

UNIVERSITY OF YANGON

THE SOCIAL ORGANIZATION OF  
THE "YIN-NET" NATIONALS  
OF KUN POAT VILLAGE TRACT, NAM SAN TOWNSHIP  
IN THE SOUTHERN SHAN STATE,  
UNION OF MYANMAR.

SUBMITTED BY

NANG SAN KHAM

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DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY

YANGON UNIVERSITY

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## INTRODUCTION

Anthropology is the study of man, especially of the variety, physical and cultural characteristics, distribution, customs, social relationships, etc., of humanity.

The main aim of the subject of Anthropology is not only to study mankind of the past ages thoroughly but also to observe personally human beings of today in their natural environment. The various ethnic national groups living in Myanmar are different in their economic progress and living standards. To try to bring these different economic and social standards to a uniform stage is necessary for them to enjoy the developments of the modern age. It is the duty of Myanmar Anthropologist to study in detail their traditions and customs, way of life and their economic situation and develop their social standards. Then only the State Government will be able to help fulfil their needs and remove their weaknesses.

The chief requirement for a race of people to survive is the need to preserve its traditions and customs, its literature and language and culture. By studying the different traditions and culture of the different nationals, we learn to appreciate and understand their behaviour. Then each national race will learn to understand each other and begin to have respect and faith in each other. This will lead to closer ties among the national races and strengthen the solidarity of the country. Knowing the "Dos and Don'ts" of each other's cultures would also make smooth intra-national relations.

The union of Myanmar has many kinds of national races and each national race has many things of interest in their culture and way of life. All the national races living in Myanmar are descended from the mongoloid group and they came into Myanmar in three waves, the Mon-Khmes group, Tibeto-Myanmar group and Thai-Chinese group. They lived in the mountain plateaus, wandering in search of "clearer waters and greener pastures". So just each monastery has its particular mantra, and each village its particular song, so the national races have things that are alike and things that are different from their beliefs, to their way of dress and language and culture.

The Union of Myanmar has eight main groups of national races and each group has many small sub-groups, which today numbers (135) groups now. It has become essential to study each group separately. As a partial requisite for the M.A degree in anthropology. I decided to present a paper on the social life of the Buddhist Yin-net nationals living in Nam San township, Loilem division in Southern Shan State.

I went to Kun Poat village in Nam San township and observed and did research on the interesting life of the Yin-net nationals living there. I recorded their native arts of song and dance traditional sayings, customary judgements, seasonal festivals, their taboos, their marks and symbols, things of reverence and wedding customs, rules in building house and kin relationships. In enquiring into things, I used Evolutionary Theories, Historical Theories and Functional Theories.

I observed, according to Evolutionary Theory how the Yin-net nationals survived from generation to generation, how they had to live and adapt themselves to their environment. The Historical Theory showed how they moved into Myanmar from their original home in Mongolia and how their historical background relates to other nationals in Myanmar. Functional theories show how they celebrate their religious and social festivals and how friendship and unity grew among the different village through reciprocal relationships.

The main aims for the research are: -

1. To fulfil the partial requisite of presenting a thesis for the M.A degree.
2. To revive the almost disappearing traditions and culture of the Yin-net national races and for other national races to understand their culture.
3. The mutual understanding among the national races would help the State's political objective of "National reconsolidation".
4. It would also help to uplift the national prestige, and integrity and preserve and safeguard the cultural heritage and national character of the Union of Myanmar.



A couple of Yin-net nationals

## CHAPTER 1

### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND GEOGRAPHICAL SITUATION

(a) **How the Yin-net nationals descended from and name of the national group.**

(1) How the Yin-net nationals descended from

Anthropologists have observed that all the nationals living in the Union of Myanmar are descended from the Mogoloid group. They came into Myanmar in three waves. They are: -

- (1) Mon-Khmer group.<sup>1</sup>
- (2) Tibeto-Myanmar group.<sup>2</sup>
- (3) Thai-Chinese group.<sup>3</sup>

The Yin nationals belonging to the Wa-Palaung sub-group of the Mon-Khmer group settled in the villages in the interior areas of the Kyaethi-man-san region in Southern Shan State. They also settled on the mountain villages near Pinlon town. The hills on the western bank of the Than Lwin river is the central region where the Yin nationals settled some of them spread to the Kyaing Ton region.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Mon-Khmer group

<sup>2</sup>Tibeto Myanmar group

<sup>3</sup>Thai-Chinese group

<sup>4</sup>Yin national, Myanmar Encyclopaedia, Vol.11, Pages 26-27.

The Wah, Palaung, three kinds of Yin nationals (Yin-net, Yin-set, Yin-kya), Pao and Kayan had lived in Southern Shan States even before the Shans spread to it.<sup>1</sup>

Lwere-la; Wah

Danaw

Kha-mut

Taing-loi

Yin-net, Yin-kya, Yin-set

Palaung, Palay national groups of the Wah-Palaung sub-group of the Mon-Khmer group all lived in the Shan State.<sup>2</sup>

The Yin-net nationals of the Mon-Khmer group ran away from the war in the Yunnan province of China. At first, they settled in the northern edge of Kyaukme division in “Munkoun” (မုန့်တုန့်) area in Northern Shan State. They spread to Southern Shan State and came to be called as Yin-net.

According to Yin-net national's history, war broke out between a Chinese king and the nationals in the Yunnan province of China. The Yin-net nationals and Yin-kya nationals fled China. The Yin-kya nationals settled in Southern Shan States first and the Yin-nets settled in Kyaukme division in Northern Shan States. They built a town in “Munkoun” area in the northern edge of Kyaukme division. A Yin-net king ruled at the capital city of “Munkoun”. They lived and

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<sup>1</sup>Shan State, Myanmar Encyclopaedia, Vol.11, Pages 387, Line 14.

<sup>2</sup>Shan State, Myanmar Encyclopaedia, Vol.11, Pages 379, Line 3.

the royal capital flourished because of the power of the three gems, the cock, the horse and the mortar. No country could make war on them. Once a Myanmar king made war on the Yin-net kingdom. But the Yin-nets, placing the three gems in the front, fought back and the Myanmar king was defeated and had to retreat.

The Myanmar king then called his ministers of state, generals and the royal Brahman to confer on plans to capture the capital city of Munkoun. A royal Brahman offered to make plans for the capture of the Yin-net capital city. He asked the king to give him five viss of silver coins and eighty ticals of gold. He entered the city Munkoun and put up at a powerful abbot's monastery. He pretended to be a soothsayer and went round the city, telling fortunes, doing rites to avert misfortune forecast by astrologers and performing ceremonial washing of the head. He went to every place always thinking of plans to capture Munkoun.

One day that royal brahman entered the palace and told fortunes. He waited till it was sunset and dark and deserted. Then according to his original plans, he buried one viss of silver each in the four corners of the palace and under the palace. He buried the eighty ticals of gold under the royal stairs and then returned to the monastery.

The scheming royal Brahman then approached the powerful abbot and paying obeisance enquired reverently about the venerable abbot's health and well being. He praised the city of Munkoun as beautiful and flourishing, and begged that he may be permitted to tell the past and the future fortunes of the city. The abbot, believing the Brahman to be respectable and earning a good living,

gave the Brahman permission to tell the fortunes of the city. Then the Brahman told the abbot that Munkoun is a good and flourishing capital city because one viss of silver is buried in each corner of the royal palace and under it. Besides, he says eighty ticals of gold is also buried under the royal stairs. He needs to make only a small recommendation to improve it further. But he says to test the truth of his forecast by first making some observations. Then the abbot told the ministers of the palace and with the king's permission, dug the grounds and found that it was true.

The king accepted the Brahman as a man of leaving and asked him what improvements should be done to develop the country. The Brahman then advised the king to use the gold and silver in giving alms and doing meritorious deeds. Then he asked the king to cut off the beak of the gem cock and to cut off one front leg of the gem horse and to destroy the mortar by cutting of the base. The Brahman said all these destructions would make the country more prosperous. The king felt some to destroy the powerful three gems, the cock, the horse and the mortar, but with the intention of gaining benefits for the country, he did as the Brahman told him to do.

The wonderful characteristic of the powerful gem cock is when it crows from Munkoun city it rumbles the spires of the palace in Maing-Pu-Kan (မိုင်းပူကန်) citadel. When the powerful gem horse neighs and the mortar is pounded, the sounds travel as far as Maing-Pu-Kan city and makes the palace spires rumble and tremble. They had never lost a war when these three gems are placed in front of them, at the head to the battle front.

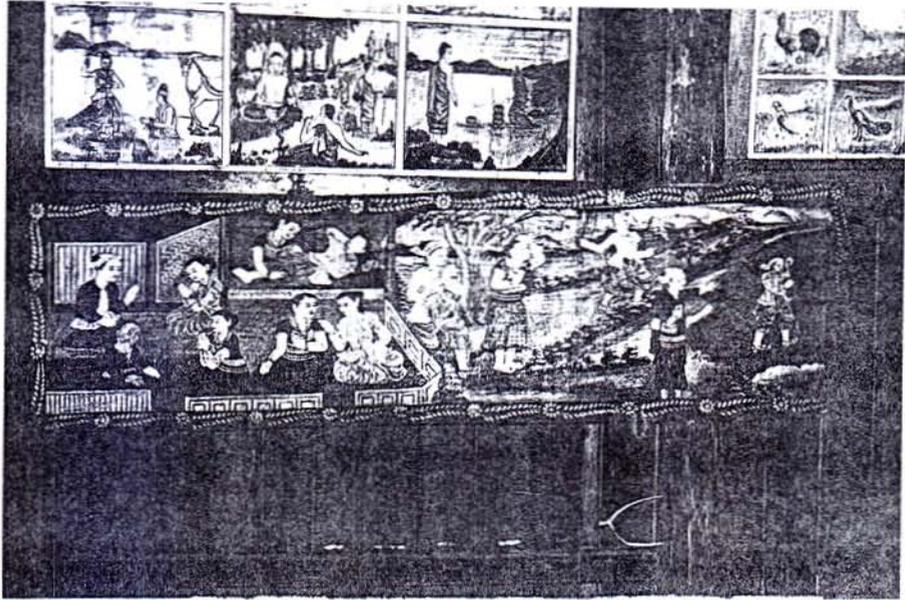
In the end the three gems were destroyed as the brahman wished. Up to this day the places where the cock died ကြက်သေရွာ (Womkaing Taing), where the horse died, မြင်းသေရွာ (Womma Taing), where the mortar broke ဆုံကွဲရွာ (Womhoat Tet), all these villages exist till today. The Yin-net country that had lost the three powerful gems was seized by the Myanmar king. In the spear fight between the Yin-net king and the Myanmar king, the Yin-net king was defeated and they became the subjects of the Myanmar king.

The Yin-net nationals left Northern Shan State from that time and moved to Southern Shan State and Maingkokam (မိုင်းကိုးကမ်) area in Thailand up to now. Besides, according to spoken tradition, they believe they are descendents of Myanmar king Kyan Sittha who married the headman's daughter Nan Mya U Sar, when he was taking refuge in that village, to avoid the wrath of king Anawratha. They consider themselves of royal lineage and take great pride in it.

King Kyan Sittha told his consort Nan Mya U Sar not to follow him on his return to his kingdom, but to wait for him in that village. The Yin-nets never left that place and have faithfully waited for the return of their great father king Kyan Sittha till today. How strongly the Yin-net people believed in it may be witnessed in the painting depicting king Kyansittha's "return to the royal country" in the monastery of Kun Poat village.

(2) Name of national group

The Yin-net nationals call themselves "Yay-Yan-Lunt" meaning a people wearing black colour clothes. The shans call them "Yan Lum" meaning black nationals according to the Yin-net nationals, Yin-net, Yin-kya, Yan-Phait, Yan-kyaut, are four kinds of Yin brothers.



The picture of king Kyansittha and Nang Mya Oo Sar  
in the monastery of Kun Post village.

The Myanmar call the Yin nationals “Yin” and the Shans call them “Yan”. Yan Lum or Yin-net are sometimes known as Kayin-net. Yin-set or Yin-kyas are some time known as “Kayin-kya”. The Yin-nets call the Myanmar Ma-yum (မာယုမ်) (Swam).

**(b) Geographical situation of Kun Poat village**

**(1) Place, Area, Population**

Kun Poat village is (6) miles from Nam San town. It is (2) miles away on the left side of the Nam San - Kyaing Ton road. Nam San is situated on North Latitude  $20^{\circ} 25'$  to  $21^{\circ} 10'$  and East Longitude  $97^{\circ} 37'$  to  $98^{\circ} 37'$  to  $98^{\circ} 15'$ . It is 308 miles measured in a straight line, Northern East of Yangon. But it is 536 miles if you travel by car road. It is 73 miles from Taunggyi, the capital of Shan State and 22 miles away from the historic town of Pinlon. Nam San is the cross roads town of Southern Shan State.

Kun Poat village is about 100 years old. There is a forest reserve on its east and 516 army corp in the west and artillery corp in the south. The village of Namhuya is on its northern border. It has about 100 houses and its average population is about 500.

Nam San is in Loilem District. On its east is Kun Heing township and on its west is Loilem tsp. and on its south is Mount Mei tsp. Mone' tsp. Le'char township is to its northern. The area of Nam San is (1594.12) square miles or (1020239) acres and (7771) acres of rivers, streams and underground water.

Nam San is on the average 3000' to 4000' above sea level. It has very few wide plains. On the whole it has many valley plains. It is full of hills mountain ranges. Especially in the north, the north east, the west and south-west, it is surrounded by hills 4000 to 5000 feet in height. In the center of the town at a height of 3200 feet there is a wide valley plain.

The Nam Lat stream which flows through Nam San township has its source in Maing-seit village. The stream flows through mountain valleys with many bends, so its flow is fast and rough. You can hear the sound of running water all the time, so that they named it Nam Lat stream, meaning the talking or speaking stream.

This Nam Lat stream is of importance to Nam San township. It is noted that on the eastern shore of the stream, however close it is to the stream, it has no underground water. Wells and lakes cannot be dug on that side. So they have to depend on the west side of the bank and on the stream for water. But there is a natural spring with a light tasting water. They believe that this water has a curative medicinal effect. People having speech difficulties like stammering and usual defects drink this water to make them overcome their difficulties. This water to make them overcome their difficulties. this spring is called "Nam Sant" meaning water having a light taste. So the village came to be named as Nam San and still retains its name till today as Nam San town.

Nam San township is made up of five quarters, containing (20) village tracts. Its population is (63247). The national groups living in it are Shans, Kachins, Kayahs, Kayins, Chins, Myanmars, Paos, Yin-kyas, Yin-nets, Yakhines, Lisus and Lahus. In the whole of Nam San township, there are over

(4000) Yin-nets; Ma Mown Mown group and Naung Hee group live in nos. (2) and (4) quarters of Nam San township. Kon Poat village is in Ma Mown Mown group. There are (19) villages in Nam Sam township where most of the Yin-net nationals live. They are: - Ta Saing; Nam Who; Naung Laing; Naung Aing; Nam Wom; Tam Kha; Nam Who Pan; Kon Tee; Nam Mo; Wom Whey; Loi Siang; Loi Cut; Loi Win Ohm; Nam Hare; Kon Lan; Wom Pon; Tin Loi; Loi Ngin Lon; and Lon Poat: They have spread a little to other townships, such as Loilem, Kyee Thi, Le Cha, Maing Naung, Maing Shu and the east bank of Than Lwin river.

(2) Climate and Natural Vegetation (Flora)

Nam San town is one of the townships in the Shan State. Although it is mostly in the tropical zone, it is not so hot as it is a highland. Compared to other places in the Shan State, it is hotter and gets about the same amount of rainfall because it is a valley plain. Its average annual rainfall is (57.60) inches and its average annual temperature is 75° F and in its hottest month of March is 87° F. It rarely has storms because it is a valley plain protected by natural ranges of mountains but has occasional strong winds.

Only a little teak and pine woods grow because its height is only between 3000 - 4000 feet. Other woods like in, ingin, sagawa, thityar, yamanay, mango, htaut-kyant and tamalan trees grow well. In the forests to the north of the division ingin trees grow in abundance. A few orchids grow and there are no indigenous medicinal plants.

