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Maintaining a cultural heritage: a case study of Pyu bead production in Phayagyi Village, Natogyi Township *

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Abstract

In this paper, Pyu bead production work was analyzed from a perspective of cultural heritage. The study focused on four points: nature of Pyu bead production as a heritage, its commercialization process, its contribution to the regional development, and the way to maintain heritage. Data used in this paper were derived from detailed personal interviews conducted to the Pyu bead producers and authorities concerned during two field observations conducted in July, 2007 and May, 2008. It is found that Pyu bead production has unique characteristics in terms of production technology and representative of Pyu culture. Market area of Pyu bead had expanded to the international level at the turn of the present century and it is contributing to the economic development of Phayagyi, its surrounding villages, and Natogyi Town. With the mechanization of production processes and the practice of mass production, however, quality and identity of reproduced Pyu beads are gradually losing. To maintain the heritage it is necessary to organize a Pyu bead production association.

Key words: Cultural heritage, Pyu bead, commercialization, regional development

Introduction

In 1989, Myanmar changed its economic system from centrally planned economic system to market oriented one. Accordingly, legislations were regulated, new laws being promulgated, and existing law that was no longer appropriate for the new system were amended to be compatible with the changing economic environment. Direct foreign investment was invited by the "Union of Myanmar Foreign Investments Law" which was enacted in 1988 (IPRD, 2002). In addition to such institutional changes, infrastructure developments were carried out to be able to cope with the changing economic

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system. Many new roads, bridges and rail roads were constructed while old ones were upgraded.

Under the state economy, foreign relation is limited and diffusion of foreign culture is also restricted. It is a natural process that foreign culture is diffused into the country through various media when a country is economically opened to foreign countries. Therefore, the government is trying to safeguard the traditional culture by all efforts. As a part of this effort, Myanmar traditional folk arts exhibition was held in 1992 (IPRD, 1993). Holding of Myanmar traditional performing arts competition annually since 1993 is another good example (IPRD, 2001). In addition, exhibitions of ten traditional arts and Myanmar necklace (beads) were held in 1996 and 2000, respectively (IPRD, 2002). All of these exhibitions were aimed to uplift the national prestige and integrity, and preservation and safeguarding of cultural heritage and national character. This aim is one of the four social objectives of the nation as well. In addition, the government enacted "Law for Protection of Cultural Traits" in 1998 to be able to maintain traditional heritage more effectively.

Although many geographical studies focused on the economic changes under the market-oriented economy there is still lack of emphasis on the changes of cultural activities. Therefore, this paper tried to analyze the changing nature of cultural activities under the market-oriented economy. Among the traditional cultural activities Pyu beads production was selected as a case study since it is a Pyu culture which was relayed through generations. During the last decade this bead production had changed drastically in terms of production process and marketing.

Geographical studies of heritage

There are many definitions related to culture and cultural heritage. Fellmann, et al. (1990, p32) defined 'culture' as a specialized behavioral patterns, understandings, adaptations, and social system that summarized a group of people's learned way of life. The word 'heritage' commonly refers to describe an inheritance that individual receive in the will of a deceased ancestor (Graham, et al., 2000). Cultural heritage is the legacy of physical artifacts and intangible attributes of a group or society that are inherited from the past generations, maintained in the present and bestowed for the benefit of future generations (Wikipedia, 2008). From the above definitions cultural

heritage could be translated as a culture that we want to maintain for present and future benefits regardless of its antiqueness.

There are some disciplines related to cultural heritage. They used past, history and heritage as interchangeable synonyms based on their disciplines. Historians make attempts of successive presents to relate and explain selected aspect of a past. Collection, preservation and documentation of records and physical remains of the past are task for archivists and antiquarians. All these fields, however, have common interest on heritage. If it is "... focus upon the ways in which we use the past now, or upon the attempts of a present to project aspects of itself into a imagine future, then we are engaged with heritage" (Graham, et al., 2000, p2).

Culture was shown to combine three things: values, material artifacts, and political institutions (Rubenstein, 2003, p105). If culture became a heritage it can be divided into tangible and intangible. Physical or 'tangible cultural heritage' includes buildings and historic places, monuments, artifacts, etc., that are considered worthy of preservation for the future. The countryside and natural environment, including flora and fauna are also important parts of a culture. Recently, these heritage sites became important component in a country's tourist industry. Intangible aspects of a particular culture are often maintained by social customs during a specific period in history. These include social values and traditions, customs and practices, aesthetic and spiritual beliefs, artistic expression, language and other aspects of human activity (Wikipedia, 2008).

