from Yangon after 1997. At present, there are 2577 households, 15 hotels, 30 restaurants, 32 guest houses, 10 marine products trading companies, many (Thayettaw) cake and souvenir makers in Chaung Tha (CVTDC, 2010). There are two bus lines (one bus daily) directly run between Yangon and Chaung Tha. In addition, four bus lines are transporting passenger and goods between Chaung Tha and Pathein.

Development Process of Chaung Tha Beach

According to Aye Myint et al. (1995), there were 60 households with 350 peoples in Chaung Tha in 1924. Chaung Tha was a small village that has settled by Bamar and Rakhine until the 1960s. Since then, some rich people from Pathein came and rest by view the ocean surrounding, breathing sea breeze, and enjoying sea foods. At that time there was no guest house and visitors had to stay at the house of native people. They have had to use both water and road transports to reach Chaung Tha. Since it became popular among urban dwellers in the 1980s, some guest houses and restaurants were established by native people to serve the visitors. However, the major economy of Chaung Tha was still based on the coconut trees, farming, and fishery until the late 1980s. Their way of living is very simple. They seasonally conduct farming and collect coconuts and fish. The amount of money earned from it, is enough for the expense of the whole year. They had enough time to be engaged in religious, cultural and traditional events.

After 1987, Chaung Tha became more popular among the other beach resorts for its vicinity location, gentle slope beach, and relatively low cost of transport, accommodation and foods. To accommodate the increasing visitor, government designated Chaung Tha as a Chaung Tha Beach Resort and many development activities were carried out. Among them, establishment of Chaung Tha Hotel under Myanmar Hotel and Travel Agency in 1991 and establishment of regular bus lines in 1990 were distinguished. In addition, the

village was rearranged into a new town plan with systematic structure of street and land use. Area adjacent to the beach was designated as a hotel zone and area west of Bogyoke Road was assigned for economic zone. According to the new plan, southern block of hotel zone was devoted for commercial activities and infrastructure facilities such as electric power plant, market and bus terminal. Native people were confined to southern part of the beach where Chaung Tha Creek is flowing (Figure 2). With these developments original agriculture land (coconut tree) were replaced by residential and commercial land use. Thus, people who depend on their coconut trees and farming had to change their way of living to services or fishery.

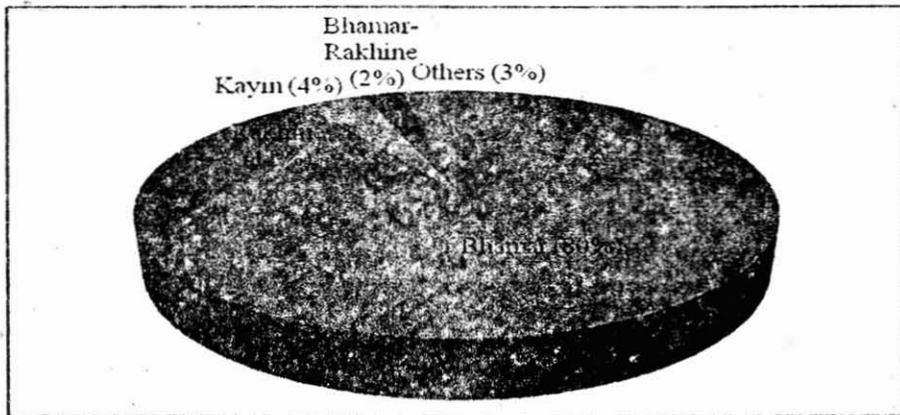


Figure (3) Distribution of races in Chaung Tha

Source: Structured interviews (April, 2011).

Although there were about 450 households in Chaung Tha in 1989 it increased to 2577 households in 2010. According to sample survey, majority of them (80%) are Bamar. Rakhine shared 11 % while Kayin and Bamar-Rakhine occupied 4% and 2%, respectively (Figure 3). Of them, nearly all new comers are Bamar those who settled in Chaung Tha through three waves (Table 1). When Chaung Tha became popular as a beach after 1988, some people from nearby villages and other parts of Ayeyarwady Region migrated to Chaung Tha to fill up the opening of job opportunities. These jobs, however, are not highly paid but as daily wages and casual types. These peoples who migrated in first wave mainly live in the southern edge of No. (5) Ward.

