

**RITUAL, RELIGIOUS BELIEFS AND PRACTICES
AMONG POE KAYIN NATIONALS LIVING IN
HPA-AN TOWNSHIP, KAYIN STATE**

PhD DISSERTATION

THEINGI SOE

**DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY
UNIVERSITY OF YANGON
MYANMAR**

MAY 2018

**RITUAL, RELIGIOUS BELIEFS AND PRACTICES
AMONG POE KAYIN NATIONALS LIVING IN
HPA-AN TOWNSHIP, KAYIN STATE**

**Submitted: Thengi Soe
Roll No. 4 PhD-Anth-1**

**This dissertation is submitted to the Department of
Anthropology, University of Yangon in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

2018

CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ABSTRACT

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

Chapter	Page
I. INTRODUCTION	
1.1 Ritual, Religious Beliefs and Practices	1
1.2 Rationale for the Study	4
1.3 Research Questions	5
1.4 Aim and Objectives	5
1.5 Conceptual Framework	6
1.6 Composition of Thesis	6
II. LITERATURE REVIEW	
2.1 Anthropological Perspective on Religion	8
2.2 Ritual, Religious Beliefs and Practices in Research Studies	9
2.3 Relation between Rituals, Religious Beliefs and Practices on Symbols	15
2.4 Socio Religious Dimension of Death and Funerals	20
III. METHODOLOGY	
3.1 Study Design	23
3.2 Study Site	23
3.3 Study Population	23
3.4 Study Period	23
3.5 Data Collection Methods	26
3.5.1 In-depth Interview (IDI)	26
3.5.2 Key Informant Interview (KII)	26
3.6 Research Tools	27
3.7 Ethical Consideration	27
3.8 Limitation of the Study	27
IV. RELIGIONS IN HLAING GABAR VILLAGE TRACT	
4.1 Historical Background of Poe Kayin religions	29

4.1.1	Belief in Chritianity	29
4.1.2	Talagu Yathè Buddhist Sect	30
4.1.3	Wei (Hui) Belief	30
4.1.4	Brahmaiara Sect	30
4.1.5	Lei Kel Sect	31
4.1.6	Du Wai Worship	31
4.1.7	Phoe Ta Khit Sect	31
4.1.7	Animism in Poe- Kayin Belief	31
4.2	Taboo of Poe Kayin Practices	34
V.	DU WAI WORSHIP AND POE KAYIN	
5.1	Historical Background of Shin Du Wai Spirits	37
5.2	Du Wai, Beliefs of Poe Kayin's	39
5.3	Preparing for Offering Du Wai	44
5.3.1	Individual Offering	44
5.3.2	Family offering	45
5.3.3	Community Offering	46
5.4	Propitiation of the Guardian's Spirit of the Paddy Field	47
5.5	The Role and Function of Spirit Medium	48
5.6	Constructing Shin Du Wai Shrine	49
5.7	The Importance of Shin Du Wai Offerings for Wedding Ceremony	51
5.8	Choosing for Life Partner	57
5.9	Believer Perception on Du Wai	61
5.10	Seasonal Ritual of Poe Kayin	62
5.10.1	The Activities during Tagu Month (<i>April</i>)	63
5.10.2	The Activities during Kason Month (<i>May</i>)	65
5.10.2(a)	Exorcizing the Evil Spirit of Kason Ritual	66
5.10.2(b)	The Function and Practices Exorcizing Evil Spirits	66
5.10.2(c)	Preparation of Treating Meals	69
5.10.2(d)	Assigning duties in Ceremony and Practicing	69
5.10.3	The Activities during Waso Month (<i>july</i>)	71
5.10.4	Wrist Tying and Belief in Practicing the Customs (<i>August</i>)	72
5.10.4(a)	Wrist Tying in Calling Soul	73