(3) Mineral Resources

Two kinds of minerals, antimony and copper are mined here. Antimony is found in the “Whey Pu Htut” ravine located one mile to the west of Wom Hin village in Nam San township. Copper is found in Pein Sai (U man) group, near Sa Main village. They are still in the process of testing its type and quantity.

(4) Transportation and Communication

Transportation and communication is good for Nam San, because it is on the Union car road from Taunggyi, the capital of Shan State to Kyaing Ton. It is also on the cross-roads to the Shan State's Southeast towns of Mone', Lin Khay, Maing Pan and Mount Mei.

Kun Poat village is two miles away from the Nam San - Kyaing Ton road. It is a gravel road on the right side. Cars, htawlagyi and cycles use this road. Some villagers use cycles but most of them walk to Nam San from their villages.

To help develop the regions of the Shan State where there are difficulties of transportation, the Shwe Naung - Nam San railway project was implemented in November 1993. It is 153.62 miles long. Today they have been able to open three sections and they are Mone' - Nam San section, Bun Yin - Pha Mone section and Taunggyi - Pha Mone section. Nam San has an air field used only by the military planes.

(c) **Appearance, Dress, Food and Way of Life**

(1) **Appearance**

The national groups living in Myanmar are descended from the Mongoloid stock. As such, physically they look more or less alike. The Yin-net nationals in appearance look like the Yin-kyas and Palaungs of the Shan State. They have not too dark skin and the body is neither low nor high, not too fat or too thin. They have straight soft black hair. The face has a prominent bid gound nose, wide eyes with a crease in the eyelids and black eyes and the lips are usually thick. The average height of the men is 5 foot 6 inches and the women about 5 foot 2 inches.

The Yin-nets are devout Buddhists and are gentle and pleasant in temperament. They try to avoid all evil deeds. They are happy to live try their religion and have no greed, no anger and no ignorance. They are contented with whatever they have which is a hindrance to their development. They dress according to their traditions and customs.

(2) **Dress**

The attire or dress of the Yin-net or Yan Lum is some thing different. Although the Yin-net and Yin-kyas are of the same stock, the Yin-nets came to the Southern Shan States later than the Yin-kyas. They continued to dress in the black rough cotton they use to wear in China till today. They grow the cotton plant themselves. Then they spin the yarn and have it dyed with natural leaf dyes into black yarn. They weave it on the back-strap loom. The cloth is made into a short sleeved and short waist jacket slipped down over the head. The top jacket is long sleeved and short waist with a one inch wide round collar. There are no

buttons. The shirt is decorated with multi-coloured woollen yarn (usually pink, blue, yellow and white) and sequins and satin pieces. The two breast pockets are embroidered with plus and multiplication signs and sequins and small woollen pompons at the corners. The pants worn by the men are not like the Shan pants. The Yin-nets wear baggy black cotton pants, very wide in the middle. The top of the pants has a white or black band. The waist band is red or pink cotton or silk, six feet long. It is wound round the waist and the two ends about (9) inches long are put down at the front. Nowadays young men line the sides of the pants and the foot edge with green, red, blue and pink colours. They also wear leather belts covered with multi-coloured woollen yarn.

Elderly men wear everyday a white “gaungbaung” made up with five yards of cloth. They wear this head-dress with three pieces of cloth of different colours (e.g pink, purple and blue) wound round their heads. The shoulder bag is white with thin black, blue and green vertical lines. Nowadays, it is woven with multi-coloured woollen yarn and embroidered with sequins. Every young man wears at his waist a small bamboo basket with a short knife in it. The top edge of the basket is decorated with coloured woollen yarn. This custom of Yin-net men carrying a short knife and basket is to keep alive their Yin-net tradition and custom. The basket is also used as the seed basket in their cultivation of crops. They wear Shan boots made of buffalo leather and the front of the boots is joined in the center and green canvas shoes. Nowadays, they also wear bamboo hats from Maing Naung woven with soft bamboo slips. The chin straps used to be stitched with coins stuck on it. Some may use silk cloth straps.

In the past grown men used to wear ear-plugs made of gold leaf rolled into a cylinder, about one tical in weight, in their left ear. They wear a gold flower design stone ring on the fourth finger of the left hand. Nowadays, the 5 or 6 months old little boy's ear is bored and kept open with a string of thread. When they are 9 or 10 years old the ear hole is widened by inserting dry thatch sticks weekly or monthly. The earhole is wide enough to wear earrings when they are adolescents. The Yin-net women themselves make the earrings. They use a small bamboo cylinder as the post and on it is an earring stitched on water proof cloth with silver paper, coloured woollen yarn, sequins and paste pearls. Nowadays the young adolescents are wearing ear-drops. They do not wear them anymore when they are married.

The Yin-net women wear the black cloth waist length slip over with short sleeves. This slip-over, short sleeved jacket has a V-shaped neck and back. It has two rows of frings about nine inches across the back and on the chest in front. Each row of fringe is about (4) inches broad. The hem of this jacket has lines of beads, coloured woollen thread work and a fringe about (3) inches in width. They wear a black cotton hta-me, calf-length. It is tied at the waist with a string and the upper half is folded down to reach the middle of the thigh, resembling a baggy double layer skirt. They do not wear leg-bands, and used to wear buffalo leather shoes. the Yin-net women also carry shoulder bags, woven by themselves. They weave the bags with multicoloured woollen yarn, and decorated with sequins. They stiffer cotton yarn with black lacquer to make into rings. They tie these (300) and wear it around the waist. the unmarried girls include one green, red and blue ring each, but the married women wear only black

The children also are dressed fully like the adults. They stitch special cloth hats for them. The hats are made of black cloth lined with white cloth inside. It is shaped like a cup with a rim. Vertical lines about a finger's breadth are stitched from the top of the hat to the rim. The rim is about 3" to 4" wide and has orange, green, red, blue, pink lines around it and wool is stuffed in between the lines. Where the rim joins the cup, they have a fancy stitch. There is a woollen pompon on the top of the hat and the surface of the hat is decorated with sequins. They string ancient silver coins, Indian silver coins, and Myanmar quarter and pyas and wear them on the neck. It is toward away evil spirits. When the child is 6 or 7 years old the boys begin to wear the white gaungbaung and the girls wear the black head-dress.

(3) Tattoo custom

The Yin-net nationals like the Shans have tattooed their bodies, from the old days. They do not know the art of tattoo, so it is done for them by the Shan tattoo masters. The Yin-net males tattoo their whole body, and on their arms and thighs are runes, tigers and cats in ascending and descending poses. The women have two rows of black dots on both their wrists and some have five black dots on their wrist and scriptures on the black of their hands. They use to say that if a woman has no tattoo marks, then she is not a genuine Yin-net woman.

The Yin-net male tattoo the picture of coal tongs on right arm and a lizard with two tails on the left arm. The coal tongs is to protect them from the seizure of the water spirit and the lizard with two tails is a love charm. In the past they used red ink but today only black ink is used. There are also less people who tattoo their bodies.



A couple of Yin-net nationals



view from the back



The Yin-net children



Yin-net woman with her traditional dress



Beautifying The Yin-net Ladies

(4) Food and Way of life

The Yin-net nationals live by taungya-cultivation. The coarse rice they grow and the fruits, and vegetables, green chillies and salt is their daily diet. They eat meat and fish, but their soups are always made vegetables only. They eat very little oil. Sometimes, when they do not have enough rice for the year, they have to supplement with corn, pumpkin leaves, banana stems and jackfruit in their cooking.

The fish and meat brought to the monastery on sabbath days is just boiled with salt and turmeric. No oil is used. On special holy days, they use to pack sticky rice to send to the monastery and to distribute among the people.

The Yin-net nationals are very fond of alcoholic drinks. Drinking is accepted as a custom and both men and women drink alcoholic drinks freely. Nowadays they do not brew it themselves, but buy the ready-made drinks. They have no drunken brawl though they drink a lot.

The Yin-nets also grow a kind of Virginia tobacco, which leaves they dry and smoke after having it sliced and rolled in taung-khauk leaves as cigars. They also chew pan and betal nut very much. When old people are toothless and pound it in a brass mortar. The old people's teeth are black due to pan chewing. But they take pride in it as to have white teeth is to have dog's teeth. But this altitude has changed today.



Yin-net old man with his betal nut brass mortar

(5) Choosing a land site and Building a village

The Yin-net nationals consider the situation and the environment of the place they are going to choose as the site of their village. When they have found a suitable place, they clear an area of 30 square feet and erect a small pandal about 9 inches in length in the middle of the clearing. Then they prepare an offering consisting of one bowl of good-grained rice, one comb of bananas, one packet of pickled tea, a slab of cane sugar, one ball of white cotton yarn and a goglet. They have to pick a small amount of rice with three fingers. Then they pray to the guardian spirits above and the guardian spirit of the "Sasana", guardian spirits of the earth, water, mountains and forests to come and guard them from harm and for prosperity in the village they are about to build now on the chosen site. If the grains of rice picked by three fingers is even in number, it is a sign of good. Then they mix the grains of rice with the pickled tea and pour it down the top of the pandal, letting some remain on the roof. They have to leave this rice and tea leaves over night. The next morning, they must come and observe whether the rice grains still remain in their place or not. If the rice grains remain intact, they consider it a good omen to build the village there. If the rice grains picked by three fingers are odd in number, they have to move the pandal (18) inches away and pick the rice grains again and move, until they have picked an even number.

The village roads are build straight and wide. They are designed like a cross. They must not use these main roads when they are carrying out the corpse at a funeral. They have to find by ways and through bushes to avoid the main roads and the taungyas and compounds. They have to circle the town in carrying out the dead. In building house the roof must run north to south and the

front of the house must face north or south. The front must not be east or west. The roofs of the houses must not be in a straight line. They must be out of line with each other. The cowshed and the barn also must be built north to south. The monastery must be built at the aryu and teza direction from the village. The Ashingyi-nat shrine must be built in the teza direction and the cemetery must be in the bomi direction from the village.

(6) Building a house and design of the house

When the Yin-net nationals are going to build a house, they have to choose the site according to the situation of the land. They choose an auspicious day and make an offering of pickled tea leaves to the guardian spirit of the land. Then they dig a pit for the ridge-pole. They have to place the earth from the pit in three piles in the direction of nat shrine. The top of the ridge-pole also have to be placed towards the nat shrine. They have to do this at the same time on the same day. When this ridge-pole has been erected a village elder has to take pickled tea leaf, a bowl of rice and a bottle of water and sit and pray near the ridge-pole. Then he has to pick a few grains of rice and count them. If the grains are odd in number, it is a sign that the place is not suitable and they have to look for another place. If the grains of rice picked are even in number, he has to place the pickled tea leaf on the pole and pour down water and pray again. They have to tie at the top of the ridge-pole, three bundles of eugenia sprouts, pigeon pea leaves, gladiola leaves, bermuda grass, guava leaf sprouts, mekin leaves and a cross-bow and arrow.

The floor of the house has to be constructed after the house posts have been erected. Then the roof and the walls are built. Building the house upwards from the base is like building up your business step by step upwards.

The ridge-pole is the main dividing line in making the rooms. On the eastern wall of the outer big hall is the altar. The pots and pans shelf is on the western wall. The kitchen is not far from the inner room. The stove is put in on a Monday. The head of the family sits to the front of the stove on the side of the altar and the housewife sits on the north side of the stove. There is a smoking shelf above the stove. The gourds for drawing and storing water are smoked on the shelf. Dried gourd water bottles are an essential for the Yin-net nationals. The Yin-net houses have only one main door. They do not have any windows because they believe that their wealth will flow out from the windows.

The Yin-net national's houses are usually three posts square with just two rooms. In the time of the Shan Sawbwas, the Yin-nets were considered poor people and the houses are uniform in size and shape. The houses have an open gallery attached to the exterior of the house. The inner part of this gallery is a bedroom and a loom is placed in the outer part. The barn and cowshed are built separately on the side of the house. The rice pounding mortar made of wood is kept in the barn. The floor of house is built about a man's height from the ground. They store firewood under the house.



The house of The Yin-net nationals



The inner part of the Yin-net nationals house

(d) **Language and Literature**

(1) **Language**

The language spoken by the national living in Myanmar can be divided into two big groups. The Austro group of ancient south group and Tibeto-Chinese group. The more ancient Austro group can be again divided into two groups: the Austro spoken in the sea areas and the Austro-Asiatic spoken on the inner lands of which Mons, Palaungs, Wa's are members. The Yin people also belong to this group.<sup>1</sup>

The language and culture of the Yin nationals is very closely related to the language and culture of the Palaungs. The Yin nationals may be said to belong to the southern branch of the Palaungs.<sup>2</sup> The Yin-nets have a distinct separate language. There is no difference in the language spoken by the Yinnet nationals living in the whole area. They all speak the same language, and because they live in the Shan States they also know the Shan language. The Shans call the Yin national "Yan Lum" and the Yin-net nationals call the Myanmar "Mayan".

The Mon-khmer group of Palaung, Wa, Yeyan (Yin) nationals word for horse' is not related to the Mon language. Instead it is related to Myanmar word for horse, which is the Yin nationals word for horse is "Mayan".<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>The Myanmar nationals, Myanmar Encyclopaedia, Vol.10, Pages 131-132, line 8.

<sup>2</sup>Yin nationals, Myanmar Encyclopaedia, Vol.11, Pages 26-27, line 8.

<sup>3</sup>Ancient Myanmar and horse, Myanmar Encyclopaedia, Vol.11, Pages 334, line 14.

The Yin-net and Yin-kya nationals have descended from the same original root, so in the language they use, the vocabulary, usage and words are the same: The only difference is in their stress and intonation, which may be long or short, light or heavy. The tone of the yin-kya nationals speech is short and light. Examples of Yin-net words:-

<b>Myanmar</b>	<b>Yin-net</b>	<b>Yin-kya</b>
htamin sa	tar kaing	soon kaing
ye thauk	ten own	ten own
thwar pyi	walan	walan
lapyi	watayu	watayu
yaukpyi	wapha yaung	walut
aing	kan	kan
wet	leik	leik
kyet	yell	yell
nwah	mait	mait
chan	sayat	sayat
sai	na	na
lel	ti	ti
chaih tauk	kyaung	kyaung
nha khaung	ka taut	ka taut
myet sai	ngaing	ngaing
phaya	cinphaya	cinphaya
phonegyi	taphun	taphun
thamanay	kaung sun	sinsun
koundhe	ikar	ikar

<b>Myanmar</b>	<b>Yin-net</b>	<b>Yin-kya</b>
tit	haut	haut
hnit	tararl	tararl
thoun	tararl waing	tararl waing
lay	tararl phone	tararl phone
ngar	khan	khan
chauk	twā	twā
khuhnit	tapun	tapun
shit	paratar	paratar
ko	tain	tain
chan	sayat	sayat
tesai	satall	satall
te-yar	pa yai ya	pa yai ya
te-htaung	tho yain	tho yain
te-thaung	min	min
te-thein	sal	sal
te-than	lunt	lunt

(2) Literature

The Yin-net nationals do not have any literature of their own. They have remained undeveloped, so they do not have educated people. Literature is a strong force in developing man's knowledge of himself and the knowledge of the arts and crafts. The Yin-net nationals not only do not have a literature of their own but has only a few, who know Myanmar letters.

The government is trying to educate them by opening schools in some villages. But very few children have come to learn in these schools. The children have to help their parents in their work. Those of them know the Shangyi letters because they go to the Shan monasteries, where they are initiated into the order. The Shan monks teach them the Pitikas in Shan, so they learn the Shan language and letters.

The illiterate people count by breaking bamboo slips, mark with lime or put down peas or corn seeds. In the life of the Yin-net nationals, learning letters is not their chief concern. To them working for survival of their lives, to practise their religion is the most important. Although they have no literature of their own, living by the teachings of their religion have made them a good people.

## CHAPTER 2

### SOCIAL ORGANIZATION

Robert Lowis, the anthropologists has defined human society as a group of people who have systematically set up rules which they obey and have the same goals and perform the same activities.

In every human organization, there is a social organization system. Man is a social animal and usually lives in a group. Such a systematically organised group of people is also known as the social organization. This systematic organising and organization method is also called the social organization of that people.<sup>1</sup>

The social studies dictionary defines the social organization as made up of all the small organizations of man based on age, sex, relationship, occupation, place of residence, possessions on property, privileges, power and status. In the book ancient man's organization, structure and activity by A.R. Redcliff Brown, he says "a social organization is a systematic organising of man's thought and behaviour"<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Khin Khin Su, Nwe Nwe, Kyin Kyin, Daw, **Anthropology Introduction**, Universities Press 1970, Page 137.

