

**YANGON UNIVERSITY
THESIS SUBMITTED FOR THE MASTER
OF ARTS DEGREE (ANTHROPOLOGY)**

**THE SOCIAL ORGANIZATION OF
THE "THET" NATIONALS OF
TAMANGTHAR VILLAGE, MAUNGTAW TOWNSHIP,
RAKHINE STATE, UNION OF MYANMAR**

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Foreword

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IN TAMANG THAR VILLAGE, MAUNGTAW TOWNSHIP,
RAKHINE STATE**

| <u>Chapter</u> | <u>Contents</u> | <u>Pages</u> |
|----------------|---|--------------|
| Introduction | | 1 |
| Chapter 1. | <u>History</u> | 3 |
| | (A) Historical Background | 3 |
| | (B) Their origins, spread, and population | 10 |
| | (C) Geographical Features of the location | 14 |
| | (1) Location, area, and topography | 14 |
| | (2) Climate, Flora and Fauna | 15 |
| | (3) Building village and construction of houses | 16 |
| | (4) Personal Features and mode of dress | 18 |
| Chapter 2. | <u>Social Organization</u> | 21 |
| | (A) Family kinship relations and customs | 21 |
| | (B) Child training and education | 26 |
| | (C) Bachelor and maiden life | 27 |
| | (D) Betrothal and Marriage | 29 |
| | (E) Pregnancy and confinement | 35 |
| | (F) Naming ceremony | 36 |
| | (G) Ear boring, cradle initiation and earring | 37 |
| | (H) Divorce | 38 |
| Chapter 3. | <u>Traditions and customs</u> | 39 |
| | (A) Language and literature | 39 |
| | (B) Proverbs, riddles, and folk-tales | 42 |
| | (C) Music and traditional dances | 45 |
| | (D) Sport and Games | 49 |
| | (E) Illness and cures | 49 |
| | (F) Death and Funeral | 50 |
| | (G) Inheritance | 51 |
| | (H) Diet | 52 |

| <u>Chapter</u> | <u>Contents</u> | <u>Pages</u> |
|----------------|--|--------------|
| Chapter 4. | <u>Economy</u> | 54 |
| | (A) Economic enterprises | 54 |
| | (B) The choice of the taung-yar hillside plot and its taboos. | 54 |
| | (C) Cultivation and livestock breeding | 56 |
| | (D) Hunting and Fishing | 57 |
| | (E) Handicrafts | 59 |
| | (F) Commerce, weights and measurements | 59 |
| Chapter 5 | <u>Religion</u> | 62 |
| | (A) Religious beliefs | 62 |
| | (B) Traditional offering of the animism | 62 |
| | (C) Seasonal festivities | 63 |
| | (1) Sacrifice to the guardian 'nat' of the creek | 63 |
| | (2) The propitiation ceremony to the 'nat' | 64 |
| | (3) Sacrifice to the guardian spirit of the home | 65 |
| | (4) Sacrifice to the guardian spirit of the farm | 65 |
| | (D) Initiation ceremony* | 65 |
| Chapter 6. | <u>Local Government and Administration of Justice</u> | 67 |
| | (A) Local administration of the past | 67 |
| | (B) Current local administration | 67 |
| | (C) Administration of justice | 68 |
| Conclusion | | |
| References | | |
| Appendix | List of informants | |

Introduction

Aim

The Union of Myanmar is a nation comprising various national races. The unity and stability of the Union of Myanmar, founded on the united strength of the national races, and the perpetuation of the indigenous national races, depend mainly on the concerted effort on the part of the people for the development of an established language, culture, and customs and traditions to be abided by.

Moreover, now is the time when the Government is striving to achieve unity among the national races and the development of the border areas. There are 135 national races residing in the Union of Myanmar. They have their own traditions and customs respectively. It is assumed that the sound knowledge of the traditions and culture of the indigenous races of the Union would surely be of great advantage in achieving national unity, and in the implementation of the developmental tasks at the border areas.

In carrying out developmental tasks, mutual understanding of cultural and traditional aspects of each indigenous race, mutual respect and assistance, cordiality and confidence are needed. Only then will the Government be able to find solutions for difficulties arising out of the internal problems. Therefore, every indigenous race should keep up its own traditions and customs through which they would gain much awareness of their history, culture and roots, and to value and preserve their invaluable heritage. Moreover, by preserving one's traditions, others would come to respect them as well, and thus promoting harmony and unity among the national races of the Union.

It is the duty of the anthropologists to bring about a widespread knowledge of the traditions and customs of the indigenous races. By presenting the culture and social behaviour of the race, the anthropologist could help dispose the social ills arising from traditions, and at the same time keep the good elements for the progress of the particular race. The study of the traditional culture of a race could also yield the developmental yardstick for the social mobility of the race in question. There are instances where different cultures merged despite the regional and traditional diversities. Historical evidence show that the diminishing and the disappearance of the traditions of an indigenous race of a nation as a sign of the deterioration process of that nation in question. Therefore, it is the duty of every member of the national races to make efforts for the preservation and perpetuation of his own race.

The differences in culture between one race and the other are not caused by unequal distribution of intelligence or social class levels, but by religious beliefs, customs and place of residence, argues the student of anthropology, citing various sound evidences. This Master's thesis is the result of the field study carried out with the intention of adding more reliable evidences for the traditions of an indigenous race of the Union of Myanmar, so that future generations may benefit by it in their study of the national races of Myanmar.

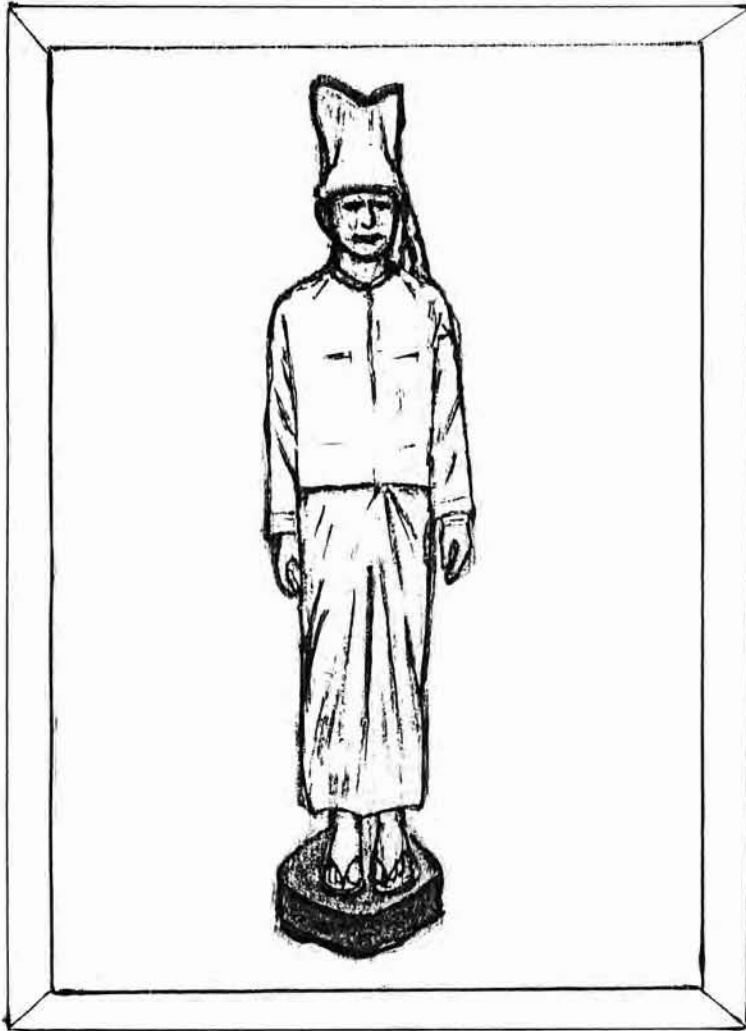
On the choice of the topic for the thesis-

The title- "Social Organization of the Thet nationals of Tamangthar village in Maungtaw Township, Rakhine State" is chosen for the following reasons.

- (1) That the day to day livelihood activities, social relations, the spirit of unity and cooperation in social and religious occasions, and the conceptual beliefs of the Thet national are of special interest for the student of anthropology.
- (2) That Tamangthar is a village, which relatively abounds in singularities.
- (3) That the whole village being Buddhists.
- (4) That the village residents can communicate in Rakhine and Myanmar apart from their native dialect, Thet, and that in some cases the Myanmar interpretation could be satisfactorily supplemented through the other two.
- (5) That the villagers there are still practicing their traditional customs.
- (6) That the courting lyrics used by the Thet bachelors and maids are of great interest in terms of meaning and rhetorics.
- (7) That Tamangthar village situated at the head of the Kyein Chaung Creek is a fertile land filled with natural scenic beauty- and,
- (8) That there are overland as well as waterways accessible.



Large hole at ear lobe of that women



That's traditional dress



That's traditional dress

Chapter – 1

History

(A) Historical Background

The Thet ethnic group, which had originally settled in northern Myanmar, moved southward in the event of pressure from the late comers who entered Myanmar. In so doing, the Thets split into 2 groups, one of which reached central Myanmar, and settled down at Thayet, Bagan, and Kyaukse. Therefore, Myanmar came to settle in Kyaukse around A.D 9th century, it is said that the Thets were already in the region. As such, it can be assumed that the Thets were in central Myanmar long before 9th century A.D. That was the group that went east. The other group went west and reached north of Rakhine State and the Chittagon Hills region. The time of their arrival should be traced back in the Rakhine history which had kept a reliable chronological records for a considerable number of past events.

Nga Tone Min (King Nga Tone)

'The Vesali dynasty ended when in 1563 A. B, (794 A.D) Mongolians from the north invaded *Rakhine Vesali* during the reign of *King Pephyu*, who succeeded 2 alien *Mro* dynasties and 9 *Maha Sandra* dynasties¹. Thus a stretch of one year passed when the kingdom was left without a king. *Sula Sandra*, the last king of the Vesalis marched to *Thindwe* (Tagoung), leaving behind his queen with a 3-month pregnancy. The child was born during the reign of the alien *Amyatu*, the *Mro* king, for fear of whose wrath the child was brought to the city of *Theindanphyar Sitantin*, the place where the Thets had settled down. At the age of 23, he founded and ruled *Sambawet* city with the help of the *Rakhines*². 'The Thet people proclaimed him as *Nga Do Min* (our khing), and from thence derived the name *Nga Tone Min*. There were hundreds of thousands of Thet warriors during that king's reign³.

Dassaraja and the Thets

'In A. D 1123, *Dassaraja*, the son of *Kolia* rebuilt the second *Purein* city and took over the *Rakhine* throne⁴. 'In A. D 1128, the 20-year old king *Dassaraja* had to face rebellion from the combined forces of the *Thets* and the 12 west Bengal cities¹.

¹ New Treatise on Rakhine History.

² New Treatise on Dhanyawadi History

³ New Treatise on Rakhine History

⁴ New Treatise on Rakhine History

Phayre, 46

page - 307

page- 100-101

page 308

page 342-343

'He sent *Koyangyi Zeyabo*, the court minister to quell the rebellion. When a sarus crane carrying a piece of hide found circling in the direction of the march, it was shot down presented to the king². That omen was interpreted by the court minister *Kawikyaw* (the learned sage) as a victory sign because the rebels, the Indians, and the Thets would have the same fate as that of the crane and the hide as They represent the same birth planet. He was given a young full grown elephant as a reward³.

Nga-Hnalone Min and the Thets

During the reign of *Nga-Hnalone Min* (A.D 1226-1250), who made *Neri-usara* Taungu city of Rakhine his capital, the Indians, together with the Thets rebelled, and *Physoegyi Dhamma Zaya*, the court minister well - versed in the 9 warfare strategies¹, was ordered to march and deal with the uprising. Along the march, the troops came across a fight between a crow and a heron, and the crow was brought down with a broken wing. That was reported to the king, and the learned sage interpreted the event as a favourable omen for the success of the war because the crown, which had the same birth planet as the Indians, was defeated by the heron whose planet was similar to the Myanmars. And the court minister continued the march forward.

Min Htee and the Thets

In A.D 1283, the powerful and authoritative *Min Htee* ascended the throne at the capital *Lay Kyet* of the kingdom of Rakhine. During his reign, the Thets attacked *Mahasoe* and *Shin-nge-kuto* villagers in A.D 1313. Khing Min Htee ordered the Senior Court Minister *Raja Thingyan* to lead the army to attack the Thet khindom.

Raja Thingyan had to come back unable to achieve his objective as the Thets went up the *Missri Mountain* for safe haven. He pleaded with the king to grant him time until the rainy season, promising that he would defeat them once the Buddhist Lent was over. *Raja Thingyan's* forces surrounded Mt. *Missri* one month before the end of the Lent. As an expert in astrology, *Raja Thingyan* foresaw 3 great earthquakes occurring on the full moon of *Tazaunmon*, one month after *Thadingyut*, the ending month of the Lent. So he sent an emissary informing the Thets that should they not come down and surrender, they themselves as well as the whole mountain

¹New Treatise on Dhanydawbon

page 118,119

²Myanmar Minmyar Ayaydawbon

³Dhanyawadi Ayaydawbon,

page 30

would be thrown into the ocean. When the Thets didn't seem to be convinced, Raja Thingyan carved into the spur and tied very strong ropes, and waited for the earthquake to begin.

When the great earthquake took place on the full moon of *Tazaundine*, Raja Thingyan tightened the ropes while making a tumultuous charge. The whole mountain was shaken by the quake. Again, he sent an emissary and informed the Thets he tolerated out of pity for them. Some Thets were convinced, others were not. Raja Thingyan waited for the second quake. Just before the expected time, he demand their surrender, and the quake followed with great force. For the third time an emissary was sent to remind the Thets of his tolerance out of pity for them, and that the 3rd and final quake would destroy them all. This time, the Thets surrendered offering brides and treasury for appeasement.

The Second Thet Uprising

Again, during the reign of *Min Htee*, natives of foreign from the 11 city-states of *Maukthuza Benga* enticed the Thets to create a collaborated havoc under the aegis of the king of *Dehlipasa*. Min Htee sent an army of 150,000 men under the command of *General Dhamma Zeya* and *Koyangyi Pyathahto*. They marched by land riverine routes. On reaching *Mahasoe Kyun*, they found the Thets had firmly entrenched themselves for a solid defence at *Kyeintan* mountain. The *Kalas*, foreigners had also blocked the *Hinya* bay at the entrance to *Chittagon* with a fully armed fleet of 100 vessels. The two leaders discussed and decided on the situation as one where they could not afford the collaboration of the *Kalas* and the Thets as they realized that if the *Kalas* could be destroyed, the Thets would be an easy target. They positioned 10,000 soldiers from forces under *Saitinsar* and *Mrochaungsar* at *Mayeinwa*. Then 500 boats loaded with rocks were secretly sent out at night and sunk blocking the navigation routes of the *Kala* fleet. Next, a bamboo raft, fully loaded with inflammable stuff and gun powder jar in the shape of an armed soldier, was lit and floated down the river. The *Kala* vessels were forced to withdraw to the river mouth to avoid catching fire from the burning raft floating down the river. But they were blocked up by the sunken *Rakhine* boats, and thus destroyed in the fire. When their naval vessels were destroyed, the *Kala* land forces withdrew from *Chittagon* which was occupied by the *Rekhines* without fighting a battle. On hearing the fall of *Chittagon*, the Thet king was frightened out of his wits and came to surrender in person bringing a multitude of gifts. Then, the *Rakhine* forces continued marching up to *Maukthuza* and occupied the

city, which was put under the administrative jurisdiction of *Saitisar*. Likewise, the *Daga* city was put under court minister *Mrochaungsar's* rule. When the messenger from the capital brought orders to bring back the Thet king, the 2 senior ministers returned. Ngaphone, the thet king, was spared his life and taken care of. These were the affairs concerning the Thet ethnic group during the reign of King Min Htee.

TheThets and King Min Htee

The western Thet group of the *Chittagon* Hills tract in the northwest of Rakhine had struggled against the Rakhine monarchic rule at every opportunity. During that time, on the other side of the *Rakhine Yoma* mountain range the Thets under the Bagan rule were gaining strength by taking advantage of the declining political power of the Bagan monarchs. The decline of Bagan made the subordinate despots more powerful. Thus, on the Myanmar side, the Three *Shan Nyinaung* (brothers) contemporaries (A.D 1283-1389) to the Rakhine king Min Htee, came to a height in dominance in what was known as the *Pinya* area. *Uzana*(A.D 1321-1340) was the monarch at Pinya. 'The rule of Bagan was just a shown piece while the real power lay on the influential feudal lords. As such, the Thets' home-ground city of *Missagiri*, close to Bagan, and a place under its rule on the other side of the *Ayeyawady* river, rebelled against Bagan¹.

Missagiri was over 200 miles across the river from the Shan Brothers' centers of power, Pinya and Sagaing. It was also in discord with these feudal States. The offsprings of *Thihathu*, *Uzana*, *Kyawswa*, *Nawrahta*, *Athinga Kyawswa*, and *Taraphyargyi* were of prominent personalities, and were fighting among themselves to get the throne. Therefore, Missagiri, the Thet stronghold, enjoyed favourable circumstances to become a formidable force.

In A.D 1333, M.E 605, the Thets from the east crossed over to the western part of the Rakhine Yoma range and attacked villages along the foothills, which were under the Rakhine rule. The headman of Lamon village reported the matter to King Min Htee, who ordered Court Ministers *Rajasithu* and Raja *Thingyan* to march on with one million soldiers and 20,000 guards. The Ministers' warfare tactics were for *Taunkhwinsar Ye Kyaw*, *Kanyan*, and *Thandwei* to march with 10,000 soldiers from the *Mindon* route; *Pandawsar Thadoe Aung* with 10,000 by the *Sanpyinkamar* route; *Deletsar Kyaw Pon* with 10,000 by the *Delet* route, *Shoosar Nyoyaun* with 10,000 by

¹Mahayaza Wingyi (1)
Hmannan (1)

the *Shuthayway* route¹; *Kalamanaungsar Chittu* and *Thandaunsar Lethathu*, each with 10,000 from the *Thelu kahmin* route. The King himself marched on with 20,000 guards and 30,000 *Kalas* by the *Sane-ma-e* route.

The King provided a beautiful woman to each division of the army and gave instructions as follows. The division marching along the *Taunkhwin – Kyeinthali* was close to the King of *Bago*, and if they should advance, a head-on clash must be avoided. Instead, the woman in her best attire, complete with her retinue of servants be shown in. The division along the *Dalet* route was closed to the *Pyu State* of *Pinya*, and if *Uzana*, the *Pinya* king came out to face them, they were to use the same method. When the *Thet* king was captured, and only when *Min Htee* himself had taken *missagiri*, would the front division and the support division be positioned. The *Rakhine* King was to be informed of every stage of the war campaign. Thus, *Raja Thingyan* brought a qualified woman and her retinue along. On arrival at *Taitar city*, he sent the competent and artful *Laymyosar Thandaing* to *Thet* king *Shin Saw* bearing a letter informing that he had come to present gifts and a bride.

Being very pleased, the *Thet* king showered an abundance of presents on *Laymyosar*, and in return gave *Raja Thingyan* one full-grown elephant, a gold sash, a gold betel tray, a gold chain, a gold spittoon and 2 horses equipped with golden reins and saddles. All these were accompanied by the *Thet* emissary, *Mindatsar Byammathi*. When *Raja Thingyan* learned of that, he ordered the soldiers to position themselves on the *Mt. Pho Khaung*, and he keep just an adequate number with him. When the *Thet* court minister *Byammathi* arrived, the woman was auditioned.

Byammathi recounted his mission mentioning, as he was so informed by the *Rakhine* minister, that the woman was *Min Htee's* sister. The *Thet* king was overjoyed and came out of the city limits to celebrate with his forces. On hearing that the *Thet* king was out of the city, *Raja Thingyan* sent forward *Dagasar Ye Aung Naing* with 10,000 guards troops to present the woman. Then, the *Kantha Myosar, Tantabo*, accompanied by 10,000 guard troops was ordered to march on a round-about route closing in the *Thet* king from behind.

The woman was presented to the *Thet* king, *Shin Saw*, in the midst of his celebrations, and he was enjoying the festivities throughout the evening in the company of that beautiful woman when attacked from the front and back. The outcome was that the *Thet* king and his 2 younger sons, *Saw Phyu* and *Saw Tu* were

¹ The present *Ann, Dalet, Lamu, Yu* etc. . . Being west of the *Rakhine Yoma*, the *Thet* region is located in the lee side of the *Rakhine* mountain range.

captured. Then the Rakhine forces marched on to Missagiri, the Thet capital, took the eldest son, Saw Sone, the chief Queen Shin Myat Hls –2 other lesser queens, and all the palace household retinue. The Thet King, Shin Saw, and 3 sons, 3 queens and 2 daughters, and palace female household retinue were entrusted with Dagasar Ye Aung Naing to bring up to the Rakhine king on the second waxing day of *Tabodwe*¹, 695 M.E.

After gaining over the Thets at Missagiri in a bloodless tactful warfare, the Rakhine troops marched on to Pyay, whose king, not daring to face the attack, surrendered to Raja Thingyan at Karma town offering elephants, 50 full grown, and 20 serviceable, gold, silver, and textiles for appeasement. Taking back all these, and 10,000 Thet households, the troops returned to Rakhine on the 13th waning day of *Taboung*², 695 M. E.

The Thet king was given Kyaukmatha and Kyaukphyar villages. The Thet princess, Saw Mauk, was made a royal concubine. The younger princess was wedded to Annsar Nga Aungthu, son of Raja Thingyan. The 10,000 Thet households were settled in villages established along the Ann and Yue creeks. The eldest prince, Saw Sone was made Kyawetsisar, the middle son, Saw Phyu, the Meechaungsar, and the youngest, Saw Tu, the Kinsar respectively. Kept in the close vicinity, the 3 princes made off for the eastern territories by way of the Pho Khaung mountain pass at the head of Laymyo. However, the remaining Thet king was not harmed as a consequence, and his privileges kept intact. The 3 princes took refuge under Uzana, who made Saw Sone the Myinsaisar, and Saw Phyu, under the name of Min Yan Naing, was made Pyaysar during the reign of Kyawswa Min. The youngest, Saw Tu, who went to serve Sagaing Min, was made Ahmyintsar. These were the events in the Rakhine archives which described relations between the Bagan dominated Thet King Min Shin Saw and his contemporary Min Htee of the Rakhine kingdom³.

¹According to the archives of the Myanmars from the other side of the Yoma, which is the Rakhine king invaded Thayet and took the Thet royal family back to Rakhine⁴. The 3 princes were educated under the noble Sage who was learned in astrology and Buddhist Scriptures. The noble teacher foresaw, in his dream, that the eldest prince drank up the waters of Samon river; the middle one that of Pho Oo Maw

¹ 11th month of Myanmar calendar

² 12th month of Myanmar calendar

³(a) New Treatise on Rakhine History

(b) New Treatise on Dhanyawadi History

(c) Dhanyawadi Ayaydowbon

⁴Volume 6, of the Glass Palace Chronicle

page 370, 376

page 125, 129

page 33,36

page 401,403

river; and the youngest, the Ayeyarwady river. He advised the princes to go to Sagaing and Pinya where they would all become kings, and reminded them not to forget him then. The predictions were made known to the royal parents, and the family, with its retinue, left Rakhine. At Pinya, the eldest prince served under *Pinyasar Uzana*, the donor of 7 monasteries, and was made *Myinsaisar*. The middle brother also served under Uzana, but was awarded the charge of Pyay only under his sibling successor, *Ngarzeeshin Kyawswa*. The youngest brother served under *Sagaing Min*, Sinbyushin Taraphyar and was made in-charge of *Ahmyint town*, and later became king after the death of *Thadoe Minphyar*.

U Ba Than's 'Myanmar History' described the attack by the Rakhine king Min Htee who took the Thet king Min Shin Saw and the royal family to Rakhine.