Many people think that maintenance of heritage is only from the point of view of cost in terms of money. Heritage, however, has its implications on political (national identity), social, and economic terms. "Heritage is multi-sold and multi-consumed.., whether building, art object or landscape, carries with it an array of conflicting cultural and economic motivation and messages" (Graham, et al., 2000, p6). Since the last two decades of 20th century cultural driven urban regeneration has come to occupy the pivotal role in new urban entrepreneurialism (Miles and Paddison, 2005). Bryann, et al. (2000) proved the value of culture in the development of Welsh economy by using input-output model. These new developments reflect the rise to prominence of the culture in the contemporary economy. Then, the meaning of culture has been redefined to include new uses to which it can be put to meet social, economic and political objectives (Miles and Paddison, 2005).

The economic dimension of heritage, however, had received far less research attention than the cultural realm (Graham, et al., 2000).

In general, recent geographical studies of heritage focused on three points: heritage as a national identity, as cultural and social symbols, and as a source of economic development. Thus, the aspect of present study will be differed from the study of archeological and historical studies and this research will mainly focus on the nature of heritage (identity) and its implication to regional economic development, and maintenance of heritage.

Research Question

Research questions of this paper are set as below.

- (1) How Pyu beads emerged as a cultural heritage?
- (2) How this culture is commercializing?
- (3) How is Pyu bead production generating economic development in the study area?
- (4) What should be the major factors that are necessary to maintain this heritage?

Data and Method

To be able to answer the above questions all Pyu bead producers (5 persons) those who are currently producing Pyu beads and 4 persons who are working as bead painters were interviewed about the situation of Pyu bead production and production process in detail. Two persons who made Pyu beads in the earliest period were also interviewed to trace back the historical development and quality variation of Pyu bead. In addition, one retailer who produces fancy products and selling Pyu beads at Natogyi Town and authority concerns of the Phayagyi Village were also interviewed about the current situation of Pyu bead.

Based on the above interviews, the historical development of Pyu bead production was reconstructed from the point of view of heritage. Then, commercialization of Pyu bead production and its effect on the regional economic development was further examined. Finally, the current nature of Pyu bead production was discussed base on the point of maintaining cultural heritage.

Origin of Pyu bead production

Many heritage buildings and sites have been maintained for their cultural value and commercialization was made by attracting visitors to those sites and producing unique symbols (such as key chains, T shirts, etc.) representing those heritages sites. Differing from that Pyu bead production has many unique characteristics in representing the Pyu culture. Pyu beads were primarily unearthed from ancient Pyu sites of Serikshetra, Beikthano, Maingmaw, Waddi, Nyaungyan, Beinnaka, Taungthaman, and Kandaw. There are three different techniques in making of Pyu beads: painting, incising, an alkali resist. First technique is simple painting with desired colour on the raw bead (basic material). In incising, basic material was cut in desired design and filled with white material before polishing. The last technique uses resist material to design the bead. Resist is painted on the bead where it wants to remain white colour before painting with black paint. After black painting, the bead was baked to diffuse black paint into the bead. Then, resist is washed out to get the original white colour (Moore and U Aung Myint, 1993). Pyu bead production of Phayagyi Village belongs to the last technique.

There was an ancient Pyu town named as Waddi near Phayagyi Village, Natogyi Township (Fig. 1). It is assumed that this ancient Pyu town was thriving during Pyu dynasty between 2nd and 9th Century AD (Moore, 2004). The capital of Pyu was Pyi and Waddi belong to one of many other Pyu towns. Then, Pyu capital was destroyed by *Nanchao* in 832 (Than Tun, 2006, p206). Pyu beads were unearthed from the place where ancient city was located when local people plough the land for cultivation in 1904. They were mainly found from the place of *Myannigyin* (pits of laterite soil) located outside the wall of the ancient city. Local people assume it to be an ancient cemetery of Chin people. British government seized these Pyu beads and rewarded 77 Kyats each to the collectors (Aung Myint, 1999, Khin Maung Htay, 2004; Puritha, 2005). At the same time, Chin people bought these beads to use as their traditional necklaces. According to Moore and U Aung Myint (1993), Pyu and Chin are related in the culture of wearing stone necklaces and burying these necklaces together with deceased. Pyu and Chin are also similar in naming system and traditional festival holding system (burying of past person's necklace (beads) and accessories under the stones). In addition, both Pyu and Chin used same accessories such as ear-rings, pots, beads (Bunane and Yujean, 2001, p.121).