<sup>2</sup>**Ibid**, Page 137.

Man's organization is based on its culture. The traditions, customs and culture of the organization is handed down as a legacy which makes it continue to survive firmly.

**(a) The family set-up.**

There are four types of family set-ups in the world. They are: -

- (1) The Basic Family
- (2) The Joint Family
- (3) The Extended Family
- (4) The Compound Family.

In the old days many families use to live together in a big family group. The houses are like a big long barrack divided into rooms. In their means of livelihood, it is one common business where everybody contribute their share of work, and also eat together from the same pot. Sometimes, when there are too many families, then they may live seperately but still continue to work in the taungya occupation of the family.

Nowadays, there are only about three families living together in the parent home. They have started to live as single families now. The usual custom is for the married children to remain with the parents for three of fours years and continue to do the family business together. Thus you may find about four generations, the grand parents, the father and mother, the son or daughter and daughter-in-law and the grand-children living together under one roof.

According to Yin-net nationals traditional custom, there is no differentiation of sex, but the men are given preference and have authority over the family. The Yin-nets practise the Patriarchal system and the father is always the head of the family. They usually have a special separate place for the head of the family to sit. The visitor who goes and sits in that place without permission of the family is considered very rude. The visitor must sit in the place designated for the visitor. The head of the family sits in front of the altar, facing the kitchen. The visitor could sit in that place if permission is given by the head of the family. They also resent it, if the visitor should refuse to eat the food they offer.

**(b) Kinship System and Kinship Terminology**

In ancient human organizations, there are very few people. In most cases a human organization in those days is usually a collection or organization of people related to each other. By relatives, we mean those born from the triangle of father, mother and sons and daughters. So that kinship relatives group is much wider than the ordinary basic family<sup>1</sup>. There is kinship by blood i.e. consanguinity and kinship by marriage i.e. affinity. So relatives mean blood relations, and they are very close and united.

In progressive human organizations, the word relatives does not have much meaning, but in ancient human organizations, it has a very deep meaning. In the modern society, the social, economic and political work is done by

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<sup>1</sup>Khin Khin Su, Daw, **Pyang Customs**, Pyinnya Pade Tha, Arts Journal, 1974, Page 89.

the government and the work of the family is not prominent. But in ancient human organizations, all the work is done by a group of families of relatives. So relatives are very important for them.<sup>1</sup>

The Yin-nets still exist as an ancient human organization and stranger and kin are clearly separated. Relatives as kin must love and be close to each other. They must help each other in their responsibilities and tasks and live unitedly.

The Yin-net national groups live by themselves separately. If other nationals should come and live near them, the Yin-net culture usually influences that outsider group. They try to preserve their race, so they marry only their own race, they are relatives in some way. But marriage between very close relatives is Dynastic Incest, so first or second cousins do not marry each other as they consider themselves as belonging to the same clan. They avoid such close kin marriages. If such a marriage should occur, then the couple is considered as animals.

The responsibility of the relatives is to solve the problems of their community. The elderly relatives or the village elders of authority help to their affairs. In naming a child, the village elders choose three names and the parents accept which ever name they like. On joyful occasions the relatives help not only with labour but also in kind. On occasions of sorrow, then relatives have to help not only with labour, rice and kind but also provide all the necessities.

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<sup>1</sup>Khin Khin Su, Daw, **Pyang Customs**, Pyinnya Pade Tha, Arts Journal, 1974, Page 89.

Louis Henry Morgan, the American anthropologist says there are two types of relative terminology namely: - (1) Classificatory term, where non-relatives are addressed in relative terms and exact terms (2) Descriptive term, where real relatives are addressed in relative terms. There are no classificatory terms in the Yin-net nationals, who only use the exact Descriptive terms only.

The Yin-net relative terms

<b>Yinnet</b>	<b>Myanmar</b>
pa	ah phay
ma	ah may
taing	u lay
waing	ah daw
cot	yauk pha
mon	ma yee
samomway	khe ma
kha yay	tha met
mywai	chway ma
sinbokaramai	nyi
sinbokaranya	nyi ma
konkaramai	thar
konkaranya	thar mee
mykaramai	ah ko
mykaranya	ah ma
lankaramai	tu
lankaranya	tu ma
pau	yaukhama (male)
kon	yaukhama (female)

(c) **Maiden and bachelor life**

The Yin-net male when he is fourteen or fifteen years old is allowed to go courting as coming of age. The maidens and young boys can meet mostly at the village festivals. They do not have maid's house or bachelor's house. When there is a village festival, maids and bachelors from other villages also may visit and meet each other and fall in love. The courtship is done at night, at about eight o' clock, after dinner. In the past in courtship in a group, the youngmen visit the maid's house, playing on a dried gourd flute. They may also court alone. The courtship may be short or through out the whole night. The parents of the maid most considerately must retire early or go visiting a neighbour. The maid must entertain them with pan and pickled tea. She must not tell them to go home even if she feels sleepy. The visiting youngmen must also help her with her work like stripping corn. They speak in riddles and each youngman brings his own betel box complete with pan, betel nut, lime, tobacco and betel-nut cutter. If the girl should eat the pan-roll from one of the youngmen's betel box, it is a sign that she has accepted him, and the other courters considerately depart. She may also give her refusal to accept them verbally and they will never visit her again. The dialogue between maid and bachelor may be as follows.

Bachelor : "Sister, what curry did you eat today?"

Maiden : "I ate egg-plant from Maing Seit." or "I ate chillies" or  
"I cannot get bitter gourd from Yat Saut, french beans from  
Maing Pan, string beans from Maing Pan"

the vow made. After the offering has been done, the maid can that very night take her property and follow the youngman to his house.

When the young couple and friends arrive at the youngman's house, they have to wake up the parents. On being informed of the affair, the youngman's parents greet their daughter-in-law-to-be and invite her upstairs. The people who accompanied the couple are entertained with tea. Then they leave the maid in the youngman's house. She has to sleep three nights at the youngman's house and return to her parent's house to sleep three nights there. If they cannot celebrate the wedding at once she has to sleep three more days in her parent's house. This sleeping in turns has to be done before the marriage. The bride has to help her mother-in-law in all the work when she is staying in the bridegroom's house. They have to pay their respects to the maid's family. They have to take lime, pan, cutch, tobacco, pickletea, bananas and ten bottles of alcohol as an offering the maid's parents. The elders of the village and guest are entertained at the youngman's house. If the bridegroom is going to live in the bride's house, he can do so only when the bride had slept three nights at his house. Then the expenses of the wedding has to be paid by the bride's family. On the wedding day the bridegroom has to go to the bride's house accompanied by an old maid and a confirmed bachelor, acting as his parents. The headman and the village elders had been invited to solemnise the marriage. The bridegroom and bride have to pay respects to the headman and village elders by offering rice and curry, a packet of pickle tea leaf, bananas and cane-sugar slabs. They pay obeisance and beg that they may be recognized as man and wife. The headman then

pronounces them man and wife and gives his blessings that their union will last till their old age. Then they ate the food offered to them. After this ceremony the bridegroom asks a virgin maid to carry some of the bride's property, and the bride herself carrying the bedroll, follows her husband to his house. When they arrive at the bridegroom's house, they have to pay obeisance to the headman and elders of the village again. This time the offertory contains a coconut, pan leaves, pop-corn, cane sugar slab, and pickled fish. This completes the wedding ceremony. They also have the custom of barring the couple access to their wedding chamber with a gold chain, until a satisfactory gift is given. Today they practise the custom of promising to give five meals or for seven days. They cook yams as the main food in the wedding.

Then one kind of meat, boiled gol leaves salad (ဂေါ်ရွက်ပြုတ်သုတ်) and other vegetables. Giving yams is a symbol of unity and auspiciousness to eat yams at a wedding. If the bride and groom are from different villages, then they must be accompanied by one village elder each. The bridegroom has to give to the youngmen of the bride's village, entrance fee to the village. They do not have marriages during lent and the months of January and April i.e. Pyatho and Tagu.

There is almost no elopement. If they elope, then by going to the bride's house and paying obeisance with offering of pop-corn, pickled tea leaf, pan leaf, cane-sugar slab, and pickled fish, the wedding is accomplished. The married couple usually continue to live with the parents for a few years. They set up a separate home only when the parents give them some property to do so. They practise monogamy, but a man of property may take more than one wife.

(e) **Pregnancy and Confinement (giving birth)**

The pregnant Yin-net woman, must abstain from eating sticky rice cake and boiled rice crust. She must not warm herself with her back to the fire and must not bathe or go out when dark at sunset. If it is necessary to go out at dark, then she must put a needle in her hair, so that evil spirits cannot possess her. She is forbidden to eat too much sweet things, so that the baby will not be big and have a difficult birth. The child is delivered by the local midwife. They have their head wound with cloth for one or two months to prevent headaches. They have to warm themselves during their confinement with a special wood fire that is smokeless. It is called "Mitelut" wood. They believe "Mitelut woodfire purifies their blood. They have eat rice with only baked salt for the first three days after giving birth. They need not abstain from anything after it. They have to drink a lot of alcoholic drinks and blood purifier medicine during confinement. It ends after seven days. Men can enter the confinement room. If it is the first child, the mother has to offer to the midwife a jacket, acacia fruit, tea and as much money as she can afford. Acacia fruit is the symbol to cleanse the unclean and has to invite the midwife to eat rice when the confinement ends after seven days. When the child is five year old, he has pay obeisance to the midwife with bananas and tea. The father himself must bury the child's umbilical cord under the stairs. They believe that it is considered not good by religion to prevent child birth. So some give birth to as many as ten children.

(f) **Naming Ceremony**

The Yin-net nationals do not have a separate naming ceremony. They usually name the child during the confinement. In ancient times, parents or elders who know how to choose a suitable name according to his birthday and the stars. The person who is going to name the child carries on his shoulder a farm implement such as a knife or a chopping hoe used in the taungya. Then the child is brought out under the eaves of the house and sprinkled with gold and silver water. They also declare that a good workman will join them. The man prays that the child may enjoy good health, prosperity and long life. The parents of the child entertain the guests with rice and curry, sticky rice packets and plain tea. The mother of the child washes the hands of the midwife with boiled acacia fruit water. The child is also bathed with boiled acacia fruit water. When naming a child it may have grandparent's names besides, names of trees, flowers and things. Nowadays, the elderly people choose two or three suitable names according to the day and the parents can take the name they like. The little girls are mostly named "Ei Kham" and the little boys are "Ai Aung". The child's head is shaved on the fifth or the sixth day after birth.

(g) **Childhood and Education for a livelihood**

The Yin-net nationals teach their young from childhood, to help their parents as much as they can. There are schools in some Yin-net villages but very few attend these schools. They train their children from young to be able to make their own livelihood. The little boys are taken to the taungya to learn how to cultivate crops practically. So they learn how to cut down and clear the taungya,

how to burn the fields, how to cast the seeds, and harvest the paddy, and winnow the grain. They also learn how to make seasonal offerings to the traditional guardian spirits of the taungya. As they accompany the father to the taungya, they gradually learn to trap birds and hunt for meat and fish. They also learn from the father about the fruits and vegetables, medicinal plants, bark of trees and roots and bulbs they use in their traditional medicines.

In the work for the house, they learn to cut the thatch and bindle them. As they grow older they learn to build the house, roof the house, build the fence together with the older people.

The daughters of the house grow up under the supervision of the mother, learning to do all the domestic work. They have to look after the younger brothers and sisters. Besides gathering firewood, fetching water and helping in the odd jobs of the taungya, they have to help the mother in pounding rice, dressing cotton, and spinning yarn. Then they learn to cook rice, clear the taungya, pluck vegetables, weave their own traditional cloth. When they are free in the early part of the night, they tell their children their folktales and riddles and traditional customs. They also teach them how to make offerings to the nats, according to their traditional methods and customs. They believe that their children will be able to participate in the affairs of the community when they are grown up. So they teach their children not only the skills to earn a livelihood but also knowledge of their traditions and customs, so that they will be able to preserve them and hand them down to posterity.

**(h) Hereditary Succession and Inheritance**

The hereditary successor, when the father of the house dies is the eldest son or eldest daughter. The mother usually hands over the responsibilities of the house to the eldest son or the eldest daughter.

In inheritance, the Yin-net nationals give their sons and daughters equal share, for example if there are five children, they make five equal shares of gold, silver, property, buffalo, cows, paddy field, taungya, land are divided equally. When the elder son or daughter marries and lives in a separate house, their share is given to them. The youngest child usually get the most because he inherits the house and the taungya the parents were working on. But the person who stays with the parents through good and bad times also has a right to it. When the parents die early, the children divide the remaining property equally among themselves.

In there should be no children, the head of the family's brothers and nephews have a right to it. If there should be dissatisfaction over the division of the property, they have to accept the decision of the elders of the village. If there should be disagreement as to whether it should be given and or not, they decide by boiling two packets of sticky rice, each packet belonging to the two opposing parties, in the same pot at the same time. When it is cooked, they unwrap the packets of sticky rice and the person whose rice packet remains uncooked is declared the loser in the case. The Yin-net nationals do not put too much value on land because the taungya can be easily cleared if they want to. They value more the paddy seed for planting, gold, silver and their buffalo and cow.

(i) **Games**

The Yin-net children usually play group games. Like game of pitch with seabean seed, spin top, try strength by twisting the bamboo yoke stick, the bird looking its eggs, the little blind quail, and the boys play butting like buffalos and martial arts game.

In the game of the bird and her eggs, the boys and girls play together. First they erect a post. Then they tie a rope about 9 feet long to the post. One person has to be the bird guarding her eggs. The bird has (10) sticks, about 9 inches in length. They represent her eggs and are placed near the post. The idea is for (10) players to try to get the sticks. The bird must hold on to the rope with one hand and kick at the person who comes in to grab the sticks. The person who is kicked becomes the bird in her place.

The second game twisting the bamboo shoulder-yoke. It is a test of strength. Two people hold the shoulder yoke at opposite ends and twist the yoke in different directions. The person who can twist the yoke over is the winner.

The third game is looking after the blind little quails. They put a stump in the middle and make a circle of 12 to 24 feet radius. The little birds stay inside the circle and try to run out of it. The mother bird stays outside the circle and have to be running round the circle crying "Owet Owet". She has to try and hit the little birds who try to leave the circle with her bundled up gaungbaung or jacket. The bird that is hit takes her place.

The boy butt each other like the buffalows. In the past they use to have different kinds of martial arts like, sword-play, stick-play, spear-play and hand-play. Nowaday only a few of these plays are practised.

(j) **Divorce**

The Yin-net nationals do not need to go to the headman to get a divorce. The husband and wife can agree between them to separate. The person who wants the separation can ask for it. But if he or she is guilty of creating a problem in the family before he leaves the house then he can be sued legally. The property owned by the husband and wife is divided by mutual agreement. The children usually remain with the mother. Both the divorce and the widow can marry again.

(k) **Funeral Rites**

The Yin-net like the Myanmars repeat the scriptures and sutras when a person is dying. They remind the dying person to think about the good deeds he had done, so that he will die rejoicing in his meritorious deeds and be born into a good existence in his next life. They declare a person to be dead when they can feel no pulse, when the parts of the body become completely still, find no vapour on the mirror when it is put against his nose or when he stops breathing.

The Yin-net nationals, bathe the dead person where he died and put on new clothes. They usually put the dead body in the coffin immediately. They put a quarter coins on the eyes and in the mouth in the past. Sometimes they would half a silver eighth piece coin and place each half in the eyes. It is done to make the person a good speaker and have powerful eyes in his next existence. Nowadays they do not put the coins in the eyes anymore. When they place the corpse in the coffin the head is turned a little to one side because they believe that

if the head is placed straight, the soul of the dead person will be uneasy. They put baked soap acacia fruit in the coffin to prevent the odours.

They place a vase of flowers on the coffin as long as it is in the house. They do not put new flowers in it. They also place the food for the dead three times a day. They can bury the dead any day not counting whether it is an odd number day or an even number day. In the past the body is kept in the house only for one night and buried in the ground the next day. The poor people usually keep it for only one day, but some may keep for five days at the most. If a person dies on the ninth waxing day of the moon, the person cannot be buried immediately. In any month if a person dies on a Saturday, he cannot be buried on Sunday the earth will pull the man and many more people will die.