Table (1) Increasing households in Chaung Tha by period

	Household	Population	Remark
Native	131	538	
Before 1980	3	13	
1980 and 1988	7	29	
1988-1997	36	181	First Wave
1998-2005	98	461	Second Wave
After 2005	60	247	Third wave
Total	335	1469	

Source: Structured interview (April, 2011)

After official establishment of Chaung Tha Beach many investments come from both Patheingyi and Yangon. Especially, all hotels are owned by people who are living in Yangon. Number of visitor both from abroad and domestic drastically increased after 1997 with the influence of "Visit Myanmar Year 2006" campaign. With increasing visitors, requirement of labour increased.

In the late 1990s and the early 2000s, many farmers from Ayeyarwady Region faced with difficulties in conducting of farming due to poor weather conditions and government paddy purchasing policy. Thus, many of them, moved to Chaung Tha where many new job opportunities were emerging. They migrated to Chaung Tha in terms of chain migration. First, one person moved to Chaung Tha, then, followed by their families and later relatives and friends. They engaged in newly emerged job opportunities such as casual labourer or selling of souvenirs and foods at the beach. Although most of the jobs are low paid and unreliable, the whole family can work in their respective job and total family income is much higher than in their native places where farming is a sole job.

These newly migrated people in second wave live in the southern edge of Chaung Tha as an extension area (Extension I in Figure 2). The house types are relatively poor than native people. Household head engaged as casual labourer while wife and children are making coconut leaf hats and sell to the visitors. Since they moved to the area to escape from poverty in their native place, they could do any job that could earn money. Alternatively, having

many workers reduce the costs of services. As a consequence of lower cost, many people come to Chaung Tha compared to other beach such as Ngwe Saung.

In 2008 when Nargis tropical cyclone struck Ayeyarwady Region, many remaining victims moved to Chaung Tha for their survival. This migration was mainly caused by push factor of Nagis in their origin and pull factor of many job opportunities in Chaung Tha. People moved in with this third wave settled in the coconut garden located at the southern edge of Ward No. (1) (Extension II in Figure 2).

Figure (4) shows the reason of migration to Chaung Tha. Ninety percent answered that economic is the major reason of their migration. It includes both push factor of their origin and pull factor of destination (Chaung Tha). Some people (4%) moved to Chaung Tha by following their relatives. It is a unique nature of migration in Myanmar. First, one person visit a new place and find economic opportunity. If this person got a job in new place, then, his or her family follow there. Then, relatives and neighbours subsequently accompany to the new place where there are many jobs. The rest moved to Chaung Tha as the government or hotel staffs.

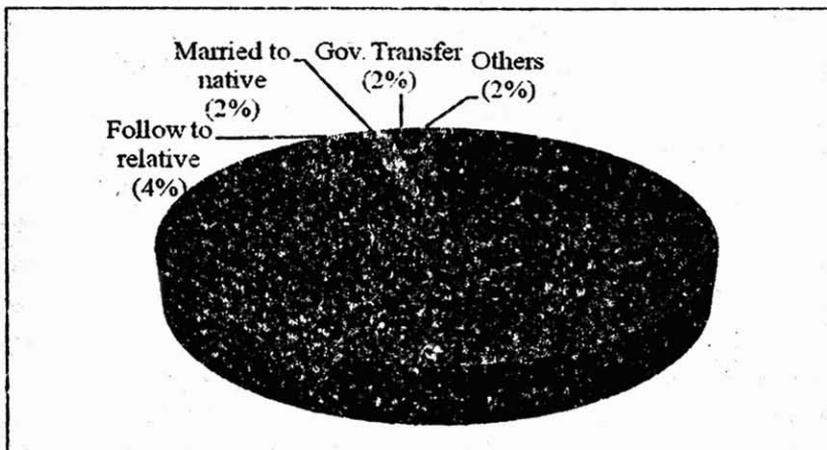


Figure (4) Major reasons for moving to Chaung Tha

Source: Structured interviews (April, 2011).

Figure (5) shows the origin of their migration. More than 80% of new comers migrated from various parts of Ayeyarwady Region, especially, Laputta, Ngaputaw, Myaungmya, Haingyi Townships. About 6% migrated

from neighbouring village tracts of Chaung Tha. The rest formerly live in Yangon and various parts of Myanmar.