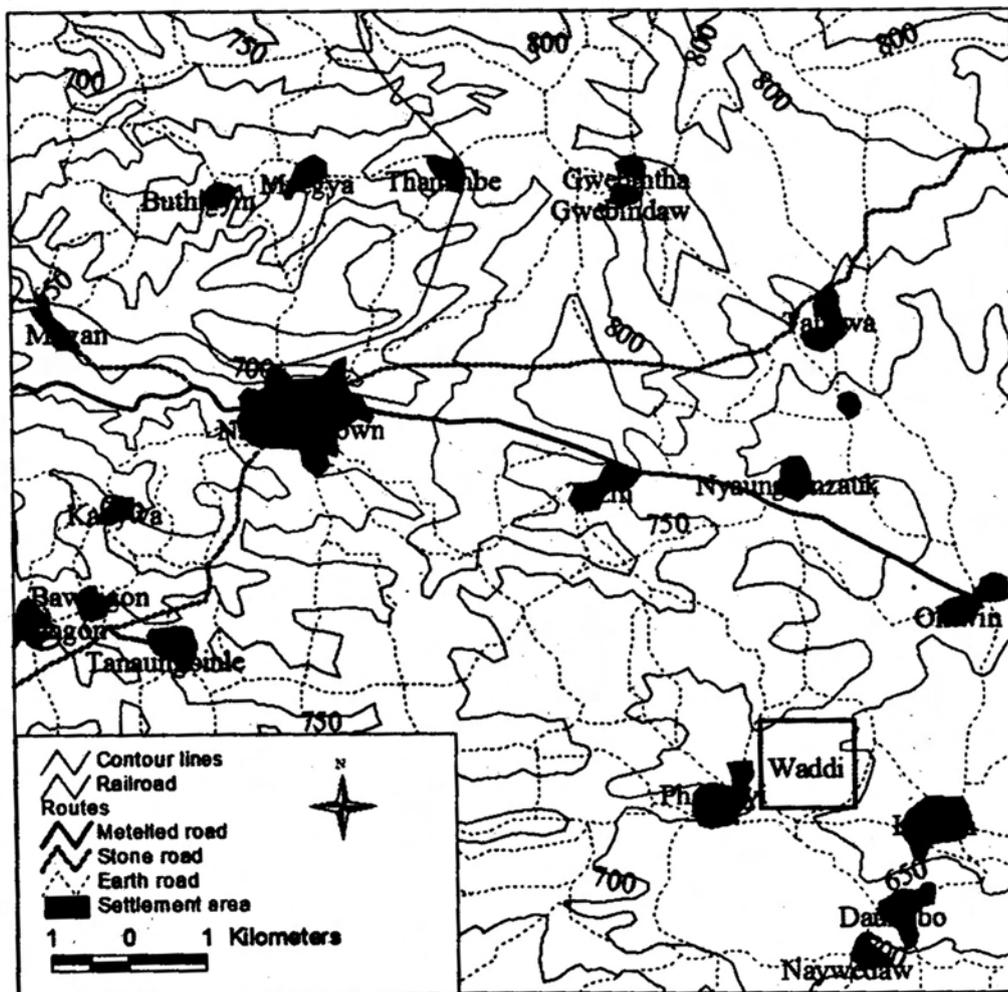


Figure (1) Location of Phayagi Village and ancient Waddi

Source: Based on topographic map No. 84_O_11 and field observation.

When nearly all ancient Pyu beads were unearthed, villagers tried to reproduce it since demand for the bead was increasing from the Chins. Pyu beads production uses the fossil-wood as basic materials. Fossil-woods were available abundantly in the place where ancient Pyu towns were located. This is one of the major reasons for the using of fossil-wood in making ancient Pyu beads. Phayagi Village is located near the Waddi and fossil-woods are easily available. Fossil-woods lie within 15 feet from the earth surface while some are bearing on the ground. However, decoration method of fossil-wood with black paint could not be found very easily. According to personal interviews, it took many years to find out decorating techniques. Finally, one family found out the techniques and started to reproduce Pyu beads. The design of reproduced Pyu beads were derived from unearthed ancient Pyu beads. The

design of necklace, however, seems to follow the preference of Chin (tradition).

Since the customers were limited to Chins and all production processes were made manually and the production faced many difficulties. In some periods, the production was stopped for many years. The production techniques, however, were maintained as family property until the late 1980s.

Therefore, Pyu bead reproduction is an art that was created in the later periods to be able to produce ancient Pyu beads and maintained throughout long history. It is said that only experts could differentiate between ancient Pyu beads and the reproduced ones since it is of high quality. For their high quality, the demand from the Chin is increasing. There are two factors for the continuous demand of reproduced Pyu beads from Chin. One factor is related to trading system of reproduced Pyu beads. Chin bought it and resold those beads in India. Second factor is related to the fact that Chin are selling out their wearing necklaces to the foreigners as an antique. Then, they buy a new reproduced Pyu beads from Phayagyi Village. There is only one place reproducing Pyu beads in Myanmar since their decoration techniques is unique.