After that, the royal family left Rakhine and got back to Myanmar. Of the three sons, the eldest served under Pinya Uzana, and was rewarded the charge of *Myinsaing*. His younger brother first served under Pinya Uzana, then *Ngarsishin Kyawswa* and assumed the name Saw Yan Naing when given charge of Pyay. The youngest son served under *Sagaing Min Shinbyu Shin* and was rewarded the charge of *Taloke* and *Yamethin* and then the charge of Ahmyint town during the reign of Thadoe Minphyar after whom he succeeded, by popular demand, as *King Mingyi Swasawkei* at Inwa.

In Minthuwan's 'Lawkathara Pyo' vol.2, page (b), it is described as follows. Min Shin Saw founded Thayetmyo in 688 M. E and ruled the Thet populace. The Thet king had 3 sons, *Saw Sone*, *Saw Phyu*, and *Saw Tu*.

The Thets attacked villages on the Rakhine Yoma. So, Min Htee, the Rakhine king sent Chief Court Minister Raja Thingyan to invade Thayet. In 695 M.E, the Minister crossed over the Yoma, seized the Thet royal family, and them back to Rakhine.

Once in Rakhine, Min Shin Saw made his sons study under the noble sage who knew the 3 volumes of Buddhist Scriptures, and astrology. When the brothers had finished their studies, the noble sage made predictions for them. In a dream he had, the eldest son *Saw Sone* drank up the water of *Samon river*, the middle son *Saw Phyu* that of *Pho U Maw river*, and the youngest the *Inwa Myitnge river*. The noble teacher summoned the 3 princes and instructed them to go to *Saging* and *Pinya* because they all were destined to become kings there, and reminded them not to forget him. In 705 M.E, the princes set out for the eastern kingdom. On reaching

Sagaing and Pinya, Saw Sone was given Myinsaing Myo, and Saw Phyu, Pyay. Saw Tu, under the name Taraphyar Sawkei, was given Ahmyint Myo, and later became 'Mingyi Swasawkei' who reign at Inwa. After 16 years of his becoming king, he invited his former teacher, the Rakhine noble sage to the capital and conferred upon him the title 'Maha Thingaraja' and made his mentor.

Thus it proved the role of the Thets who came south from upstream in the north of Myanmar in the later part of the 9th century A.D. They had good relations with those around, and as it was a monarchic era, they had to migrate, fight wars, and struggle for survival according to the wishes and whims of the despots. The Thets maintained relations with both the Rakhines and Myanmar monarchs since it was the era of the 2 contemporaries. The racial group faded out at the close of the *Bagan era*. They might have intermingled just like the *Pyus*. Only what was assumed as formerly of the Thet race, the *Kadus*, could be found in the *Mu river* valley. However, to the west of the Rakhine Yoma, the Thet's role is still alive and active as one of the indigenous races co-existing with other Rakhine ethnic groups such as the *Dainets* and the *Mros*. They have their own culture and language and had been a united force under the Rakhine rule. In the *Sagaing Htupayone* stone inscriptions dated A.D 1442, depicting the coronation of *Narapati*, it was mentioned that the Rakhine king, ruler of *Thet* and *Mro* races also attended the ceremony.

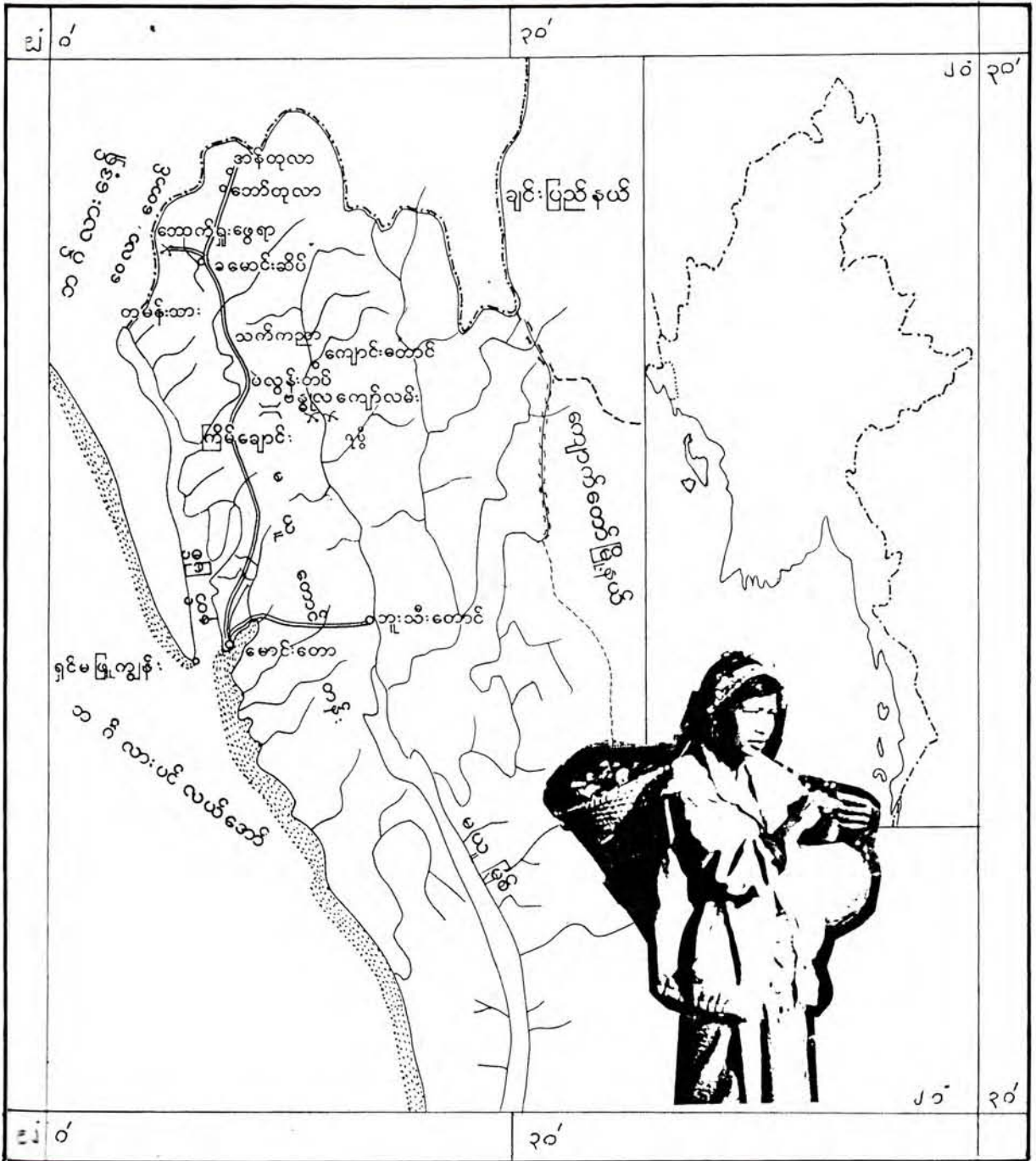
(B) Their origins, spread, and population

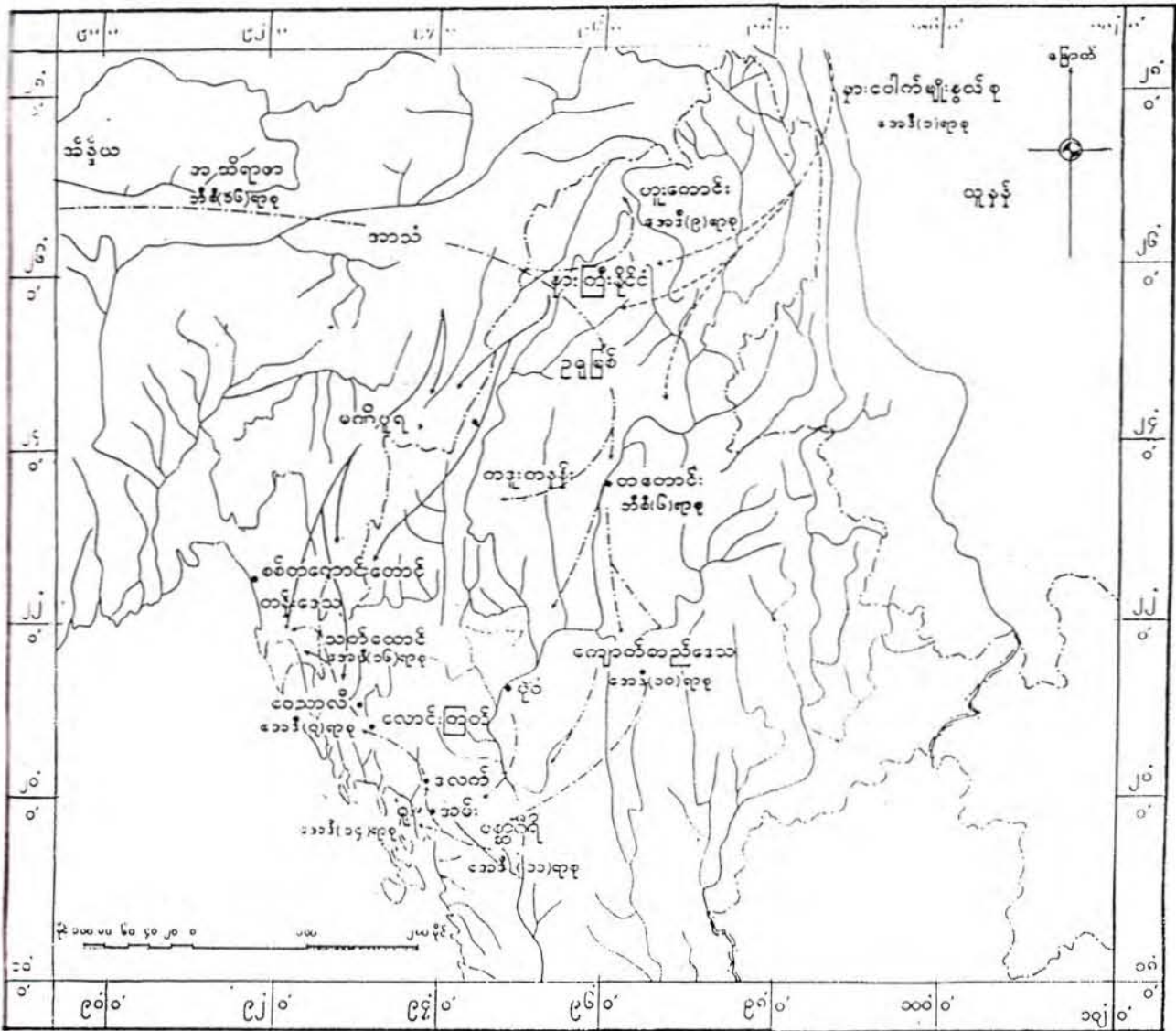
The Origins of the Thet ethnic group

The Thets called themselves *Asak*, meaning the descendants of the *Cakya* dynastic clan. The Rakhines called them Thets, and they were distinguished as 2 groups depending on the exotic earlobe ornaments of the Thet women. The Rakhines in Chittagong district, Bangladesh have an additional name for them calling them Mee Thet. They are known to others as *Chak*, the written form is *Sak*, a likely deviation of *Asak*.

Among the Thets themselves, the name is *Asak*. There is no variations of the name in terms of locality. According to Rakhine records, *Asak* is described as eastern Thet, which is also known by the name '*Myanmar Thet*'. In A.D 1333, the Rakhine king, *Min Hteeretaliated* the Thets attacks on Rakhine territories, and the Thet city, (what is now *Thayet*) was destroyed, and the Thet royal family and people were brought back as captives. As they came from the east, and from Myanmar, they were known as Myanmar Thets. The *Chakmas* who were in the Chittagong hill tract were

Northern Kachine villages





မြန်မာနိုင်ငံသို့သက်တိုင်းရင်းသားများအခြေချနေထိုင်မှု ပြင်မြေပုံ

ရှင်းလင်းချက်

- အဘိဓာန်**
ဗဟိုစေတီမှ ငွေ ပြောင်းဝင်ထောက်လှမ်းခြင်း ပြင်ဆင်ခြင်း၊ ရခိုင် ဘုရင်များတွင် အိမ် ၁၆ နေရာ ရှိခဲ့သည်။ မြန်မာအစိုးရများတွင် အများအပြား ငွေလွှဲလေသော အစိုးရအဖွဲ့များ ဝေခံခဲ့ရသည်။
- စကောင်း**
မြန်မာ့စွယ်စုံကျမ်း တွင် အိမ် ၆ နေရာအပေါ် ပြင်ဆင်ထားပြီး ဖြစ်သည်ဟု ဆိုသည်။ မြန်မာ အစိုးရတွင် ငွေ ထည့်သွင်းမှု အပြစ် ပေးခြင်း ဖြစ်သည်။
- ဟူးကောင်း၊ ၂၅**
ပထမဆုံး ဝင် ထောက်လှမ်းသော သက်တိုင်းရင်းသား အခြေချနေထိုင်မှု ဖြစ်သည်။ ဝေခံ ၁ နေရာ ရှိခဲ့သည်။ နေထိုင်ခဲ့ကြသည်။ ဟူးကောင်းတွင် နားကြီး နိုင်ငံဟု ခေါ်သော ဝေခံ ဖြစ်သည်။
- နားပေါက်မျိုးနွယ်စု**
ဟူးကောင်းတွင် နားပေါက်မျိုးနွယ်စု နိုင်ငံကြောင်း ဝေခံ ၁ နေရာအပေါ် အိမ်ခြံမြေသည် ငွေထည့်သွင်းမှု၊ ကတား၊ ကနန်းတိုင်း အစိုးရ၊ အိမ်ထောင်များ ဖြစ် ကြပေသည်။
- ကျောက်ဆည်စေတီ**
ဝေခံ ၆ နေရာ ၁၁ နေရာအတွင်း သက်တိုင်း ရှိပြီး ဝေခံများ အခြေချနေထိုင်ခဲ့သည်။ ပုဂံသို့ တိုင်းစား ဖြစ်ခဲ့သည်။
- ပစ္စာနီရီ**
မြန်မာများ ကျောက်ဆည်၊ ပုဂံစေတီတို့အပြင် ချောင်းကျောက်လှေအစားအစာအဖွဲ့အစည်းများ ရခိုင်စားနပ်ရိက္ခာ ပြောင်းရွှေ့ခြင်း ဖြစ်သည်။
- အိမ်၊ ၅၊ ၁ လက်**
ရခိုင်ဘုရင် မင်းညီထွန်း သက်တိုင်း ရှင်စောကို စောင့်ရှောက်ပြီးနောက် သက်တိုင်းစောင့်ရှောက် တပ် သောင်းကို အခြေချထားခဲ့သော စေတီများ ဖြစ် သည်။
- သက်တိုင်း**
ရခိုင်ဘုရင်များ လက်ထက် အုပ်ချုပ်ရေးတွင် တိုင်းကြီး ၁၂ တိုင်းခွဲရှိ အုပ်ချုပ်ရာ ဟူး စစ် တကောင်းတောင်တန်းစောအဖွဲ့ သက်တိုင်း သည် တစ်ခု အပါအဝင်ဖြစ်သည်။ မြောက်ဘက်စောတိုင်း 'စောင့်ရှောက်' အဖြစ် ခြံစည်းခဲ့ရာ 'သက်တောင်' အဖြစ်သို့ ပြောင်းလဲခဲ့သည်။

called Rakhine Thets, and western Thets since they lived in the west. 'The Thets were one of the 7 Myanmar ancestral groups having a variety of racial groups ¹ as Brahmin *Thet*, *Myon Thet*, *Myanmar Thet*, *Phy Thet*, *Pyone Thet*, and Thets of the Shan ancestry.

The Thets believed that they were the same stock as the *Dainet (Chakma)* in accordance with the following folk tale.

Bago (Hanthawady) in Myanmar is founded by *Thets*, *Pyus* and *Kanyan*, and in one type of poem, the Thets are referred as *Bagosar*². From Bago, the Thet king over to *Mt. Thet Kyine*, in *Tawphayar* creek region of the Rakhine kingdom. He built a city where a total of 11,000 Thet households settled down. Thet Kyine mountain was strategically located, and no enemy could overcome it. There was only one route leading to it, and any enemy marching up could easily be annihilated by letting loose great logs down the route. But when the enemy caved into the mountain with ropes and threatened to pull the mountain down as an earthquake, the Thets were frightened out of their wits and ran off abandoning the city. The place where the prince was killed was aptly named *Min Taun*. The fleeing Thets entered the *Pichaung* creek and built a city on the banks of the *Matamura* river in Bangladesh. The Thets could not stay any longer in the woods since there was only a princess left. The princess distributed prawns for meals on their way to the city. Her relatives were given white prawns and the rest, red prawns. Those who got the white ones prepared meals at once and ate and entered the city, but those who got the red prawns had to spend sometimes washing the prawns white before cooking and were thus late in entering the city. These people were discriminated by the early arrivals and prohibited to enter the city. Only then the latter realized the trick played on them. The former group consisted of *Ahmatgyi* (senior court minister) and relatives were known as *Ahmatgyi Myo* (ministerial kins). The leader of the latter group was the *Ahmatnge* (junior court minister) and thus the present Thets were known as *Ahmatnge Myo*.

The *Ahmatgyi* group went in search of groom for the princess, one whose fingers would fit in with her ring. At that time, it so happened that a *Buddhist Kala* (foreign native) was on his way to gather bamboo. He was seized and made to put on the ring which was found to have fitted his fingers. The *Kala* was wedded to the princess and was made king. The descendants were called *Thet Kalas* who were said to be the *Bengali* speaking *Dainets (Chakmas)*.

¹Myanmarmin Oakchokepon Sardon (2)

²person with a finger in every pie

Settlements of Thet

The Thets were spread far and wide throughout the country since the early days of their settlement in Myanmar. The Thets described here in this paper had their place of origin in the Vela Mountain on the north of the *Mayu Mountain* range in the Bangladesh borders. The Thets at present residing in *Myauk-U Township* confirmed that Mt. Vela was their place of origin, and that their ancestors had live there happily. And according to Thet elders, it was learned that long before the British rule (A.D 1862), the Thets had worked the virgin soil in the Vela mountain area north of *Maungtaw township*, and had settled down in 10 villages.

Because of the feuding riots between the Kalas and the Rakhines that broke out on Thursday the 14th of May, 1942, the Thet left Mt. Vela, crossed over the *Mayu* mountain range and reached the Rakhine territories after difficult overland and riverine trek.

After Independence, some returned, but had to flee again in terror of the *Mujaheedins* rebels.

In 1959, with the help of the Government, the Thets, together with the Dainets and Mros of the Rakhine stock, built villages in Tamangthar, close to the Vela Mountain. There were 60 households at the beginning of the settlement, and were allotted 2 to 4 acres, and one cow to work the land. At present, according to the 1984 census there are only about 24 Thet households remained, the rest moving out in search of better places. They are spread widely in the north of Rakhine State, in such townships as Maungtaw, Butheetaung, Myauk-U, and Sittwe. Villages and wards include *Vela Taung, Ohntola, Bawdula, Khamaungseik, Taikchaung, Tamangthar, Thetkanya, Maungtaw Myoma Ward (6), Laymine Zawmatet, and Indin* in *Maungtaw township*; *Rampi and Pyeilonat* at the foothills, east of the *Mayu* mountain range in *Butheetaung township*; *Aungseik, Ywetpyin, Chaungwa, and Taunyindan* in *Rathetaung township*; *Thet Ywa, Myothit, and Sanchaseik* in *Myauk-U township*; and *Mintayar Chein* in *Sittwe township*.

Population

The Thets at present residing in the Rakhine State had first settled down in the northwestern region of Mt. Vela. After the Second World War, the unstabilities in the political situation led the dispersal of the race into Maungtaw, Butheetaung, Rathetaung, and Myauk-U townships.

The distribution of the Thet population according to townships and village tracts is as follows.

| Township | Village tract | Population | |
|-------------|---------------|---------------|-----|
| Maungtaw | Baushu Phwera | 209 | |
| | " | Hline Tho | 12 |
| | " | Khamaung Seik | 80 |
| | " | Tamangthar | 147 |
| | " | Thetkainya | 120 |
| | " | Ward (6) | 90 |
| | " | Zawmatat | 70 |
| | " | Indin | 22 |
| | total | 745 | |
| Butheetaung | Kyunpauk | 172 | |
| | " | Badana | 12 |
| | | total | 184 |
| Ratheetaung | Aungseik | 70 | |
| | " | Shokpyin | 134 |
| | " | Chaungwa | 10 |
| | " | Taunyindan | 126 |
| | | total | 340 |
| Myaük-U | Thetywa | 242 | |
| | " | Sanchaseik | 96 |
| | " | Myothit | 21 |
| | | total | 359 |
| Sittwe | | 30 | |
| Total | | 1658 | |

(C) Geographical features of the location

The Thets in Rakhine State, the Achak had their origins in Occacrit kingdom. The following was how they left their place of origin.

The kingdom there was ruled by Cakak dynastic king who had a daughter. Close to it was the kingdom of Witakupa (Wipadupa) which was a formidable stronghold. One day, the king of Witakupa forced the Occacrit king to surrender his daughter to him. The latter was in a dilemma because he dared not refuse, and at the same time he could not violate the ancestral code of marriage. Finally, the Minister's daughter was offered in place of the princess. The Witakupa king took her for the princess and accepted her. Later on, a child was born, and the young prince came over to pay a visit to King Occacrit, whom he assumed as his natural grandfather. The king received him and built him a separate palace residence. When the young prince left for his country, the palace household retinue brought milk and washed the residence. It was considered inauspicious since the young man was not of royal birth. While they were doing so one of the prince's men came back to retrieve the sword that the prince had left forgotten. He realized the situation at once and reported the matter to his master. The young man felt he could not bear the shame and made it clear to his father. Naturally, the Witakupa king bore grudge on the Occacrit king and the country. Thus, he took his revenge by marching to make war. Not being able to resist the oncoming forces, the Occacrit king and countrymen fled to the Rakhine Yoma mountains and settled down as the Thet race.

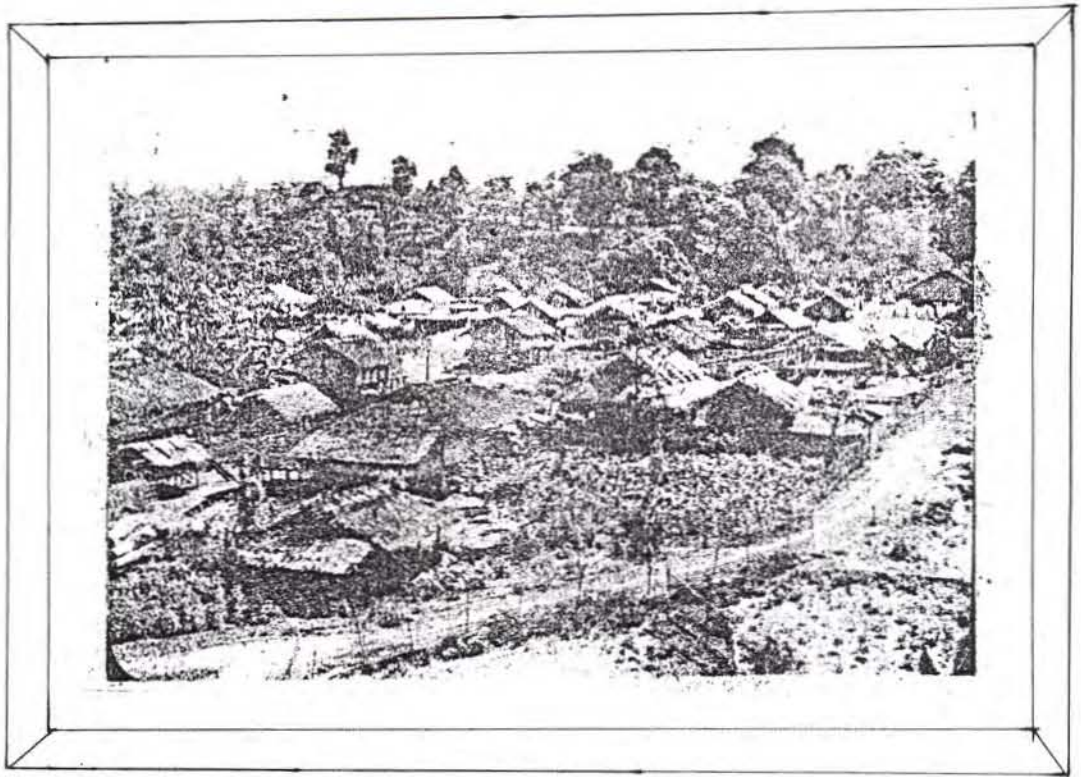
'Occacrit, believed to be the Thet king, is a name very much akin to King Occacrit of Mizima region of India. The Occacrit of Mizima was the Banares, whose offsprings founded Kapilawut whose citizens were of the Chaka ancestry¹.