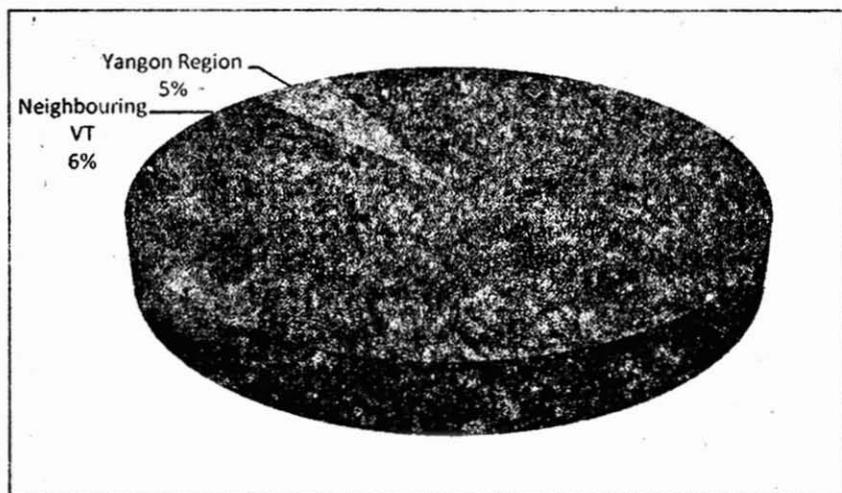


Figure (5) Origin of newly migrated peoples to Chaung Tha

Source: Structured interviews (April, 2011).

Increasing visitors generated many new jobs such as cook-and-convey of food and utensils (*Chetpot*) services engaged mainly by native peoples. Visitors order the curry, sea food cuisines, and rice to the native peoples and native peoples cook and send food and utensils to the customer's place. It is benefited for both sides, although there may be some hygienic problems of food. Visitor could reduce the cost of eating, while villagers can sell their foods without giving tax and cost of renting a shop. This system cause reduction of general visiting cost and as a consequence, more people visit Chaung Tha. In the case of peak season when visitors exceeded the accommodation capacity (especially, in April and May), houses of native people become guest house for group tours. Many new comers make some accessories such as coconut leaf hats, foods such as roasted fish and prawn and sell on the beach. They could earn money, but, could not make a lot of money, since there are many competitors for the same job.

The nature of beach resort also plays an important role in the development process. The number of visitor coming to Chuang Tha varies seasonally. Majority of visitors come to Chaung Tha during December to May. Thus, people living in the area have chance to earn their money mainly in those six months. Between June and November, they have to change their

jobs to fishing or other maintenance jobs. Thus, majority of newly migrated people are breeding pigs as a bank of money saving for their rainy season's expense. This nature also forced people of Chaung Tha to earn enough money between December and May. If they could not earn enough money in this period, it is necessary to do a new job in the rainy season. Since the number of visitors is few in rainy season, they have to work in the other areas. This nature also encouraged competition among the people and finally visitor could gain good services in low prices.

Therefore, the cycle of "low expense generated from having many workforce attract many visitors and many visitors create many job opportunities, many job opportunities absorb new migration (work force)" is occurring in the development process of Chaung Tha Beach.

In addition to the above economic generation, transportation also plays an important role in the development of Chaung Tha. The people from upper Myanmar and Shan State generally come to Chaung Tha by their rented bus as a group tour. However, people from Patheingyi visit the beach by bus or own car or motor cycle. People from Yangon use their owned car or buses. There are 4 bus lines (Thiha, Shwe Ayeyar, Shwe Minthar, and Zwe) transporting passengers and commodities between Patheingyi and Chaung Tha. In addition, two passenger bus lines (Shwepyithar and Htet Aung Lynn) are connected daily between Yangon and Chaung Tha. Each bus line is owned by one owner. In 1990, Thiha, Shwe Ayeyar and Shwe Minthar bus lines (those owners live in Patheingyi) opened their trips between Patheingyi and Chaung Tha. Shwepyithar and Htet Aung Lynn bus lines are managed by owners from Yangon and started Yangon-Chaung Tha trip in 2001 and 2003, respectively. Zwe bus line was opened in 2010 with the buses owned by one owner who live in Patheingyi. Although many group tours visit Chaung Tha by using their rented cars, these extension of bus line encourage the flows of many individual visitors to Chaung Tha.