Figure (2) shows the Chin bead (half) that reproduced in Phayagyi Village. From that bead it could understand that it is carrying symbols of ancient Pyu beads excavated from many ancient Pyu sites such as Waddi, Maingmaw, and Kandaw. In addition to above symbols, other designs found in ancient Pyu sites were reproduced in other forms of beads.

At present, it is very difficult to found an ancient Pyu bead. Only by means of reproduced Pyu bead we could understand identities of ancient Myanmar. In other words, both Pyu bead production techniques and reproduced Pyu beads are maintaining ancient culture. As examined later, without these technology and reproduced Pyu bead it is difficult to know about Pyu from the world. Pyu bead reproduction, on the other hand, is helping to maintain Chin culture by means of providing Pyu beads as their traditional necklace. It is also standing as an archeological linkage between ancient Pyu and Chin. For this reason reproduced Pyu beads are also known as 'Chin beads'.

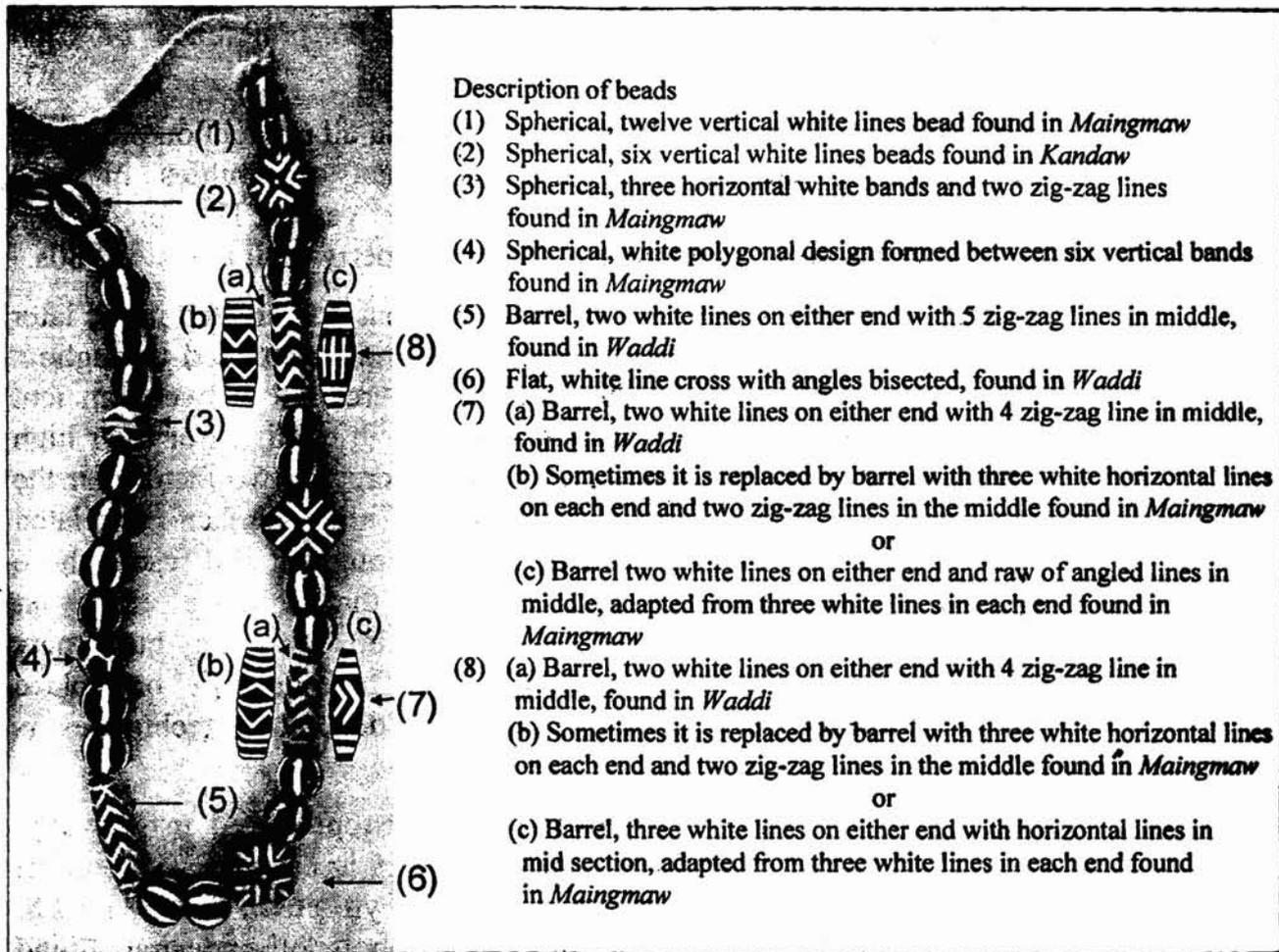


Figure (2) Chin bead carrying symbols of different Pyu Sites

Source: Reference to bead designs and excavated sties mentioned in Moore and U Aung Myint (1993)

Although reproduced Pyu beads are keeping the cultural linkages between Pyu and Chin peoples and maintaining the Pyu culture by mean of artifacts, both Pyu bead producers and scientists could not interpret the meaning and design of each bead including in the necklaces. It is necessary to find out it in the future.