The Yin-net nationals cremate the corpse of a person with leprosy and throw the body of a person struck by lightning into a stream. People who die on the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, and 4<sup>th</sup> day of Thingyan are also not buried in the earth. They are thrown down a ravine. In the burial of a natural death they have to be very careful in carrying the coffin. If the accident if they should let fall the coffin, they believe that more sick people in the village will die. An elderly person is usually consulted for a good day to dig the grave and bury it in earth. They usually keep the body of a person who died a natural death for three days. A preacher would come in the nights and preach. The coffin is taken out of the house through the door with it feet first. They believe that if the coffin is taken out head first, then the head could look back into the house and give trouble.

The coffin is placed on a stretcher when they reach the ground. If it is an (elderly person) three rolls of cotton cloth are joined together and tied to the stretcher. Then the women, relatives and old people of the family have to draw the hearse. They need eight men to carry the stretcher. The men of the family must not carry the stretcher. They have to have a sort of tug-bo-war of the hearse before they reach the cemetery. It is called "Tilaing". So in a place where there is space, they place two giant bamboo poles eighteen feet long, four and a half feet apart, parallel to each other. Then they place the stretcher with the coffin on it. They have to pull in different ways but it is always won by the people pulling it towards the cemetery. When they reach the cemetery the cotton cloth is removed and can be used to stitch into clothing.

The funeral rites are carried out in an empty plot by the side of the cemetery. They offer the offertory and the priest give the sermons. Then the coffin is placed in the grave. It is let down slowly lengthwise and covered with earth. Pointed stakes are put round the mound to prevent wild animals from disturbing it. They believe that the dead person will have a miserable life in his next life, if his grave is disturbed.

The people who return to the house after the funeral are lead by the Phukant or headman. The house is shut up completely opens the house and beats about the place with a stick, shouting "get out, get out, you must not stay anymore in this house. Get out, go away, don't stay in any corner of the house". He has to drive him to the top of the stairs and throw away the stick. Then he calls to the people outside, "come, come he is gone, and we have got the house". People then come into the house.

During the funeral the house is left empty. They have to clear the fire place of the wood, ashes and the trivet, and left covered with a flat round tray made of bamboo. When they come back after the funeral, they uncover the fireplace to see if there are any marks of foot prints and handprints of man or bird. If the fireplace is clear of these marks, they believe the person's death is a natural death. But should they find such marks, then they believe that the person died of unnatural death due to witch craft of black-magic. This custom is observed till today. They entertain everybody who came to the house with rice and meat.

In a house of death, the house mates do go to work on the taungya, pound rice or play the flute as a mark of mourning. On the day of the funeral, nothing must put out in the sun outside the house. The whole village also does not do any buying or selling and does not go anywhere so that they could attend the funeral.

On the 5<sup>th</sup> day after the death of the person, they send the "soon" to the priests at the monastery. The whole village is invited to a meal at the house. It is a vegetarian meal of rice and vegetable marrow only. The "soon" supposed to be offered by the dead person is done on the 7<sup>th</sup> or 8<sup>th</sup> waxing moon of Thadingyat. If the person is elderly person, then a tall gaint bamboo flag pole has to be erected in the monastery compound. It must have a 10½ feet long pennant. If it is a young person, a paper or cloth pennant about 6 feet in length must be offered for him at the altar in the monastery.

The Yin-net nationals bury those people who die a sudden unnatural death or those who die in child birth are buried immediately, rolled up in a mat. They also have a seperate cemetery for these people. If a pregnant woman

dies of being unable to give birth, then a banana tree trunk is buried together with her. They believe that she will not suffer the same fate in her next life.

The corpse of the person who died outside the village is not allowed into the village. A stand has to be built outside the village, to hold the corpse. The whole village take part in the "wake", with gambling games played through out the night. If a person died of lightning strike, the corpse may be kept for about two days and then buried in the very place he was struck dead. In cases of death by hanging i.e. scicide, drowning, snake-bite, gun-shot and spear wounds and attack by wild animals, they also are buried on the spot they died. For a person who died of hanging, he is buried with his face in the opposite direction that he was facing when he was found dead. If the person who died of wild animal attack should die with his face flat down on the ground then he is turned over on his back and weighed down with heavy thorn branches, and buried in the earth, so that it could not disturb the village. They do not have the custom of driving away evil spirits by making loud noises with beating of tins, shouting or firing of guns.

## CHAPTER 3

### ECONOMY

#### (a) Agriculture

The national races living on the hills of Myanmar have to make their livelihood by agriculture. So the main occupation of the Yin-net nationals is taungya or hillside cultivation of crops.

##### (1) Taungya Cultivation

The Yin-net nationals believe that this occupation of taungya cultivation was left to them by their great father King Kyansittha. The Yin-net people were in great sorrow that King Kyansittha must return to his royal home without fail. The King also was very sad and thought of how he could repay the gratitude he owed these people. In the night the King vowed and prayed that the surrounding hills and forests be twined in agricultural land. In the morning, when the Yin-net people woke up, they found that the land around them had become flat lands. King Kyansittha told the Yin-net nationals to work and live on that land. The King also provided them with seeds to plant and the Yin-net people have lived on that land ever since, never leaving that region and sowing their fields, from the seeds given them by the King till today.

In the past, the Yin-net nationals depend on their taungya cultivation for their food and clothing. They grow paddy just enough for their own consumption and grow corn on a bigger scale for their income. They grow cotton for the clothing needs of the family. There is no custom of hiring farmhands. They only help each other on reciprocatory terms. Nowadays they are working as farmhands on another person's taungya and sometimes whole groups may work as farmhands.

The Yin-net choose the place they like for their cultivation. The taungya plot of land belongs to the planter. They usually plant the taungya for three successive years and then look for a new plot. The family plot of land can be handed down to posterity. The abandoned plot of land can be used by anybody. There is no custom of hiring the taungya plot. Nowadays they hire people to clear the land and burn it and plough it. The labour charge depends upon the size of the plot and it is paid in money or paddy. Ploughing and weeding of the land may separate tasks to be carried out to the end of the job. The fees for ploughing also may differ according to the place of the land.

In the past, they use cow dung as fertilizer. They first dig the land with a chopping hoe on each other taungya on reciprocatory terms. Then they have to use a buffalo to continue the work of ploughing. The more people in the family, the bigger the size of the taungya. In a family of eight people, they need at least (4) acres of paddy land and four acres of sussemum. They cannot afford to have large farms because they cannot weed it.

The Yin-net nationals practise the moving taungya system. They plant paddy and corn in June and the rest of the crops are just broadcast mixed together in the fields. According to spoken history, the Yin-nets said that when King Kyansittha left them to return to his royal house, his consort Nan Mya U Sar in despair threw the seeds onto the taungya. But King Kyansittha told Nan Mya U Sar to wait for him there and he swore pointing his spear on the taungya. The Yin-nets believe their taungya's produce more than other nationals and whatever they planted, flourished. In practising the moving taungya system, they plant sessemum for the first two years and plant paddy only in the third year. They move after every three years and the old taungya is replanted only after many years.

The Yin-nets pray before planting the paddy. They pray and make a vow that if the plants should produce plenty, then they will offer the robes to the pagoda and the priest. In planting paddy they have to weed two, three times from the time of sowing to harvest time, and weeding is very hard work for them. Besides rice, they also grow chillies, corn, guatamala corn, pumkin, taung-khaut medicinal plant, cotton, tobacco, yams, sesseman, rousal, cold potato, cucumber, plants to dye cotton and vegetables. They do not grow long-term trees.

The Yin-net nationals help each in turn, to turn up the soil in the fields, weeding, reaping the paddy and threshing it. Reaping the paddy is done by both men and women. The threshing is usually done by men and the women carry the paddy to the barn. When the paddy is ripe and ready for reaping they make offerings to the guardian spirit of the fields to protect it from insects. The guardian spirit of the fields is called "Pheemar" in Yin-net language. They put water in a dried gourd bottle and corked with cotton wool. They put this offering first in the corner where they began clearing the field, where they began ploughing and planting. Then they make the offerings in the remaining three corners.

The sessemum is sold as seed as well as oil. They grow paddy, sessemum and soya bean just enough for the family consumption. They sell them only if they should have some extra. Cotton also is grown to weave cloth for them to wear. It is picked by the women.

In agriculture, they have many ways of calling the paddy spirit. One way of calling the paddy spirit is to put rice in a box like a betel box. Then they put two baked fish on the rice. They take this offering to the fields and invite the paddy spirit to come. When it is brought home, it is placed on the paddy basket in the house. It is done by an elderly man or woman and their aim is to have a good harvest in the coming year.

(2) Paddy field cultivation

The Yin-net nations live on the plains, far away from the water. There is almost no paddy field cultivation. It is grown only in regions close to a stream and they grow the paddy by irrigation with the waters from the stream. These fields are planted every year and are not moved like the taungyas, every three years.

(b) Animal Rearing

In the past there is almost no rearing of animals. But today they are rearing buffalos, cows and chicken. Cows are reared as a way of saving money and buffalo is reared to use in the fields and to hire to the poor people who cannot afford to buy a buffalo. They also sell fowl eggs. They do not rear pigs.

(c) **Hunting**

They hunt in the months of February, March and April when they are free from taungya work. They may hunt alone or in groups. When they go hunting, there must be someone to beat the bushes to force the animal to come out, then a person to wait for the prey and a person to drive the prey. Sometimes dogs are used in making the prey come out. The whole male population of the village may join in the hunt.

They choose a brave and strong limbed person to lead the hunt. They believe they would meet with danger if they choose a person with impaired limbs. The leader must be brave and be able to shoot the percussion lock fire arm well. All the hunters must present their weapons like guns, bows and arrows at the guardian nat shrine. If on their way to the nat shrine they should meet a monk or a pregnant woman, they must return and not continue their way to the shrine. The kill or the dead animal must not be brought whole into the village. It has to be cut up where it fell or outside the village and distributed among the hunters. The person who hit the prey first gets the skin of the animal. Their share of meat is eaten and the surplus may be dried and sold or exchanged for something he needs. Sometimes they may get sambur with a new tender horn. They sell the tender horn for a good price because it is rare to have a new horn growing sambur. Only one out often may be growing a new horn and its head may fetch two to three hundred kyats in the past. They also sell the skin of the tiger when they get a tiger.

(d) **Fishing**

The Yin-net nationals are very afraid of water. But those living near the streams, use a boat made of yemanay wood. It is 15 feet long and about 1½ feet wide. They are skilled divers and they dive into the water to search for fish. They use the fishing pole and hook and net. The Yin-nets fear of water is known in a saying “A Yin gets sick when he is near the water”.

(e) **Cottage Industry or Domestic Work**

The Yin-net nationals produce things they use daily by themselves. They make the implements they use on their taungya. They weave the baskets, containers and walls of the house. They do silver works, make gourd and bamboo flutes, weave cotton cloth for clothing, bags and belts, gaungbaungs, earrings and other utilities. They make their own contraptions of bamboo and wood for spinning yarn. They have separate looms for weaving cloth for clothing and for weaving gaungbaung and bags.

The Yin-net young girls are taught weaving when they are fifteen or eighteen years old. They spin the cotton from their cotton plants into yarn. It is dyed black by soaking it for three days in rotting dye plant leaves. Then the dyed yarn is woven into cloth to make the traditional Yin-net male suit. The Yin-net girls themselves stitch the suits and decorate it with sequins, coloured wool and satin. When they do not have enough cotton yarn, the women buy black canvas cloth to make their clothes. Nowadays they may wear velvet and bright clothes for festive occasions.

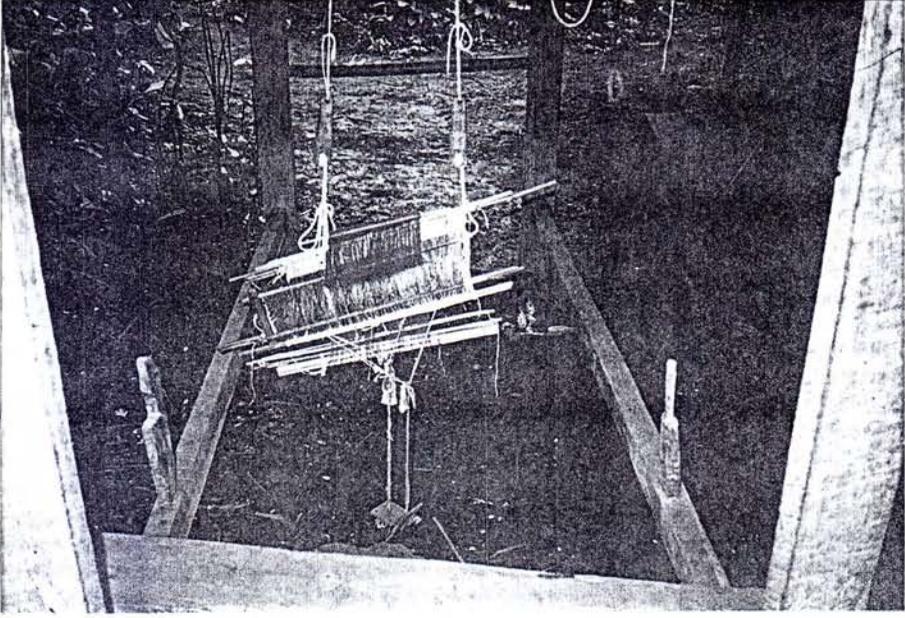
In weaving bags, they buy the wollen yarn according to their taste, and the gaungbaungs also are woven in many colours. The belts also are decorated with sequins and coloured woollen yarn. The village of Naung-ain makes earrings and bangles with the best silver. They also shape the dried gourds to put in water.

The earrings which are shaped like a hollow pipe is made of silver from Naung-ain village. They decorate it with coloured wool yarn and sequins. The earrings for the boys are made by their mothers or sisters or girl friend.

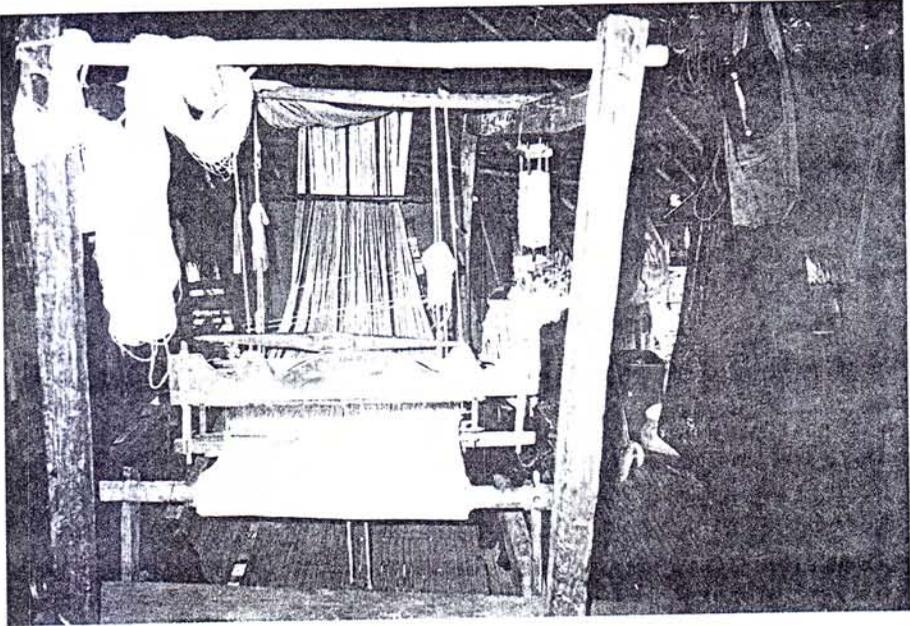
They make kerosene lamps out of empty tin cans and the wicks are made by themselves. Their musical instruments like the gourd flute, bamboo flute, bamboo joints instruments are produced in Naung-ain village.