(1) Location, area, and topography

The Thets reside in the westernmost border regions of Myanmar. That is to say, they settle in the north of Mayu mountain range on the Myanmar- Bangladesh borderlines and as such, the northernmost part of the Rakhine State.

In the north, there are the *Chittagong Hills* district, *Thet -taun*, *Phalan- taun* linking to where the Rakhine racial groups live, and farther on there are *Assam* and *Manipur*, the regions of the original Thets. In the east, there are the Mayu ranges, and the hilly regions con-joining the west Yoma. In the south are the *Natmyit River*

¹Department of Cultural Institute, 1982. May,6



Thet Nationals' village

valley and the river itself flowing through the valley in placid windings and bends. From there, the Bay of Bengal can be sighted. The Natmyit River begins from Mt. Vela, the Thets' haven. From the 1356 feet high Mt. Vela, the view to the south covers the summit of the bow-shaped Mayu range along with the fertile delta region of the Natmyit valley.

In exact topographical readings, the Thet territory is between North Latitudes 21-20 and 21-25, and East Longitudes 92-10 and 92-20. In other words, it is situated in the tropics.

Vela is a 1356 feet high mountain range which can be seen from the mouth of Natmyit river. The view from *Tamangthar* depicts Mt. Vela as the distinctly raised platform of land standing out from among the surrounding hill tracts. From Mt Vela, the *Mayu*, *Bimbaw*, *Hinth*, and *Hmainezari* mountain ranges can be seen. There are some plains dotted among the mountain ranges.

(2) Climate, flora and fauna

Climate

The Thet region enjoys a hot, damp tropical monsoon climate with an annual rainfall of about 174 inches. The rainy season is from May to October, the time when the southwest trade winds blow. June, July, and August, the mid-season months get more rain. Seventy-five percent of the annual rainfall occurs during these months. Sometimes storms break out during the initial and final parts of the season. Usually, they are the side swipes of the cyclones going into Bangladesh. However, hydrological and meteorological records show there had been a severe storm in May, 1926 with wind speeds up to 120 miles per hour hitting into Maungtaw township, and killing over 4,000 people and a considerable number of cattle.

The average temperature for this region is around 76 F, the hottest month being 96 F, and the coldest, 50 F. April and May are the hottest months, while the coldest are December and January.

Flora

Bamboo is the prominent natural vegetation. A variety of species by the names *Khayin*, *Myar*, *Madeka*, and *Taragu* are found mingled with other large trees. Types of trees include *Nabe*, *HtauKyant*, *Kanyin*, *Myaukngo*, *Thingan*, *Taunpeine*, *Thinganet*, *Thitkadoe*, *Htain*, *Myaukhloke*, *Sinpyun*, *Kokko*, *Pyinma*, *Padauk*, *Myaukhaung*, *Banyan*, *Thadut*, *Gantgaw*, *Pauk*, and *Letpan*. Vines and creepers include *Daungtalon*,

Letswut, Sinthat-mathay, moon seed, and Taunlamont. Pungens, gooseberries and amada etc, make up the weeds.

Fauna

Wildlife prosper in the mountain ranges of Vela, Mayu and other hill tracts. Elephants, tigers, and other wild beasts roam the region. It is the most densely inhabited areas in the Rakhine State. Besides, there are stages, deer, barking deer, mountain goats, bears, wild boars, hog badgers, long-tailed monkeys, chido chada monkeys, kalama monkeys, pangolins, bisons, and wolves. There are also varieties of snakes such as boa constrictors, cobras, vipers, pythons, common rat snakes banded kraits, king cobras, lizards, and tortoises in the reptile group. Birds and fowls include jungle fowls, pheasants, partridges, owls, jays, eagles, kites, parrots, collared doves, wild ducks, water fowls, heron, and egrets. The region is noted for its great number of elephants, wild boars, and parrots.

The most familiar fishes for the Thets are the fresh water species such as cat, fish, banded snake head, barbus, eel, etc.

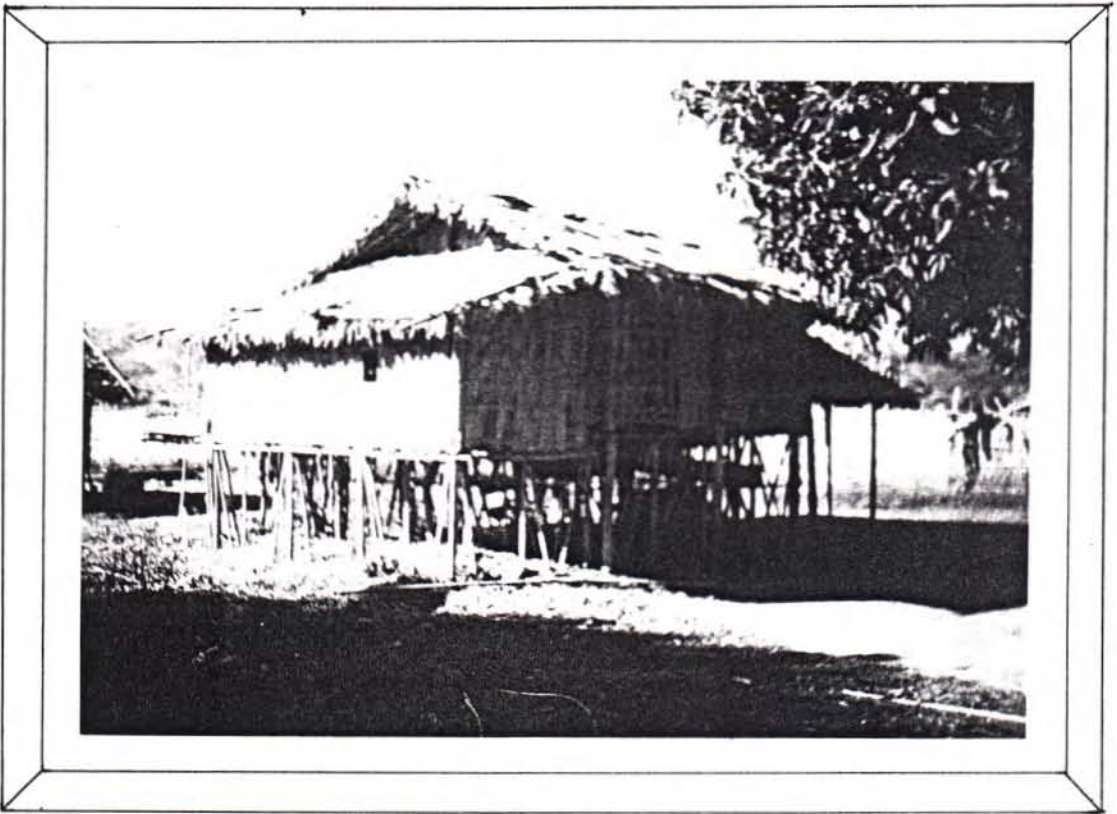
(3) Building village and construction of houses

Building villages

A village does not limit itself to one kin group, but is a mixture of various kin groups living in one place. The founder kin group makes up the majority of the residents and quit naturally, the village elders are from that kin group. For instance, the Thet village of *Tamanthar* in Maungitaw Township has different kin group residents such as *Indaw, Tanzein, Pimo, Kyampein,* and *Kankapaing*.

Villages are usually located on elevated grounds. The village lies lengthwise from north to south with houses facing the main path in between. The rooftops align with the path of the sun. Care is taken to abide by the rule that traditionally prohibited clans do not have houses built facing each other or to be side by side. For instance, the *Kankapaing* and the *Ngayanhsin* clans are not to be next door or adjacent neighbours.

Thets keep a bachelor house at a suitable place in the village. The cemetery is in the wood nearby so as to have easy access to firewood for cremation. The tree for the abode of the Nat(Spirit) is usually chosen from one of the large trees close to a creak, sometimes outside of the village. The coffin is prepared at the place. The bereaved family buys the coffin and keeps it there.



Form of Traditional House

For the founding of a village, a hog is killed under solemn oath. The elders do the job and injuries in liver means a negative sign, and a blocked bile also means the same.

Constructing houses

The traditional Thet home is a single- stored one with flooring. It is built facing east. There is no house built against the solar route.

Almost every home has 9 pillars. At the back is the washroom (*Kabah*) which stands on the 2 exterior pillars, and has no roof. The house stands at a height of 5 feet above the ground level and there are supporting poles to make the structure stand firm. Hog and chicken enclosures, and piles of firewood are under the house. The penthouse (*Meemayone*) is attached to the main structure. The walls are of bamboo mats weaved in cross knit pattern with narrower horizontal wefts.

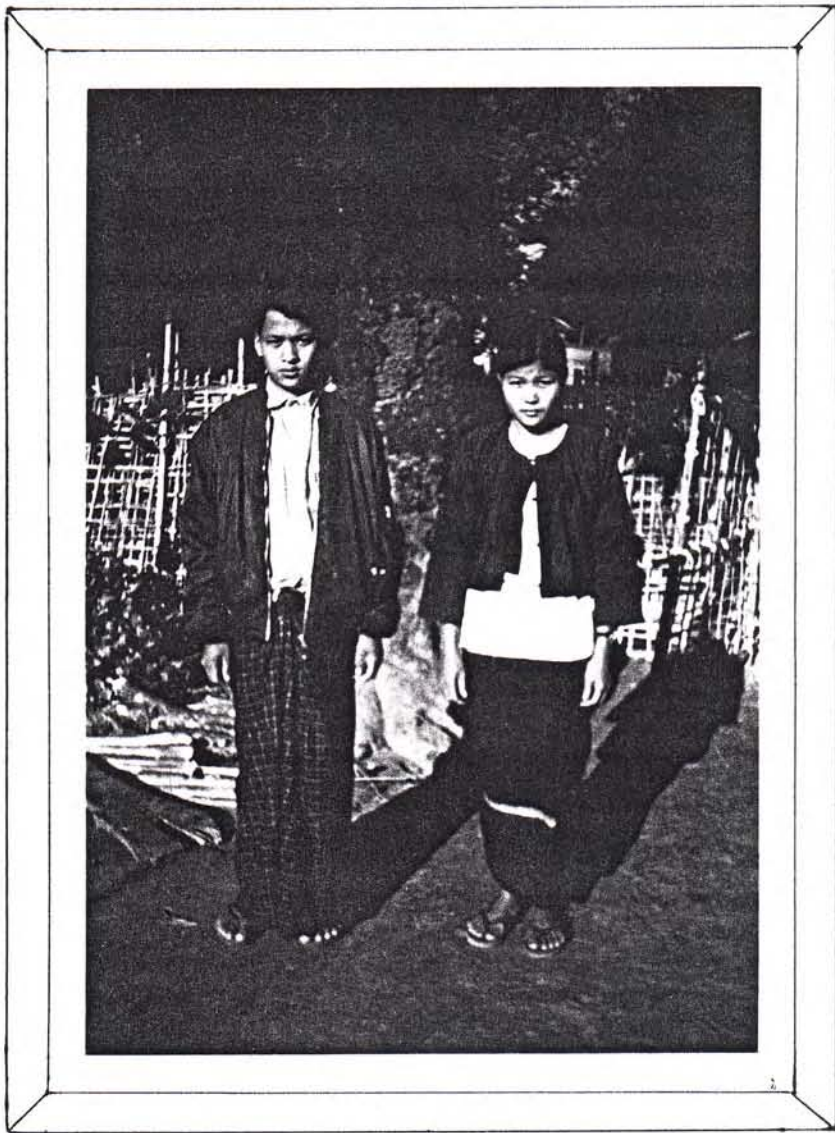
The first room is the front bedroom (*Pwar*) which is partitioned *Ahtalone Keikpu*, the walling material, with a passage in the middle. Further, on the left of the passage, is the *Takadu*, the hearth, installed on an elevated earth over the flooring, and enclosed with wooden planks. The hearth is in angular position with the walls, and over it is the soot rack. On the opposite of the hearth is the *Kyohone*, the rice storeroom. This is also the place for the guardian spirit of the house. In the rice storeroom are the *Useik Khonno*, the large basket containing rice, and a smaller one used for the measuring of rice. Bottles of liquor are kept on the walls of the storeroom. Supplies are stored up to cater for any guest likely to turn up. To the end of the house is the washroom.

Roofs are of bamboo leaves fastened down by bamboo poles to be secured from the windy weather. The adjoining poles are tied up with bamboo leaves to protect from the rain drops dripping inside.

The erecting of pillars is first done with bamboo slat stakes to mark off ground plan. Trees with creeper vines growing on are not used for pillars. Other prohibited woods are also avoided. *Nataw and Pyatho*¹ and the Buddhist Lent period are times when no house is to be built. The construction begins at sunrise. Securing wood and bamboo, and the construction altogether take about 10 days work by 2 persons.

The ladder is of carved log. The number of steps is usually in odd numbers. The transfer of the original ladder to an opposite room requires the addition of a extended

¹ 9th and 10th month of Myanmar Clendar



Physical Feature of Thet woman and man

room. The levelling of the ground under the house is done only after the completion of the house.

The Thet traditional home is extended as the family members grow. Building materials vary according to locality. Nipa palm is used for roofing in Mýauk-U Township, and that aches in Vela, Tamanthar, and Gokpi. Bamboo is for flooring and walling, and timber for pillars.

Thet nationals observed in Tamanthar village have only 48 households. Another 35 households are found in Thetkanya village 50 yards from the opposite bank of the creek of Tamanthar village.

(4) Personal features and mode of dress

Personal features

According to Professor G.H Luce, the earliest Thets who entered Myanmar were of the **Tibeto-Burman Stock**¹. They were of medium fair complexion, the natural skin being yellow but darkened later on by hard labour and rough weather.

The hair is dark and straight, the forehead medium, with flat nose and protruding eyelids. Eyebrows are not prominent, eye slits are narrow, and cheekbones are high under wide cheeks. They have thick lips and their bones and joints are a bit large. The body is sparsely haired. The nose and ridge distinguish them from the Rakhines. They resemble more closely to the Tibeto-Burman than the Rakhines. In other words, they can be assumed as pedigree Myanmars.

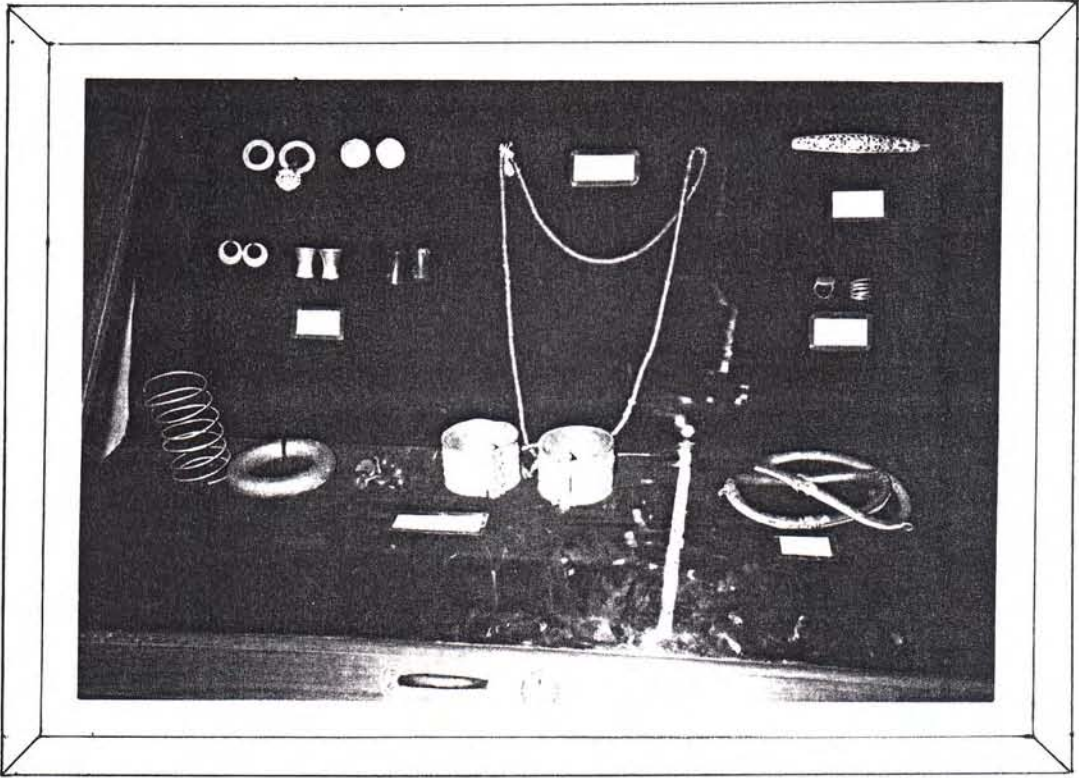
The average height is 5 feet 3 inches, and for the womanfolks it is 4 feet 8 inches. The female calf is particularly plump. The following is the sample vital statistics of the Thet males.

| No | Name | Age | Height | Chest | Head | Hands |
|----|----------------|-----|-----------|-------|-------|-------|
| 1 | Maung Saw Hla | 30 | 5ft.3 in. | 36in. | 20in. | 26in. |
| 2 | Kyaw Tun | 53 | 5ft.3 in. | 32in. | 21in. | 28in. |
| 3 | Tha Tun Aung | 30 | 5ft.3 in. | 32in. | 21in. | 26in. |
| 4 | Soe Thein Aung | 17 | 5ft. 4in. | 32in. | 21in. | 26in. |
| 5 | San Hla Aung | 35 | 5ft. 5in. | 33in. | 28in. | 28in. |
| 6 | Mg Kyaw Sein | 18 | 5ft. 5in. | 31in. | 21in. | 25in. |
| 7 | Shwe Tun Maung | 47 | 5ft.6in. | 33in. | 21in. | 27in. |
| 8 | Thano Aung | 30 | 5ft. 7in. | 32in. | 22in. | 27in. |



The old man and woman of Thet nationals





Ornaments of Thet nationals

Mode of dress

The Thet males wear white turban (*Ahpaung*), whose flaps drop down on the right side of the head. Traditionally, the male keeps his upper half of the body bare. The lower part of the body is adorned with the white hand-woven linen called '*Kamu*'. In the olden days, the Thet males girded loins like the Mro nationals, and also wore earrings.

Thet ladies put on the '*Yekanpang*', the turban-like headscarf. It is about 3 feet long, square piece of cloth folded horizontally, and just enough to cover the head from the temples. The top of the head is a bit open up for that matter. All grown up females are made to wear this since puberty. The headscarf is adorned in a ceremony when the female is getting old. The colour is black.

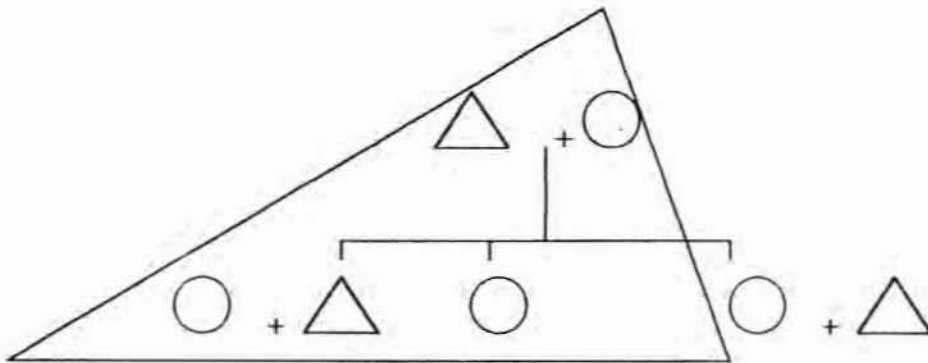
Large earrings, called '*nataun*' in Thet language, are worn, and their sizes vary according to age. The range is from ½ inch to 2 inches. They are the distinguishable mode of dress of the Thet female. Those who can afford make them out of silver, and others with bamboo. Young girls are made to wear strings of beads made of coloured glass balls. After marriage, gold and silver beads are worn depending on bride price they received at marriage. Silver beads are in common use. At least, 5 to 10 strings of such beads are worn and they are called '*Kyeik*'. In the old days, silver coins were inserted in between the beads for adornment, and these were slung like a sash around the shoulders. Some wore these from both shoulders in a criss-cross pattern. They are generally worn on ceremonial occasions.

The ladies of the older generation who worn the traditional strapless bodice called '*Yinkant*'. This also is put on the grown up girl in a separate ceremonial occasion. The apparel is similar to the ladies' headscarf, a square piece of black cloth folded horizontally and spread on the breast and tied at the back.

Silver, and glass ball chains are adorned at the band of cloth stitched to the upper hem of the '*htabi*', the Myanmar skirt. They are made from 2 backstrap loom woven materials, and called '*pharaphu*'. The circumference is about 5 feet and the width is 2½ feet. Like the Myanmar ladies of the old times, the skirt is not stitched but wrapped around the body. Red and blue stripes form small square patterns, and from a distance, the mauve colour domination can be seen clearly. There are 2 horizontal stripes like the Kayin traditional longyi. In general, the Thets in the west wear their '*htabi*', '*naphe*' in Thet short, that is, have higher hemlines.

The well-to-do in the old days are known to have worn silver anklets. The modern Thet males, like the traditional Rakhines of the rural parts, wear collarless

round -necked shirts for the upper half, and mercerized cotton longyi for the lower part of the body. And the modern Thet female wears a hairdo tied in a loose knot at the nape, wide ear hole, and large earrings, a blouse just like the male jacket, and the wrap longyi down to the calves.



This figure is shown extended family and patrilocal residence.

In counting the patrilineal lineage, there are two major groups. The first is known as '*sameik asai*' comprising six ancestral subgroups, while the second, the '*bauk asai*' has three. The lineage set-up is as follows.

Sameik Asai

- (1) Kant-ka-bai
- (2) Tang-Zein
- (3) Nga- yant zein
- (4) Soun- yin
- (5) Pyin- lar
- (6) Kanka- zeik

Bauk Asai

- (1) In- daung
- (2) Kun- mei
- (3) Bay-mu

The first four in the Sameik Asai are the original ones, while the remaining two are derived from the original groups. The Kant-kabai group led the '*Sameik Asai*' and settled in *Ramree*, and thus also known as the *Ramree Asai*. The *Bauk Asai* was led by the *Indaungsar* group and settled in *Manaung*.

Islands, and thus also known as *Manaungthar Asai*. That the population of one *asai* is exactly half the other is still left unexplained.

The *Pyinlarsar* of the Sameik Asai is the least populated group having only three families in the whole of the *Rakhine State*. The second least populated is the *Kunmeisar* group. It is believed that seven households from this lineage group would result in the deterioration of the State. It is learned that there are not altogether

seven households for the two groups combined among the Thet total population in Rakhine and Chittagong.

Since the marriage between members of the same Asai is prohibited, it is called exogamy. In other words, when the groom is of the Sameik, the bride should be a Bauk. Depending on the number of population it is quite convenient for a bauk groom to win the hands of a Sameik bride. On the other hand, since the number of Bauk eligible brides and grooms are so few, it gives the Sameik grooms and brides very little chance to secure a wedded partner. So much so that there had been an incident where daughters – in –law snatching in between the Kabaisar and the Ngayantzeinsar ancestries of the same asai, the main group. One subgroup snatched the already engaged bride-to – be from the other, and since then the two subgroups households never lived as next door neighbours.