Production process and commercialization of Pyu bead

Environmental condition is the major influencing factor on the development of Pyu culture and Pyu bead production. The main material used in Pyu bead production is fossil-wood. As mentioned above, technology of

Pyu bead production from fossil-wood is also developed based on ancient Pyu town (Waddi). Easy availability of fossil-wood is very important for the emergence of Pyu beads in Waddi and reproduction of it in Phayagyi Village.

Production process

Fossil-wood is used as a basic material for the production of Pyu beads. There are four different compositions in fossil-wood based on their hardness: out (*Akhar*), soft (*Apwha*), hard (*Ahmar*), and transparent (*Ahkyi*). Outer part of the fossil-wood is softer and more fragile compared to other parts and are not used for bead production. Softer part could be handled easily compared to harder part. At the beginning the harder part was used in reproduction of Pyu bead. Softer part, however, has been used for bead production since the late 1980s. Harder part is difficult to handle and time consuming one in production process. Thus, the price of Pyu bead made by harder part is four or five times more expensive than one made by softer part. Although the former is more expensive and heavier, it is less fragile and can last for a long time. Transparent part of fossil-wood was not used in production of Pyu bead until the end of the 20th century.

There are five major stages in Pyu beads production: cutting and rounding, drilling, polishing, decorating, and beading.

Cutting and rounding- Fossil-wood is cut into pieces by using a knife. Based on the desired design, fossil-wood are cut into round, cylinder, and dice form. Then, a detail desired form is further made by rubbing. After 2000, this process was mechanized by using diamond cutter and diamond grinding disc. For round beads, rounding machine (*Seinbyin*) was used instead of diamond grinding disc.

Drilling- If the desired form of smooth stones is derived, a hole is drilled to be able to band beads together. Although manual drilling was used until 2005, drilling machines were introduced later.

Polishing- After drilling, it is necessary to polish all type of beads before painting. The oils (from human's hand) and other impurity contaminated on the beads were removed from the beads by means of polishing.

Painting- After polishing it is necessary to dry up the raw beads under the sunlight for three days. Then, it is ready to decorate the beads with paint. Two types of paint are decorated on the polished beads: white and black. Actually,

white painting is used as a resist against diffusion of black paint into the stone. Therefore, white paint is drawn according to the desired design before coating with black paint. After black painting, it is necessary to bake the beads in charcoal fire. Next process is to wash out the white resist (paints) with water to get beautiful beads decorated by black paint and original colour of fossil-wood.

Beading- Beading is the last process of necklace production. After selecting the desired size, each bead is beaded with a nylon rope. There are 63 beads in a Chin necklace. They are composed of 51 rounds, 6 cylinders and 6 dices (Fig. 2). Beads selling to other parts of Myanmar and exported to foreign countries has different size and include various design of beads excavated from many Pyu sites.

Commercializing the Heritage

Although Pyu bead production was developed in Phayagyi Village since 1930s, it was faced with many difficulties throughout its history. Sometimes, the demand was lack for years. At that time, the family that invented and relayed Pyu bead production technology had to work alternative jobs such as agriculture (*Ya*) to feed their family.

Until the late 1980s, Pyu bead reproduction was run as a family business produced by only family members. But in the early 1990s, the business became better due to increasing demand from the Chins. The business, therefore, expanded as a workshop working by hired workers. According to interviews, it is found that some foreigners are visiting the production sites since that time. Until the business changed to workshop type only hard fossil-wood was used to produce Pyu bead. Due to increasing demand, new workshops were opened as a spin-off at the beginning of 1990s. All newly spin-off Pyu bead production works were founded by former workers or relatives those who worked at the pioneer Pyu bead factory. Many new comers, however, used soft fossil-wood since it is easy to handle and economically more productive.

Although Pyu bead reproduction was developed as an economic activity in the 1990s it was not a major economy in the village. Customers came to the village within 5 to 7 months intervals to collect the beads. Then, bead producers produced their products during that time and invested their money throughout the period. In addition, production amount was very limited

since all production processes had to be done manually. Thus, bead makers had to work alternative jobs (*Ya*) for their major earning during that time.