5.10.4(b)	Wrist Tying in Getting Married	75
5.10.4(c)	Wrist Tying in Wah-gaung month	76
5.10.5	Preparation of the Wrist Tying Ceremony	78
5.10.6	Mock-ship sailing ceremony	81
5.10.6(a)	Activities of Shin Du Wai Bonfire	81
5.10.6(b)	Preparation of the kind of wood	82
5.10.7	House Warming Ceremony	84
5.10.8	The Practices of Belief in Death	86
5.10.8(a)	Preparing the Corpse	87
5.10.8(b)	The Disposal of the Body	88
5.10.8(c)	Bone Collecting Ceremony (A-Yoe-Kort Pwe)	89
VI.	THE RELIGIOUS BELIEFS OF LEI KEL ARIYA DEVOTEES	
6.1	Background History of Lei Kel Ariya Religion	97
6.2	Lei Kel Ariya Asceticism and Grandpa and Grandma Belief	99
6.3	Worship of Temple Belief	100
6.4	The Areas where Lei Kel Devotees Live	103
6.5	The Composition of the Temple and Tasks or Responsibilities	104
6.6	Duties of Lei Kel religious Leaders	104
6.7	Background and Conceptions of Kyet Yet Literature	106
6.8	Wedding Ceremony and Lei Kel Custom	108
6.9	Donation and Lei Kel Ritual	110
6.10	Historical Background of Phi Bhi Yaw Spirit	111
6.10.1	Phi Bhi Yaw (The goddess of Paddy) Festival	112
6.11	Lei Kel Practice and the Custom of Tying white Thread	116
VII.	DISCUSSION	
7.1	Religious Beliefs and Practices of Other Countries	120
VIII.	CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION	
8.1	Recommendation	135
REFERENCES		

LIST OF TABLES

	Page
Table-1 Schedule of the Research	24
Table-2 Seasonal of ritual calendar	94

LIST OF FIGURES

Page

Figure 1.	Religious ritual, beliefs and practices conceptual framework	6
-----------	--	---

LIST OF PHOTOS

		Page
Photo (1)	Shin Du wai Zedi	39
Photo (2)	Kadaw Pwe (ဆုံတုံလိုဏ်)	40
Photo (3)	PanKan Pwe (ဆုံတုံလိုဏ်)	41
Photo (4)	Kun Pwe (တင်လိုဏ်လှူဒါန)	41
Photo (5)	Individual offering for Shin Du wai	45
Photo (6)	Family offering for Shin Du wai	46
Photo (7)	Community offering for Shin Du wai	47
Photo (8)	The group of Sprit Medium for propitiation in Du wai Zedi	49
Photo (9)	A place of offering to spirit Shrine of Du wai	51
Photo (10)	The groom separating the traditional spirit by a spirit medium	52
Photo (11)	The spirit medium preparing the offering items from the bride	53
Photo (12)	The groom preparing the coconut used in making a promise	53
Photo (13)	Pay respect to the guardian spirits of Banyan trees	55
Photo (14)	The auspicious marriage bed room	56
Photo (15)	Pay respect and worship at Shin Du wai	57
Photo (16)	Activities of Tagu Month	64
Photo (17)	The ceremony of exorcizing evil spirits	66
Photo (18)	Activities of exorcizing evil spirits	67
Photo (19)	Activities of exorcizing evil spirits	68
Photo (20)	Sharing to all creatures their merit deeds	70
Photo (21)	Wrist tying in getting married	76
Photo (22)	Activities of wrist tying ceremony Wah-gaung	78
Photo (23)	Preparation of the wrist tying ceremony (let chi pwe)	78
Photo (24)	Bonfire plants	82
Photo (25)	Activities of bonfire	83
Photo (26)	Activities of house warming ceremony	85
Photo (27)	Utensils for house warming ceremony	86
Photo (28)	Utensils for house warming ceremony	86
Photo (29)	Ariya religion	97
Photo (30)	Praying Buddha instruction	98
Photo (31)	Grandpa and grandma' belief	99
Photo (32)	Kalun Wan Woke temple	101
Photo (33)	Don Seik Thar Phaung Lei Kel Temple	103

Photo (34)	Lei Kel religious leaders	106
Photo (35)	Activities for donation	111
Photo (36)	Offering paddy and paying homage to the Phi Bhi Yaw	113
Photo (37)	Activities of Phi Bhi Yaw ritual	114
Photo (38)	Holding Phi Bhi Yaw ritual	115
Photo (39)	Participation in Phi Bhi Yaw ritual	116
Photo (40)	Preparation of the corpse	119

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Firstly, I would like to express my gratitude to my mother unit, Department of Anthropology in Dagon University for giving me a chance to pursue the Doctorate Degree of Philosophy at the University of Yangon. Special thanks also go to the Ministry of Education, the Republic of the Union of Myanmar for allowing me this privilege.

Secondly, I would like to express my gratitude to my thesis supervisor, Dr. Than Pale, Professor the Department of Anthropology, University of Yangon. For the partial fulfillment of the requirement for the Doctorate degree of Philosophy, I have been fortunate to write the major thesis “Ritual, religious beliefs and practices among Poe Kayin nationals living in Hpa-an Township, Kayin State”. This had been completed due to the special kindness, excellent guidance and invaluable suggestion of her.

I would also like to express my heart-felt thanks to my co-supervisor, U Kyaw Win, Director General (Retired), Ministry of Culture, Department of Anthropology, University of Yangon for his command, patience, great guidance and supervision to enable me to complete my thesis in timely and insightful manner.