It is assumed that Thet ancestral subgroups originated from the members' occupation, or the region of residence. The *Baymusar* subgroup from the Bauk Asai was known to be of the blacksmith, and the hillside farming ancestries. The *Kantkabaisar* and the *Indaungsar* had settled in *Ramree and Manaung* regions respectively. Again, for the Baymusar, there are the original group and the derived group. They settled in *Pichaung and Pikaukchaung* creek areas in what is now *Kyauktaw* township.

Thet kinship terms are as follows-

| | |
|--|--------------------|
| father | arbar |
| mother | arnoe |
| parents | arnoemar |
| grandpa | a-oo |
| grandma | a-ee |
| son | arsar |
| daughter | arsa-ee |
| grandchild | arsatone |
| husband | a-ra ho ba |
| wife | aita |
| brother | apar |
| sister | payo/ pamei/ pabay |
| parents –in –law(man) | atay |
| parents- in – law(woman) | aphoo |
| brother - in – law(brother of wife or husband of sister) | jaupha |

| | |
|---|--------------|
| brother-in-law(husband of elder sister or elder brother of husband) | anaesu |
| brother-in-law(husband of younger sister or younger brother of husband) | asataung |
| sister-in-law(wife of younger brother or younger sister of wife) | asone |
| sister-in-law(wife of elder brother or elder sister of wife) | apha |
| sister-in-law(sister of husband or wife of brother) | arnon |
| married couple | maun-naung |
| uncle | atay |
| aunt | siyo/ sipay. |
| cousin | ardausar |

Chart of consanguineal kinship terminology

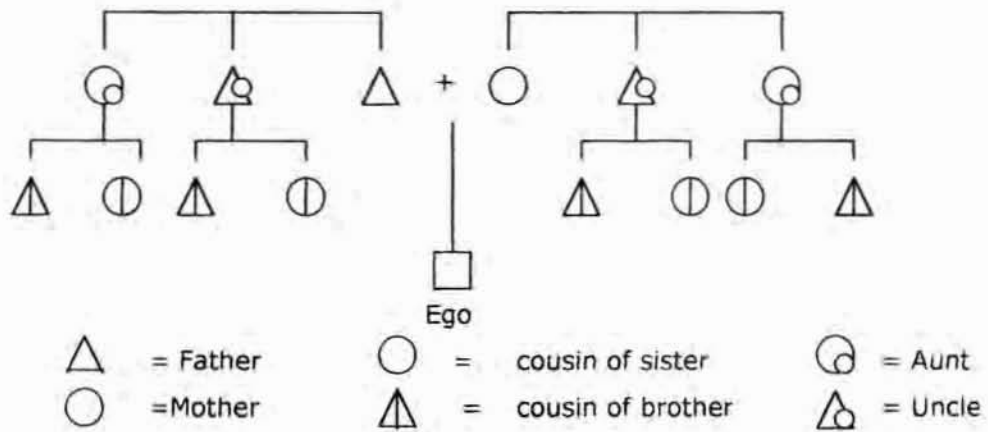
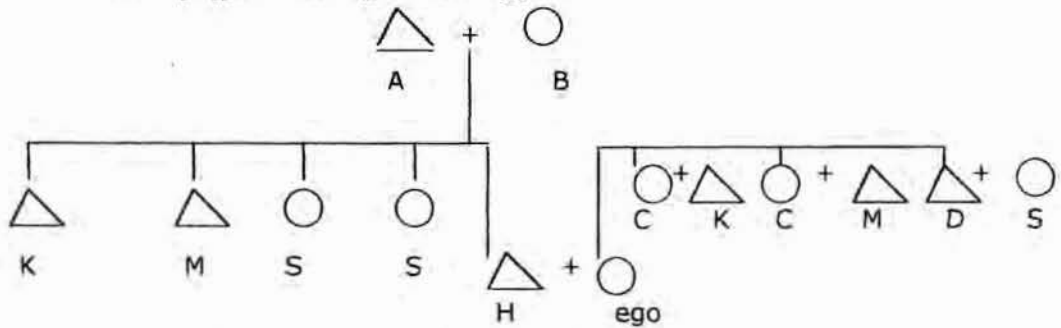


Chart of affinal kinship terminology

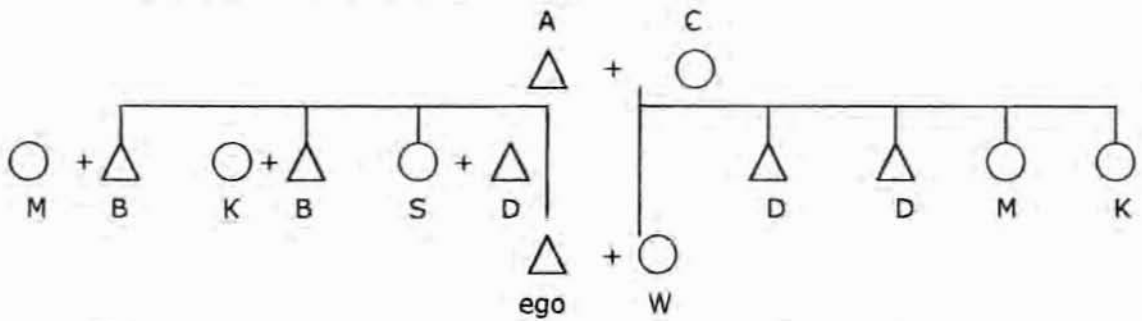


A= parents-in-law(man), B= parents-in-law (woman), C=sisters, D=brother

H= husband, K=brother-in-law(husband of elder sister or elder brother of husband)

M= brother-in-law(husband of younger sister or younger brother of husband)

Chart of affinal kinship terminology



A= Parents-in-law(man), C=Parents-in-law(woman), W=wife, B=brother, D=brother-in-law
 S= Sister, M= Sister-in-law(wife of elder brother or elder sister of wife),
 K=Sister-in-law(wife of younger brother or younger sister of wife)

Customs

Thet nationals are a race of very limited desires. The tale of the ' Oldman and the boa constrictor' showed that this was so. The story pointed out as evident that any huge thing found in the jungle was a common property.

Guests are treated with respect. Bottles of liquor are specially kept in the chamber inside the home ready to serve the calling guests. Thet traditions recognize drinking as a noble practice. Guests are entertained with liquor. Every household brews its own liquor. It is an essential on festivities and on special occasions.

Those who are inhibited by tradition to do something enjoy the considerate acts by other ancestral groups. The blacksmith group from the Pemoesar ancestry could not grow pumpkins. Therefore, others who could do so see to it that the inhibited group is not deprived of such vegetables. So much so that a Thet saying has that those who do not grow pumpkins enjoy an abundance of the fruit much more than those who do.

The head is the exalted part of the body for the Thets. They believe that touching the head is an insult to the guardian spirit of a person. Touching the shoulders is also believed to result in bad effects on the memory.

The exalted place in the home is the special chamber for the guardian spirit of the house in which is kept the rice basket. Trespassing into it , or touching the rice basket must be compensated by provisions of liquor. A family's fireplace's not to be made use of by another.



That's nationals children



The exalted spot in a village is the tree where the guardian spirit of the village dwells. Although there is no special shrine built for the spirit, it is a place where children must not play.

Traditional prohibitions are usually kept to the word. Inauspicious dates are avoided in business. Ancestral inhibitions are as follows.

All Thet nationals to avoid using the 'pyone-ma-zar' plant on pains of the probable extinction of the whole race. All Sameik Asai generations must not use the 'yamanay' wood as pillars, or for firewood on pains of mental illness or death. No journey is to be set out on the full waxing and waning days of the moon, and travelling on new year day is also to be avoided.

A tiger's corpse found on the way to the hillside farm is taken as ill luck, and thus no work for the day. It is believed that crops yield would be low when one's harvesting tools are touched by others. Poor crop yield would also be the outcome of people urinating and defecating on the farming plot.

(B) Child training and education

The Thets are an industrial race, and they nurture their offsprings with much care and loving tenderness. They send their children to Buddhist monasteries for studies and for proper training in sound morals and manners.

The monasteries were the only establishments where the young Thets received their education. There were no other institutions for such purpose then. Traditional conventions were handed down to new generations by the elders in their spare time. Knowledge came in the form of folk lores, handicrafts were taught, and the young ones were taken to the farming plots to train them in practical farming. Mothers taught daughters backstrap loom weaving, and the house chores.

Now, there is a State Middle School in *Tamanthar Village Tract*. Grownups generally have to help with the parents' work. Therefore, they could afford to study up to the Primary level only. Out of the 142 residents of *Tamanthar Village*, only 15 could afford schooling. These could be specified as 8 pupils in the fourth standard, 5 middle school graduates, and 2 in high school. There are no Matriculates as yet, and 4 are studying at the village monastery.

Monastery education(1995-1999)

| No. | years | boys | girls | total |
|-----|-------|------|-------|-------|
| 1 | 1995 | 3 | 1 | 4 |
| 2 | 1996 | 4 | - | 4 |

| | | | | |
|---|------|---|---|---|
| 3 | 1997 | 3 | - | 3 |
| 4 | 1998 | 5 | - | 5 |
| 5 | 1999 | 4 | - | 4 |

Government education(1994-1998)

| No. | years | boys | girls | total |
|-----|-------|------|-------|-------|
| 1 | 1994 | 4 | 8 | 12 |
| 2 | 1995 | 5 | 6 | 11 |
| 3 | 1996 | 7 | 8 | 15 |
| 4 | 1997 | 6 | 9 | 15 |
| 5 | 1998 | 6 | 9 | 15 |

(C) Bachelor and maiden life

The Thets keep a separate ' bachelor house', built at the head, or an appropriate spot in the middle of the village. Although known as the bachelor house, it is a place for every male youngster who choose to sleep separately from their parents' residence. The parents do not hinder the young ones since there exists respect for the older ones and obedience at the 'house'. Those under-aged youths who prefer to spend the night at the house make bed for the older ones do chores and run errands, such as fetching water, gathering firewood, cleaning the compound, and attending the fireplace.

A youth, coming of age to be a bachelor, who does not put up the night at the house, usually becomes an outcast among his peers. But such cases are very rare. The youths would gather at the place right after dinner and would recount their various experiences to the gleeful laughters of the rest of the crowd. Thus, it is also called the ' bachelors' haven'.

The bachelor house is a 50 feet by 20 feet building. It is a single storey one with bamboo flooring and walling, thatched roofing or bamboo leaf roofing. With an elevation of about 4 feet from the ground, 2 rows of bedsteads could be accommodated, leaving a 4- foot passage in between. In the Thet language, the house is called ' arbyaung saraka ekasayat' Guests from other villages can put up at the house with the permission of the head bachelor. There is no ' maidens house for



Bachelor House

the girls, and they gather at a convenient place designated by the head maiden to spend the night.

The Thets take ample time and consideration in the choice of a wedded partner. Here, there are traditional conventions to abide by.

The 2 main racial groups are – a) Indaunsar, b) Kantkabaisar, and the sub-groups for each.

Indaunsar

(1) Baymusar

(2) Kunmeisar

Kantkabaisar

(1) Tantzeinsar

(2) Kontzeinsar

(3) Saungyinsar

(4) Pyinlarsar

(5) Kankazeiksar

The sub groups do not practise indogamy. They are not allowed to marry among the consanguine kinship. Instead, conjugal marriage is the normal practice. The male offspring is regarded as the lineage successor, while the female one as the degenerator. Any unconventional act would result in the couple being expelled from the village, excommunicated, and made to compensate. This is an important aspect upon which the bachelors base their courtship.

The youth could fall for the girls from their own village or from the neighbouring villages. The maidens of the village congregate at a place designated by the head maiden of the village since they have no separate 'maidens house' built for that purpose. The most important thing a bachelor has to do when he takes interest in a maiden is the making of inquiries on the kinship relation. Only if it proves favourable could he proceed with the courtship.

As the daily workday life is so much occupied with the livelihood affairs, the Thet youth's love affairs can only be attended to at nightfall. Right after dinner, they gather at the house to work out courtship schedules for each individual. If the youth happens to be a guest, the head bachelor has to see to it that there is no fighting among the young men. The traditional wind instrument, '*chein chin*', is taken along the bachelor's quest for his dearest's favour. Using this wind instrument to signal his presence, the youth approaches his beloved. The wind instrument itself is a kettle-shape device to which is attached a 2-inch iron sheet.

This wind instrument produces a soft and peculiar sound in the dead of the night. The expertise in using the musical instrument is an advantage in courtship. Everything the young man wants to express could be played on the instrument. The rhythmic tone could be adjusted to conform with the verbal message. The girl concerned also keeps a similar instrument by her bed, and whether she appreciates the courtship or not, she is bound to express her attitude making use of the instrument. Although the girls sleep en masse, this particular wind instrument could single out precisely as to who is being called upon.

The musical instrument could be used in their leisure time apart from the courtship at night. It is sometimes played on their way to the farm, and on trips to gather fruits and vegetables. The young man carries it along and if he comes across certain girls he is interested in, he would play the 'chein chin', to which tune the girl could resound her attitude towards the proposal. Sometimes, matches are made in this way.

The courtship could also be performed in-groups. They would play tunes on odes to the beauty of their beloved, and folklore riddles, quizzes, and the likes are made use of. The elders at the maidens place have to find excuses to move somewhere lest they be criticized as unaccommodating individuals.

Although the Thet youths enjoy such freedom in their bachelor and maiden life, there is very little or none in the violation of the pre-marital codes of conduct. On viola- of such a conduct they would be made to get wedded right away according to tradition. Unable to do so would amount to the young man treating the whole village residents with meals of pork curry. He would be put to shame. This is to remind the future bachelors to abide by the rules. If a married man is the culprit, he would be arrested by the bachelors and dealt with in the manner above. However, such cases are not heard to have been reported, since the community practises monogamy, and as such, behaves accordingly.

(D) Betrothal and Marriage

Betrothal

On the day of the betrothal, the groom party comprising village elders, parents, relatives and friends go to the bride's home as agreed upon beforehand. They bring along with them a cock, a hen and 2 bottles of liquor. The chickens are received by the bride's female companions who kill the chickens in the bloodless way by twisting the necks. Then the intestines are taken out, cleansed and replaced to be

boiled intact. The elders and parents of both parties talk over the matter. When the chickens are well-cooked, they are placed each on a tray and served with rice. The groom party takes the cock, the bride the hen, symbolizing the leader and the follower. Each party pulls out the chicken's tongue and the middle projection is checked. If found to be fallen aback, it means ill omen, and avoid consuming. Some repeat the process until the good omen is found. This practice is called finding the 'san kaw'.

When procuring a favourable omen, the parties agree on an auspicious date, and the bride price as agreed upon beforehand is offered. Besides, a hog or an ox is to be provided for the meals on the wedding day, and the bride price is to be made known formally. Then, food and drinks are served. Some choose to make the occasion low-keyed. Some send the bride eggs, spear, knife, rings and other utility goods, 3 joints of sugarcane, 80 betel leaves, a hand of bananas, 30 quids of betel lumps, 1 chicken, and a brand new cooking pot.

The custom of offering a hog or an ox to the bride's parents is the common practice. Those who could not afford give goat or chicken. The entry to the bride's house in the order of 2 liquor jars, 2 maidens, 2 bachelors, and 2 male adults is made by way of the backdoor open extension of the floor. The Thets take marriage seriously. The betrothal occasion carried out formally in the presence of elders is to avoid complexities in the aftermath of probable divorce, demise, and inheritance such as the reimbursement of the bride price.

Marriage

weddings are not held in the Buddhist Lent period. Wedding arrangements are made after the engagement is over. Usually guests are served food 3 days in advance of the wedding day by the bride's household who make use of the ox or hog received from the groom's side in the form of bride price. On the auspicious day of the marriage, the groom party come to the other party to fetch the bride. The groom also comes accompanied by his bachelor friends. The head bachelor brings bottles of liquor which they consume on the way, and there develops an atmosphere of jovial mood in the party teasing the groom in fun and good humour. The groom's arrival is reported from a 40 yards proximity to the bride's home, where the groom stops while his best man goes there to announce 'Here comes the groom'. Those who are catering food to the guests at the bride's home bring drinks and snacks for the groom's entourage. After helping themselves with what is offered, the groom in the company of two of his

best men comes up the house through the front door. By that time, the groom's party of parents and elders are already in the house. As the groom approaches, 2 maidens wash his feet at the entrance of the house. The groom sits facing the bride once he is inside the house, his 2 best men beside him holding the homemade bottle of liquor, which they have brought for the occasion. There are 2 square bamboo low tables in between, upon which are placed a rice bowl with chicken atop- the cock for the groom, and the hen for the bride.

Then a glass of liquor is served to the couple – the groom by his best men, and the bride by her maidens in wait. The bride and groom exchange their drinks. Next, the best men and the maidens in wait pull out the chicken's tongue set in front of them and look for middle projectile behind. If the middle one is found to have been leaning towards one's direction, it means a good omen. If it is found fallen backwards, this is ill omen, and in which case more chickens are slaughtered in anticipation of the sign of good omen. Then the chicken meat is mutually shared.

The groom side takes the responsibility for the occasion. It caters for the food supplies such as rice, meat, chicken, pork, fish etc, and hands them over to the bride's side. Before taking the food provided by her in-laws, the bride goes down to the ceremonial pandal and sits on thatched mat among her maidens in wait. Before her on the low bamboo table stands the bottle of liquor from which drinks are served to those who present wedding gifts.

When the bride has taken her seat, the mother-in-law comes over to put the head covering gear over the bride's head, symbolizing the upkeep of morally proper ethical behaviour. The bride pays homage and bows her head to receive the head-gear. After that the bride's relatives come forward to present wedding gifts, and they all are served drinks. The bride then recites a traditional poem depicting the plight of the daughter-in-law who is about to be taken away by the groom, and leaving words to the family members to take the food provided by the groom.

- ယက်ကာရေယာအား ...
- မိနီ မီးဟော့ကားရေ ...
- ရေယာမီးဟော့ကားရေ ...
- အဗရာကားဟောင်းဖြော့ အမ်ကားရေ ...
- အနူးရာကားဟောင်းဖြော့အမ်ကားရေ ...
- အနူးရာကားဟောင်းဖြော့အမ်ကားရေ

- ပြိုင်စူးငါးဖူးဟော့ဟော့ကားရေ ...
- တေမိငါးပါးတိုင်းဇာကား ...
- စိမ်းမဗာရာဆတ်မာလေး ...
- စိမ်းမနုရာဆတ်မာလေး ...
- လုံးမဗာရာစိမ်းမာလေး
- စိမ်းမယုံးရက်စိမ်းမာလေး ...

The paraphrasing runs like this- ' Now that the time has come for me to be taken away by the groom as it is the auspicious date agreed upon previously by both parties. Do justice to the food brought in by the groom, all my family members, do not feel awkward. 'Then, the bride takes meal brought by the groom. Right after the meal, she sings the following tune-

- ခေါင်းဆာရီအင်စပါးမက်
- ဗာဟိန်းအင်စပါးမက်
- နုကယင်စပါးမက်
- အအူဒူငါင်စပါးမက်

-which means that it is her last farewell, and she pays homage to her mother and father, and to all her brothers and sisters. So the parents pray for their daughter, who is about to be out of their possession, to meet with a safe future ahead. It runs as follows -

- ဖျောက်ဆရက်တဘော်ဆာငလင်း
- ပန်းပေါဆာ ငလင်း
- အင်ကိန်းအင်ကာ အမြိန်းမာ ဟင်းတို့.နာ
- စီရိတုံးတက်ကိုပန်းတုံးတက်လင်း

-meaning to wish for health and wealth, and to be free from force majeure, the Myanmar version of which is the 5 enemies of mankind, i.e. water, fire, monarch, thief, and person who bears ill will towards one. To be endowed with children, and to be successful in any undertaking are in the prayers. Then, the daughter again pays homage to the parents recite the following poem.

- ပြိုင်စူးကဒူ ဗန်ကားလေး

- တေမိကသူ ဗန်ကားလေး
- ပြိုင်စူးကသူ ဗန်ကားရပ်
- တေမိကသူ ဗန်ကြားရပ်
- အတန်းကမ္ဘာ ဗန်ကြားရပ်
- အတိုင်းကြိုဖုန်းပိပိုကား
- စီးရိကိန်းအမန်နိုင်
- ပျောက်ကိန်းအပန်နိုင်
- ဘိန်းဆိန်တူဖြိုင်ငါ့နမ်းအမ်း
- ပန်ပန် ,,, တူငါင် ...ငါနမ်းအမ်း
- ပြိုင်စူး: နလေကောင်းမ ငါနမ်းအမ်း
- တေမိနလေကောင်းမ ငါနမ်းအမ်း
- မေနဘာကော ... ကိန်းဆုဆိုက်လင် ..နိုင်ကားဟု
- အိတ်စု စလင်... နိုင်ကားဟို
- တုံတတ်ထစ်နိုး နေးအင်းဗဒ့
- ဇာဒတ်တစ်နိုး: နေးအင်းအား

Meaning that she would have to part with her parents, and instead she is about to take care of her husband. Please do not leave her alone. She would have to live under her in –laws with a feeling of inferiority as a small fry. Would my husband and parents –in – law be cordial to me? If I am discarded by my husband, I will come running to you, mother. Please accept me. Could my in –laws forgive me if I am in the wrong? Please let them know that, and understand my situation. Now, I'll have to settle down in a new place with new responsibilities. Would those remaining back at home live in unity? I wish all of you to be free from any kind of worries. The parents decide on the offsprings marriage after adequate inquiries are made. Although married offsprings have set up separate homes, they still pay heed to the parents just as they did when they were living under them before their marriages.

While this is going on in between the bride and her parents, the wedding is in progress with the serving of food and drinks. After that, depending on the distance to the groom's house where the wedding is to be held on that day, the bride is taken before the day is over. The male offspring is recognized as the legatee of the father's

lineage, and the female offsprings as someone to be given away to the groom in marriage. The daughter-in-law is to be received in the house while the natural daughter is to be given away to the son-in-law in marriage. Therefore, a wedding is known by the name 'thamee tet' meaning an occasion to procure a daughter, and not as 'themet tet' meaning an occasion to procure a son-in-law, as with the Rakhines. The maidens-in-wait accompany her, and relatives and friends form a line in escorting the bride, whose head is covered along the journey. If not from the same village passage fees has to be given to bachelor heads, and maiden heads of village on the way, amounting to Kyats 100/ to Kyats. 50/ as deemed appropriate.

As the bride approaches the house, 2 maidenheads come forward and stop the entourage using an 18-foot bamboo pole. Here begins a war of words in between the bride's and the groom's parties on the virtues and merits of their girl and young man. There are debates, arguments, and satires and jokes as well. Finally, a set of blanket 5 yards long is taken and the couple is wrapped inside. The bamboo pole marks the borderline, the toe line, right in between the bundled couple. The bachelor group and the maiden group then involve themselves in a tug-of-war. The one who treads over the border or the 'winning line' loses. In fact, this is done as a token symbol of the bride's integrity, and to preserve her chastity, the bride price and the wedding gifts are listed and announced by the villager elders. This is to make things clear for further likely developments in the marriage, such as divorce.

Now, the groom and bride sit facing each other, while a cock and a hen are slaughtered by twisting the necks, a way to avoid a bloodstained killing, the liver and the intestines all taken out, and boiled in salt. The 'san kaw' practice of predicting from the chickens undergrowth of the tongue which points out the good and the bad omens. The one who consults is required to be a bachelor or a maiden, otherwise the prediction would not be reliable, it is assumed.

The occasion comes to an end when an elder cups the palms of the groom and bride in his hands and announces the couple as man and wife from that day on, and wishes them a successful marriage.

Then, the groom pays a visit to the 'bachelor's house', and within the first week of the wedding he is prohibited to go on visits to other places. After that 7 days, he calls on at his parents-in-law's house, taking along with him a jar of liquor for the bride's father and mother. While doing the courtesy call, he has to avoid entering villages on his way lest ill luck would befall on him.