Since mid 1990s, Pyu bead reproduction developed again. Since then, reproduced Pyu beads have been commercialized as a major commodity of the village.

Pyu beads and regional development

Government protected traditional heritage by means of designating new heritage sites and encouraging existing heritage sites. On the other hand, they promote traditional handicraft productions. As a part of these efforts, Traditional Beads Exhibition 2000 was held at the national museum in August and September, 2000. Pyu bead reproduction is not only a traditional handicraft but also a Pyu heritage. Due to government encouragement Pyu bead was known to the world after the exhibition. Many Pyu bead producers received connections with foreign customers during that exhibition. According to the records, there were 34 Pyu bead producers at that time of exhibition. Of them, 16 participated in the exhibition.

Customers from Asia and Europe came to the village for observation of Pyu bead production processes or/and to buy the beads. The exhibition widen up both the market and economic consideration of the producers. Thus, they introduced jade cutting techniques and machines derived from Sagaing Town. Then, production processes were mechanized step by step. First, they used diamond stone-cutter instead of traditional cutting by knife. Diamond stone-cutter was also used in rounding of the stone by cutting the edges of the square. Diamond grinding disc was used in rounding of cylinder and dices beads. In 2004, both rounder (*Seinbyin*) and polishing machines were introduced in the production. Although rounding of cylinder and dices were finalized by diamond grinding disc, round beads were put into rounding machine after cutting edges. Derived round, cylinder and dices were drilled by machine to make a hole. After that all beads were polished by putting in the polishing machine. Therefore, nearly all processes of bead making except painting were mechanized by using jade technology in 2004-05.

Some raw fossil-woods found in large single stone were excavated and sold to China directly since late 1990s. In addition, formerly excluded transparent parts of fossil-wood started to be made into beads and jewel stones since the end of 1990s. The transparent parts of fossil-wood have many

colours. It is produced as fancy stones. Some of them look like jade. Therefore, the major market of this product is China. Since new product (fancy) is made by machine and complex and sophisticated painting are not included, the business boomed very fast. Demand from China is increased immediately. In this situation not only old Pyu bead producers but also many new comers participated in the business.

At its peak around 2004-05, there were 25 large factories (machine), and 10 small factories (hand) in Phayagyi Village alone. Four large factories were producing both Pyu beads and transparent beads while the rest produced newly emerged transparent bead only. Ten small factories were all transparent bead producers. During that peak period, the transparent bead production spread to the nearby villages (Kyigan for example) and Natogyi Town. Some factories were established with the financial support of Chinese to produce transparent beads. Since polishing machine have to run for a long time (24 to 72 hr for one shift) it was established in Natogyi where electricity is available. There were 6 polishers in Natogyi in its peak period (2005). During that peak time, all Pyu bead producers produce transparent beads and only four or five traditional Pyu bead producers that have regular market both from Chin and foreign countries kept producing Pyu beads.

Since new Pyu bead production works were spin-off from the main workshop in the 1990s, division of labour was encountered in Pyu bead production. All four major production processes could be subcontracted. At present, cutting and rounding of a hard round-bead is 10 Kyats and 7 Kyats, respectively. Drilling could be subcontracted by 12 Kyats for a round bead and by 60 Kyats for a cylinder and dice. White painting is made by subcontracting or owner of the factory while black painting is conducted by daily wage earners. The cost of white painting varied based on the types of beads: 2 Kyats for each round bead, 5 Kyats for both each cylinder and dice bead. There are about 20 painters that are subcontracting white painting works in Phayagyi Village.

Except from painting, other villagers could participate in all processes of Pyu bead production. From its flexible nature of production many students and young people could participate in the production during holidays. People who are engaging in the agriculture could also participate in bead production for extra income in off season. Due to development of business workers from the nearby villages are hired in the production as wages earners.

The market area of reproduced Pyu beads had spread to foreign countries after the bead exhibition of the year 2000. At present, two out of 5 traditional Pyu bead reproducers have regular demand of bead from Japan and Taiwan. Pyu bead is also sold at Thailand through Tachileik, Shan State. Foreign customers bought hard traditional Pyu beads and sometimes they order beads with their desired design. In domestic market, hard Pyu beads are distributed mainly to Chin State (Kalay). Soft Pyu beads are mainly distributed to Chin State, Bagan, Inlay, and Yangon. All transparent beads are used in making of necklace, hand chain, and key-chain etc. Newly emerged transparent beads are exported mainly to China through Mandalay.

With the introduction of machines in the production processes and existing skill on handling of fossil-wood, many new businesses have come to be established in Phayagyi Village since 2001. But after reaching its peak in 2005-06, business has declined due to over production and scarcity of raw material (transparent fossil-wood), and rising fuel price. At present, there are 7 large producers and 4 small producers engaged in Pyu bead related products. Of the large factories, 4 are producing both Pyu and transparent beads while the rests (3) are transparent bead producers.