Next, much appreciation and lots of thanks go to external examiner, Dr. Sandar Win, Professor and Head of the Department of Anthropology, East Yangon University who has corrected and polished to be qualified for my thesis within a short period. And then I'm greatly indebted to referee, Dr. Hla Hla Kyi, Associate Professor, Department of Anthropology, and East Yangon University for careful reading and examining to perfect for my thesis.

Moreover, I am greatly indebted to chairperson, Dr. Mya Mya Khin, Professor and Head, Department of Anthropology, University of Yangon who coached and taught me to become a good academic writing; without her help my writing skills wouldn't have come any close to where it is now.

I wish to send my gratitude to members, Dr. Aye Aye Aung Associate Professor and Dr. Cathi Tun (Lecture), Department of Anthropology, University of Yangon for their reading and giving suggestion.

Furthermore, I would like to acknowledge, in leading Hlaing Gabar Sayadaw and U Hote Sein the ward administrator, who give permission for this study. My special thanks go to the local dwellers from Nan Mu Si Saw Phaung U Dee Oo (One

hundred household leader, Hlanig Gabar village, who have assisted and patiently answered my enquiries whenever I wanted to know about the knowledge and data for my thesis and also would like to thank all the people who encouraged me with their kind supports, resources, time and expertise during the entire period of my writing this thesis. Afterward I would like to record my thanks Saw Eh Phaung and Saw Myo Myint Oo for helping in gathering data.

Finally, my hearty thanks and gratitude go to my siblings and all of my family members for helping me unconditionally with my thesis and giving me their inspirable encouragement throughout the period of my studies.

ABSTRACT

In Myanmar, over one hundred national ethnic groups are living nowadays. Each of the ethnic groups has their own characteristics and different cultural patterns. The main purpose of this thesis is to understand the ritual, religious beliefs and practices of a Poe Kayin ethnic group living in Hlaing Gabar Village tract in Hpa-an Township, Kayin State. The aim of this research is to find out the impact of ritual, religious beliefs and practices on their socio-economic life. The specific objectives of the research are -to find out Poe-Kayin's religious belief and practices, to elicit how their religious belief influences on their social and economic function. The study was conducted with qualitative methods. Key informant interview (KII), In-depth interview (IDI) and Direct observation were conducted to collect data. It was found that, only Poe- Kayin nationals live in this region. Religious and moral values are a highly sensitive area involving beliefs and concepts about the various different kinds of Buddhist and animist beliefs are mixed by each individual. Everyone can participate in this ritual regardless of age and sex. Even people from the neighboring villages come to participate in some ritual which is held in respective village tract. They practice matrilineal descendant pattern for Poe Kayin nationalities. The traditional practice has been handed down to only women – one generation after another. Manna and taboo for marriage, pregnancy and confinement are found so there are a few cases for inheritance and divorce.

Key words: ritual, religion, belief, practice, function,

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1. 1 Ritual, Religious Beliefs and Practices

Every society has religious systems and customs. It can also find people accept and believe as true in every subject matter of religion, social activities, economy, and education factor. There are Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism and other religions, beliefs and practices in Myanmar (Census, 2016). Most of Myanmar Nations are Theravada Buddhists.

The term “religion” origin from the Latin noun: “religio” that was nominalized from one of three verbs: “relegere”. Religious studies originate in the nineteenth century, when scholarly and historical analysis of the Bible had flourished, and Hindu and Buddhist texts were first being translated into European languages. Today a religious study is practiced by scholars worldwide. Religion may be regard as the beliefs and patterns of behavior by which humans try to deal with what they view as important problems that cannot be solved with known technology or organizational techniques (Havilland, 1999, P-25).

According to Geertz religion is “a system of symbols which acts to, establish powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations in men by, formulating conceptions of a general order of existence, and clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic” (Susan A. Johnston, 2009, p-7).

The anthropologist E.B. Tylor said that religion began with Spirit (“*Nat*” in Myanmar) worship or animism. Tylor mentioned that early religion arose from people’s beliefs in spirits of godlike beings (Barfield, 1997).

Religion and spirituality have been recognized as having important relationships with mental health status. While some forms of religious commitment may be psychologically unhealthy in them and others may foster pathology the religion and mental health relationship in complex and simply no longer justifiable (Peter C. Hill, 1996, p-55).

Spirituality is thus differentiated from religion by being a broader concept that does not rely on notions of divinity or particular practices such as worship or rituals.

The descriptor religious/spiritual is now commonly used as an umbrella term that encompasses both religion and spirituality, and its acronym Religious/spiritual is used throughout the remainder of this thesis (Rosemary Lyn Aird, 2007, P-6).