(E) Pregnancy and Confinement

Pregnancy

The Thets, as a robust and healthy race, do not have much anxiety and inconvenience as far as pregnancy is concerned. They take it as something natural in the way of life. Therefore, loss of appetite, dieting, abstaining from work, and making offertories to the spirits during the period of pregnancy are carried out without fail as normal conventional observance. And as illness during pregnancy is very rare, the practice of prenatal diagnoses are not popular among the Thets. Traditionally, the pregnant woman does not attend weddings nor makes nuptial gifts. Mattress and pillow are specially made for the woman in pregnancy leaving one side unstitched.

The prohibitions include going out at night, making trips to far away places, attending funerals, and contributing to its expenses, planting trees, sitting at the doorway blocking the path, and positioning oneself at the top of the stairways which are strictly followed to the word. Others include taking bath at night, consuming twin-bodied fruits and vegetables and windfalls. She also has to refrain from taking fruits half-bitten by animals, red yam, shark meat, and those of tortoise and tiger. The husband also avoids carrying the coffin and purchasing knives and such equipment.

confinement

Child delivery is taken care of by the local 'midwife' who is a much experience woman in the art. One way of going about a difficult delivery is to use the boiled rice water. Rice and chicken is put in an earthen pot and the juice poured through a bamboo tube stuck into the pot of rice and chicken. The midwife sucks the rice water juice with which she utters mystic words to ease off the difficulty. The chicken is prepared without turmeric powder, and boiled. The rice and chicken meat are then laid out into 7 servings. A basket to put the rice serving is first rinsed with 'khaung-yei'¹. The rice servings are then transferred into another empty basket leaving one serving in the former basket. On the 7th day, the rice thus put in is disposed of outside the village. The other 6 servings of rice is put into smaller baskets and disposed of at the 4 corners of the house.

The first-born male brings recognition and popularity to the mother. Plum twigs are hung at the 4 corner of the house right after the delivery. Sweet sop leaves are also stuck in the house. These are done in the belief that they may ward off evil

¹fermented brew

spirits. Relatives and neighbours to turn and keep vigil for any signs of aftershock. The confinement area is out of bounds for any male because of the belief that it would weaken the male's lucky stars. The woman in confinement drinks turmeric in '*ying-pyar*' oil. Fish is taken as roast, or in soup. Plain rice and roasted salt is the only diet for a couple of days after confinement. Bamboo shoots mushrooms, chillies, and pork that are avoided for a month on pains of going blind.

The umbilical cord is cut with the sharp edge of a bamboo slat, and the navel is applied with ash procured from a burnt down reed mat. The newborn is smeared with honey, or sugar on the tongue and brows. This is done by the grandparents or the father dedicating the process with wishes for the verbal influence of the child. The mother of the firstborn male is served with a boiled hen on the very day of delivery. The fireplace is not to be handled by anyone apart from the woman in confinement. The confinement ends after 5 or 7 days after the delivery of the firstborn and for later births 3 to 5 days would do. On that day, the child's head is shaved and washed in soap acacia. The midwife cooks herself chicken at the confinement fireplace to signal that the confinement has ended. Guests are served food and drinks on that day. Those who come to wish the newborn pray for the child's health, wealth, and prosperity while holding the soap acacia, tumeric, and rice spread in a tray. A cradle is woven in time for the morning meal. The cradle initiation is held by those in attendance helping themselves to the boiled chicken meat served out in token of the occasion. The fireplace is not to be dismantled before the navel wound is cured. When it does, the mother's head is washed with the white of an egg. Warm water is used for her baths. Turmeric, and '*tauntangyi*' are made into a mixture and applied to her body. Shampooing her hair is done only a month after the birth.

(F) Naming ceremony

According to Thet traditional customs, the Naming is held on the very day of the cradle initiation occasion. Therefore, it does not have a fixed date. A woman carrying the baby goes down to the ground and shows the child to the sun and moon. It is done as a symbol of lasting existence, and of being intimate with the world, and thus treading on the path to victory. The ear boring is performed at the same time, with a mirror and a turban for male, a comb and a mirror for the female child. The cradle is to be woven with bamboo within the day. Uncles usually do this task since the Thets adopt the patrilineal system. The name is given on the cradle initiation. The names somewhat resemble those of the Rakhines in whose traditional naming is



Large hole at ear lobe of the women

carried out with the advice of the astrologer. The name of the firstborn usually includes the syllable /u:/ at the initial, medial, or final position. However, a Thet traditional naming syllable is usually included in the name. For instance-

| | |
|----------------------|-------------|
| Male | Female |
| kun | pei' |
| tein | mei |
| min | yo |
| pei | kyaw |
| Kun Tun Kyaw | Pei Nang Sa |
| Tein Aung Htwee Phyu | Mei Nan Tha |
| Hla Tun Kyaw | Ma Yo Nan |

Grandparents' names are also given. Some names conform to a good omen, or a purpose. The name 'Don Tha Aung' reveals the intended ritualized aversion for an inferior infertile ancestry.

(G) Ear boring, cradle initiation, and earrings

The ear boring ceremony is held on the very day the confinement is over. That day could also be called the cradle initiation day because on that very day the bamboo cradle for the child is woven by the father, and the guests treated to refreshments. The child's ear is bored by the local midwife using a pointed bamboo stick which is stuck there for good. Then the local midwife chews up some rice grains while praying for the child, and the wound at the ear bores uttered upon with mystic words to heal. This ceremony is usually held in the morning, and both male and female bore ears. In the old days, the male also wore earrings and ornamental ear plugs. The guests in attendance are treated to meals consisting of pork curry, and drinks.

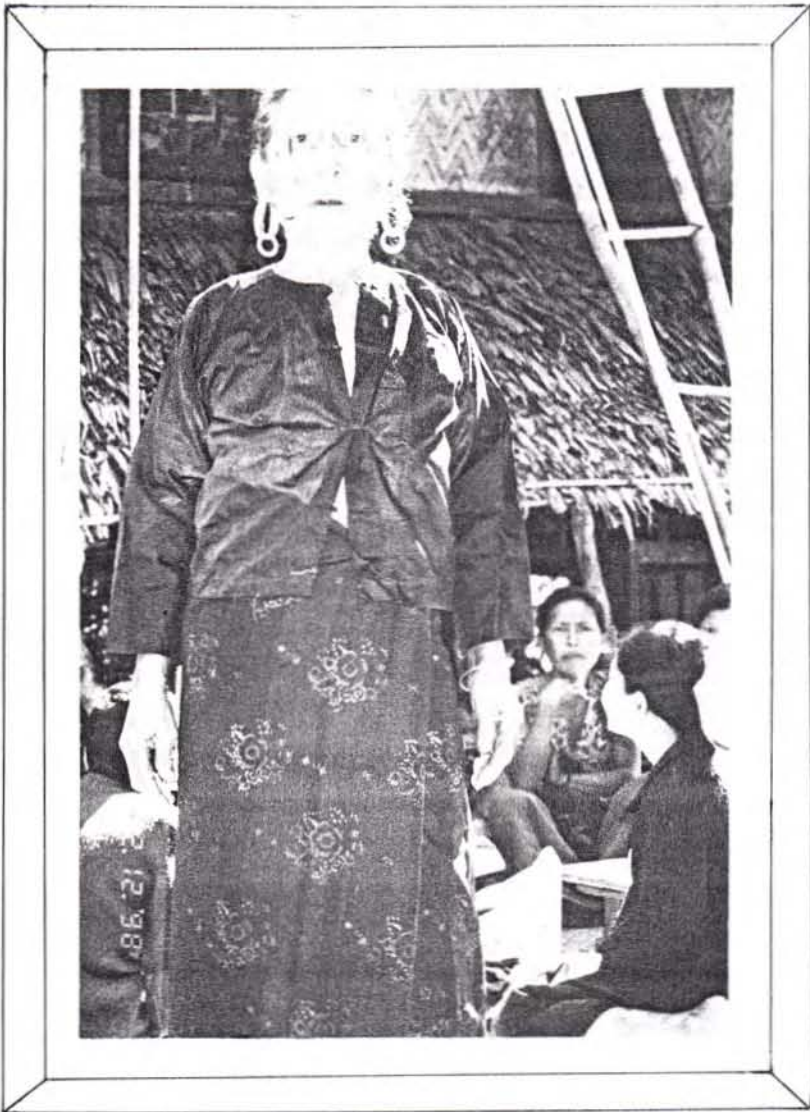
Once the ear boring is completed, the child's arms ears, abdomen, and legs are tied in satin ropes as adornment, as well as protective charms. Then the cradle initiation ceremony is held. Both occasions are held simultaneously.

Large earrings

The beauty of a Thet lady is signified by the large earrings which tell a lot about her identity. Right from the beginning, as a newborn, the ears are bored and the earplugs include thin bamboo slats, bamboo fragments, and then black treads are inserted. Later on as time passed, larger bamboo joints replaced one after another



Large ear rings of Thet women



until the girl reached puberty. By that time, the ear bores has become 1½to 2 inches holes. The Thets admire and appreciate these wide ear bores, and the wearing of large earrings. They take pride in them, and this has become a distinguished traditional custom of the Thets.

(H) Divorce

The divorce process in the Thet community may be described as follows. The Thets practise monogamy. There are discords among the wedded partners, but divorce cases are relatively few. That is because there are traditional controlling influences over the marriage system. The elders would see to it if a divorce case is to be decided upon.

a legal divorce could be obtained by the female spouse if she claims a dislike for her husband, and if she could reimburse the bride price and the wedding expenses. When the male spouse wants a divorce, nuptial gifts from both parents, earnings and property, accrued wealth during the wedded life have to be surrendered. It is for this purpose that the list of nuptial gifts, and the bride price are announced by the village elders at the wedding.

The offsprings remain under the charge of the male parents since the Thets practise the patrilineal system. The female divorce can have her children only with the permission of the husband. Divorces use to put up for a month or so at the parents' house. However, they are not to call on other neighbours since it is assumed to bring ill luck to the hosts. Estranged husbands and wives, divorces widowers, and widows are not allowed to participate in auspicious affairs. Therefore, they are virtually outlawed from such occasions. Thus, the Thets take great care to uphold their marriage as a lasting union. As a result there are very few divorce cases.

Chapter – 3

Traditions and customs

(A) Language and literature

There is no systematic written record of Thet spoken language, and no evidence as to the explanation for the absence is available. The spoken Thet is a separate dialect by its own right. The syllable ရ/ra/ is fully pronounced, and the syllable ဆ/hsa/ is pronounced as ဆ/tha/.

| | | | | |
|-----|---|-----|---|---|
| က | ခ | ဂ | ဃ | င |
| စဉ် | ဆ | ဇ | - | ည |
| ဋ | - | - | - | - |
| တ | ထ | ဒ | - | န |
| ပ | ဖ | ဗဉ် | - | မ |
| ယ | ရ | လ | - | ဝ |
| - | - | ဟ | အ | - |

Although there are 27 alphabets for Thet syllables. ဖ is produced by sucking the air inward and pronouncing the sound right after. ဖ် is produced by closing the lips halfway through which air is sucked in before pronouncing the sound. ဖာ means suffocating. The င is produced by rolling the tip of the tongue and drawing it close to palate. Spoken Thet has no equivalent Myanmar vowel sounds such as အစ် /it / အဉ်, / in./ အုတ် /u', အွန် /un/, etc...

There is no dialectal diversity among the Thet racial groups; there are only those who make use of loan words from other languages resulting from the co-existence with other national races.

| e.g | Myanmar | Thet | Meaning |
|-----|-------------|--------------|-----------------------|
| | ဇွန်: /zun/ | ပေါ/peipa/ | spoon(Tamanthar Thet) |
| | | ဗိဗာကာvivak/ | " (Rathedaun Thet) |

There are archaics as well as vocabulary usages in Thet dialect.

| e. g. | Myanmar | Thet | Meaning |
|-------|----------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| | ထမင်း /htamin/ | ပုတ်/pout/ | rice (vocabulary) |
| | | ရာပုတ်/rapoutu/ | " (archaic) |

The possessive case is formed by 'ကာ'/ka/ .

| | | | |
|-----|---------|----------------|-------------------------|
| e.g | Myanmar | -ငါ +၏ +အိမ် | /nga i ein/ = my home |
| | Thet | -ငါ + ကာ+ကိန်း | /nga ka kein/ = my home |

The adjectives are found to have derived from the verbs.

Thet -ကနင်း+ဟေဂိတ် +က+တာဆော်လောင်/ kanin heieit ka tahsawlon/

Myanmar -လှ + သည်+သော+မိန်းမ/ hla thi tho meinma/

(both mean 'beautiful woman')

Verb particles in Thet are found as follows.

a) Myanmar -ငါ+ထမင်း+စားသည် (I have my meal)

Thet -ငါ+ပုတ်+ဆာဟေအိတ်(")

b) Myanmar -ငါ+ထမင်း+စားနေသည် (I am having my meal)

Thet -ငါ+ ပုတ်+ဆာကိုတုံးဟေ (")

c) M -ငါ+ထမင်း+စားပြီးပြီ (I have finished my meal)

T - ငါ+ ပုတ်+ ဆာကိုကျီးယာနန်း(")

d) M -ငါ +ထမင်း+စားမည် (I will have my meal)

T -ငါ+ ပုတ်+ ဆာကား(")

e) M -ငါ+ထမင်း+စားနိုင်သည် (I can take a meal)

T -ငါ+ ပုတ်+ဆာလူဟေ (")

Where onomatopoeia is concerned, the Thet version of the rooster's crow is 'တောကလေးကော်' / to ka lei ko:/.

| Myanmar | Thet | Meaning |
|------------------|-------------------|-------------|
| ပန်းကန် / bagan/ | ပေါင်ဂဲန်/pongen/ | dish /plate |
| ဇွန်နဲ /zun:/ | ဗီဗာတ် / vivas/ | spoon |
| အိုး/ou:/ | တီ /ti/ | pot |
| ဒါး/da:/ | ကတဲန်း /katen/ | knife |
| အိမ် /ein/ | ကိန်း/kein/ | house |
| ရေကန် /jeigan/ | အီကန် /ikan/ | pond |
| နေ/nei/ | ဆမြိတ် /hsamjeik/ | sun |
| လ/la/ | ဆဒါ / hsada/ | moon |
| ရေ /lei/ | မူရ် /mur/ | water |
| ချောင်း /chaun:/ | အီး /i:/ | creek |
| မြစ် /mji'/ | မလိုင် /malai/ | river |
| တော/to:/ | မလိန် /malein/ | wood |
| ထမင်း/ htamin/ | ဘုတ်(ပုတ်) /bout/ | rice |

Thet syntax is similar to those of Rakhine and Myanmar, with verbs in the final slot. For instance,

M - တံခါးကို /ဖွင့် (the door be open)

T - လင်းဟနင်း /ဖွင့် ()

Simple sentences end in 'hei eik', the Myanmar equivalents of / thi/ and /te/.

For instance,

M - ထိုင်နေသည် (sitting)

T - တုန်ဟေအိတ် (")

M - ပိန်သည် (thin)

T - ကြိန်ဟေအိတ် (")

Some basic lexicons are as follows.

| <u>Myanmar</u> | <u>Thet</u> | <u>Meaning</u> |
|-----------------------|-------------------|----------------|
| ဦးခေါင်း/ u:gaun:/ | အဟူး /ahu:/ | head |
| ဆံပင်/zabin/ | အပူမိ/aphumi/ | hair |
| မျက်နှာ/mje'hna/ | အမဲန်း/amen/ | face |
| နားရွက်/najwe'/ | အခနား/akhana:/ | ear |
| မျက်စိ/mje'si/ | အမိ/ami/ | eye |
| နှာခေါင်း /hnakhaun:/ | အစကနူး /asakanu:/ | nose |
| သွား /thwa:/ | အစာ /asava/ | teeth |
| လက် /le'/ | ဒုး /dahu:/ | hand |
| အဖေ /aphei/ | အဘာ /aba/ | father |
| အမေ /amei/ | အနူး /anu:/ | mother |

(B) Proverbs, riddles, and folk-tales.

Proverbs

Thet proverbs derived from environmental circumstances and experiences.

1)စမိတ်ဆင်ကာကအာအင်မလင်းဟေ

To dry the paddy only when the sun is about to set.

Used in admonishing people who had not done their best in life during their youthful days, reminding them there is not much probability of achieving in old age.

3) တိပ်ကားမိန်းကြက်လက်ကားပေးအိတ်

The lid got heated rather than the pot itself.

Used to remark the intervention of other people in the affairs of someone chooses to keep quiet.

Riddles

A riddle in Thet is called 'apai hse gar'. A riddle is set, and the person to provide the solution is called upon to do so by the expression, 'chay hele nga yu zawn', meaning 'Do you know the answer?' If he could not find the solution, the questioner would ask whether he concedes defeat, the expression for which is, 'apaik yan', meaning surrender your flowers. The latter replies, 'Here are 12 (name of flower) blossoms. ' Then the one who sets the riddle would supply the answer with the preceding expression, 'If so , I'll eat up the flowers.'

Question. 1 ကိန်းတိုင်းကိန်းတိုင်းဌာအူချိုပုံငှေ့နပ်ကူချိုပုံ

Heaps of chicken excrement at every house.

Answer. မလိပိုက်

Collectiion of chicken excrement.

Q. 2. ယူလင်စိုင်လင်

The more one looks, the farther it is.

A. အမိတ်အိန်အကာနား

Eyes and ears.

Q.3. အတာရိစ်ဗင်းဗင်းတဟူးစ်ရိစ်နိမ်ဖက်

Legs in abundance, but only two hands.

A. နဟိုင်

The crab.

Q.4 . အရပ်ရပ်တာအဟူး၏ဆုံးဟူးစ်ငဟေ

Three-headed everywhere.

ဗ. တိပ်ဖူးဖိ

Tripod stand for cooking purposes

Q.5. ကိန်းတိုင်းကိန်းတိုင်းအအိအအုတိန်းဘင်းဘင်

Grandpa and grandma in every house.

A. ကော်နံးဇယ်ယု(ဂ်)ကား

The brewing paraphernalia and the fermenting jar.

N.B Brewing and fermenting liquor is customary in Thet tradition.

Guests are treated to drinks of such homemade brew. Thus the riddle came into being.

Q.6 ကိန်းတိုင်းကိန်းတိုင်းမေးပေါက်ဆား

A small gun in every house.

ဗ. ပဲနံ့ဒူး

A smoking pipe.

Q. 7. ခူစုံဟူဂေတူနီဘားရေတုံးဟေ

Three people meet to discuss

ဗ. တိပ်ဖူးဖိ

The tripod stand for cooking purposes.

The practice of story telling, drawing analogies from proverbs, and riddle making are Thet traditions preserved up to the current times. Thet folk tales consist of those depicting attitudes, customs, natural environment, animals, etc. A tale is 'tentu' in Thet dialect, and it usually begins with the phrase, 'haik karana', meaning 'once upon a time', and ends with 'tentu hton naun nai, ' meaning' thus, concludes the tale. '

The tale, 'The old man, and the boa constrictor, ' a story depicting attitudes, warns of the danger of greed as follows.

The old man and the boa constrictor

Once upon a time, an old man going into the woods saw a boa constrictor lying on the ground stretching itself. Since he wanted the animal all by himself, he wove a basket to carry it in. While immersed in the weaving, the snake swallowed the old man. It so happened that the old man slung a knife round his waist, and that caused the opening up of the snake's neck into halves. In the end, both the boaconstrictor and the greedy old man died.

One of the tales on traditional ethnic describes the sibling brother and sister who got married, and were put to shame, despised, and as a result, became a rainbow after death. There are 9 ancestry groups of Thets, and one of them, the

blacksmith stock of the 'pei moe sar' is prohibited to grow pumpkins. The story went as follows.

The pumpkin tale

Once upon a time, an old woman from the blacksmith stock of the 'pei moe sar' ancestry group had a daughter. At the foot of the ladder in her house was planted a pumpkin. The plant grew and bore a pumpkin right on top of the door. And everytime someone entered or went out of the house, the head came into contact with the fruit. The daughter did not like that and urged her mother to eat the right then. But the mother refused. One day, when the mother was on a trip, the daughter plucked the fruit and cooked it for the meal. Not finding the fruit when she got back, the mother asked the daughter about it. The daughter told a lie, that she had not eaten it. The unconvinced mother made the daughter swear on oath which she did to oblige her mother. The mother imprecated that the one who ate up the pumpkin be devoured by a tiger. In a moment, a tiger appeared from the woods and told the mother that the one who ate up the pumpkin was no other than her own daughter, and that she be given up as his prey, or instead, a hog in case the mother did not desire to give up her daughter. However, the mother was firm in her decision, asserting that everyone is equal under the law, and there was no exception in the face of justice. She gave up her daughter to the tiger. Hence, the growing of a pumpkin was taken as the cause for losing a daughter. Therefore, the 'pei moe sar' group of descendants never grew pumpkin again. Those who did were branded as 'mad' people, or even imprecated to meet their death. Thus, the group never grew pumpkin up to the present day. They could eat it when given to.

The tale, 'The toad and the crow' is similar to those of the Rakhines. The only difference is in the story ending. The ever-popular tales include 'The sarus crane couple', 'The barking deer couple', 'The prayers for fertility', 'Shin Mrakonzon malon', 'The white crow', 'The red crow', 'The yellow crow', etc.

(C) Music and traditional dance

Music

The 'chi khaun:¹' is the essential one in the Thet musical instruments. It is the main musical instrument used in courtship. Long poem recitations unaccompanied by notational tunes are a significant aspect in the Thet tradition.

¹bamboo flute

Lullabies. (Thet version)

- (၁) အဒူဝေနာကာနီယို
 အိပ်ရာနောင်ဟောနော်
 အာစိနဲနဲကာ
 မောင်ကာနဲနဲကာ
 အပန်းနဲနဲကာ
 အိအာနော်ယိုင်
 အာဟာနော်-ယိုင်-ယင်ယင်ယိုင်

(English version)

Young one, your mummy's gone to the farm,
 And will bring back fruits when returns,
 Plenty of maize and blossoms,
 She'll return soon,
 So go to bed, my child, dear,
 Without a sob or a tear.

'Ahdhu' is an archaic word in the Rakhine dialect, as 'yai yin yin yai' is the Rakhine melodious line ending a lullaby.

2. (Thet) မလာမလာပိုင်နော
 မလာပိုင်နောမလာပိုင်
 အဒူဝေ ဤတုပိုင်နာနော
 ဤတုပိုင်
 မလာမလာပိုင်
 ထိန်းထိန်ဗာအိုင်နော

(English)

The baby's mother, come back quick!
Come back quick!
So that the baby could see you when it wakes up from sleep,
Do come back quick!

is the lullaby for a cry-baby whose mother is away.

3. (Thet) အဒူးဝေ နာကာနီနာကာနောနော
 စာနာခူးဂါးလော်င်ကားနောအော
 အိစိကောနာဖဲန်နော
 အိစိဗူလီဗူလီနဖဲန်နော
 တနာဗူလီဗလီနဖဲန်နော
 အိစိဗလီဗူလီနဖဲန်နောနောနော်နော
 မလာမလာဖဲန်နော
 တနာဗူလီဗလီပိုအွန်ကအဲန်
 နဟိုင်ဗေါင်းဗေါင်းနပိုင်နော
 နဟိုင်ပတုယိုမနကဘဲန်

(English)

Don't cry little baby,
Mummy will bring back
Lots and Lota of fish and prawns,
Mummy make sure you bring them all.

(D) Traditional dances

Dances are performed as occasions call for –such as ceremonies, festivities, weddings, and funerals as well. The 'chein chin' is the musical instrument used in rural parts when the male and female made a 'zan' dialogue in the old days.