(f) **Buying and Selling, Weights and Measures**

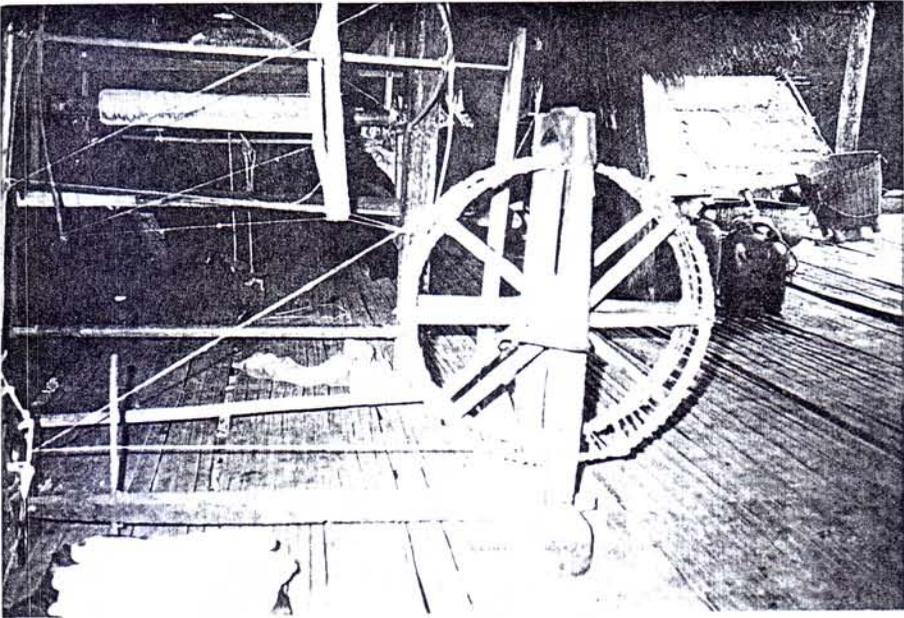
The chief products of the Yin-net nationals are paddy, corn, sessemum, tobacco, cotton, soya bean and lentils. Their plantations produce pineapple, bananas, chilly, egg-plant, tomatos, edible herb roots, and other vegetables. The surplus after home consumption is sold in the markets. The women carry them in long baskets and sell them in markets. The men do not do any selling. Fish is sold by the weight if it is big and stringed together if it is small. The weights are made of iron or red of gold copper lion or hintha figurine wieghts. They also measure by the basket, that is one basket, half-a-basket, one small basket (pyi) and  $\frac{1}{2}$  a small basket.



backstrap loom (for bags & gaungbaungs)



backstrap loom (for clothes)



A Spinning wheel of Yin-net nationals



At the Nam San Market

## CHAPTER 4

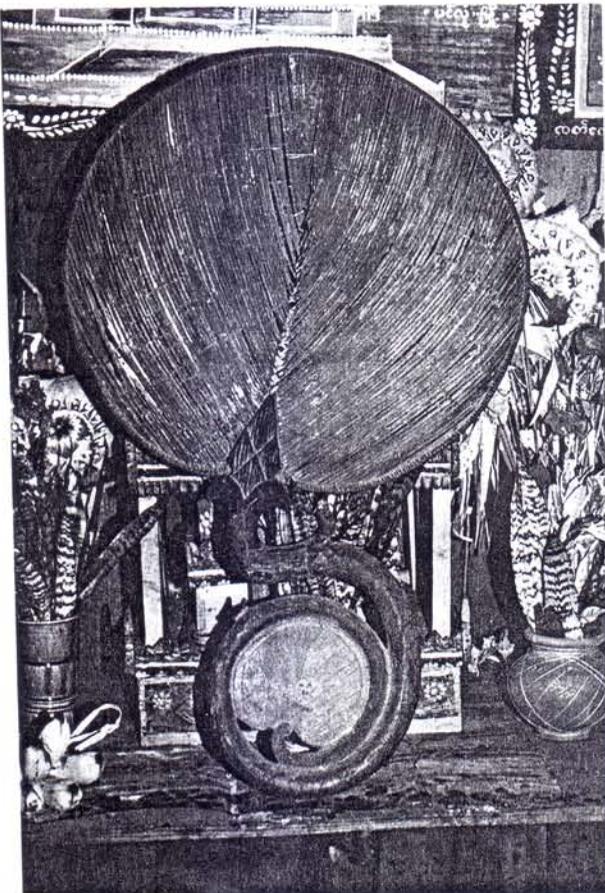
### RELIGION AND TRADITIONAL BELIEFS

#### (a) Buddhism and Beliefs

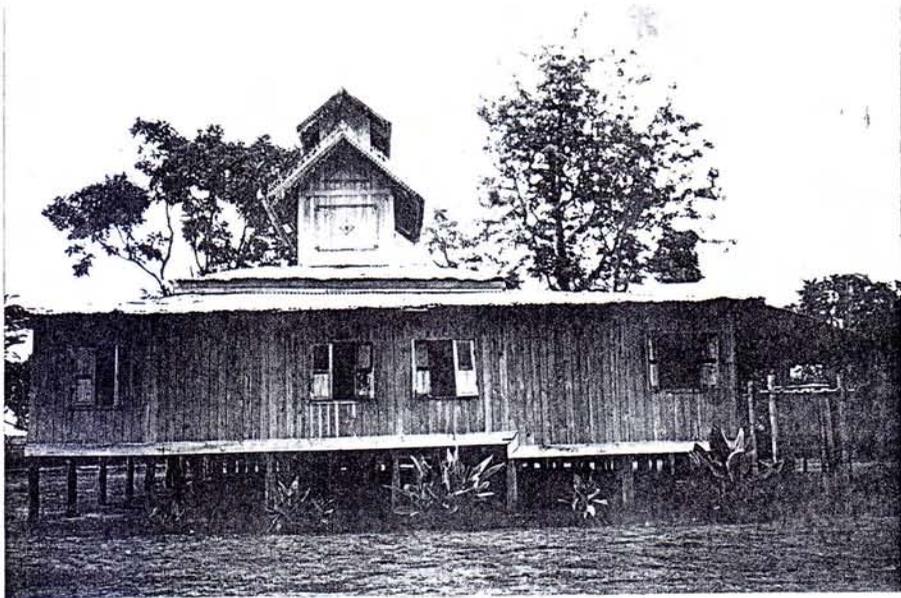
The Yin-net nationals are all Buddhists by religion and every house keeps an altar and every village has a monastery at the head of the village. There is an abbot and young novices in these monasteries. The abbot of the monastery is usually a Shan and not a Yin-net national. When the children come of age, they do the noviciation ceremony and the children stay in the monastery as novices. They are very religious. On the night before the sabbath day, the young and old of the village dance and play their musical instruments the whole night. Sometimes they may invite guest from another village to join the festivity. But on the sabbath day, the whole village stays away from work and observe the sabbath. They come to the village monastery with their bedrolls and meal packets. In the morning all take the precepts on the monastery. The men eat their meal packets together in groups on the monastery and in the afternoon may rest there. So they spread out the bedrolls they brought and tell beads or meditate in the afternoon and sleep the night there. The women come up to the monastery only to take the precepts from the abbot. Then they have to go to the small rest houses or zayats in the monastery compound to have their meals and tell beads and meditate and sleep the night there.



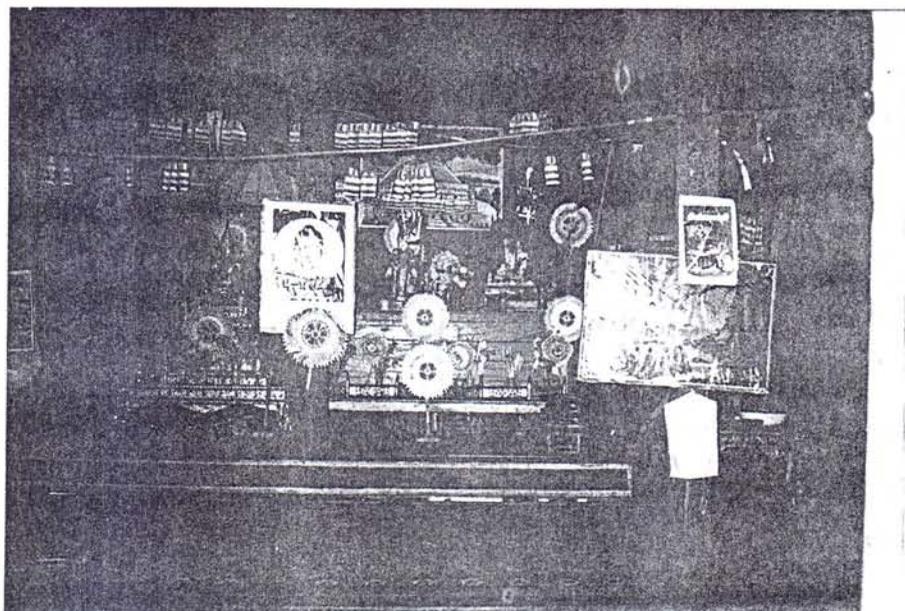
The Yin-net women meditating



Palm leaf fan  
with wooden handle  
at the Kun Poat Monastery



Monastery of the Kun Poat village



The altar of the monastery

**(b) Various Kinds of Animism and Nat Worship**

Although the Yin-net are Buddhist, they also believe guardian nats and they have guardian nat of the forests and mountains, guardian nat of the house and guardian nat of the village. In every house near the Buddha altar is another little bamboo stand for the guardian nat of the house. They put offerings of two bananas, rice, meat, pickled tea on a leaf and flowers on fullmoon and newmoon days during the three months of lent.

At the Mya O Sar nat shrine in Naung Ain village there is a small shrine with a stand on which they have placed a flowers vase. Only the villagers of Naung Ain can put flowers in it. No one must pluck the flowers or fruits grown near it nor cut down any tree or plant. The government has declared Naung Ain village a tax free village for looking after this nat shrine.

They also make offerings to the guardian spirits of the village and the town. According to their belief, there three nat brothers. One nat who is good hearted is called "Sainglemon nat" (ဆိုငါလီမွန်း) and his shrine is the north of Nam Who village. Of the remaining two, one is in Naung Ain village and the other is in Ta Saing village. In February, they offer chicken and rice gruel and alcoholic drink. It is offered by the whole village so after the offering is done the whole village enjoy the chicken and rice gruel. February is the end of their yearly work and they believe this offerings bring them good fortune. In making offerings to the nats the ritual is carried out by the shaman. In making the offering, first the nat shrine stand is covered with leaves. Then five chicken are killed by cutting their throats and the blood is collected in a cup. Only after the chicken has been bled, they are given to be cooked. After the chicken has been cooked, a small

quantity is brought back to the shaman who pours the alcoholic drink into the bowl of the blood and the bowl of chicken. Then he makes the offering to the nat. The rest of the chicken is eaten by the whole village. These are other forms of nat offerings. In the month of May they cook fish and jackfruit and offer it with alcoholic drink. It is done to prevent sickness and have fine weather. In June they celebrate the Mya O Sar shrine festival grandly. The five chicken offered at the nat shrine have each its own meaning. The first chicken is to predict whether the rains will be good or not. The second chicken is to predict the state of the country. The third chicken is to if there will be plenty or scarcity of paddy and water. The fourth chicken is to predict whether they will be free or not from danger and disease. The fifth chicken is to predict whether many people will be poor or rich. The shaman makes a vow and reads these predictions.

On cutting the throat of the first chicken, if it bleeds a lot, there will be good rain and if it bleeds a little, then there will be less rain. If the second chicken bleeds a lot the country will be peaceful and happy and if the chicken bleeds a little there will be no peace in the country. If the third chicken bleeds a lot, the country will enjoy abundance of food and if it bleeds a little, there will be scarcity of food. If the fourth chicken bleeds a lot, the country will enjoy good health and if it bleed a little, the country will have disease and sickness. If the fifth chicken bleeds a lot, the country have an easy time and if the chicken bleeds a little, then the country will have hard times. They offer only green leaf and white leaf crotons only. The offering lasts from seven in the morning to three in the evening. Other villages also are invited to the offering. The people who go hunting also have to present the weapons they use in hunting at the shrine near their village before they go on a hunting trip.

(c) **Shaman**

The shaman play an important role in the life of the Yin-net people. They consult them in all big or small affairs. When they lost a cow or buffalo, they offer the nat master a bottle of alcohol and five or fifteen kyats and ask for help. They have to give the name of the owner of the lost property. Then the shaman place a banana leaf face down wards and puts on it washed rice and dried tea leaves and a peeled banana. Then he puts a piece of cane sugar slab on it and pours a token portion of alcohol. Then he repeats the muntras and marks a place and mediates between the parties concerned and solves the problem.

They can consult the shamans on other big of small affairs like whether they will proper by doing a certain business or whether the journey will be good or bad. There is a shaman in every village and some may even have two. The shaman cannot depend on this profession for his livelihood. He has to work on a taungya to supplement his income. This shaman profession is usually carried on in the family from his ancestors. Some may learn to do it because they are interested in it.

(d) **Sorcery and Witchcraft**

In the past women practise witchcraft and the men are experts in sorcery. The person who wants to inherit the skill has to promise that he is willing to suffer in held for all the lives the sorcerer had killed in his life. They ask the shaman or do it themselves to prevent thieves in the taungya. Once a farmer made a promise that he would offer the first and best pumkin to the nat. His wife not knowing her husband's intention plucked and cooked it and ate it. The

husband on finding the pumpkin had disappeared, thought thieves had stolen it. He swore a curse and as a result his wife died. Besides, when a chain was lost in Nam Lat stream, nobody could find it, until a Yin-net was asked to find it. He cast a handful of rice in a shallow bamboo tray, and the place where most rice had fallen was marked as the place to look for the chain. He dived into the stream and found the lost chain.

When the witch hates a person, she casts a spell by putting in something into a person's body like water bags or balls of hair. Sometimes a person may be struck dumb or to have twisted mouth or impair his limbs. Then they have to invite a medicine man who knows the art to make counter attacks to cast out the spell. Today are only a few people who know the art of sorcery or witchcraft.

(e) **Taboos**

The nationals residing in the Shan State have almost all the same kinds of things to avoid i.e. taboos and things to keep. In the same way the Yin-net nationals living in the Shan State follow and practise the same taboos. They avoid pagodas, monasteries and zayats and things totally donated by libation. They also would not touch other people's property, animate or inanimate. For example, in building a house, they consider, 5<sup>th</sup> day of Tagy, 7<sup>th</sup> day of Nayon, 8<sup>th</sup> day of Waso, 9<sup>th</sup> day of Wakhaung, 10<sup>th</sup> day of Tawthalin, 2<sup>nd</sup> day of Pyatho, 3<sup>rd</sup> of Tabodwe, and 4<sup>th</sup> day of Tabaung as unauspicious days, and will not start building a house on those days. In the same they avoid doing things or going on a journey on certain days.

In Choosing a site to build a house too, they have rules to follow. They take a bowl with a handful of rice and a packet of pickled tea leaf as an offering to the guardian spirit of the earth. They pray to the spirit to show whether the land is suitable or not. Then they count the rice grains in the bowl and if it is even number, they consider the land to be good and if the number of rice grains is odd in number, the land site is bad, and they have to search for a new site and repeat the ritual again.

There are rules to follow in choosing the posts for the house. When they cut down a tree to make posts for the house, they must bring only the trunk of the tree and leave behind the branches. The trunk of the tree must also be faultless. If they happen to use a post with a fault, one problem or the other will prop up among the family. When cutting down the tree, if it should fall over another tree and cannot be extracted easily, they must not bring that tree for the post. If they should bring that tree trunk the husband and wife will die young.

They must not break down the northside of the house, and they must not extend the southside of the house. Banana plants also must not be planted on the southside of the house. If there is a hillock on the north and a banyan tree is opposite it on the southside, a house must not be built between the two.

There are taboos also concerning going on a journey. They will not go on a journey if a bird of ill-omen should screech, hear a barking deer bark or dogs howl. If a branch of a tree should break and fall in their path, a barking deer cross the road or meet some fighting, they consider them as bad omens

and will not continue the journey. Meeting a snake means a long journey but there is luck. If a titlark should give a cry and fly past the roof of a house, they believe that the house will catch fire. Five people must not travel together to the west and six people must not travel together to the east. They will meet with danger if they do so.

In the month of February and May on market days in Mone', they make nat offerings. On these days, they must not wash their hair and cut their nails. If this taboo is broken there will be sickness and disease. They must not cut their own hair in January and on their birthday.

The pregnant woman must not stitch a pillow, or sit at the door of the house. She must not put her foot on the stove. Her husband also must not help to prepare the corpse or carry the coffin. If the taboo is broken the wife will have a difficult delivery.