The Role of Native People in the Development of Chaung Tha Beach

In the early stage of development, native people play an important role in the development of Chaung Tha. They gave accommodation and food to the visitors. Coconut garden along the beach seem to be a one natural sense for the visitors. Traditional fishing by drafting net along the beach caught visitor's eyes until the late 1990s. Traditional village layout of Chaung Tha

was one more attraction that gave both cultural and social construction of Rakhine and Bamar. Visitors could experience both beauty of beach and nature of simple rural environment in Chaung Tha. Poor transportation system preserved these natural senses until the late 1990s.

With the practicing of market oriented economic system, the style of living and recreation gradually changed among the people. Accordingly, demand for recreation services drastically increased in the 1990s. To supply this increasing demand, recreation services and travel destinations sites have changed. Not only transport systems to the recreation site are improved but also accommodation facilities are constructed in the destination sites. Since then, the nature of recreation has changed from *beach and rural environment* (where coconut plant and traditional event are dominant) to *beach and urban environment* (where hotel and restaurant and modern facilities occupied in the sense).

Accordance with changing economic environment native people had to adapt with newly emerged service activities. They have no choice but adapt to it since their former coconut garden and farm land were replaced by modern facilities. According to structured and opened interviews, it is found that only some educated people and people those have connection with Patheingyi or Yangon could successfully changed to service economy. Table (2) shows the owner's address of accommodation, restaurant and souvenir shops from Chaung Tha. All hotels are owned by the people living in Yangon. Of 14 hotel owners, 7 have their branch hotels in Naypyitaw or Yangon and Chaung Tha is also a branch hotel. In case of restaurant, 21 out of 37 were run by owners who live in Chaung Tha. Some are owned by people who live in Patheingyi. Majority of souvenir shops are owned by people living in Chaung Tha. Both in the case of restaurants and souvenir shops native and new comers living in Chaung Tha are involved. Thus, it is obvious that local people could only participate in the food and souvenir section of resort and accommodation sectors was mainly occupied by external capital:

Table (2) Role of native people in the economic ownership of Chaung Tha Beach Resort

Owner's Place	Hotel	Guest House	Restaurant	Souvenir Shop
Chang Tha	0	3	21	39
Pathein	0	2	10	6
Yangon	14	18	2	5
Mandalay Region	0	2	0	0
Ayeyarwady Region (except CT)	0	1	4	18
Others	0	2	0	1
Total	14	28	37	69

Source: Structured interviews (April, 2011).

Among the local people that represent both native and new comers there are some variations in the nature of job. Table (3) reflecting these variations. Chi-squared test result revealed that there are significantly different (0.001 level) between the job of native and new comers in Chaung Tha. To make comparison, percentage share of each job also revealed in the table. Both native and new comers engaged as seller of foods, souvenirs, cold drinks and purified drinking water, cooked and roasted marine products, etc. This job occupied about 40% of all jobs. New comers occupied distinguished share in fishing and professional carrier such as (repairing, hair dressing, carpentry and masonry works) compared to native people. Conversely, native revealed high share in farming and gardening, food processing, restaurant and souvenir shops. Since there is no farm land in the flat land some native people conducted Taungya cultivation and cashew nut and rubber plantation in the hilly area. Thus, people said that "*natives are going up to the hill for their economy*". Food processing job mainly referred to production of Thayetaw rice cake done by native people. It is a traditional cake of the area revealing one of cultural identity of Chaung Tha.

Table (3) Variation of occupation type between native people and new comers

	Native	Percentage	New Comers	Percentage
Selling	51	39.8	91	37.3
Casual labour	6	4.7	42	17.2
Fishing	7	5.5	34	13.9
Professional career	15	11.7	26	10.7
Services shop	5	3.9	15	6.1
Gov. and hotel staff	5	3.9	11	4.5
Rental and repair	4	3.1	10	4.1
Farming and gardening	15	11.7	7	2.9
Other	20	15.6	8	3.3
Total	128	100.0	244	100.0

Source: Structured interview results (April, 2011) (n = 361)

Note: Some household have more than one major job.

Table (4) Difference education level of household head between native and new comers

Status	Native	%	New comers	%
Illiteracy	1	0.76	4	1.96
Monastery Education	24	18.32	33	16.18
Primary School	24	18.32	42	20.59
Middle School	52	39.69	71	34.80
High School	18	13.74	37	18.14
University	9	6.87	12	5.88
University Graduate	3	2.29	5	2.45
Total	131	100.00	204	100.00

Source: Structured interviews (April, 2011). (n = 335).