The 'spider dance' originated in Myotaun in Tipuran Province, India, and spread elsewhere. The dance is performed by a few dancers. However, for those of the Myopyi, Thetpyi, Bomintaun, and Falantaun racial groups which are of similar blood

stock with the Thets, the full-length choreography make use of 40 people in all. The dance movements consist of open palms and raised feet, with the body seinging to and fro. A complete set of musical instruments is needed for the full-length dance acts in serial order. It is danced to the adaptation of the birth stories of the Buddha, and other stories. The spider dance is usually performed for such plays as Bayakumar, Kawkanu, Saddhadanu, and Ramayana. Some perform for plays based on folktales. The name of the dance derived from the insect spider.

The 'Ngasi' dance mainly depicts the movement of strides and the snapping of the fingers. It is a non-instrumental solo dance accompanied by singing alone. The Ngasi dance choreographer designs various dance patterns based on a variety of gestures and expressions, and sounds. The audience can enjoy the artistic feat depending on the expressive gestures of the dance. First, the choreographer sings the introductory preliminaries. Then, the plot of the drama is acted out, and finally, comes the search for Ngasi in a boat. The audience finds delight in this dance because it includes humour, treasure troves, prophecies, auspicious sayings, and predictions.

In the ancient times, the Ngasi dance was performed only at the Royal Court. However, with the abolishing of royalty the dance had spread elsewhere and prospered in the rural parts as well. The dance is performed on the ground on moonlit nights, with the audience crowding around the show. The full drama is acted out solo. There is no specific attire, but any mode of everyday dress would do. The paraphernalia includes a mortar, a scoop net, a tumpline basket, an oar, a basket, one quarter bushel of rice, one tray of offertories, and a shawl. The dancer wears a turban with the front piece jutting out about 8 inches to the front to symbolize the fish tusk.

The 'don' choral dance is performed at the funeral of Buddhist monks as well as other rural festivities.

'Thaing', the martial art dance, is performed at the funeral of Buddhist monks when the corpse is brought out for the final journey. Dancers knock with sticks at the bamboo poles that hold that holds the monk's corpse in rhythmic beats. Dance steps also change after 3 or 4 a particular martial arts footworks, and dance to the beat and rhythmic tunes of the sticks. There are songs for every 'thaing' dance.

The 'Ancients' image' dance is performed in the form of woven bamboo slat figurines dressed elderly attires, and into which the dancer enters for the



The children are playing their traditional games.



performance. It usually goes with pagoda festivals, and other merry-making occasions.

The 'nat' (spirit) dance' has been performed annually at the sacrificial ceremonies to the spirits since time immemorial. It is part of the sacrifices to the guardian spirits of the village, the creek, the farm, the home, etc. At the onset of the monsoon rains, the sacrifice to the traditional guardian spirit is usually held at the village 'nat' shrine where the dances are performed to the accompaniment of music by bamboo flutes.

The 'zan' choral dance has its choreography based on the 'zan' which means a linguistic register made up of poetic rhymes, consisting of questions and answers used by the dating bachelor and maiden in their courtship. This register is known as 'zan chin', and is widespread in the whole of the Rakhine regions. Naturally, it is cherished by all the bachelors and maidens.

(D) Sport and Games

Spinning tops is a game the Thets play. The top has an ordinary spike, and the game is played without a circular line drawn on the ground. The first player strikes his top spinning on the ground and the rest strike on his spinning top provided that they also could set their tops spinning. The striker whose top does not spin would be made to take the first player's place.

Tip-cat is also a Thet traditional game. Dice is played making use of 5 shells or small pebbles.

Martial arts games such as 'thaing' and boxing are found to be absent in Thet sports and games.

Others such as 'queuing behind the victor', 'cockfighting', and 'chasing around the threshing ground' are included in Thet popular sports and games.

(E) Illness and cures

The Thets are a healthy crowd and illness seldom occurs. Therefore, there is no one who makes a living out of medicines. The occasional illness is treated with such cures and medicines as are known, and as have been experienced with.

Bowel disorders are dealt with the juice obtained from a plant called 'noan'. Sores not caused by injuries are cured by charms and mantras. Nowadays, Thets go to Rural Health Centres for treatment. There are one Health assistant and 2 midwives, and a mobile health team led by a doctor opens clinic one day a week.

(F) Death and funeral

Comparatively speaking, the Thets live longer than most of the other national races of the Rakhine State. The over-sixties of both sexes are found to be still active and alive. Death from old age is common as opposed to that by epidemics or disease.

It is believed that the soul hovers on after a person's death. The corpse is provided with meals, one at dawn and others at the usual meal times of the day, up to day of the burial. Guest mourners could contribute to the funeral expenses.

Thet traditions call for the corpse to be laid on a mat on the floor of the roofless extension of the house. It is bathed, put on new dress, and laid on a reed mat, and covered with a blanket from neck to toes. There is no tying of toes with threads. The elder uncle leads the funeral undertakings. The cook and the butler for the death person's meals are chosen and assigned duties. The 'passage fares' is folded in a piece of cloth, and tied to the hand. Knife, axe, smoking pipe, water pot and laid beside the corpse.

The funeral vigil is kept by relatives from both sides reciting melancholic mourning verses. The coffin, woven in bamboo slats, is prepared outside of the village at the foot of the special tree for the 'nats'. The bereaved family pays a token fees to 'purchase' the coffin.

On the burial day, relatives provide alcoholic drinks to those who carry the coffin, coffin carries should be in even number 4,6,8,etc, which is borne feet first. The bathing utensils are brought along, and the pot bearing the tendron is carried over the head of a family member. Once outside the village, the coffin is put into a tiered hearse called 'myinmo'. The coffin is prepared outside of the village within the day, it must not be brought into the village on pains of ill luck to be fallen on the village, inviting more deaths. Bachelors carry the coffin to the accompaniment of coffin carrying slogans, and a tug-of-war in the open field.

At the cemetery, the rites of taking refuge in the 3 Gems, the sharing of merits with the deceased and the offertories to the monks are carried out according to the Buddhist religious practice. The grave hole is dug to a person's height because a shallow one would prevent the deceased from realizing the Law of Deliverance from the Life Cycle of Rebirths. Entombment is not a common practice. The corpse is laid to rest head north, symbolizing the act of homage to its place of origin, and to direct the soul back to its native place. All utensils are buried together with the corpse so

that the deceased could make use of them in his next existence. The cremation time is in the afternoon, the noon time is a taboo for this matter. Cremation of the male needs 5 layers of firewoods, while the female needs 6. The firewood is gathered from the nearby wood, not taken from home.

The head is washed in the creek water on returning from the burial. The Sameik Asai does its headwashing upstream, while the Bauk Asai at downstream. Prayers for protection are recited while washing the head. Then, each goes to the mourning house and climbs up the ladder for 3 stairs as token for reentering the home. Only after that each returns to his home where acacia shampoo awaits. Next morning, people go to the cremation site for observing the whereabouts of the soul in its next life.

Two types of cemetery are kept. One is for normal deaths, and the other for death by disease, violent deaths, drowning, homicide, falling down trees, and for those who died without the benefits of the 'gaun: baun: tin' auspicious ceremony. According to Thet traditions, the cemetery is kept at the back of the village, not in the village itself. Persons who died away from the village and those who died on the waning day of the moon are deprived of the opportunity to have their corpses inside the village. It is assumed as bringing ill luck to the village. Prompt burial is required for violent deaths, for deaths by cholera, those who died on Wednesdays, women in confinement, and newly-born, or still births. There are no specific customs for bachelors and maidens.

The offertories to the monks for the soul of the departed are held within the week. Before that, there is the practice of summoning the soul. A piece of cloth is placed on the eve of the occasion as an invitation to the event. It is put on a mat and touching it with hand, the invitation is pronounced. If the soul is coming, it will some sounds at night or make its acceptance by giving a dream.

(G)Inheritance

Since it is a patrilineal society, the male offspring is the one entitled to inherit in the Thet community.

If both parents died, and the children were not of legal age, the legacy would be for the natural sibling males of the deceased male parent.

When the husband had only sisters, they would not inherit the property. If a wife died before the husband, there is not such a problem. On the contrary, the prior death of the husband would not put the wife in the line for heritage. The deceased's

younger or elder brother enjoys the right to inheritance. In such cases, the village elders ask the wife whether she would stay on or leave the household.

Whether the answer is positive or negative, the husband's sibling brothers take over the property. An exception to the rule is that if the siblings are too poor to manage the household, and made it known officially, the widow has the right to take charge. When both parents died in a household where there are grown-up children, the sons share the property among themselves, not the daughters who are supposed to enjoy inheritance from the in-laws through their husbands.

The most valued inherited property are considered as those of gongs, and brass gong circles. The others, such as homes and farms are not considered as long lasting or permanent.

(H) Diet

Thet diets mainly consist of local fruits and vegetables, and fish from the sea and rivers, which are nutritious for the local populace.

The variety of tendrions growing wild on the hills, and the different species of mushrooms that grow around the marshes along the creeks and rivers make up delicious dishes for the people. Various kinds of fish are cooked in accordance with choice recipes. Dried fish is also an important ingredient in Thet dishes. They are usually taken as salad in hot, sharp tastes. Sometimes it is an essential dish in making offertories to the monk.

Chillies and fish paste roast go very well as a side-dish for Thet meals. Sliced onions, chillies, and prawns are also a popular dish.

Snacks include a variety of sweetmeats produced from glutinous rice. Most of them are similar to the Myanmar snacks.

The Thets take 3 meals a day on a working day. They like hot and sharp tastes. Fire places are assigned for each specific group. In chicken meat, the intestines are much valued. So the elders are given the priority for such meat. Homage to elders and parents is made before eating a meal. Harvest festivals are held with food and drinks in abundance for the 'nats', the spirits and the people around. Mutton is cooked without oil for making sacrifices to the spirits. There are singing and merry making on these occasions.

Every household brews liquor.

Thet home utensils include-

Myanmar

အို:

ခွက်

ယောက်မ

ဒါ:

ဆန်ကာ

ဆန်ကော

ဆန်ကောဝိုင်း

Thet

Ti

Whar

laukpaung

katen

kywekul

vaekyue

vaemayan

English

pot

cup

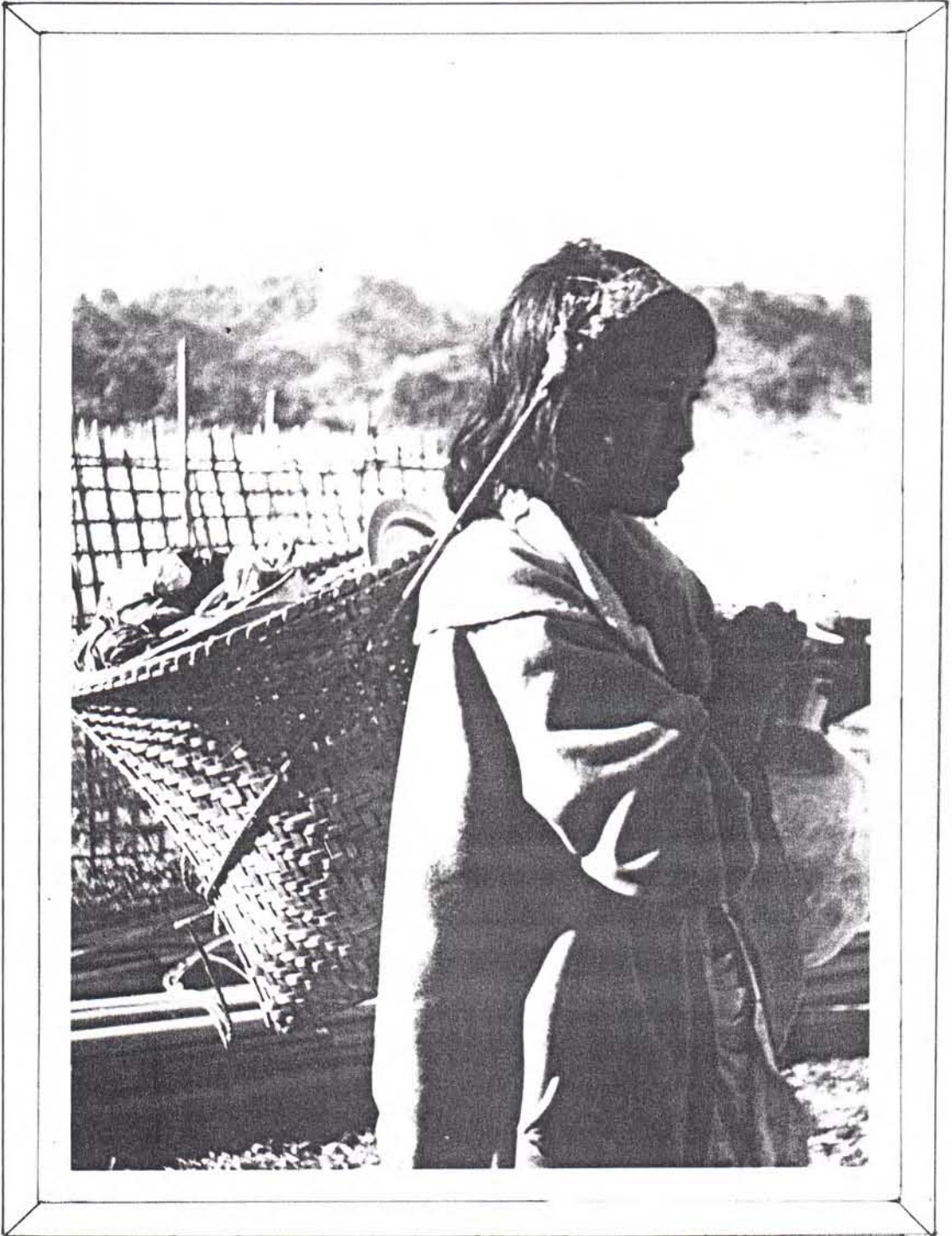
ladle

knife

seive

threshing tray

circular tray



Thet women usually go to taung-yar

Chapter - 4

Economy .

(A) Economic Enterprises

The Thet people undertake various economic enterprises for earning a living. The enterprises depend on various geographical and natural resources such as timber extraction, gathering firewood, hunting, weaving mats and hillside farming. Likewise, there are fisheries and boat playing in areas close to streams and rivers.

Those Thets who live in urban areas earn their living plying trishaws, roofing houses, and also as Government employees. Thet's traditional dress is usually handwoven and homemade. It is done as a Thet traditional occupation, but not on a commercial basis. Cotton is grown on the hillside farm along with paddy. After harvesting the cotton is dried and spun. Like those of the other indigenous races, the Thet spinning equipment consist of manual devices. It takes about one day to spin yarn for a piece of clothing.

Then the traditional black dye obtained from the 'phon tar' plant grown on the hillside farm is applied. The plant about a person's height tall is usually grown along with the cotton plants and the ripening times also coincide. Some seeds are kept for the next planting season. The fruit, the buds and the leaves of the plant are all boiled down to get the liquid for dyeing the yarns.

For 5 days the yarn is dried and drenched repeatedly until the colour fasts permanently on the yarn. Weaving is done on a back-strap loom. The weaving patterns and tools are similar to those of the Mros, the Khumis, and the Dainets. Clothing articles such as skirts and blouses for the women, and turbans, bags for men, and blankets and shawls are produced in this way.

(B) The choice of the 'taung-yar' hillside plot, and its taboos.

The main livelihood of the Thets is working on the 'taung-yar', hillside farm, which is not done on a permanent plot, but shifts to new plots when the soil is used up in one place.

When a plot is chosen for farming, a large branch or a bamboo is split up into four, and placed in view of all passers- by. Before doing this, the owner pleads to the Nats, the Spirits concerned, to favour him with a good dream. Those who come across the branch or the bamboo acknowledge it as plot under the possession of an owner.

Having dreamt a good dream, the person goes to the *taung-yar* taking along with him a pair of cock and hen, an egg, turmeric, sweet potato, and a piece of cotton. First, the guardian spirit of the creek is offered the hen as a sacrifice. Only then he would clear the plot. In doing so designates a particular large tree as that of the abode of the guardian spirit. The egg and the yam are then buried at the foot of this tree. A small shrine consisting of five tasseled posts is erected at the base of the tree trunk. The cock is then fed popcorns before it is killed by cutting its throat. The chicken blood is smeared to the shrine. The hollow bamboo containing turmeric is now added water and chicken blood. The knife is sharpened in the diluted blood on three hones. The chicken is boiled and offered at the shrine. Liquor is used in the sacrifice requesting the Nat concerned for permission to till the plot. Then the buried egg is retrieved and boiled. If the white of the egg turns black, red, or brown, the plot should be abandoned. In that case the yolk is consulted for a better plot. The boiled chicken is checked in the tongue. If the stump at the base turns towards oneself it is considered lucky site. Then the clearing work on the plot can proceed.

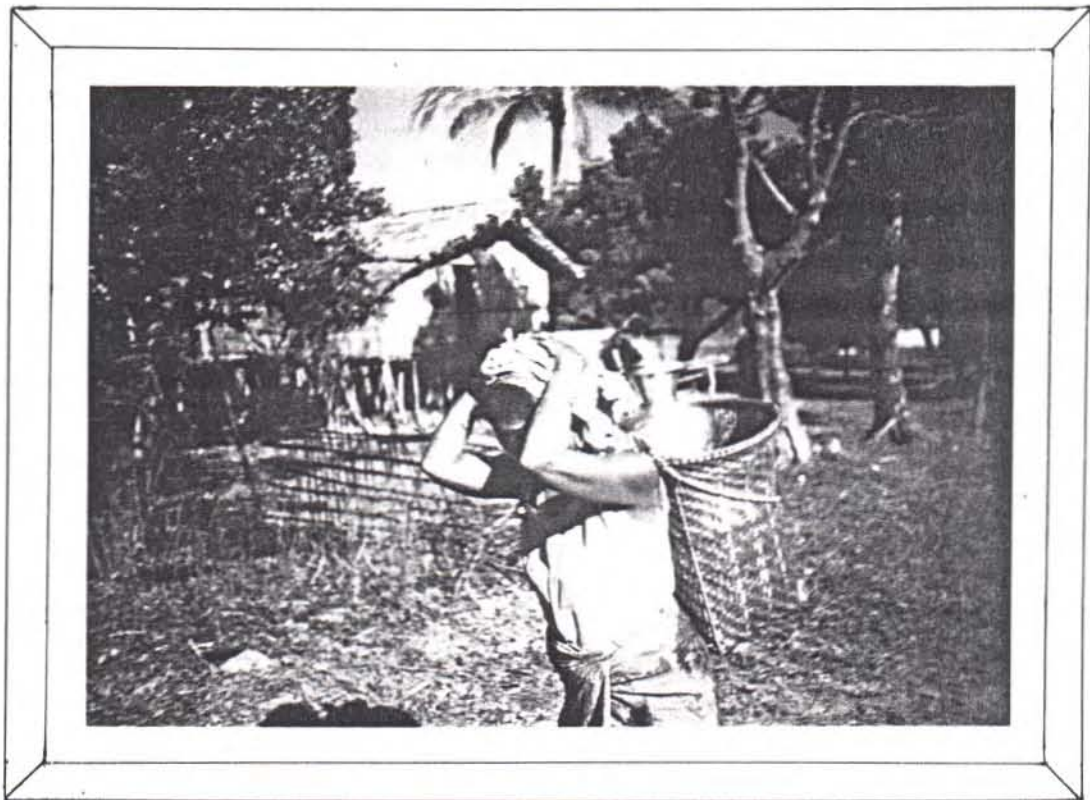
Another chicken has to be offered to the Nat when the cleared *taung-yar* is set on fire. Seven stumps of turmeric are put in a bamboo hollow joint container and the paddy seeds are sprinkled with the turmeric solution. No sacrifice is offered at the weeding time.

The christening of the *taung-yar* farm is done before the Buddhist Lent begins. Chicken blood is diluted and kept in a bamboo joint container in which are seven stumps of turmeric. The owner of the farm goes around the plot holding this, which is done for obtaining a bumper crop.

Another sacrifice is made at the time of the crops blossoming. Roasted egg is diluted and put in a bamboo joint container. Then the liquid is sprinkled over the paddy plants.

A jar of 'khaung-yei'¹ and a chicken is needed at full harvest. A small abode and a small barn are built beforehand. Chicken blood is again sprinkled on all the farming tools, as tradition calls for. Two bushels of paddy are reaped and threshed before noon. The basket of rice, on top of which is the chicken, must be kept at the main post of the barn. 'Let there be a bumper crop, and let there be food supplies in abundance. 'After praying so the liquor in the mouth is sprinkled upon the paddy. Invited guests also do likewise.

¹fermented brew



Thet women usually go to taung-yar

In this way the taung-yar farming starts. Men fell down large trees while women clear bushes, set on fire, weed, and prepare the ground. The work begins in the month of Pyatho¹, and reaps the crops in Nadaw².

No talking is allowed with other people during the clearing of a taung-yar plot. It is prohibited on pains of encountering harms. But words can be exchanged among workers of the same group. Urinating on the plot is also prohibited.

(C) Cultivation and livestock breeding.

Cultivation

The Thets are skilled in both the hillside farming and plains farming. In other words, they earn their livelihood by both dry and irrigated cultivation. Common species of paddy are Nga-yoke-tan, Panei, and red Kauk-pyauk. Paddy by hillside farming is the chief product of cultivated crops. But it is carried out on a subsistence basis only, and on a manageable scale. Besides paddy, chilly, maize, common millet, Italian millet, sugarcane, and banana are also grown along with pulses, vegetables, tobacco, jute, and cotton. Tobacco is grown for commercial purposes. Moreover, the 'phon-tar' plant for dyeing agent is a compulsory plant called upon by tradition on every Thet household. From this plant the traditional black dye can be extracted.

Garden plants consist of chilly, onions, mustard, banana, cabbage, ginger, guava, plums, coconut, jackfruit, mango, djenkol, gourd and pumpkin.

Paddy ripens at the end of Buddhist Lent. Harvesting is done on communal basis. Food and drinks are served to helpers. Neighbours help each other with the harvesting. The new harvest is cooked and offered to elders before partaking by everyone.

Taung-yar paddy is grown for family consumption only. Hillocks and slopes are chosen for this type of farming. The months of Pyatho and Tabodwe³ are the time for taung-yar clearing. The trees felled are kept to be dried in the sun for a month or so, and set on fire in the month of Taboung⁴. Later than this time would cause difficulties not only in burning but also in the stumps sprouting up again with the early rains. The ashes would bring about good manure and also season the ground for planting. Precaution is taken for villages not to catch fire.