Therefore, it is very clear that Pyu heritage generated regional economic development by increasing production of Pyu bead itself and distributing technology that could produce transparent bead for new market.

Maintaining a cultural heritage

Pyu bead reproduction had emerged based on many conditions: existence of ancient Pyu town (Waddi), unearthing of ancient Pyu beads, availability of fossil-wood, creation of decorating technology, initial demands from the Chin. Although it is difficult to distinguish between ancient Pyu beads and reproduced one for ordinary people, close examination reveals many differences. First, the fossil-wood used in ancient Pyu beads lies between hard and transparent stage. Thus, the colour of ancient beads is brighter and more transparent than reproduced one. From the interview it is found that although villagers could find out the techniques of black paint decoration on the hard fossil-wood it is not sufficient enough to decorate on transparent one. Secondly, the quality of ancient Pyu beads is better than the reproduced one. Ancient Pyu beads are decorated with both white and black paints although reproduced one could be decorated with black paint and white

paint is used only as a resist from the diffusion of black paint in designing parts. Therefore, original Pyu beads are more beautiful than reproduced one. Although reproduced one has such inferior quality reproduced beads look like ancient Pyu beads that were covered under the earth for a long time. This point made a success of Pyu bead reproduction in Phayagyi Village.

Most important technology in Pyu bead production is composing of black paint that is used for black decoration on fossil-wood. In composing of black paint there is exact ratio of chemical to be put in the paint. However, all interviewed producers composed black paint by putting approximate amount of each chemical and no measuring device was used. It is because bead producers learn from their previous employers and ancestors only by eye. After composing the paint they are tested on the polished fossil-wood. If it is well diffused into the stone, they use it. If not, they tried to add the chemical that seem is needed. In making of black paint, they used sodium arsenic trisulphate, copper sulphate, sulphur powder, and arsenic. Breast milk was used instead of water as gummy consistency. They said breast milk is the most important material in making of black paint. Although pure breast milk is spoiled after a year, it could still be used for painting if there is no water in it. These points vary among producers, thus the quality of beads varies. Moreover, it is the main reason that Pyu bead production is not developed in other places.

After Traditional Bead Exhibition 2000, the demand for Pyu bead greatly increased. At the same time mechanization was introduced in the production processes. Since then, reproduction of Pyu bead changed from quality production to standardized (mass) production. They tried to satisfy the demand of the customers, rather than keeping the quality. As a result, the quality of Pyu bead was lost in many aspects.

First, producers do not care the nature of fossil-wood in mass production. As mentioned before, there are different structures in fossil-wood. Even within the hard or soft structure, the texture is different. Black paint could be easily diffused in some texture while not for others. Thus, well diffused part of a bead is darker than the other one and darkness is differed even in one bead (Fig. 3a). Although texture was carefully selected in quality product period, many mass product producers do not consider it.



Figure (3) Different colour (a), white lines do not fall in a straight line (b), and line not meeting at the center (c) in reproduced Pyu beads

Quality of decoration is loosing in reproduced Pyu beads. Due to careless painting the lines of rounded beads do not fall in straight line (Fig. 3b). Then, the lines do not reach the center (Fig. 3c). Early reproduced Pyu beads were carefully made by producers. Period for dry up the bead after polishing process, for example, take at least 3 days. In mass production, however, it takes only one or two days. Thus, the amount and distribution of black paint diffusion into the fossil-wood varied and inferior quality product resulted. Of the Pyu bead producers, one noticed these points and hired a worker who understands the structure of fossil-wood to cut the stone by giving good salary while others do not notice it. These inferior quality products could not maintain Pyu heritage in the future.

Due to introduction of mass production, market is also saturated and value of reproduced Pyu beads decreased. Marketing is not an important factor when demand is high and all products could be sold out. However, when market is saturated and demand is low and availability of connection to the customer become important. In this situation, if they get a connection with customer they tried to sell out their products at a minimum price. Thus, the value of cultural heritage is not benefited by the producers as they have to sell the beads without profit. Sometimes brokers (interpreters or tour guides) were given to about 40% of the product to get market.