Table (3) also reveals that native peoples have to compete with new comers in the case of selling (a major job). However, the motive of business is different between them. As mentioned before, all new comers came to Chaung Tha not only to pull factor of Chaung Tha but push factors of their respective origin. Thus, they could do any job at low wages for their survival. Thus, native people have some difficulties in competition with new comers and mainly emphasized on the some jobs (such as saw mill, gardening) that new comers could not compete. In addition, education levels of household head are not significantly different between native people and new comers. Table (4) supporting this point. Although majority of the household head of both native and new comers are middle and primary school graduate, there is no significant difference between two groups of people. Thus, it can be said that native people have some difficulties in competition for good salary jobs in hotel and guest house.

Finally, job created by development of Chaung Tha Beach Resort was analyzed by using questionnaires survey conducted to hotel, guest house and restaurant owners. Both hotel and restaurant use local people (both native and new comers) living in Chaung Tha. But, guest house employed workers mamly from Yangon and Pathein. In average, local people could contribute about 38 percents of labour requirement in accommodation and food sector of Chaung Tha (Table 5). Thus, it is fair to conclude that development of Chaung Tha contribute to the local people by creating certain job opportunities. In the case of transportation, both conductors and drivers are assigned from the place of owner’s house. Thus, all came from Pathein and Yangon.

Table (5) Number and percentage of workers by their native region in Chaung Tha

	Chaung Tha	Pathein	Yangon	Other	Total	Sample
Restaurant	133	79	9	91	312	37
Hotel	258	114	85	212	669	14
Guest House	19	29	42	12	102	37
Total	410	222	136	315	1083	88
Percentage	37.9	20.5	12.6	29.1	100.0	

Source: Structured interviews (April, 2011).

Note: In case of guest house, 4 run only by their family member and no worker was employed.

Conclusions and Discussion

This paper analyzed the change of the role of the native people during the exogenous based development process of a region. The nature of native people and development process was examined based on the data derived from open and structured interviews conducted to native people, hotel manager/owner, restaurant and guest house owners and transportation lines. Analyzed results of derived data and information confirm following points.

- (1) Chaung Tha changed from primary economic activities such as coconut plantation and fishing to service industry in the late 1990s,
- (2) With the development of resort new capital investment are came from Patheingyi and Yangon, while many people from various parts of Ayeyarwady Region migrated to Chaung Tha,
- (3) Only some educated native people or those who has connection with peoples from more developed areas could successfully adapted to newly emerged (service) economy,
- (4) Majority of native people were not well educated and could not compete with the newly migrated people in many jobs. Thus, the role of native people is gradually diminishing with the development of Chaung Tha.

Chaung Tha originally served visitors with both its traditional culture and physically beautiful beach. With the development of the beach its culture and traditions are gradually diminishing. For example, cooking and offering of *Soon* to the Buddhist monks was replaced by contribution of money to the trusty committee. Formerly social welfares carried out by youth (man and women) associations were replaced by task specific companies. It is because people must earn enough money for the whole year only within the peak season. Thus, they could not participate in the culture and traditional affairs.

At present, there is no item that could symbolize the Chaung Tha Beach in accommodation, food, and souvenir sectors. It means that there is no identity that represents the Chaung Tha. Only good transportation and cheap accommodation and food are main attraction for visitors. In this situation native people are always faced with difficulties in competition with continuously increasing new comers. To escape from this cycle local cultures and identity such as production of Theyetaw cake, selling of Rakhine cuisine, demonstration of fishing by using dragging net on the sandy beach, etc. should be encouraged. The symbol and image of native culture reflecting in the food,

accommodation and souvenirs could generate the sustainability of the beach and participation of native people in the development process.

Findings of this paper have important implications for the regional development of an area. It is reflecting the *exogenous development process*. In this process the quality of existing human resource is become important. When an area is developed many job opportunities are opened up. Job opportunities include both higher level and lower level jobs. To take lower level jobs (such as seller, casual labour) people from relatively less developed regions will migrate to the area. On the other hand, some qualified people will move into work at the higher level of jobs such as manager and professional staffs. If native peoples are not well qualified, they could not compete with both qualified (higher level) and unqualified (lower level) jobs. Then, finally they will moved to marginal areas or fields of economic activity.

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