They refrain from stepping on the shadow of the monks and the elderly people as a sign of respect. If you yawn or sneeze apart from sleeping time, they consider that you are suffering some sickness and your stars are not in the ascendant. In the Yin-net villages if there is danger or doubt, they do not try to bring out the ill-luck person and drive him out, but invite the monks to chant the parittas and sacred pali verses.

The Yin-net nationals refrain from cutting wood, building houses, go on a journey, get married or do any social activity on the second waxing day of the month and the fourth waning day of the month. When there is drought, they pour water on the Buddha image and pray for rain and when they want sunshine they offer lighted candles at the Buddha shrine.

(f) **Astronomy and the Stars**

The Yin-net nationals mark time according to the stars. They make appointments with each other by marking the position of the Bid Dipper.

(g) **Thoughts on Natural Phenomena**

The Yin-net nationals believe that the world, the sun, the moon and the stars were created by the four Brahmas. The earth was destroyed by fire. So the four Brahmas who gave birth to human beings created the sun, the moon, and the stars to give light and warmth in the day and light in the night for the human beings in the world.

The human beings disappeared when the earth burned down. The four brahmas descended to the earth from the heavens and lived on the fertility of the earth. They could not return to the abode of the Brahmas and their legs became pregnant and gave birth to men and women. These men and women later married each other and so marriage came into being.

In the beginning of the world, people on earth were provided with trees of plenty. They just had to pluck and eat from these trees of plenty. They did not have to work, so man became lazy when the Buddha came round in the morning, they were still sleeping and did not offer the Buddha, the morning offering. So the Buddha gave them a lesson by making the trees of plenty disappear. Man had to depend on himself and grow things for themselves was the legend ancient people told them. They believe the four Brahmas had created warmth and light for human beings from the beginning of the world.

The Yin-net nationals believe that four big islands emerged on the earth, each island different in the appearance of man and so giving rise to different races among the human beings. Then they believe each island had its way of speaking words in stress and intonation, giving rise to different languages among man.

Fire came into being when dry trees and bamboo rub each other in high winds, causing sparks of fire and they learnt to cook and use its warmth.

The earth quaked when the Buddha was first in his mother's womb. Again there was an earthquake when the Buddha was born and when the Buddha-to-be abandoned the world and went into the forest to practise religion. There was an earthquake again when the devil come to tempt and fight him. The earth trembled when he gained enlightenment occurred when he gave the first sermon of Dhama after enlightenment and when the Buddha attained Nirvana. So they believe earthquakes as signs and omens of good and evil such as the coming of good kings, peace and unrest in the country. The Yin-nets call it "Yi-yone-ka-yu" (ရီယုန်ကရ) in their language.

They believe that thunder is caused by the fight between Thagyamin and Athuya who stole Thagyamin's daughter. Athuya threw a weapon at Thagyamin and Thagyamin in return threw a thunder bolt at Athuya. So when a thunder bolt hits a tree or the hills, they believe it is because Thagyamin thinks Athuya to be hiding there. But today they understand it as the striking together of heat and cold.

If the Nam Tain stream makes a rumbling sound or if in broad sunlight there is a rumbling noise like an earthquake, it means rain, and if it is raining it means sunshine. The Nam Tain stream also rumbles when it is day break time. The Yin-nets believe that falling stars show the place where people in the past have buried gold and silver and the Milky Way is supposed to be the fairy walk.

There is also a legend of how the rainbow came into being. There was once a couple and the husband asked the wife what curry she ate. The wife replied that she ate celery but the husband would not believe her. So he cut up his wife's stomach to see if she told the truth and the wife died as a result. When the husband saw only celery, he was stricken with sorrow and he too died together with his wife. They became two rainbows, the rainbow with the green band in the lower arc being the wife and the rainbow with the green band in the upper arc being the husband.

They believe in the existence of the spirit or soul which leaves the person when he dies. This spirit sometimes leaves the body and if you do not know how to recall it, the person will soon die. The young spirit stays at a person's finger tips and you know it is there if you can feel the pulse. The big spirit stays at the top of the head and if you can not feel the pulse, then the bog spirit has left the body.

Nats, witches and ghosts are like the shadows of the human beings and they are considered the lower evil spirits and when they take possession of a human being, they can make the person go mad or turn his eyes red and make him eat a lot without becoming satiated.

They also believe in life after death. A person who does good deeds will enjoy a good life in the next existence and the person who does evil deeds will have to suffer in his next life. They revere the banyan tree, the ingin tree, the rain tree and the fig tree because the Buddhas Kaukuthan, Kawnagone and Gautama have gained enlightenment under these trees.

**(h) Indigenous Medicine**

The Yin-net nationals like the other nationals living in Myanmar brew their medicines from the trees, plants, roots and barks of trees growing in their region.

They light candles and recite the mantras. When a person gets sick. When they have a headache they recite the mantra on a spray of thatch or a bamboo slip and tie it around the head. They dip the thatch in mantra water and spray it on the sick person. They take the four elements medicine powder with hot water.

The woman giving birth is given smelling salts made up of scented wood, netmeg, cloves and peper pounded together and wrapped in a piece of cloth. She drinks the four elements medicine, and blood tonic every now and then. For cuts and wounds they use Kanyin resin and the leaf of Yakhauklo (ယာခေါက်လို့ဝ်) tree. The leaves are round and used to cover the wound after washing the wound with water in which the leaves have been boiled.

When the sick person is swollen, then he is bathed in water in which the bark of the yellow laburnum and a medicinal creeper had been boiled. They also boil grass from the graves for this purpose. The patient is fed ripe papaya early in the morning.

In cases of poisonous animal bites they rub the wound with raw opium and drink the boiled leaf of Lut-ka-yu-ku (လုတ်ကရုက္ခ) plant which bears blue flowers. When they have a toothache they keep a piece of cutch or a bit of salt-peter in the mouth. They also use boiled water of giant bamboo root. They bake a kind of eggplant which is round and striped and thorny. Then they blow the hot steam from the eggplant into the tooth with a small bamboo pipe.

For sprains and broken bones, they bind the injury with about 9 inch slips of "Gamoun" plant called "Womhut" (ဝမ်ဟတ်) by the Yin-nets. They use the fruit of the "Sompalaung" (ဆုမ်ပလောင့်) creeper with sugar-cane stabs to de-worm a person. This "Sompalaung" creeper has round leaves a thumb or a fore finger's breadth apart, and bears black coloured fruit, the size of a match head, in January and February.

They boil the bark and root of the sour banyan tree and red wood tree bark and drink the liquid for diarrhoea. For cough they take the roots of mountain celery, jasmine and Kati and boiled in three cups of water. They boil it down to one cup and drink it.

(i) **Proverbs and Tales**

Proverbs are popular short sayings with words of advice, warning to remember and take lessons from it. There are many valuable observations to learn from them. We can see in the proverbs a people's thoughts and views, their beliefs, traditions and customs and culture and their characteristics. In the rural villages, they reflect their life environment, and examples related to them teach them to avoid what is not good and direct them to good ways. Thus

proverbs and sayings are the most effective way of teaching them<sup>1</sup>.

The elders of ancient times and the learned persons have preserved the traditional proverbs by teaching them to their children. They have increased these sayings were creating new ones and handing them down to their children and grand-children. We can also observe the basic similarity if the nationals in their natural human nature, human behaviour, in their morals and how they view the world in their proverbs.<sup>2</sup>

These sayings have existed before written letters came in being. There are many national races in Myanmar, who still do not have written letters till today. Yet their spoken language has many wise sayings in them<sup>3</sup>.

Most of the national races who live in the hills still do not have writing of their language. They listen to lectures on relationship or family history, historical tales and sayings and riddles. In the same way the Yin-net nationals earn their livelihood by working on the taungya from sunrise to sunset. They return home at sunset and the family usually sit around the fire to eat the evening meal. Then they sit around to talk of their ancestors and family and historical tales of their races. Sometimes tales with sayings and riddles are spoken. The family may have a round of riddles spoken to each other to pass away the evening.

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<sup>1</sup>Myanmar Nationals Proverbs, Ministry of Education (1981) 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. Page 3.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid

<sup>3</sup>Ibid

**Some Yin-net Proverbs**

- (1) An early riser will have left-over rice, but a late riser will have scorched rice.
- (2) Early planting will have for sale, late planting will have to eat a mixture.
- (3) When we plant things, do it as if it would never die, but when we give in alms, do it as if we would die tomorrow.
- (4) When you work on the taungya, do it until you have produced plenty.  
When you take a husband or a wife, let it be till death or let it be for life.
- (5) If you live in a small house, your life is tight, but if you live in a big house, your life is easy.
- (6) When you use your legs, it is not the same as using your hands. So also when you ask someone to do it for you, it is not the same as doing it yourself.
- (7) If you work together, you can eat together, and if your hands and feet get wet, your mouth also will be wet meaning if your hands and feet are working, it will feed your mouth.
- (8) If there is a lot of water, the water will win and if the fire is bid, then the fire will swallow up everything. In other words, the majority always wins.
- (9) If your hands are dirty with faeces, you cannot cut it off with a knife. You must wash it with water.
- (10) The work that will finish tomorrow, finish it today. The food that will be finished or eaten today, let it last till tomorrow.
- (11) When you work let be fast like a wild forest fire but when you eat let it be slow like the smouldering paddy husk fire.
- (12) When you climb a mountain without taking a big knife, you will be unhappy the whole day.

- (13) If you are a human being, you have to live with five enemies and it is important to know how to handle them.
- (14) Whenever you are tie with the string available there and breathe the air of that region. In other words adapt yourself to your environment.
- (15) Paddy gives you good rice to eat. Money makes everything.

### **Yin-net Riddles**

- (1) Head of the bridge this side and head of the bridge that side, pull 24 horses and ride 22 horses. (loom)
- (2) Others play inside, but she plays outside.  
(Veins and Ohsi or open ended long drum)
- (3) It is raining below and the kite is circling above.  
(The circular bamboo sieve for tossing sessemum)
- (4) When it goes into the forest it is a kite, when it stays at home, the snake crosses it. (umbrella)
- (5) It is like a pagoda or zedi from a far, but it is curry when you get near.  
(bamboo shoot)
- (6) The meat is like chicken meat, the seed is like the moniter lizard egg and the middle stem is like a zedi. (jackfruit)
- (7) The plant is about a fishing pole and the fruits are seven thousand.  
(millet, italian millet)
- (8) They also take it along when they go and they go together with the house, don't have to worry. (tortoise)

The talk that goes on by the fireside of the Yin-net people is like a school where the old people give learning to the young people as they listen to their talk. The young people learn and remember things about their people, the traditions and customs they must follow and practise. It is handed down from son to grandson from one generation to the next generation by word of mouth, spread and survived through out the ages. In this way the Yin-net nationals have lived with experiences of life related to their environment and gained general knowledge. Thus sayings and riddles and tales have been left in the hands of the Yin-net nationals to some extent.

Nearly all the nationals living in Myanmar have the habit of telling tales when they put their children to sleep at night. These tales with moral lessons teach the children to be good and the Yin-net people also have this custom. There are many tales and one of which is to value your own national race. In the tale of **“You will get your deserts”**, it tells of a great mouse king with a white belly. He had a very lovable little daughter for whom he wanted to find a husband. He thought about the moon that is the most peaceful and could give the brightest light in the night. The mouse king went to the moon king and asked him to let his son, the moon prince marry his daughter the mouse princess. The moon king knew it was impossible to marry the race that is not alike and very cleverly directed the mouse king to the sun God. The moon king told the mouse king that he does not have his own power of light, but was given to him by the sun God, who is more powerful than he. He said his son will not be able to guard the mouse princess and that she is only worthy of being the sun prince's wife.

The mouse king went to the sun god and asked him to let his sun prince marry the mouse princess. The sun god also knew the impossibility of such a match and sent the mouse king to the cloud prince. The sun god said the cloud prince has the power to disturb the sun light and the mouse princess is worthy of the cloud prince only. So the mouse king went to the cloud prince, who in turn told him that although they can cover the sunlight, they are at the mercy of the wind and have to follow wherever the wind king led them. So the mouse princess is only worthy of the wind king.

The mouse king went to the wind king and asked him to marry his royal daughter. The wind king also knew it was impossible to marry not of his own kind, gave reasons that although he could fight the cloud king, he cannot conquer the mound. So the mound king is stronger and deserves the princess. So the mouse king approached, the mound king again very cleverly said he cannot stand against the buffalo horn and directed him to the Buffalo prince. The mouse king had to continue his journey to the buffalo king. When the mouse king asked the buffalo king to marry his royal daughter, he also realized the impossibility and told the mouse king that they may be able to destroy any mound however big it is, they are led by the cattle halter. The mouse can bite and break this halter, so advised the mouse king to marry his daughter with a mouse. So the mouse king hung his head and came back to the mouse and married his royal daughter with the mouse race. This tale is a moral lesson to the Yin-net nationals not to think highly of other nationals and to marry their own national only.

The Yin-net nationals have another tale concerning their beliefs. It is the tale of the "Spotted Dove". Once upon a time, there lived in a pleasant mountain valley an old Yin-net couple. They lived by working in their taungya growing peas. There is a deep forest near the taungya pea plantation of the old couple. The tigers, bears, the stags, sambur, deer and rabbits lived in the forest. The people in the village were happy to hear the cry of these animals in the mornings and in the evenings.

When the pea plantation was laden with fruit, the old Yin-net couple built a fence round it, so that the wild animals would not come and destroy it. After they had built the fence, they built a small hut in the middle of the plantation, and the old man slept and kept guard over the plantation. The old woman slept in their house near the village.

One night while the old man was guarding the plantation, strong winds and heavy rain fell, frightening the wild animals in the forest. They ran out of the forest and entered the old couple's plantation and destroyed it. The old man shouted and shot at the animals with his cross-bow and frightened the animals away.

While the storm was raging the old woman thought about the old man guarding the plantation alone in the small hut. She felt anxious about what would happen to the old man if the small hut should be blown away by the wind. She put on her usual black jacket and bamboo hat and headed for the plantation. The rain did not stop, but continued to rain increasingly. The old woman came steadily and reached the gate of the plantation. She tried to open the door and enter it. The old man hearing the sound of the gate opening, looked closely

towards the gate and saw a black shape coming forward nearer and nearer. Muttering that although he thought he had frightened off all the wild animals, they keep coming again and again, he shot his cross-bow at the black shape.

As soon as the cross-bow shot died down from the place where the black shape was came the shout "I'm dying, why did you shoot at me? Come and take me. I am dying". The old man hastily ran down the hut and picked up his wife in his arms, saying "I've been disturbed by wild animals the whole night and I thought you were the wild ox and I shot at you by mistake". Tears flowed down his face as he sorrowfully apologized to his wife.

The old woman did not believe her husband in the least although the old man was holding her and apologizing to her. The old woman accused him of enjoying himself with a mistress when she was so worried that he was alone in trouble in the storm. She said she had come in great anxiety through the storm and that he had tried to kill her by shooting at her with his bow and that he is a very wicked husband. Then she breathed her last breath and passed away into another world.

The Yin-net old man placed the wife's corpse on the hay stand to cremate it. Then he remembered the young days when they shared their sorrows and joys and how they had lived happily. Now he had lost his wife and he is very unhappy. The old man thought, because he loved her so much, he told her the truth. Yet she didn't believe him and died, angry with him. He felt he didn't want to go on living in this world. So he laid down by the side of the old woman's corpse and set the hay stack on fire and died together.

The old Yin-net couple after their death became two spotted doves. They lived as husband and wife but they did not live in the same nest. When the male dove coowo-coowo-coowo (the ox, the ox, the ox) the female dove from another tree would cry kut-kut-kut (wicked, wicked, wicked) and fly from tree to tree and are living till today.

The type of paddy according to the Yin-net nationals is that long ago they had three famous people, one is a monk who had moved around seven monasteries and a man who had changed seven wives and a woman who had changed seven husbands. These three people are not fit to live among people, so a hundred nationals gathered together and drove them away from their village. They had to go and live in the deep forest of the Himalayas mountains.

At that time, God, paddy and thatch had a great argument among themselves. Each declared he was more powerful than the other. Paddy got angry and it ran away. So when paddy disappeared the hundred nationals of people met with famine. They played their musical instruments of the harp, gongs, flute, short drum and ohsi and oboe and searched for paddy everywhere, but they could not find it. So the hundred nationals went to the emperor and informed him of the problem of famine. Then the emperor ordered the hundred nationals to search for the three Yin-net people they had driven away.