¹ 10th month of Myanmar calendar

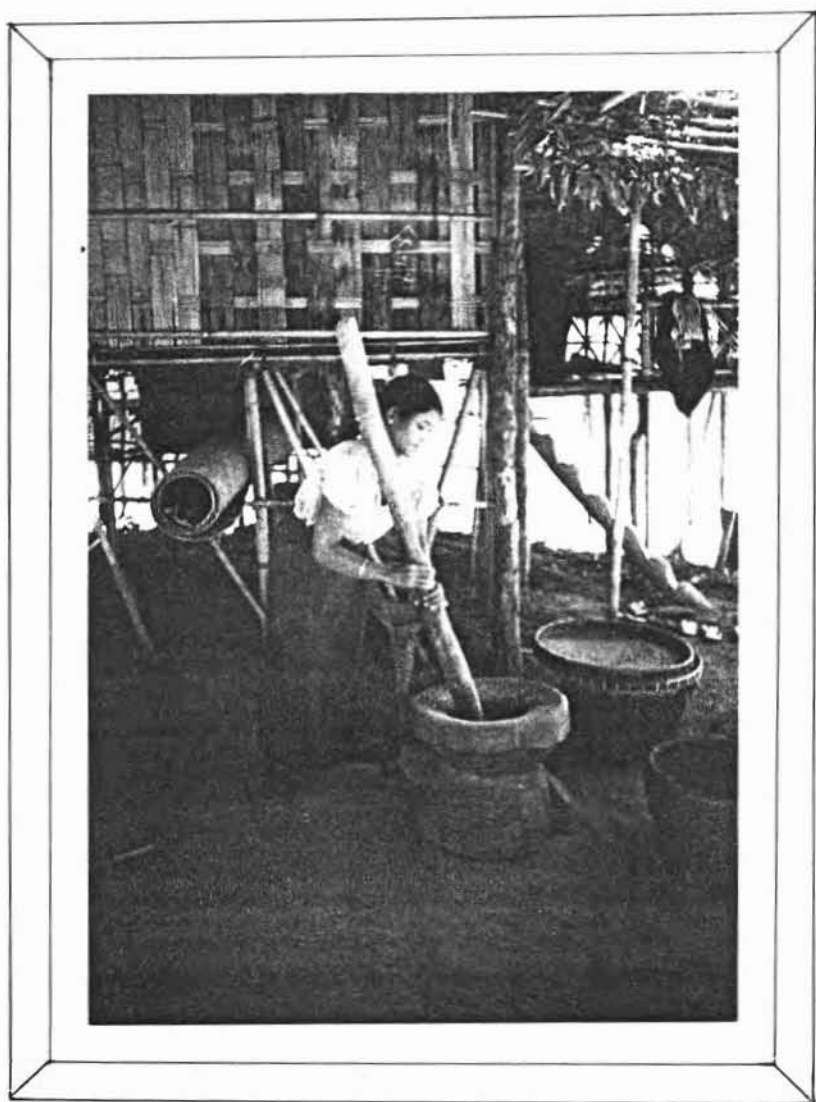
² 9th month of Myanmar calendar

³ 11th month of Myanmar calendar

⁴ 12th month of Myanmar calendar



Picking mustards



Pounding rice

When the plot is ready, it is burrowed and the planting begins. Knives, axes, and hoes are the common farming tools. Males and females work the taung-yar side by side, clearing, burning, planting, weeding, and reaping. Paddy is planted in the month of Tagu¹, and harvesting time is the month of Thadingyut. The common paddy species are those of Nga-yoke-tan, Panei, and red kyauk-pyauk. Besides paddy, there are chilly, millets, maize, sesamun, and turmeric grown on the farm.

Garden plants grown on mountain slopes include areca palm, betel, jackfruit, mango, guava, pineapple, marian, papaya, banana, tamarind, and other assorted vegetables. Home gardens also have such banana plant species as Yakhine, Theehmway, Feegyan, and Nanthabu.

Areca palms are grown on riverbanks, hillocks and valleys, and on the silted virgin lands. These plants need layers of hay and humus. The palms blossom in the month of Taboung, and the harvest time is from Thadingyut² to Nadaw. Areca is a Thet commercial nut and the palm is widely grown.

Tobacco is grown on silted soil and virgin lands. The tobacco plot is cleared and burnt, and sowing of seeds begins in autumn. The leaves sprout up in Pyatho and Tabodwe. Tobacco is harvested in Tagu and Kason. Leaves are sorted according to quality grades and slung on bamboo sticks of 12 to 14 inches long. Each stick contains 30 to 40 leaves. Ten such sticks are counted as one 'po'. These sticks are hung under house roofs to dry up. Tobacco leaves must not be dried in the sun. Tobacco is widely consumed throughout the Rakhine State.

Livestock breeding.

Although livestock breeding is not found to be carried out on a commercial basis, domesticated animals are usually bred for consumption at traditional festivities. Poultry, hogs, cattle, and goats are the common livestock. Poultry and hogs are raised for use in sacrifices to the Nats, and cattle for cultivation work. Livestock is raised in the traditional way as opposed to modern breeding methods.

(D) Hunting and fishing

Hunting

Since the Thet community dwells in the natural woodlands, they earn their living as lumberjacks, accrue income from gathering firewood, and as experts on the

¹ 1st month of Myanmar calendar

² 7th month of Myanmar calendar

terrain and wildlife of the jungle, also make a livelihood by hunting. From squirrels to stags, and deer to wild boar, the Thets would hunt for meat. The hunting devices consist of bow and arrow, spear, booby traps. Sometimes, dogs accompany on hunting trips. The noose is used as a hunting method. It is tied to branches, bamboo, and stumps. The height and length vary according to the size of the intended game. Steel wires are used for the noose to catch wild cats, stags and rabbits. Bamboo traps called 'lay-khet' are used to catch wild boars that come to devour the ripening crops. This is made of bamboo posts whose bent force is utilized in pushing forward a sharpened bamboo stick. The pointed piece of bamboo is adjusted to the height of the boar so that other taller preys such as full grown stags, barking deer; and even human beings can be harmed only at the below the knee level. But then there are warning signs on the footpaths.

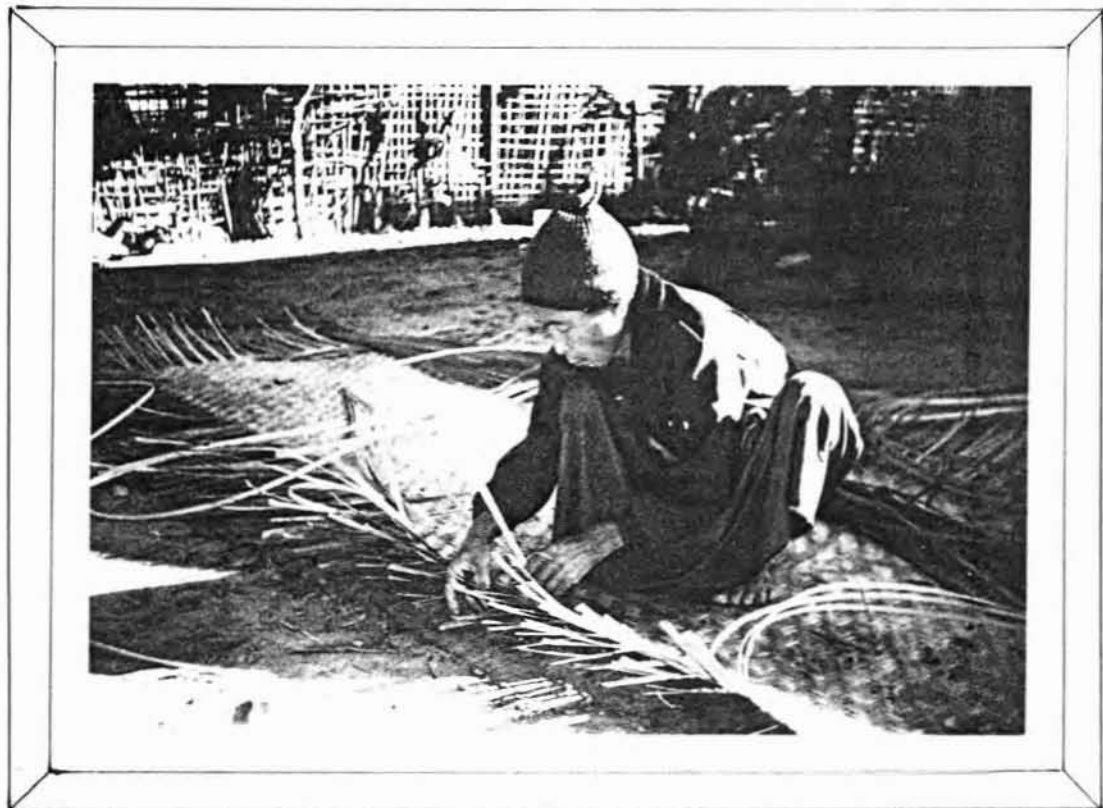
Booby traps, in the form of digging deep holes in the ground, and placing thorns at the bottom, are prepared on the paths of the prey. The holes are camouflaged using leaves and earth spread on the lid made of split bamboo. The prey, unaware of the trap, falls into the pit.

There is also a kind of trap for catching birds and small animals consisting of heavy blocks of wood that would crumble on the prey when it reaches out for food left at the base of the device. Wild cats, squirrels, jungle fowls, and a variety of birds are hunted by this method. Jungle fowls are also caught by ensnaring them with a hen tied loose to a tree or a post around which are loops. The rooster's crow attracts jungle fowls to challenge for a fight, and as they approach they are caught in the trap.

In the old days, even animals as large as the elephants were also hunted and caught. Tamed elephants were used to ensnare the wild ones, or by luring wild elephants into a keddah. Catching elephants required a sacrifice to a certain Nat (Spirit) called 'uteinna'. The original place of the Thets, the Hukong Pass in the north of Myanmar, and the present place of residence, the Mayu mountain range up to Mt. Wela of the Western Yoma are popular elephant sanctuaries. Therefore, the Thets are skillful in the art, as well as other hunting methods.

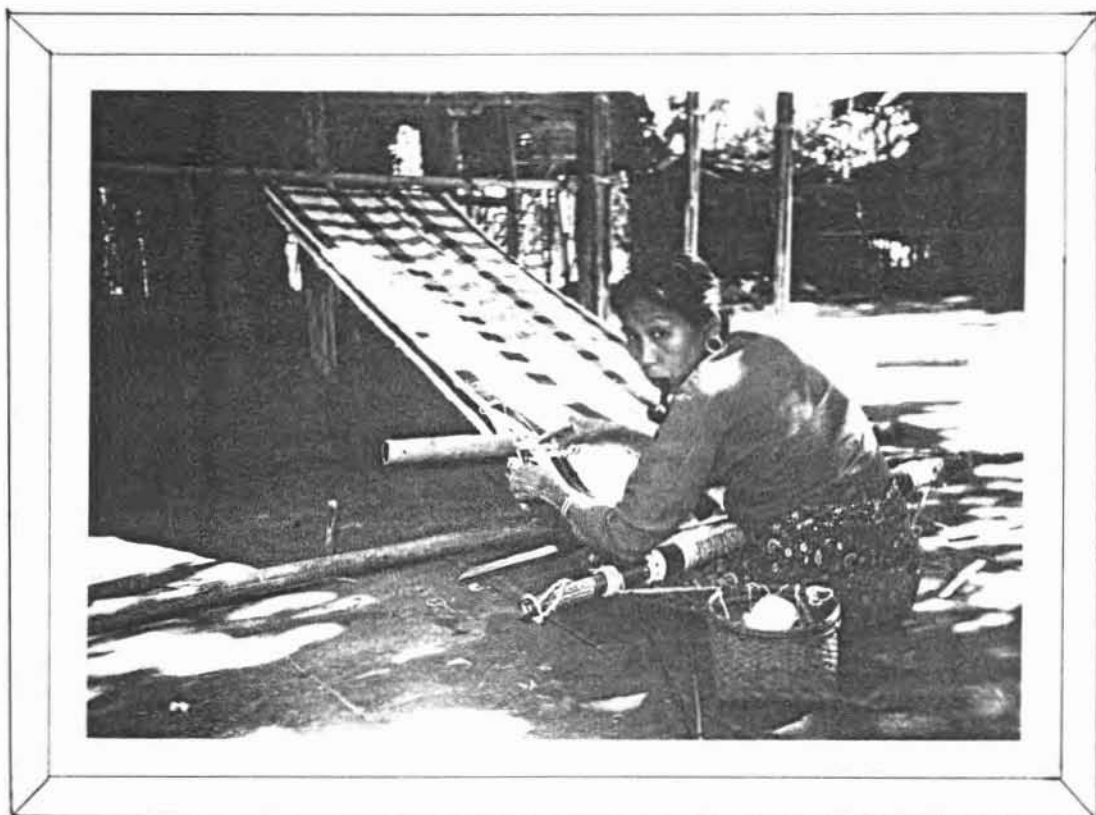
Fishing

Fishing is done individually as well as in company. There is no taboo found to exist in fishing in company. The main fishing methods are by using fish-traps made of bamboo, fishing lines, and by using a concoction produced from the roots of the

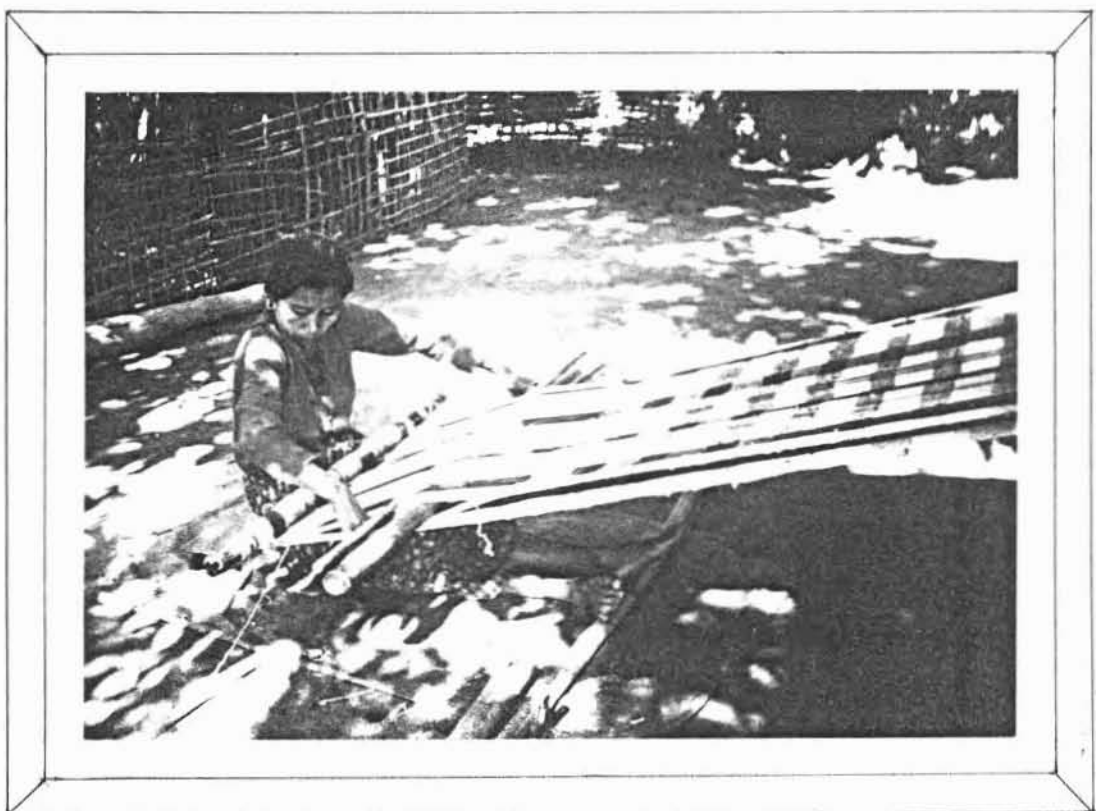


Weaving bamboo mat (Domestic work of men or women)





Weaving cloth



'mahaka' plant, which kills fish. The last mentioned method is used to catch fish in ponds and lakes. The roots are crushed by pounding and rubbed in the water until froths appear. The smell and taste make the fish intoxicated and float above the surface.

(E) Handicrafts

Weaving bamboo mats is one of the cottage industries of the Thet people. Large baskets, small containers, mats both for flooring and walling, carrier baskets, all made from bamboo material are produced for farming purposes. However, weaving mats is done on a commercial scale. This is particularly the specialized occupation of the residents of Rappi Pelon Tet village on the eastern part of the mountain range. The products are distributed to markets across the Mayu range via Kyein Chaung. This is also true of the villages such as Tamanthar, and Welataun. Raw material is in abundance, finished products are of quality items, and the market availability is also very constant. Thus, the bamboo mat weaving cottage industry is second only farming in terms of generating income for the Thets.

Different types of wide cavity baskets are woven using bamboo. The producing time depends on the size of the basket. Flooring and walling mats are also woven out of bamboo. The weaving patterns employed are single-tiered zigzag weave, and the crocodile skin pattern. Sieves and trays are also woven out of bamboo.

Mortar and pestle for pounding rice is made of wood. The mortar has a curve in the middle. Ladders are made of logs carved out for footholds.

Pottery, stone sculpting, silversmith, sculpture, and blacksmith are the crafts that do not have a place in the Thet community.

The traditional loom is the backstrap one, but a bit longer in width. The frame, pulley, and pad are of bamboo and wood, not a finely decorated loom as such. Carpentry is the art the Thets are skilled in, and houses are built on self-help basis.

(F) Commerce, weights and measurements.

Commerce

It is not observed that minerals are found in the regions populated by Thets. The soil is of early rock geologically. The region comprises highlands receiving monsoon rains for over 200 inches of annual rainfall facilitating dense woodland of

timber and bamboo. Paddy from the hillside farm is the main crop product. Paddy, pumpkin, cucumber, maize, and chilly are brought to neighbouring weekly markets for sale. At other times, the goods from Tamangthar are shipped to Kyein Chaung by riverine transport, and from there distributed to various parts of the region.

The second main commercial activity of the Thets is the weaving of bamboo mats and baskets. These are sent to Kyein Chaung by boats and rafts, and by overland routes to the neighbouring country. Fish paste, dried fish, and other consumer goods not produced, or not sufficient in the region are imported from Butheetaun and Maungtaw via Kyein Chaung. There are no proper traders in the Thet community, each selling his own products, and the sale is cash on delivery basis. In rare cases of goods exchanges, the value is estimated on current selling price, as agreed upon mutually.

Weights and measurements

The Thet people use the 'site', the approximate of 40 ticals, as the unit for measuring weight in their buying and selling of goods. Fish is sold in number of corporeal form, or piles on a fixed price. Fruits such as gourd, brinjal, cucumber, and pumpkin are sold by weight. The 'site' is the measurement for weight just like the Rakhines. The only different is in the sound, which is /hsa/ instead of the Rakhines' /tha/. 'Site is in the form of the balance except that it has only one container for weight. The amount of weight is measured with the balancing of the wooden rod to which the weight container is attached to by ropes. The weight measurements are as follows.

| | |
|-------------|------------|
| pwachan | -2½ ticals |
| pwaseik | -5 " |
| 1 pwa | -10 " |
| ½ site | -20 " |
| 1 site | -40 " |
| 1 site 1pwa | -50 " |
| 2½ site | -1 viss |

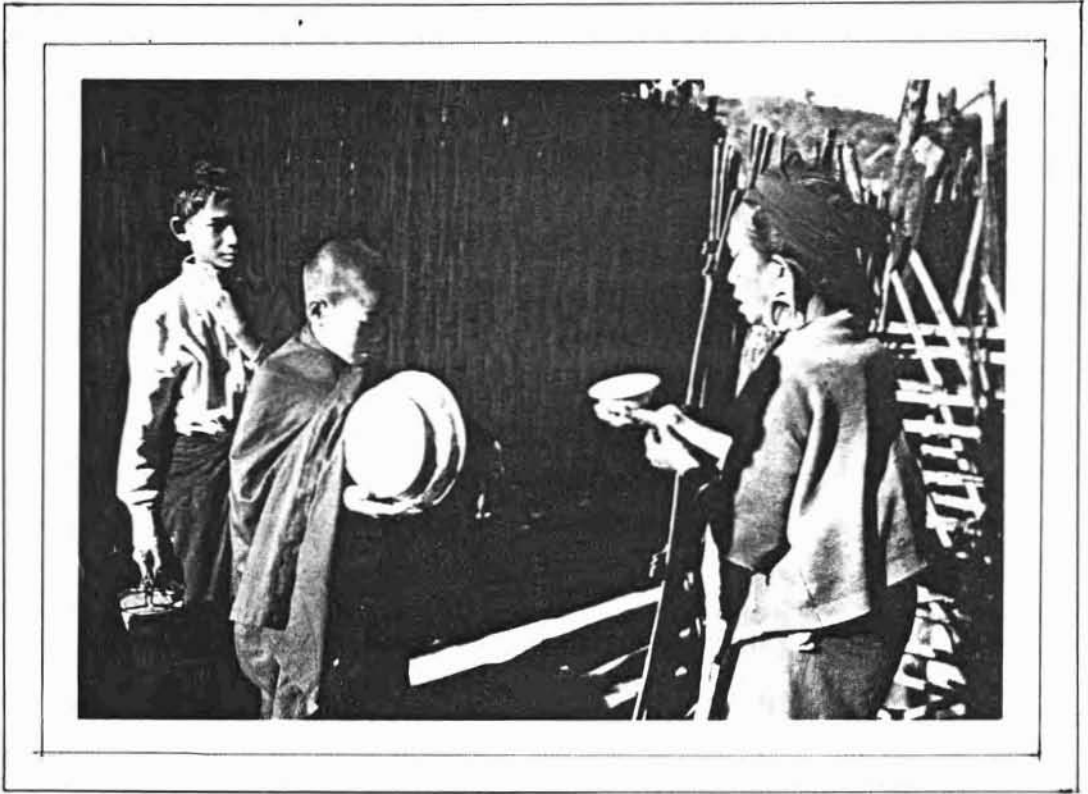
Paddy is sold in bushels. The measurements are –

| | |
|---------|---|
| 1 pyi | -2 site |
| 6 pyi | -1 taung |
| 2 taung | -1 bushel (the measurement used throughout Myanmar) |

Liquid measurements are –

| | | |
|-----------|------------------------------|-----------|
| 20 ticals | -1 artar (½ standard bottle) | |
| 10 ticals | - 1 arti (¼ standard bottle) | |
| 40 ticals | -1 standard bottle | |
| 50 ticals | -1 " | & 1 arti |
| 1 viss | - 2 " | & 1 artar |

The liquid measurement when converted to 'site' is taken as 1 viss equals to 2½ 'site'.



Offering rice and curry

Chapter -5

Religion

(A) Religious beliefs

The Thet nationals take up Buddhism as their religion, and there are indoor shrines for Lord Buddha in every home. They also practise the traditional worship of 'nat', the spiritual being concerned with each aspect of human life. According to Thet tradition, the whole planet of the earth is under the guardianship of the 'nats', and all human beings are at the mercy of the nats who are the masters of their destiny.

The Thet nationals traditionally worship nats, that is called animism, including the 'Kein-Ha-Mine', guardian spirit of the household, 'Htein-He-Mine', of the village, the 'pasi-ha-mine', of the creek, 'tago-ha-mine', of the mountain, the 'phone-phaug-ha-mine', of the tree, the 'kabashay-ha-mine', of the river bank, and the 'kosaunt-ha-mine', of the individual person.

The household guardian spirit is offered a sacrifice when someone in the household falls ill, and at the reoccupation of the house after the temporary stay at the 'taung-yar'¹. This is done to ensure the safe protection under the guardianship of the nats, and the occasion calls for a chicken and a jar of 'khaun-yei' as offertories, and neighbours are served food and drinks.

The guardian nat of the village and that of the creek are worshipped with offertories at the beginning and end of the rainy season. These are collective sacrifices for a bumper crop and abundant food supplies, and for the good health of the whole village. During cultivation, sacrifices to the guardian 'nat' of the mountain are made.

The guardian 'nat' of the individual person is offered lights and candles at the monastery.

(B) Traditional offering of the Animism.

The Thet nationals believe that the whole natural world is guarded by respective 'nats', and that the destiny of every human is at the whims and wishes of the 'nat's.

The falling of meteorites at nightfall is assumed as the process of a new star replacing an old one. Concerning the rainbow, it is believed that it was caused by two sibling brother and sister marrying against the moral ethical codes. The couple was

¹hillside farming site

put to shame, and when they died they at times appear in the sky in the form of the rainbow- the dimmer part representing the male Thet sibling, and the brighter part, the female- indicating the assumption that the sister, the female sibling is rather coquettish.

The Thets believe in reincarnation, and have faith in faith-healings. Insane persons are thought to be the victims of the 'nats' wrath, and thus, offertories are made to appease them. Dumb and deaf newborns are believed to be the consequence of the pregnant mother's inadvertent whereabouts and her gastronomical desires. Twins are the answer to prayers from the previous existence.

Practice and belief in witchcraft and the supernatural world are widespread in the Thet community. For instance, a baby refuses breast feed from a mother returning home in the evening is assumed as the work of the devil and thus, food is given to the devil to appease him. Fresh meat or fish is put in a bamboo slat container, and an earthen or aluminium container as well. The second container is left at the gate of the house yard. Taking the bamboo container and a knife, the mother retraces her steps. While doing so, she avoids conversing with anyone on her way. At a reasonable distance from the house, she pronounces, 'May the child get well', and throws the food. Then she burrows the ground with the knife and brings the dust home. Once back at the gate of the house, the mother enquires, 'Has the child recovered?' and those at home reply, 'Yes, it has.' Then the food container left at the gate is thrown outside declaring, 'Let the evil befalling this home be gone with this food.' The baby is then rubbed on the palms and forehead with the dust taken on the knife.