Radcliffe-Brown (1965), stated: “We should see religious beliefs and observances as a part of a complex system by which human beings live together in an orderly fashion. We should look, he maintains, at the social functions of religion, that is, the contribution that it makes to the formation and maintenance of a social order”.

According to Spiro (1978), by religious belief he means any belief that directly or indirectly relates to beings who are held to possess greater power than humans and animals, with whom human beings sustain relationships (interactions and transactions), and who can affect human lives for good or for evil.

Religious beliefs and rituals take so many forms across the world that anthropologists have found it difficult to define religion in a way that encompasses them all. They have agreed, however, that the major characteristics of religion include belief in supernatural beings and supernatural power, symbolic expression of feelings, and rituals performed both individually and in groups for the purpose of influencing supernatural beings and powers. Religious beliefs differ from the ordinary day-to-day beliefs that grow out of a mechanistic view of things. Religious beliefs portray the world supernatural rather than scientifically (Crapo, 2002).

Turner (1969), focused on this notion as a way of negotiating between stability and change. In his view, society has a need for some kind of structural differentiation, in different numbers hold separate roles. Rituals are also performed to influence for the sake of human beings. It differs from other sorts of behavior in three important ways: it is symbolically meaningful; it is often performed in a repetitive, stereotyped, and predictable way; and it has the intent of manipulation nature through the power of symbols rather than by mechanical means.

There are three main roles of ritual in religion: to unite a community emotionally; to portray or act out important aspects of a religion’s myths and cosmology; and to influence the spiritual world and thereby the natural world for human beings or, conversely, to help human beings adjust to the conditions of the natural and spiritual realms (Crapo, 2002).

Rituals are generally understood as social practices that are bounded, recurring and serial (Trice and Beyer, 1993), a ritual is patterned, repetitive behavior focused on the supernatural realm. There are two types of rituals: sacred rituals and secular rituals. Such sacred rituals are the enactment of beliefs expressed in myth and doctrine. Sacred rituals are distinct from secular rituals, such as sorority or fraternity initiations, that have no connection to the supernatural realm. Some ritual events combine sacred and secular elements (Miller, 2011).

Anthropologists categorize sacred rituals in many ways. One division is based on their timing. Regularly performed rituals are called “periodic rituals”. Many periodic rituals are performed annually to mark a seasonal milestone such as planting or harvesting or to commemorate an important event.

For example, Buddha’s Day, an important periodic ritual in Buddhism, commemorates the birth, enlightenment, and death of the Buddha (all on one day). On this day, Buddhists gather at monasteries, hear sermons about the Buddha, and perform rituals such as pouring water over images of the Buddha. Cylindrical events, such as the shortest day of the year, the longest day, the new moon, and the full moon, often shape ritual cycle. “Non-periodic rituals”, in contrast, occur irregularly, at unpredictable times, in response to and scheduled events, such as a drought or flood, or to mark events in a person’s life, such as illness, infertility, birth, marriage, or death (Miller, 2011).

Belief, as a term, has been defined in a variety of different ways in the literature and used interchangeably with a variety of other terms including attitudes, values, judgments, opinions, ideology, perceptions, conceptions, conceptual systems, dispositions, implicit theories, explicit theories, internal mental processes, action strategies, rules of practice and perspectives (Pajares, 1992).

Beliefs are expressed and transferred over the generations in two main forms: myth (stories about supernatural forces or beings), and doctrine (direct statements about religious beliefs). A myth is a narrative that has a plot with a beginning, middle, and end. The plot may involve recurrent motifs, the smallest units of narrative. It conveys messages about supernatural forces or beings (or, simply,) indirectly, through the story itself, rather than by using logic or formal argument.

Belief in God appears to have been replaced by alternative conceptions of the divine by substantial proportions of different populations. These beliefs clearly deviate from traditional religious thought, since they regard ultimate reality as involving a “spiritual” or “higher” power; some sort of depersonalized “energy” or “force”. Religion, spirituality, and mental health and social behavior in young adulthood: a longitudinal study (Rosemary Lyn Aird, 2007, P-22).

Malinowski said that a myth is a charter for society in that it expresses core beliefs and teaches morality. Levi-Strauss (1967), argued myth as functional in a philosophical and psychological way. Doctrine, the other major form in which beliefs are expressed, explicitly defines the supernatural, the world and how it came to be, and people’s roles in relation to the supernatural land to other humans. Doctrine is written and formal (Miller, 2011).