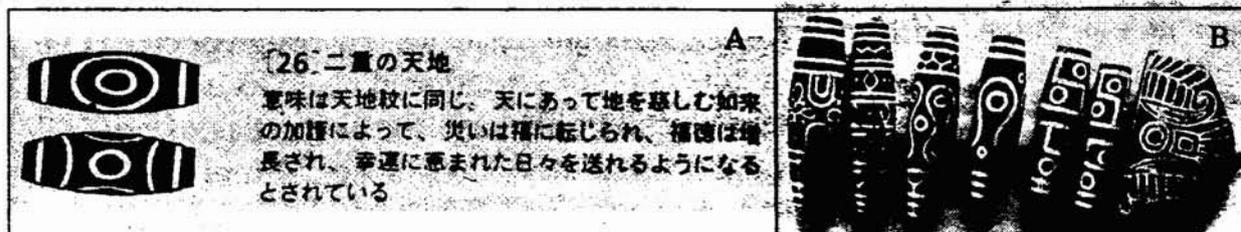


Figure (4) Some new designs ordered from Japan (a) and customized fossil-wood products (b)

Note: the meaning of Japanese words is that "two heavens: by keeping of this symbol of heaven, good luck and happiness will bring while disasters are turn away. Thus, one can be live on long happiness life"

From the above situation, it could be concluded that reproduced Pyu bead was developing in two ways: tradition and fancy. Original reproduced Pyu bead was made of hard fossil-wood. Its main customers were Chin, Taiwan and Japan. However, Chin orders soft fossil-wood beads for economic reasons (hard one is expensive) and Taiwan and Japan order Pyu beads in their desired design (Fig. 4). Recently, customized orders were received instead of Chin beads. It can be assumed as an extension of Chin bead production or loosing of the role of Chin beads in international market.

Soft fossil-bead, on the other hand, is used as a fancy product that is cheap and easily bought by many people as a souvenir. It is mainly distributed to tourist sites of Myanmar. Chins also traded these beads to India through Kalay. Recently developed transparent fossil-wood beads are not the heritage of Pyu. It is just an extension business of bead production techniques developed based on ancient Pyu beads.

Thus, it is fair to conclude that although Pyu beads was reproduced and commercialized based on the remains of ancient Pyu beads its original properties are gradually loosing. It is necessary to maintain the original properties of Pyu since both political and economic benefit of heritage could sustain only if original identities of heritage is maintained.

Conclusion and Discussion

At the beginning of this paper four major questions have been raised to be answered through this study. The first question is "how Pyu beads emerged as a cultural heritage?" Traditionally heritages were classified as tangible and intangible based on their nature. The process that Pyu bead reproduction became a heritage is different from traditional heritages. Although ancient Pyu beads are tangible, these were regenerated or reproduced again as a Pyu beads during the last century. Since reproduced beads have the properties of original Pyu beads, it was appreciated by the Chins who have close cultural links with the Pyus. Therefore, the production is sustained for nearly 80 years. As long as it is maintained as Pyu bead's original properties it could be assumed as a cultural heritage since it carried the identity of Pyu and also identity of Myanmar. There is also a linkage between Pyu and Chin culture, in other words, it helps in maintaining the Chin culture. However, the meaning of each

design included in the bead is still missing. Figure (6) shows the new design ordered from Japan. The meaning of the design is seen in this figure. It is necessary to find out the meaning and belief depicted by each Pyu bead design.

The second problem is that “how this culture is commercializing?” Although it is traditionally known that heritage is costly, reproduction Pyu bead not only keep culture but make profit since the beginning. Later, the production emerged as one distinguished economy in the region. This commercialization process is connected to the third problem of “how is Pyu bead production generating economic development of the study area?” When Pyu bead reproduction reach its peak, not only Phayagyi Village itself and nearby villages and Natogyi Town had benefited from the production. It is still one of the main economies in Phayagyi. While many heritage sites were benefiting from the visit of tourists, Phayagyi Village derived direct economic benefit from Pyu bead reproduction. Thus, it is clear that heritage could generate regional development.

The last question is concerned with the maintenance of heritage. As we have discussed above, original properties of Pyu bead was gradually missing in reproduced Pyu bead. The commercialization process forced producers to deviate gradually from original Pyu bead and leading to the fancy beads. For the producers, it is necessary to keep the original quality and identity of Pyu bead because if production changed from the traditional cultural craft to fancy product, it will be difficult to sustain the production. In fact, neighbouring countries could export the raw material to their country and they could make more beautiful design and more qualified products than beads produced by Phayagyi Villagers. If that situation occurred, it will be difficult for the current producer to compete with the new comers.

With the mechanization of production process, any amount of bead could be made by only one producer within a short period. Therefore, producers are competing by lowering the price of beads. At the same time, many inferior quality products from mass production were distributed to the world through Taiwan and Japan. Due to these inferior quality products, the original meaning of heritage will lose its value and it will have a negative repercussion on the future bead production. If this situation happened, the heritage status of the Pyu bead will gradually lose its importance and it will become a mere fancy product. Therefore, there is an urgent need to organize an organization that could maintain the quality of Pyu bead.

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