The king then ordered the three people to go and search and bring back paddy. They were given three sets of bamboo gong rings each, ranging from small to medium and large. These three sets of bamboo gong rings were to be played by nine men together. The sound of the gongs must sound simultaneously

as one sound. So they went round playing this gong ensemble and found (102) kinds of paddy. Some kinds of paddy felt reluctant to come, so the monk had to wrap them around with his robe to make them come. This paddy is called, “Khaw-wa-san- kom” (ခေါ်ဝါဆန်ကန်နဲ) paddy. Some rolled themselves in the mud and so they were called “Khaw-wa-kom” (ခေါ်ဝဲကုမ်) meaning (mud-swamp-paddy). Some jumped into the fire, and became scorched and black. It is called “Khaw-pi-saing” (ခေါ်ပီဆိုင်) or (Chaik paddy), so you have many kinds of paddy for many reasons. From that time, thanks to the Yin-net people, the ten races of mankind can cultivate (102) kinds of paddy and make their livelihood.

## CHAPTER 5

### MUSIC, SONG , DANCE AND TRADITIONAL FESTIVAL

(a) **Music, Song, Traditional Dance and Musical Instruments.**

The Yin-net nationals have a song called “Yay-hine” to which they dance, a dance called “Met”. The Yin-net males form a line and the females form another line and they dance together to this song. Then they speak words of love to each other while they are dancing. They carry on dancing through the night till daybreak.

The “Yay-hine” dance song is as follows: -

- (1) “We look forward to year, we look forward to the moon, we look forward to the stars, it is never ending, we look forward to our brothers and sisters, we look forward to our relatives, we look forward to rice paddy and water, we look forward to the wind and rains, we look forward to having good health, we look forward to having gold and silver, we look forward to friends and we will look forward to these things until we enter Nirvana”.
- (2) Under the shade of nyaung-hown, we' ll dance “Met” together,  
Under the shade of nyaung-hown, we became friend,  
Though we dance “Met” under the shade of nyaung-hown, we do not expect to marry,

Though we dance “Met” under the shade of nyaung-hown, we do not expect to marry,

We do not expect to marry, because we are brother and sister,

We do not expect to marry, because we are all friends.

(3) Let us do this festival together and gain merit,

Let us do charity together and make a tree of plenty,

Let us do charity together, then I may get a handsome person like you,

If we pray together, then I may get a tall, handsome person like you.

(4) On the ox with curved horns, I have put the cotton basket,

On the ox with patches, I have put the paddy spirit,

Putting the cotton basket is from grand-parent's time,

Bringing the paddy spirit is from long ago,

Paddy and the barn, we all help to thrash the paddy,

We are worried in case he is hot hot or cold,

So we will all have plenty to eat.

(5) The cloud increases and covers the whole land,

The cloud increases and everything is covered,

So we cannot see the sun, so we cannot see the moon,

So we cannot see the stars, so we cannot see everything,

So everyone is puzzled.

(6) There is thunder up in the skies,

There is thunder up in the skies,

You can forget the return road, must forget the return road,

We bachelors and maids are like them.

(7) Young maiden wearing flowers and smelling so sweet,

Young maid with flowers in her hair, smelling sweeter and sweeter,

The sweet smell is like konkan (ကုန်းကန်းပန်း) flower, smelling sweet and pretty,  
is it the mulay (မူးလေးပန်း) flower?

Our happiness is endless. The maid smelling sweet and pretty, is like all these  
flowers.

They play the dry gourd flute called “Kyen” ကျဲ (နီ) and dance the “Met” (မတ်) dance. There is this dance troupe in every village and may have as many as (20) dancers. The gourd flute and the gongs of all sizes ensemble accompany the dance portraying the fare well scene of King Kyansittha and Nang Mya U Sar is the Yin-net national's traditional dance. They also have a song accompanied by bamboo flute asking their father King Kyansittha to return to their land as he had promised, to come soon they prayed. They are telling him, that they have planted the fruits he has given them and are still waiting for his return on the original land he left them.

### **Musical Instruments**

The Yin-net national's musical instruments include the gourd-flute called “Kyen” the Ohsi called “Taung Khum” တောင်ခုံ (ခုံ), 5 or 6 gongs, 1 short drum, and bamboo joints to knock on. The “Kyen” or gourd flute is made of a dried gourd. Ten holes are made in the body of the gourd shell. Then ten bamboo pipes of different sizes are inserted in the gourd and sealed with bee-wax. You have to blow from the top of the gourd. The bamboo joint is made of a piece

big bamboo with three joint a smaller piece with three joints. One side of the bamboo is cut off and the remaining side is placed face down and knocked on it. This bamboo joint instrument is one of the Yin-net traditional instruments. The big gourd flute with the pipes is used at ceremonial occasions and the small gourd flute is played while courting or tending cattle. The Yin-kya nationals do not use the gourd flute. In the same way the Yin-net nationals do not use the three stringed harp of the Yin-kya nationals.

**(b) Traditional Festivals**

The Yin-net nationals are Buddhists and like other Myanmar Buddhist nationals, celebrate the religious festivals. During the three months of lent, on sabbath days, offer the “soon” to monks in the monastery. The elderly people keep the precepts and sleep the night at the monastery.

**(1) Thadingyut Festival of Light**

The Yin-net nationals buy or collect all the offerings on the day before the full-moon day. They get up early at about 3:30 in the morning and pluck the fruits that can be eaten raw and the fruits that must be cooked. They make a special stand for the offerings and have it ready to offer to the Buddha descending to the earth from the abode of the Nats. There is a story connected with this tradition of offering fruits to the buddha. Long ago an old couple lived on their taungya. They lived on their taungya. They could not go to town for Thadingyut festival. So they built a small stand on the taungya and offered “soon” and fruits of

their farm. So the Yin-net nationals carried on this tradition of offering “soon” and fruits to the returning Buddha, from the day before full-moon day, to seven days after. So each family builds a small stand in front of their house and have everything complete from the day before fullmoon day of Thadingyut. On the first cook's crow on full-moon day, they hang the fruits on the stand and light the candles from the day before fullmoon day for seven days. The fruits also are offered for seven days and thrown away in a clean place in the forest or near a stream.

They also have a big bon fire besides lighting candles. They make a tall torch 15 feet to 20 feet high by tying together pine tree branches. When they set fire to this tall torch, it is called “Pwe Kyut” (ပွဲကျွတ်) or Thadingyut, which means end of lent. On fullmoon day the elderly people go to the monastery and keep the sabbath. They celebrate the lighting festival for three days at the monastery. The big bon fire of the torch is celebrated singly or in groups. There are four or five torches and at sunset the men and women take their offerings to the monastery. The torch is first lighted by an elderly person. On that night every house brings whatever they can to cook and share with each other. The elderly people go home when it gets late in the night, but the young people spend the whole night dancing and amusing themselves.

Each village has to take the responsibility of lighting the monastery for one night. They invite guest by giving a packet of tea. The people of the village entertain the visiting villagers who come to light the monastery, with rice and meat. The visiting villagers come with their musical troupe of ohsi, drum and gongs. They go round the monastery three times before they light it. When

they dance round the monastery before lighting it, the flute player leads the procession. He is followed by the men and the women and when the men start to sing the women also have to sing and dance. They have to stop as soon as the flute player stops the music. They celebrate this lighting festival from seven in the evening to six in the morning. Each village celebrates it for one night and in the morning the villagers return to their own villages. When the festival ends the young people pay their respects to their elders with rice, pickled tea, dried fish, dried skins, popped rice, fruits and flowers.

(2) Dazaundaing Festival

The Yin-net people offer the Kahtain robe on the fullmoon day of Dazaunmon at the pagodas and monasteries in their villages. In the years, when their economic conditions are good, they may even have a zat-pwe entertainment. The village that can afford it would invite the neighbouring villages by sending pickled tea packet invitations to come to the zat-pwe. Then the invited village would come with their musical troupes and dancers. The festival starts about 10:30 A.M on fullmoon day. The guests are given rice packets and they sing and dance in the night too. In the morning the next day the guest are fed breakfast of rice and meat again.

The Yin-net people go round the village and gather at the village headman's house for the offering of the Kahtain robe. They put the offerings in bags and go to the monastery about eight o'clock at night. When they reach the monastery, they dance round it three times. Then the headman, taking the

offerings, goes round the monastery three times again, before he goes up to the monastery to listen to the sermon.

(3) Fire Festival

The Yin-net nationals worship with fire on the fullmoon day of Tabodwe. It is called "Low" (လှော်) or worshipping with fire. To do this, they split and dry the bamboo. Then they build zedi and spires with the dry split bamboo and keep them in the monastery. On the day before fullmoon day, they make gold sticky rice pudding and in the evening go round paying respects to the elderly people. In the morning of the next day, they make offerings of things to the abbot of the monastery. Then they feed the people who come to the fire worship celebration.

The young boys and girls wind cotton thread round the bamboo zedi and spires until the bamboo framework is completely covered. Then an elderly person first sets fire to the zedi. Then all the men and women join in to light the zedi and spires. Their intention of offering this fire to God is to give warmth to God in the cold season. In the small villages where they do not have a monastery, three or four villages gather together and make this fire offering at a village that has a monastery. On the fullmoon day of Tabaung, they go to the monastery, to offer "soon" to the Buddha.

(4) The Noviciation Ceremony

The Yin-net nationals usually celebrate the noviciate ceremony for their sons in Tabodwe and Tabaung. When the boys are twelve or thirteen years of age, they are sent to the monastery to learn the letters and scriptures. The families usually combine to celebrate the novicite ceremony. The abbot of the monastery chooses the auspicious day for them. A pavilion is built in the monastery compound and the noviciate ceremony is celebrated very grandly.

When a village is going to have a noviciate ceremony, four or five villagers go to the market on market day and distribute packets of pickled tea leaf to friends, as invitation to the noviciate ceremony. If they cannot wait for market day, then they have to go and invite their friends in their villages.

The entertaining for the noviciate ceremony starts the day before the actual day. The guests are fed in the pavilion where the novice to be are dressed like Myanmar royal princes, and shown to the public. They have to run around the monastery three times in the morning and again in the evening. As the guest are fed in the pavilion, these young novices-to-be are also fed by their parents. Each boy must be fed three mouthfuls by their parents before they can eat on their own. The young people entertain the guests with music and the young men and girls sit near the music troupe. Everytime the flute gives the signal they have to dance round the music troupe. This music and dance goes on from (6) in the morning to (6) in the evening. They are given the meals by the donors of the noviciate ceremony.

On the first day of the noviciate ceremony, the person in charge of the novices-to-be shave their heads. The father of the novice has to take his son's hair and bury it at the foot of a tree or bamboo grove. The boy is then bathed in soap-acacia solution, scented water, gold and silver water. At about 3 o' clock in the evening they are dressed in their finery like royal princes and taken to the shrine of the viliage guardian nat by the novices-in-change and village elders. There an elderly person spreads two banana leaves on the shrine and puts the offerings of a bottle of alcohol, rice, cane sugar slab and other delicacies. They present the novices-to-be and to guard them from harm. The boys are then brought back home and sleep together with their incharges. But music and dance and song goes on at the pavilion till midnight.

On the second day of the noviciate ceremony, the boys are bathed in soap acacia solution and scented water, dressed in the princely clothes and made to sit in the pivilion for show. Guests from faraway villages are given their breakfast in the pavilion. In the night the boys change into their ordinary clothes and go to sleep together with their incharges.

On the morning of the third day the novices-to-be are bathed and again dressed in royal princes clothes. At about 10 o' clock they have to run round the monastery and the pavilion three times each. Then they have to wash their faces and change into ordinary clothes and rest in the pavilion. When they have rested, they have to go round the monastery and the pavilion again three times each. At about three in the evening, the village headman brings the abbot of the

monastery to the pavilion. The novices-to-be then beg for the robe to be given them from the abbot. When the abbot gives the robes, their incharges help them to put on the robe of the holy order. The abbot then gives the precepts and name each novice according to his birthday. The sermon is heard and the libation for the meritorious deeds is done. Then the novices, carrying the rice bowl and other prescribed requisits follow the abbot to his monastery. Each novice has a tray of offerings prepared for him in the pavilion. The offertories in the tray are rice, a coconut, sugar cane slab, a comb of bananas, dried skin betel leaf, tobacco, pickled tea leaf, soya bean cakes, chilly, salt and termuric.

The combined offertories are made into a tree of plenty. They have to invite seven to ten monasteries. The offertories have to be divided equally among the monasteries invited. If they have invited seven monasteries and there are ten offertories from ten novices, each monastery will have one offertory, the remaining three offertories will be given to the chief monastery where the noviciate ceremony was done. The novices must stay at least fifteen days and some may stay as long as ten months.

(5) The Water Festival or Thingyan

The Thingyan or water festival is celebrated in the month of Tagu. In the days of the Shan Sawbwas, the Yin-net nationals use to go and pay their respects to the Shan Sawbwa. They have kept up this tradition and today they go to Nam Sam and pay their respect to the descendants of the Sawbwas. The host Shans also welcome them with food to eat, and donations. The whole town join

the procession with the music troupe and singers. The people in the houses too contribute donations as much as they can afford.

The Yin-net people do not pour water on each other during the water festival. They go to the monastery taking offerings of rice, bananas, dried skin, candles condensed milk, dried fish, betel leaf, tobacco, pickled tea leaf, popped rice and flowers on trays with a stand, and keep the sabbath. They call this act of making offerings at the monastery, attending the monastery, or “Kyaung-tet-pwe”(ကျောင်းတစ်ပွဲ). On new year day they have the ceremony of “cleaning the monastery” and here they pour water on each other too as they clean the monastery. On this day they also go round paying respect to the elderly people and pour water among themselves. All work is suspended during the days of the Thingyan.

(6) Shooting Fireworks

The Yin-net nationals celebrate fireworks day on the fullmoon day of Kasown, or a free day in Kasown. First they go to a monastery with offerings of mattress, pillows and mats. They invite the neighbouring villages also and listen to the sermon and entertain the guests with food. They shoot fireworks in the night. The fireworks are also brought from other villages and they have competition among them.

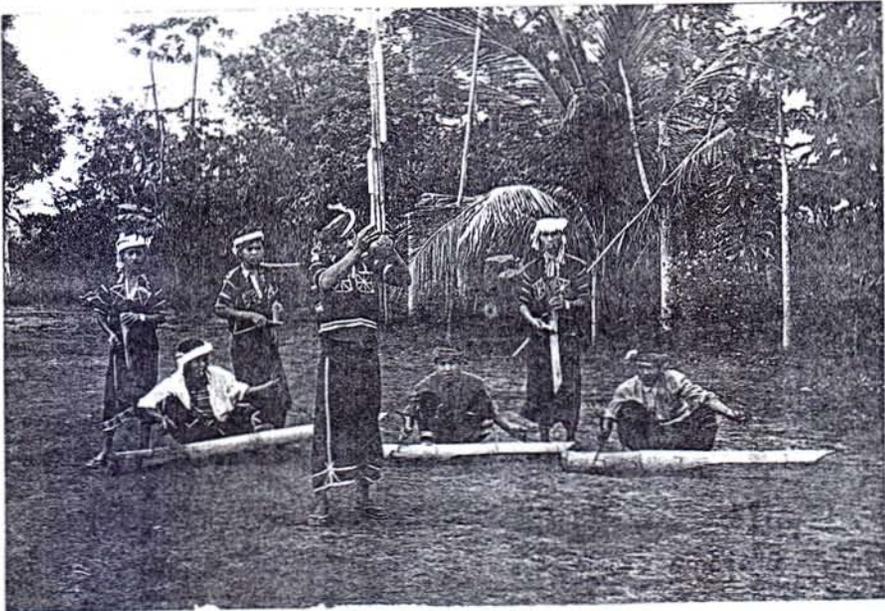
The fireworks are made of giant bamboo poles. They would stuff ten to thirty poles with gun powder weighing from a quarter to one viss. Then they would fire these poles like rockets. In the competition the losing village must supply the food and the winning village provides the music. This shooting of the

fireworks or rockets lasts the whole night till six or seven in the morning.