Based upon a literature review of above mention, present studies focused on the facts Poe Kayin in Hlaing Gabar village hold in ritual seasonal festivals and various ceremonies such as social activities, economic activities religious activities and spirit worship throughout the whole year. These rituals have connections with people’s works, living status, and their daily lives one way or another. Studies are also made to highlight on the rituals, religious beliefs and practices of worshipping it has contributed to creating cohesive society show a high degree of religious toleration.

1.2 Rationale for the Study

Anthropological studies have revealed many aspects and functions of religion. In Myanmar, more than one hundred ethnic groups are living nowadays. Union of Myanmar is formed with different varieties of tradition and custom of these ethnic groups. These ethnic groups had their own cultures and literatures since the ancient times. The cultures and the arts of these races are also different from each other according to their different birth-places. There are mainly eight ethnic groups in Myanmar: Kachin, Kayah, Kayin, Chin, Bamar, Mon, Rakhine and Shan. Each of the ethnic groups has its own characteristics and cultural traditions: kinship systems, economic systems and religious systems.

Therefore, every society has religious systems and customs. It is also found that people accept and believe as true in every subject matter of religion, social activities, and economy. That is why; Poe Kayin was studied for this dissertation. Poe

Kayin is one of the tribes of Kayin nationality who live in the Union of Republic of Myanmar. The majority of Kayin are living in Kayin State and Ayeyarwady Delta Region, Yangon Region, Bago Region, Mon state and Taninthayi Region. As mentioned above, most of the Poe Kayin is living in that region. Among them, present study was attempted to point out religious rituals, beliefs and practices of Poe Kayin who are living in Hlaing Gabar village tract. Although most of the Poe Kayin is Buddhists, there are many different kinds of religious groups in Poe Kayin. They can be classified such as *Lei Kel* religion, *Du wai* religion and *Kyaik kawi* religion, various belief systems. However, this dissertation was explored two kinds, *Lei Kel* and *Du Wai* religions. They have been holding their rituals based on religious beliefs. Moreover, this study was focused on the religious rituals, beliefs and practices influenced on their social and economic functions from religious anthropological point of view. The reason for choosing of the study is that most of Poe Kayin people live there and therefore, the real Kayin culture and customs can be studied there.

1.3 Research Questions

The main questions of this study are;

1. What is ritual?
2. What are ritual's effects and how they are achieved?
3. How do people act in the present situation of ritual religious beliefs and practices on their socio economic life?

1.4 Aim and Objectives

General objectives

The aim of this research is to find out the impact of religious ritual, beliefs and practices on their socio-economic life.

Specific objectives

The specific objectives of the research are as follow:

- To find out Poe-Kayin's religious beliefs and practices.
- To elicit how their religious beliefs influence on their social and economic function.

1.5 Conceptual Framework

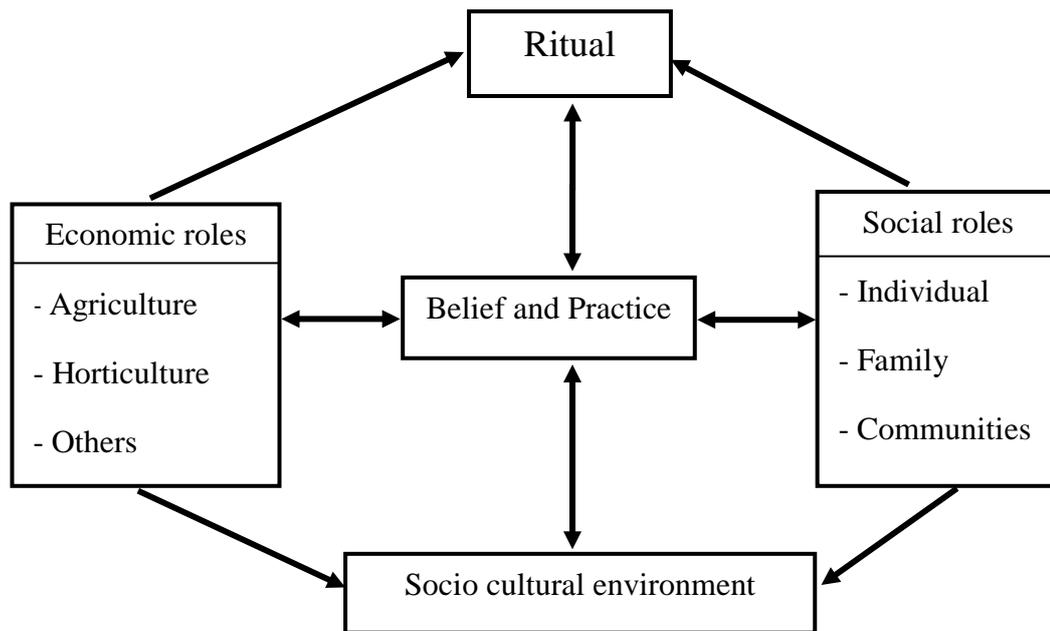


Figure 1. Religious ritual, beliefs and practices conceptual framework

According to this figure, Rituals are also performed to influence for the sake of human beings. By celebrating the rituals, the people reduced feelings because it could support and provide their economy and social affairs. Economic context provides the daily activities of the people for their livelihood. Similarly, social role is an important factor to be found out in sector of individual, family and communities.