(C) Seasonal festivities.

The sacrifice to the guardian 'nat' of the creek, called 'pasi-ha-mine' in Thet, held by the whole village before the rains come, is the main seasonal Thet traditional festival. It is done to ward off danger and harm, and to attain good health, happiness, and prosperity.

1) Sacrifice to the guardian 'nat' of the creek.

This sacrifice is usually held in the evenings when the rainy season begins. Tuesdays and Saturdays are recognized as the days when the spirits are in the best of their temperament. The Headman or the Sorcerer takes the leading role. People

assemble at the village on that evening and walk in a procession towards the creek of the village where the sacrifice is to be held.

Gold and silver coins, banners, and popcorns are brought along. A temporary shrine on four posts is erected at the edge of the creek. The roofing is of 'dhani', a kind of marsh palm, or of plantain leaves. There are 3 walls of bamboo slats woven into 4-inch square pattern enclosing the place. The four 6-foot posts are held firm by criss-crossing supporting poles. Five tassels, and five banners are adorned on the four posts.

Popcorns are laid upon the banana leaves on the bamboo floor. The Sorcerer then recites the sacrificial prayers, which can be interpreted as, ' We are offering a sacrifice to you, the guardian nat of the creek, to keep the residents of the village, old and young alike, away from disease and illness, and to bring about prosperity'. This is repeated by the villagers in chorus. After this, the popcorns placed on the shrine are sprinkled along the creek. There is no killing of animals for this sacrifice, and only the men folk participate in it.

2) The propitiation ceremony to the 'nat'

Though it is a kind of sacrifice to the guardian nat of the creek, this is known by the expression, 'chaung nat khin'. Unlike the other sacrifice that is done at the edge of the creek, this one is held at a tree on the banks of the creek, and is held once at the beginning, and again at the end of the rainy season. The former is held in the morning, and the latter in the evening. It involves the killing of animals. Two large trees are designated for those purposes, one up the village, and the other down the village. If these trees happen to be on the riverbanks, it is most fitting for the purpose. The tree up the village is first attended to. The tree in question is enclosed by a wall of bamboo slats, and 5 banners of woven bamboo are erected.

A bottle of liquor surrounded by popcorns is placed on the shrine. The sorcerer chooses two assistants who take the responsibility of killing animals -goat, chicken, duck, and the like- for the sacrifice. The morning sacrifice requires one goat, and the evening one needs two. The popcorns on the shrine are sprinkled with the blood. Then they are thrown around the place. This is called a blood sacrifice. The animals killed for the sacrifice are cut up into meat on the spot, and cooked. When the meat is done, the limbs, the head, the liver, and the intestines are placed on the shrine and offered to the spirits. Then those attending the ceremony partake in the food and drinks served. Roads and paths leading to the village are closed to make

sure there isn't any visitors during the time of the sacrifice. If there happens to be a guest in one's house at the time of the sacrifice, the host has to produce one chicken as compensation for the offence.

On re-entering the village after the sacrificial rites are over, the Sorcerer pronounced that he had pleaded with the guardian spirit of the creek for the health and wealth of those residing in the village, and thus open the village gate for him. As he enters, the village people give him a sip of liquor. He in turn distributes a string of spiritually charged thread as token of prosperity. This kind of sacrifice is done for a bumper harvest, prosperity and good health.

3) Sacrifice to the Guardian Spirit of the Home

This sacrifice is done when there is illness in the home or when returning to occupy the home after a stint of residence at the taung-yar hut. One chicken and a jar of khaung-yei are needed for the occasion. The chicken is killed, and the main part of the house is smeared with the blood. Half a 'pyi'(8 tins) of rice is placed at the foot of the post. Then, neighbours are invited to share the meal of chicken curry.

4) Sacrifice to the Guardian Spirit of the Farm.

Before starting the work on a farm, a favourable dream has to be interpreted to locate the farm site. An egg, a tuber, a cock, a hen, liquors, and pieces of cotton wool are used for the sacrifice performed at the foot of the designated tree, where the egg is boiled and buried. After sometime, the egg is dug out to see whether the yolk is contaminated or left intact. In the former case, the site is assumed unlucky and thus moves on to another site. The chosen site has to be sprinkled with chicken blood, turmeric, and egg before starting to plough. The Spirit concerned is known as the 'Grandma Farming Spirit' and a sacrifice is also made to her at reaping time. The well- to- do make hog meat and 'khaung-yei' sacrifices to her.

(D) Initiation Ceremony

Reaching puberty is recognized as a blessing. It is time when one can raise family, and when one can earn a livelihood on one's own. Therefore, it is assumed an auspicious time when the person concerned is much congratulated. In a way it is a time to instill new courage to face the world. The initiation ceremony for the youths is held between 15 and 16 years of age. It is the occasion to register the youth as an eligible bachelor who is entitled to frequent the 'bachelors' house of the village.

The youth concerned contacts the leading bachelor of the village for the initiation with the consent of parents. The leading bachelor sets the date in consultation with the other bachelors of the village. Invitations are sent out to elders and grown-ups. Arrangements are made to feed the guests. The piece of cloth meant for the turban is a $\frac{3}{4} \times 13\frac{1}{2}$ feet white linen. The leading bachelor adorns the turban on the newly initiated youth. The flap is on the left. Then the leading bachelor pronounces, 'Maung----, now you've reached the status of an eligible bachelor'. The guests applaud in congratulation and convey their blessings. Then, drinks are served in honour of the initiation ceremony. The occasion in Thet is known as 'ahpaung-paun hey'. The ceremony is taken as a formal occasion. Those who have not gone through the process are not to take part in auspicious occasions as weddings and alms giving ceremonies. More than that, when they die they are buried together with those who died of violent death. Generally, the Thet nationals special occasions are undertaken by bachelors and maids, and those youths who have not been initiated in this way would most likely to be social outcasts since they are not allowed to participate in these social occasions.

Chapter-6

Local Government and Administration of Justice

(A) Local administration of the past

The Thet nationals regard the male parent as the patriarch of family and accept his dominance. The eldest out of those generated from respective families is chosen and recognized as the influential leader of the group. The Headman is the key person in the Thet village administration. The traditionally recognized 'tein-loke-pyaun'- the head of the village- leads each village, although he may not be the one officially appointed by the local government to take charge of the administrative responsibilities. Usually, an upright and farsighted elder is elected by consensus, and live peacefully under him. The position is a hereditary one. In the case of an heirless 'loke-pyaun', his male siblings and their offspring could succeed him. Nevertheless, consensus is required for the appointment. Moreover, the son-in-law cannot succeed a 'loke-pyaun'. There might be a number of households in a village, but only someone from a Thet household could be a 'Loke-pyaun'. The responsibility for the security of the village is taken up collectively. They co-operate for the prosperity of the village, and to ensure a peaceful community. The Thets are a peace-loving society occupied with their own domestic chores, and thus do not have a complex socio-economic structure. As an honest and upright lot, they seldom are involved in legal disputes. Therefore, the scope of administration and legislature are not very much complicated. The youth affairs are normally solved by the leading bachelor/ maid of the village who also manages the village social and religious occasion as leaders.

(B) Current Local Administration

The Union of Myanmar has an administrative structure on regional basis as State/ Division, District, Township, and Ward/ Village levels. The ward/ village level is the basic unit of local administration. Only when the State's political, economic, and social objectives are met at these levels will there be a successful implementation of a modern peaceful and developed State.

Thus, there is the village Peace and Development Council taking the administrative responsibilities at Tamarthar village. For the effective undertaking of the rule of law and order, and for the peace and welfare of the village, the rights and responsibilities of the village administrators are published.

In keeping law and order, the village tract headman reports to the Township General Administration Office, the Township Peace and Development Council, and the Police Station concerning all criminal and civil cases, such as theft robbery, mugging, absconding, deserters, homicide, and criminals at large.

The village headman assists those concerned in investigations of offenders in his village jurisdiction. In cases where reporting is out of question, the headman has the right to arrest the culprit.

In development affairs such as cultivation, land use, cattle pastureland, and collecting tax and revenues, the headman helps those concerned with such affairs.

In the social sector, the headman takes the leading role in acquiring health facilities, sports and games for the village youths, the greening of the village and its environs, organizing auxiliary fire brigade, and other social matters for the village community. Villagers also follow the headman's leadership.

The village administrative system's law and order preservation under the guidance of the State Peace and Development Council is the way by which the State's policy, aims and objective would be materialized.

(C) Administration of Justice

The 'loke-pyaun', or the village headman decides all miscellaneous disputes in the village. He can resort to caning and beating in the process of an investigation, and has the power to expel those who do not abide by his words. A 'loke-pyaun' is not a particularly distinguished individual. In normal conditions he is also an ordinary citizen. He makes decisions in harmony with the recognized conventions of the Thet national who have high regard for traditions. There is no permanent court of justice. An ad hoc jury of elders is formed to deal with an arising dispute. The original value is to be compensated in theft cases. In an outbreak of fire, those who help extinguish it deserve a treat by the house owner whose house has caught fire. Swearing of oaths holding Buddha images, the thunderbolts, and at the place of the Guardian Spirit of the Creek, are made in the court of justice. In theft cases, the offender is believed to suffer the imprecations made before the Guardian Spirit of the Creek with an offering of a beheaded chicken. When a decision has been made on a dispute, the offender apologizes touching the foot of the arbitrator and offering him an alcoholic drink. The 'loke-pyaun' does not reside in a designated house, and as it is, there is no single 'loke -pyaun' recognized as representing the whole race. In the

old days, there existed a Thet despot, although not of the whole Thet population in the Rakhine State, as the chieftain of the Thet community while settling in Thayet.

In a dispute where evidence and proof are hard to produce, or if there is no confession and admission, imprecations in the presence of the Guardian Spirit of the Creek are practised. This includes a sacrifice of a beheaded chicken, followed by the pronouncing of the imprecation in the presence of the Guardian Spirit of the Creek are practised on the suspect by calling upon the spirits that the suspect meets the same fate as the sacrificed chicken. This act is taken very seriously, and offenders usually confess on threats of such imprecations. Some go to the monastery to make solemn pronouncements before the Buddha images. Heavy sentences are given to those who do not abide by the court decision. In some cases, that would amount to expulsion from the village. Nowadays, this manner of investigation no longer exists. The punishments in the administration of justice include apologizing, paying homage, doing community welfare tasks, cleaning the monastery environs, compensation, and expulsion from the village. In some cases, compensation are made, and expulsion from the village depending on the nature of suits, in cash, and in kinds such as cattle, hog, goat, etc.

The Thets practise monogamy, and thus, extramarital affairs are rare. For premarital offences, the offending male and female couple is put to shame by making them serve the whole village with pork curry meals. Compensatory means are usually decided upon in quarelling, swindling, theft of domestic animals, exchange of harsh words, etc. The elders' decisions are accepted the alternative for which is being public shame and contempt.

Conclusion

Tamanthar village, where the Thet nationals live, is situated to the north of maungtaw, a town in the Rakhine State. Thet nationals are Buddhists by faith, and their presence was felt throughout Myanmar history. As an indigenous racial group of the Tibeto-Myanmar stock, the Thet nationals had inter-racial relations with other national races of the surrounding regions of the Union of Myanmar such as Rakhine, Bamar, Mro, Dainet, etc.

The anthropological task of studying the traditional customs of the national races of a country is vital to the promotion, preservation, and the dissemination of the national heritage. In this paper, Thet traditions handed down from the elders in the form of adages, rhetorics, tales, riddles, poems and different types of lyrics are presented.

The Thet residence of Tamangthar village is strategically located, close to the Bangladesh-Myanmar border area. The Kyein-Chaung creek is the main waterway. Forest and farm products are transported through this route. The area enjoys a great amount of tropical rains. Therefore, flora and fauna abounds. The origins of the Thet race described in detail in the history of Myanmar. Thets called themselves 'Asak' and claimed to be the descendants of the Cakka monarchic dynasty. They left Mizima region to avoid the enmity of Vidadupa. According to Myanmar history, the Pyus, Kanyans, and Thets entered Myanmar from the north over 2000 years ago, and were the earliest tribes of the Myanmar race. Anthropologically and linguistically, the Thet nationals could be classified as descendants of the Tibeto-Burman stock of Mongoloids. Their original settlements were in the north Hukong valley, at head of the Uru river to the Yunan province borders in the north, and the River Mone valley between Ayeyarwady and Chindwin rivers, Buddalin- Nyaungan, Pinlebu-Wuntho and around Katha area, Tagaung being the capital.

Succumbing to the pressure by the latecomers from A.D 6 to 10 centuries, the Thet nationals moved southwards. When the Bamars reached Kyaukse in A.D 9 century, the Thet nationals were already to be found there. From there, they moved across the Ayeyarwady to the Rakhine Mountains during the Bagan era in the 11th century A.D. There they founded the Mitsagiri. Then in A.D 14 century, during the reign of Min Htee, the Rakhine monarch, they moved to Ann and Dalet regions on the eastern part of the Rakhine Yoma. From there, surviving every twist and turn of the history of the successive Rakhine dynasties, the Thet nationals came to be at the place of the present residence. One historical evidence supports the fact that the

early Thet nationals entered Myanmar from the north, crossed the upper Chindwin area, and came down the Kaladan river. The Rakhine history identifies this group as the western Thets. The polished stone plates excavated from the Danyawadi and Vesali ancient city sites, and the large earrings from the stone sculptures (A.D 4-8 C.) found on the Mhamuni hillock show the evidence of the Thet cultural influence. Thus, the present paper on the Thet nationals residing at Tamanthar village could lead to the conclusion that they are an ancient race of the Tibeto-Burman stock.

Thet have a fair complexion, dark and straight hair, medium forehead, and relatively a flat nose, narrow eye slits, thick eyelids, evidence of the authentic Tibeto-Burman stock. The symbolic representation of the Thet racial attire is the white turban for the male, and the beautiful large earrings for the female. The initiation ceremony is held for every Thet grown-up. Otherwise the youth would not be regarded as eligible bachelor, thus an outcast in village social affairs. Moreover, death before the initiation rites would lead to burying in the same cemetery as that for the violent deaths. The females' large earrings seen today are very splendid ones. The distinguishing feature from other earrings worn by other females the world over is that unlike boring the ears, the Thet earrings are inserted into the flesh which makes it a rarity in style. Moreover, according to the Chinese archives dating back to the first century A.D, Thets were known as people of the 'large ear country', the 'ear boring race', recognizing the tradition to have been in practice since the last 2000 years.

Thet are a race of robust health. Childbirth is usually carried out by local midwives. Midwifery trained in the traditional way includes curative mantras, and childbirth poems and songs. Thet traditional curative mantras are recited at difficult childbirth. This is done in the form of songs being sung to bolster the morale of the woman in confinement. The ear boring ceremony is held when the mother winds up confinement. Both male and female babies get their ears bored with a pointed bamboo. The name is given in accordance with the horoscopic bearings –the male taking the middle word, and the female, the initial. Parents let their bachelor sons and maid daughters enjoy an independent social life. A separate 'bachelor house' is erected in the village where bachelors could congregate, and the independent choice of wedlock partners is granted. There are of course the traditional prohibitions to be adhered to in the choice of a marriage partner. Those of similar sibling lineage are not allowed to wed. Courting is based on these restrictions. The wind instrument called 'chein-chin' in Thet plays an important role in Thet courting. Love tunes are

played on this from the head of the girls' home. If the girl favours the courting young man, she comes down from the house to engage in an endearing conversation. However, premarital sexual relation is to be strictly avoided on pains of compensations in addition to the obligation to marry immediately.

A distinctive feature of the Thet marriage ceremony is that the groom and the bride sit face to face and feed each other in turn with cock and hen meat, and exchanges of drinks. Moreover, the custom calls for the bride leaving her home for that of the groom. The melancholic scene created by the bride paying homage to her parents before leaving her home for that of he would-be in-laws is a very touching one in the tradition of a Thet wedding ceremony. In fact, a Thet wedding ceremony is an unpretentious and sober traditional social occasion ushering in the sacred institution of marriage.

The basic family structure is the common factor in Thet society. The male parent is the head of the family. The male offspring is regarded as the patrilineal heir, and the female offspring as someone to be given off to the groom. Grandparents, uncles and aunts as extended family members are a united lot. Monogamy is the rule, and therefore divorce is rare. A compensation of the bride price and the wedding expenses are to be made in the case of a wife filing a divorce suit, whereas for the husband, it is all the property at the time of the divorce. The trusteeship of the property falls in the hands of the male parent's siblings and relatives in the case of underaged orphans. Also when the male parent dies, the ownership of the property and the guardianship of the children go to the deceased's sibling brothers instead of the widow. This custom arose from the concept of relieving the widow of her responsibilities, and to boost her morale.

Thets believe in the supernatural world. They believe that the soul hovers around dead body, and therefore they need to feed the corpse daily until the burial. The funeral is normally undertaken by the elder uncle of the deceased. Things for use in his next existence are buried along. The funeral rites are in the Buddhist traditions. A particular manner is that the corpse is buried head towards Mt. Himalaya, the place of their origin. It is found that the funeral rites are strictly adhered to.

Seasonal celebrations include Buddhist religious festival as well as traditional sacrifices to the Spirits. Harvest festivals are held family wise. Thet nationals are devout Buddhists. There are prayers recitations held annually in the village, and at

the same time traditional Spirits are also worshipped, even though in-house shrines are not kept.

The educational status of the village in question is found to be satisfactory. Good transport and communications, and a State Middle School enable the residents obtain a certain level of social position. The majority has been educated up to the Primary level, and out these, half or so continue to study at the Middle School level. A few who could afford continue to study in High School. It is likely that economic and financial limitations have been in the way of the bright and promising ones. However, the prospects are good with the opening of the University for the Development of National Races where Thet youths are being enrolled, and it is hoped that it is just a matter of a short time before educated Thets could be graduating from this institution.

Cultivation and hillside farming are the main economic activities. Bamboo products such as farm and household utensils are side income. The people are, in fact, experts in bamboo artifacts. Domesticated animals are bred for farm-work as well as home consumption.

To sum up, the social status of the Thet nationals residing at Tamanthar village could be considered as quite above average. They are an unaggressive race living peacefully abiding by the Buddhist precepts. The noble characteristics and traits enable them to value and preserve their own culture and language.

That the Thets could preserve and maintain their traditions and language for what was historically supposed to be for a duration of over 2000 years is a remarkable feat by itself. As mentioned above, they had been for centuries involved in the political arena of Myanmar to which they belong as a reputed indigenous race. At present, the Thet national population residing in the Rakhine State borders numbers only in thousands. Nevertheless, they are ever ready to hand down the historic reputation, and traditions to the upcoming generations. The cultural heritage that they had maintained throughout the successive generations is no doubt part of Myanmar history. The use a Myanmar dialect but an archaic one as such. The sentence is also structured in the Subject -Object- Verb pattern. The language is noted for its wide range of vocabulary.

The Thet nationals have taken up Buddhism for more than two thousand years. According to scholars, even the Pyus came to adopt the religion from the Thets. They are devout Buddhists and the sounds of the triangular brass gongs coming from homes and shrines in the border areas make one feel blissful in the

serene religious culture of Buddhism. Religious festivals, cultural occasions, pagodas, and monasteries depict the propagation of a well-flourishing Therava Buddhism.

The main problem for the race is the scant population. Wedding of the same lineage being prohibited is seen as one reason for that. Marriages between the race are sometimes hard to achieve because one has to wait for a chance that seems few and far between.

Nevertheless, the youths of today has the responsibility carry on preserving and maintaining the traditions of the race throughout the coming new millennium. It is hoped that this compilation of traditions, culture, and heritage of an indigenous race of the Union of Myanmar would be beneficial for the new generations.

ကျမ်းကိုးစာရင်း

၁. စန္ဒမာလာလင်္ကာရ ရခိုင်ရာဇဝင်သစ်ကျမ်း မန္တလေး၊ ဟံသာဝတီ၊ ပိဋကတ်ပုံ နိပ်တိုက် (၁၂၉၃)
၂. စိန်မောင်ဦးဦး သရေခေတ္တရာမြို့ဟောင်း တက္ကသိုလ်ပညာပဒေသာစာ စောင်တွဲ ၃ / ၁ (၁၉၆၈)
၃. ထွန်းရွှေခိုင် (မဟာဝိဇ္ဇာ) ရခိုင်နန်းဆက်မြို့ဆက်သမိုင်း ရခိုင်ပြည်နယ်၊ ပြည်သူ့ကောင်စီ (၁၉၈၅)
၄. ထွန်းရွှေခိုင် (မဟာဝိဇ္ဇာ) ရခိုင်မြောက်ဖျားဒေသမှ စစ်သည်တော်စာပေ (၁၉၈၈) သက်တိုင်းရင်းသားများ
၅. ထွန်းရွှေခိုင် (မဟာဝိဇ္ဇာ) သက်လူမျိုးတို့၏ သမိုင်းဦးကာလ မြန်မာနိုင်ငံသမိုင်းအဖွဲ့ အခြေအနေများအားလေ့လာတင်ပြခြင်း (၁၉၉၉) စာတမ်း
၆. ထွန်းရွှေခိုင် (မဟာဝိဇ္ဇာ) ရခိုင်ရှေးဟောင်းမြို့တော်များ သိဒ္ဓိမြိုင်စာပေ (၁၉၈၅)
- ရ. ပဏ္ဍိတဦး ဓညဝတီရာဇဝင်သစ် ပြည်ကြီးမဏ္ဍိုင် (၁၉၁၀)
၈. မိုးလတ်ဦး ရှေ့ဟောင်းရာဇဝင်နှင့် ယဉ်ကျေးမှုသုတေသန (၁၉၆၂)
၉. ကုလားဦး မှန်နန်းရာဇဝင် (ပထမတွဲ) မန္တလေး (၁၃၁၉) (မဟာသက္ကရာဇ်)
၁၀. ရည်စိန်ဦး တိုင်းရင်းသားလူမျိုးသမိုင်းကြောင်း ယဉ်ကျေးမှုဗိမာန် (၁၉၈၂)
၁၁. ပါတီလမ်းစဉ် အခြေပြမြန်မာ့နိုင်ငံရေးသမိုင်း (ပတွဲ) လမ်းစဉ်ပါတီ (၁၉၇၀)

၁၂.မင်းသုဝဏ်

ဦးကုလားရာဇဝင်

တက္ကသိုလ်များဗဟိုစာကြည့်တိုက်

၁၃. ဖေမူ

မဟာရာဇဝင်ကြီး

တက္ကသိုလ်များဗဟိုစာကြည့်တိုက်

List of Informants

| Name | Job | Age | Village |
|----------------------|------------------------------------|-----|--------------|
| 1. U Hla Htun Kyaw | teacher | 52 | Tamanthar |
| 2. Usan Hla Aung | security, paddy purching center | 56 | " |
| 3. U San Htun | farmer | 60 | " |
| 4. U Aung Kyaw | general worker | 65 | " |
| 5. U Ngwe Sein Oo | farmer | 60 | " |
| 6. U Thar Noe Aung | " | 68 | " |
| 7. U Htun Aung Kyaw | " | 60 | " |
| 8. U Htun Hla Oo | general worker | 69 | " |
| 9. Daw Mo Thar | midwife | 80 | " |
| 10. Ma Aye Sein | taung-yar | 60 | Thet-Ka-Nyar |
| 11. U Maung Htun | " | 58 | " |
| 12. U Htun Hla Oo | " | 63 | " |
| 13. U Thar Htun Aung | merchant | 57 | Thet village |
| 14. U Don Thar Aung | Indigenous | 79 | " |
| 15. Daw May Thar | midwife | 58 | " |
| 16. Daw Ma Sein Thar | general worker | 60 | " |