The elders of the village and the young people consult each other and everyone helps in the celebration of these festivals. They are celebrated to gain merit, to be blessed with good harvest, rain and plenty, and for the happiness and unity of the national races. There is no class distinction and everybody is welcome to participate in them.



The musical troupe of Yin-net nationals  
with their musical instruments



The Yin-net nationals musical troupe  
with gourd flute (Taung Khum)

## CHAPTER 6

### ADMINISTRATION

(a) **Administration**

(1) **Sawbwa Era Administration**

The Yin-net nationals living in the Nam San township in Shan State were the faithful subjects of the Sawbwas from the time of the Myanmar kings. Nam San town was under Mone' Sawbwa in the past. On the east is Kun Haing, Kyaing Ton region has abundant supplies of edible oil and forest products, in the south, Mone', Mauk Mei, Lin Khay region has plentiful paddy and water, and handicrafts, in the west is Loilem, Maing Pun, Taungyi region with modern human consumer goods, makes Nam San village the central place for exchange of goods and commerce, so that Nam San village became a thriving big village.

Six Yin-net villages are combined to form one administrative unit or circle and there is one circle headman for each unit, responsible for administering the six villages under him. Nam San village had one headman who was under the circle headman U Nyat Kham who is the circle headman of Wohm Pon (ဝဲဝဲ) administrative unit. The head men in the villages are known as Pukan (ပုကန်). The Sawbwa chooses and appoints the circle headman

and the circle headman appoints the Pukan headmen. If the Sawbwa is dissatisfied with the circle headman, he can dismiss him. He in turn can dismiss the Pukan headman.

The headman or Pukan collects the taxes from the villagers. He has to give the taxes collected to circle headman, who in turn gives them to the Sawbwa. The village headman keeps one twentieth of the amount for himself. Then the circle headman keeps one tenth of the amount for himself. The taxes for the year is about seven or eight kyats. Then once in Tabaung and once in Thadingyut each house has to give about one kyat for the offertory. The circle headman as well as the village headman has to work at his taungya for his livelihood. He can ask the villagers for help only if he needs it, otherwise he must work for himself.

The village headman is an ordinary man, but the circle headmen are usually relatives of the Sawbwa. So the sons and daughters of the circle headmen must not marry the sons and daughters of the ordinary Pukan headmen. They can marry the Sawbwa's sons and daughter.

(2) The Colonial Era Administration and  
The Japanese Era Administration

In the Myanmar era 911, Sawbwa Sao Peit Hom Khun (စဝ်ပိတ်တုံခွဲ) founder Mone' and reigned for nineteen years. As the successive Sawbwas governed it, in the year Myanmar era 1247 in the time of Sawbwa Htwe Lu (ထွတ်လူ) the British annexed Myanmar, but the Sawbwa administration continued to stay.

In 1885, the British annexed the whole of Myanmar, and Nam San village in the Shan State came under British rule. In May 1886, when the British government published The Schedule Districts, Shan State was not included in it and so the Sawbwa, Myosa and tax collectors continued to exist.

In 1887, for the first time the Sawbwa's authority was curbed by the Sanad (ဆာနာဒ်) and their independence was lost. Although the Sawbwas were supposed to govern the people according to traditional customs, they can decide only according to the directives of the Myanmar Commissioner. In 1889 the British government recalled Sawbwa Sao Shwe Kyi (စဝ်းရွှေကြည်) was recalled from Kyaing Ton and made to administer Mone'.

In Myanmar proper, the Diarchy government with ninety-one departments administration, developed successively. The Shan States administration remained undeveloped and became regarded as out-of-date, backward areas, exception areas and administered separately.

In 1941 When Japanese invaded Myanmar, the country was unsettled, in the time of Mone' Sawbwa Sao Kyaw Hoe (စဝ်းကျော်ဟိုး). When the Japanese had completely occupied Myanmar, they put Myanmar under military rule and the Shan State also was put under a separate military rule. On 1<sup>st</sup> August 1941 the Japanese gave Myanmar independence and on 24<sup>th</sup> December 1943 put the Shan State except for Kyaing Ton and Maing pan given to Thailand, into Myanmar. So part of Shan State also became independent and became united to Myanmar. After World War II according to the White Paper, the British government tried to break the Union of Myanmar by separate rule between Myanmar

proper and the hill regions. The Shan youth came to attend the conference of the AFPF League on the middle terrace of the Shwedagon Pagoda and expressed their desire to remain with the Union of Myanmar. In the end the Shan State also won independence together with the Union of Myanmar.

(3) After Independence Era

In 1950, the travelling tradesmen in carts started to rebuild Nam San village. In 1956 the government built villages by settling war veterans in these villages. The population of Nam San increased and became a flourishing town again.

In 1959, in the time of the Care taker government, Nam San became recognized as a town and some of the villages from neighbouring towns were put into Nam San township. In 1962 when the Mone' Sawbwa relinquished his power, the Sawbwa administration came to an end. The army opened Nos (2) and (3) rehabilitating centres and set up ten villages for war veterans and started regional development programmes which helped to develop the region.

In 1962, the Party Councils administered through the village headmen. The Revolutionary Council, Party Council, the State Law and Order Restoration Council and the present State Peace and Development Council all administer through the headmen. The Yin-net villages administration is for (10) chosen headmen to take charge of the village in turn for one week at a time. The (10) chosen headmen are U Ta Mon Kao, U Kyaing Hmya, U Ta Saing Po, U Son Mu, U Tamu Lan, U Lon Soe, U Hsun Ta, U Aike Mun, U Aike Shan,

U Sandar. The headman who is incharge is responsible for solving all the problems that crop up during his time of office.

(b) **The Legal System**

The Yin-net nationals are devout Buddhist and so there are few criminal cases. In the past there had been cases of robbery and murder and bullying between villages and between groups of villagers. So to stop such lawlessness, they formed associations and elected leaders to draw up rules and keep order, thus laws came into practice.

In the past the Pukan or village headman has to give the legal advice. He does not get any payment but takes only what is given him by the parties concerned. In a case of divorce, if the husband and wife agree to seperation, then the property is divided equally between them. The children may live with either the father or the mother accoding to their wishes.

In a case of theft, the culprit is given warning the first and second time not to do it again. But on the third time, the thief is made to pay three times the value of thing he had stolen. If a person is accused of a crime unjustly, then he has to swear before the Buddha shrine that he is not guilty of the accusation, that he is speaking the truth and that if he should be telling a lie, then may harm fall on him.

In a case of cattle coming into a plantation and eating up the plants, the owner of the cattle has to pay the value of the plants and grain destroyed. But if the owner of the plantation should wound the trespassing cattle

with his sword, then he has to give compensation to the owner of the cattle and leave the wounded cattle to the plantation owner. If the wound is slight, then he has given medical treatment to the cattle until they are healed.

The Yin-net men and women drink fermented drinks but they seldom have drunken brawls. They are put under arrest for (24) hours only a drunken person becomes rowdy and uncontrollable. They are never whipped or jailed. There has been no cases of murder or rape.

## CONCLUSION

The Yin-net nationals live mainly in Nam San township in Southern Shan States. A few are found near the town of Pin Lon. I have written this paper after going on a field trip and doing research personally there. The research paper has six chapters. The observations are based on Tylor, Boas and A.R. Radcliffe Brown theories.

Nam San township is in Southern Shan State on the Pyidaungsu highway between the capital city Taunggyi and Kyaing Ton. It is the town where many roads meet and where communications are good and a developing town. But the Yin-net nationals continue to keep their old customs and traditions so their society is still in a backward state.

The Yin-net nationals believe they are descendents of King Kyansittha and so of royal family, thus does not marry outside their race and also lives separately from other races. They are proud of the royal lineage. But they have no literature of their own, and no true written records of their history. Literature is very important in raising the standard of a race's culture and preserving and handing it as a heritage.

There are very few Yin-net nationals who are literate in the Myanmar literature. Although the State had opened schools, because of lack of teachers, lack of interest by the children, lack of encouragement by the parents, the State schools have not succeeded in making them literate. Only when they enter the monasteries they learn the Shan letters from the Shan monks that they know bit of Shan.

They still live in their traditional houses having only one entrance door and no windows. The inside of the house is dark and poorly ventilated, so their health is poor.

The Yin-net nationals are devout Buddhists and contented with whatever they could get. The whole village stops working on sabbath days and the elderly people observed the precepts. Just as they are serious about being Buddhist, they also keep on their nat worship. For example in choosing a land site for building a house or working a taungya, they never fail to do the traditional rituals and offerings to the nats.

The Yin-net nationals keep their promise and their morals. There must be no relationship before marriage. Even the courtship is carried on while helping the girl in her daily work. Three or four friends accompany the bridegroom to the girl's parents at night. They have to bring a bottle of alcohol drink. If the parents agree to the match promise to make offerings to the nat, the girl is permitted that very night to go back to the boy's home where she sleeps for three nights. Then they return to the girl's home for three nights. This staying inturn goes on till the wedding. First and second cousins do not marry each other.

The Yin-net nationals have Monogamous system and do not practise Polygamous at the same time. They are devout Buddhists and no cases of theft or misconduct are known. Both men and women love to drink but they do not get drunk and misbehave.

The villages invite each other and celebrate the religious festivals together. Thus the villages become friendly with each other and could consult each other in their affairs of the village, in social affairs and in their administration and exchange information. The bachelors and maids can only meet each other on this festive occasions. So celebrating festivals create opportunities for them to meet and develop the spirit of unity and patriotism.

The Yin-net nationals need all round development programmes to raise their standard of living. They need education to give them knowledge, and to train them to do things and arouse their spirits to want to improve themselves. In implementing these programmes, it is also essential to keep their traditions that do not retard their growth, and still help to preserve their valuable culture.

## ကျမ်းကိုးစာရင်း

- |  |   |  |
|--|---|--|
| ၁။ ပါတီ၊ မြန်မာ့ဆိုရှယ်လစ်လမ်းစဉ်  | တိုင်းရင်းသားရိုးရာ<br>ယဉ်ကျေးမှုဓလေ့ထုံးစံများ<br>(ရှမ်း)          | စာအုပ်ထုတ်ဝေရေး<br>ကော်ပိုရေးရှင်း (၁၉၆၈)          |
| ၂။ ပါတီ၊ မြန်မာ့ဆိုရှယ်လစ်လမ်းစဉ်  | တိုင်းရင်းသားတို့၏<br>တူညီသော ရိုးရာဓလေ့<br>ထုံးစံများ              | စာအုပ်ထုတ်ဝေရေး<br>ကော်ပိုရေးရှင်း (၁၉၇၅)          |
| ၃။ ခင်ခင်စု၊ ဒေါ်<br>နွဲ့နွဲ့၊ ဒေါ်<br>ကြင်ကြင်၊ ဒေါ်                                      | မနုဿဗေဒသနိဒါန်း   | တက္ကသိုလ်များစာအုပ်<br>ထုတ်ဝေရေးကော်မတီ<br>(၁၉၇၀)  |
| ၄။ ကြင်ကြင်၊ ဒေါ်<br>နွဲ့နွဲ့၊ ဒေါ်  | မနုဿဗေဒဘာသာရပ်<br>အထူးပြုတတိယနှစ်<br>သင်ရိုးညွှန်းတမ်း              | ရန်ကုန်တက္ကသိုလ် (ပင်မ)<br>(၁၉၆၆)                  |
| ၅။ မင်းနိုင်၊ ဦး   | တိုင်းရင်းသားစကားပုံများ  | ယဉ်ကျေးမှုဝန်ကြီးဌာန                               |
| ၆။ မင်းနိုင်၊ ဦး   | ဒို့တိုင်းရင်းဘွား၊<br>ပြည်ထောင်စုသား                               | ယဉ်ကျေးမှုဝန်ကြီးဌာန<br>(၁၉၆၀)                     |
| ၇။ မင်းနိုင်၊ ဦး   | ပြည်ထောင်စုအကပဒေသာ  | ။  |
| ၈။ မင်းနိုင်၊ ဦး   | တို့သွေး၊ တို့သားတိုင်းရင်းဖွား                                     | ။  |
| ၉။ ဘိုးလှ၊ ဦး  | ရှမ်းပုံပြင်  | ကမ္ဘောဇဂုဏ်ရောင်<br>ပုံနှိပ်တိုက် (၁၉၅၅)           |
| ၁၀။ ဖိုးလတ်၊ ဦး  | မြန်မာအစ  | ပညာနန္ဒာပုံနှိပ်တိုက် (၁၉၆၆)                       |
| ၁၁။ နမ့်စန်မြို့ပိုင်ရုံး<br>နမ့်စန်မြို့၊ ၁၉၆၅  | တိုင်းရင်းသားယဉ်ကျေးမှုနိဒါန်း<br>နှင့်အခြေစိုက်မေးခွန်များ<br>အဖြေ | ရှမ်းပြည်နယ်ယဉ်ကျေးမှု<br>ပြတိုက်၊ တောင်ကြီးမြို့။ |
| ၁၂။ တိုင်းရင်းသားလူမျိုးများအရေးနှင့်<br>ပတ်သက်၍တော်လှန်ရေး<br>ကောင်စီ၏ အမြင်နှင့်ခံယူချက် |   | စာပေဓိမ္မာန်ပုံနှိပ်တိုက်<br>(၁၉၆၅)                |
| ၁၃။ လွိုင်လင်ခရိုင်မဂ္ဂဇင်း<br>(၁၉၉၉)  |   | ပြန်ကြားရေးနှင့်ပြည်သူ့<br>ဆက်ဆံရေး၊ လွိုင်လင်။    |
| ၁၄။ နမ့်လတ်စာစောင်   | အတွဲ (၃)၊ အမှတ် (၄)<br>၁၉၉၅ (ဩဂုတ်)                                 | ပြန်ကြားရေးနှင့်ပြည်သူ့<br>ဆက်ဆံရေး၊ နမ့်စန်။      |

၁၅။ နမ့်စန်မြို့ပိုင်ရုံး  
နမ့်စန်မြို့၊ ၁၉၆၅  
၁၆။ နမ့်စန်မြို့ပိုင်ရုံး

ယင်းနက်လူမျိုးစု၏  
သမိုင်းကြောင်းယဉ်ကျေးမှု  
နမ့်စန်မြို့နယ်မှတ်တမ်း

ရှမ်းပြည်နယ်စာကြည့်တိုက်  
တောင်ကြီးမြို့။  
ပြန်ကြားရေးနှင့်ပြည်သူ့  
ဆက်ဆံရေး၊ နမ့်စန်။

၁၇။ မြန်မာ့စွယ်စုံကျမ်း၊ အတွဲ ၁၀  
၁၈။ မြန်မာ့စွယ်စုံကျမ်း၊ အတွဲ ၁၁  
၁၉။ သန်းထွန်း၊ ဒေါက်တာ

ခေတ်ဟောင်းမြန်မာရာဇဝင်

ကာယသုခပုံနှိပ်တိုက်  
၇၂။ ရေတာရှည်လမ်းဟောင်း  
ရန်ကုန်။

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## List of informants

No.	Name	Age	Occupation	Town/Village
1.	U Pantita	65	abbot	Kun Poat
2.	U Kyaing Hmya	55	taungya	Kun Poat
3.	U Son Mu	60	taungya	Kun Poat
4.	U Sandar	50	taungya	Kun Poat
5.	Daw Naing Pan	50	dependant	Kun Poat
6.	Daw Pan Ta	45	dependant	Kun Poat
7.	Daw Ei Kham	38	taungya	Kun Poat
8.	U Sein	73	scripture reader	Kun Poat
9.	U Ta Mon Kao	50	headman	Kun Poat
10.	U Ta Saing Po	44	headman	Kun Poat
11.	U Tamu Lan	38	heaman	Kun Poat
12.	U Nyat Kham	47	taungya	Kun Poat
13.	U Aike Shan	40	taungya	Ta Saing
14.	U Shan Ta	56	taungya	Ta Saing
15.	Aike Mon	35	headman	Ta Saing
16.	U Swam Tar	57	taungya	Ta Saing
17.	U Po Htaung	40	staff	Nam San
18.	Daw San Myint	50	Dept. Incharge	Nam San
19.	Ko Kyaw Win	27	photographer	Nam San
20.	Sai Saw Han	26	trader	Nam San
21.	Nang Shwe	28	teacher	Nam San
22.	Daw Pa Mon	40	dependant	Nam San