1.6 Composition of Thesis

The dissertation was composed with eight chapters. The first chapter introduces an introduction of the research including historical background, rational for study, research questions, aim and objectives of the study, conceptual framework and structure of the thesis.

In chapter two, first of all, literature review was conducted by the literature knowledge and finally this study used to apply fieldwork. It was included procedures used in collecting information, official data on anthropological approach to religious activities.

Chapter three covers the research methodology which comprises the study design, study site, research method from data collection and ethical consideration

Chapter four, five and six was included historical background of Poe Kayin rituals, religions, beliefs and practices of their worship including holding seasonal ritual and activities of the Poe Kayin living in Hlaing Gabar village tracts, Hpa-an Township.

Chapter seven was discussed on the findings comparing to other scholar's description of findings.

Chapter eight was concluded with conclusion and recommendations on findings.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Anthropological Perspective on Religion

Religious anthropology can be observed as a branch of cultural anthropology. Since the religious anthropology studies the religion-related subjects along with the culture, it consists of all the subjects dealing with the psychological and religious aspects of the specific peoples. It has been found that, depending on the influence of the environment in which they are living, the people all over the world have faith in their respective religions.

Durkheim said “totemism is a religion.” All religions are true after own fashion. They meet “need” that is part and parcel of human life. Religion is not defined in term of anything that would turn a man of science positive away from observable phenomena, miraculous, or the supernatural. In addition the moral in the term moral community specify that the groups are not hodgepodges either but are made up individual who have mutually recognized and recognizable identity that set them cognitively and normatively on shared human terrain (Fields, 1995,p-xuiii, xxxiv).

Hillary Rodrigues and John S. Harding mentions that, the definition of religion that everyone could agree on, but no such definition has yet. Among the reasons for this lack of agreement is the tendency for people to define religion too narrowly, often from the perspective of their own backgrounds and culture. Although such descriptive definitions do encompass much of what is generally regarded as religion in many societies and cultures, they are still too narrow (2008, p-1, 2).

They quoted that “The Christian theologian Paul Tillich (1886–1965) offered a broad definition of faith (or religion) as “being grasped by an ultimate concern.” And they continue to compare that a Christian this ultimate concern might center on issues such as redemption, salvation, and being close to God for eternity, for a Buddhist it might be the state of freedom from all illusions through the attainment of nirvana. It is that collection of thoughts, beliefs, and values, which most shapes the character of their lives, upon which they base their most important decisions, and for which they may even be willing to give up their lives. This, then, would seem to be an

effectively broad definition of religion. In research areas, they believe in Du wai and Leikel. Especially their own definition of what is Du wai and what is Lei kel were studied to know their definition of religion (see chapter IV).

Durkheim suggested that religion was a system of beliefs and practices pertaining to sacred things, by which he meant things that inspire feelings of awe, respect, or reverence because they are set apart and forbidden. He was concerned with the question of what lies the root of religious ideas and what maintains them through the generations, for those aspects of society and culture that inspire feelings of respect, fear, and awe among its members. He believed that by maintaining and manipulating these feelings in symbolic form, religion perpetuated these feelings in symbolic form; religion perpetuated the sentiments that people must have toward their society if it is to survive. He illustrated his belief in the intimate connection between a religion's sacred symbols and society's fundamental institutions by examining the native people of central Australia (Crapo, 2002). Present studies focus on religion although they are Buddhist; their belief systems are diverse such as Du wai and Lei kel. How their religious beliefs and practicing behaviors and sacred things interconnect among them and what kinds of religious sentiment were among them were described (see chapter IV).

2.2 Ritual, Religious Beliefs and Practices in Research Studies

Religious beliefs and ritual take so many forms across the world that anthropologists have found it difficult to define religion in a way that encompasses them all. Religious beliefs differ from the ordinary day-to-day beliefs that grow out of a machnistic view of things. Religious beliefs portray the world supernaturally rather than scientifically (Carpo 2002).

Cathrine Bell ritual (1992), said that in ritual theory suggests that the recent role of ritual as a category in the study of culture has been inextricably linked to the construction of a specifically 'cultural' methodology, a theoretical approach that defines and addresses 'cultural' data we face in analyzing ritual, as well as the impetus for engaging these particular problems have less to do with interpreting the raw data and more to do with the manner in which we theoretically constitute ritual as the object of a cultural method of interpretation.

Religion was a system of beliefs and practices pertaining to sacred things, by which he meant things that inspire feelings of awe, respect, or reverence because they are set apart and forbidden Durkheim, (1995), P-xxxiv.

In this study, the analysis of beliefs and practices provides on the behavior of pray and thus must follow some *do's and don'ts* in making such offering. Noises such as crying of babies and quarrelling of the couple as well as other kinds of noises are prohibited. They happen to make the traditional Spirit (Nat) annoyed by their careless behavior.

Malinowski's exploration of the distinction between religion and common sense seem to me inevitable starting-points for any useful anthropological theory of religion. But they are starting-points only. The dangers of such a procedure are obvious: arbitrary eclecticism, superficial theory- mongering, and sheer intellectual confusion (James A. Forte, 2005 P-88). In this study was explored that distinguish between Du wai and Lei kel religion. Especially their own definition of what is Du wai and what is Lei kel were studied to know their definition of religion (see chapter IV).

Ancestor worship is related to the animistic belief in a spirit or soul surviving the body after death, as proposed by early anthropologist Edward Burnett Tylor (1832–1917), is reasonable, since it is this spirit essence of the ancestor that is believed to continue its relationship with descendants. Tylor's theory further suggested is certainly debatable. the ways in which the living are influenced by the dead; and the individual, family, kin group, or regional variability in practice that can be present in a single cultural tradition. In research area, they believe in ancestral worship. Especially they have believed that different forms of the worship were the places and things where the powerful Spirit (Nat) of difficult types resided since the time of their parents, grandparents and traditional respective Spirit (Nat) are worshipped with offering things (see chapter IV).

Religion consists of various rituals – prayers, songs, dances, offerings and sacrifices – people enact to try to manipulate supernatural beings and powers to their advantage. These beings and powers may consist of spirit and goddesses, ancestral and other spirits, or impersonal powers, either by themselves or in various combinations (Haviland, 1999).

Scupin (2000) said that human learn their religious traditions through the process of enculturation. Religious convictions are therefore shaped by the historical and social situations in which a person lives. Elders teach children through songs and narratives, artists paint the stories on rocks and walls, and sculptures create images in wood and stone that depict aspects of religious belief (Miller, 2011).p-79. According to present study, religious and moral values are a highly sensitive area involving beliefs and concepts about the various different kinds of Buddhist and animist beliefs are mixed by each individual. As people in Hlaing Gabar Village practice many religions, children need to be socialized and enculturation when they are young in order not to mix belief with customs.

A ritual is patterned, repetitive behavior focused on the supernatural realm. There are two types of rituals: sacred rituals and secular rituals. Such sacred rituals are the enactment of beliefs expressed in myth and doctrine. Sacred rituals are distinct from secular rituals, such as sorority or fraternity initiations, that have no connection to the supernatural realm. Some ritual events combine sacred and secular elements (Miller, 2011).

Bell (1992) also defines ritual as a culturally strategic way of action, a mode of paying attention and a process of making interest. In this expiation, the role of places as a fundamental component of ritual is strengthened since a place directs attention. Emphasis is made therefore of the preliminary understanding of ritual and its relation to sacred site.

Trice and Beyer (1984) conceptualize ritual as the general idea behind a rite; that being the specific instance of ritual, while they use the term ceremonial to portray the context in which rites occur. Similarly ritual pattern is an important fact to relate in ceremony according to their belief of specific power and ritual practices.

Rituals can build solidarity, identity and commitment within the organization (Islam and Zyphur, 2009; Kunda, 1992). Moreover, rituals not only have the capacity to maintain but also manage and change organizations (Howard-Grenville et al., 2011; Gbadamosi, 2005; Trice and Beyer, 1993 & Leonore van den Ende, 2015, p-35).

Transition rituals is derived from the term 'rites de passage' – coined and theorized by French anthropologist van Gennep (1960) and later succeeded by Turner

(1969) – who define it as a ceremonial event that marks the passage of an individual or group from one social status to another (Leonore van den Ende, 2015, p-38).

Bell (2009) suggests that we depart from the longstanding theoretical tendency to view ritual either as a magical or sacred activity in sharp contrast with technical or utilitarian activity, given that ritual was frequently characterized by its symbolic and non-instrumental dimensions; or as an activity which can be seen as an aspect of all activity given that the basic features of rituals, such as repetition and reutilization, also lie at the basis of all social life (Leonore van den Ende (2015) p-33).

Both Van Gennep (1960) and Turner (1969) describe how important transitions in the life cycle of humans (such as birth, adulthood, marriage and death) require the practice of rituals so that individuals or groups can transition from one status to the other (Gennep, Turner, (1960) (1969)).

Sidney M. Greenfield's (2005) chapter provides not only an overview of Spiritism in Brazil, but also an ethnographic account of two ritual healings. Like Lindquist, Greenfield is interested in the efficacy of ritual and in somatization. He takes this further to posit indirect ritual effects, through belief, on biological systems causing illness (Greenfield, 2005).

In research area, The Buddhist Poe Kayin people believe in persisting of spirits. While the body is sleeping, the spirit is leaving from the body and floating directionless. They assumed that if the spirit cannot return back in time, the body will be dead so, they can get treatment in various ways such as treatment by modern medicine, treatment by medicine that is accepted by tradition, treatment by faith-healer.

Lokasundari Vijaya Sankar (2014), Mention that the roles and rituals practiced by Malaysian Iyer women. Women were seen as keepers of tradition and customs that are important to the community. Most homes had a room assigned for the prayer altar while others set aside space in some part of the house for conducting prayers. The community practiced a patriarchal system. Men conducted religious rites while the women provided the support services such as preparing the food offerings during religious. In the current study, Poe Kayin women have the leading role to play

in traditionally celebrated propitiation ceremonies. Thus, woman's practices have been handed down to one women-generation after another.

According to Anning Hu & Felicia F. Tian, 2008, China is characterized by an extended kinship network, strong family identity and an important cultural force underpinning these familial characteristics is ancestor worship, which is defined as a series of rituals, practices, and beliefs that focus on the perpetuation of the family line and reverence for the ancestors. According to this cultural tradition, Ancestor worship in China used to be an indispensable component of marriage and family life because it fostered an orientation toward perpetuating the family line (2018, p-1, 2). In the study area, investigation shows that, Family organization and characteristic of ancestor worship are important because they practice the ritual participants to tap into the powers and resources of the identity.

According to Michael J. Zyphur (2009), Point out The study of rites, rituals and ceremonies in order to apply these constructs to the study of organizations, rituals as a form of symbolic expression that takes place in organizations. The structure and functions of rituals, exploring specific cases where symbolic actions have been exposed in the workplace and discussing their effects for the structuring of social systems and individual beliefs and values. In this research, in addition to the various explanation already given to ritual, in this thesis, will be tried to present the traditional religious beliefs and rituals practices reflect on their daily routine. Especially, the study focuses on religious rituals are integrated into social and economic function.

The writer, Gilat Levy and Ronny Razin, in his paper entitled, a theory of religion: linking Individual beliefs, rituals, and social cohesion in 2006. In this study three main themes: individual beliefs, social rituals, and social cohesion. The objective is to provide a theory which establishes this relation. The theory provides therefore a link between individual beliefs, social rituals, and social cohesion (Gilat Levy and Ronny Razin, (2006), p-1.4).

The writer, Mohamed Salsh, (1991) in his thesis entitled: Islam, traditional belief and ritual practices among the Zaghawa of Sudan, in 1991. In this study traditional religious beliefs and rituals practices, related to the life cycle and agricultural activities. The main purpose of the themes: How the general Islamic rituals have been influenced by the particular setting of the environment.

Sidney M. Greenfield's (2014) chapter provides illness and healing in Brazil's forms of treatment. The writer composes on not only an overview of Spiritual in Brazil but also an ethnographic account of two rituals healing. Greenfield is interested in the efficacy of ritual and in somatization. He takes this further to posit indirect ritual effects, through belief, on biological systems causing illness (Greenfield, 2005).

In research area, they hold a ritual to propitiate the guardian spirit of the farm as the main livelihood is farming. They live in the flat plain where they do cultivation and so they believe that they need to worship the guardian spirit of the farm. The influence of holding "ritual" are to reunite with the relatives living elsewhere, to organize a family reunion, to enhance the unity among them and to work for solidarity of the Kayin community.

Evelyn J. Grey 2015, point out, some of the traditional beliefs and practices of Aetas have been influenced by many factors. They have also retained some of their traditional beliefs and practices on pregnancy, childbirth, marriage, death and burial despite the effects of the factors mentioned to determine the cultural beliefs and practices of the ethnic Filipinos. Pregnancy their most beliefs and practices are observed by the Aetas in the rural communities, their old beliefs and practices had been influenced by modernization.

According to Rinchen Pelzang (2010), he mention believes in its capacity to aid in the recovery from disease. He found that most people pray or perform rituals during their illness and hospitalization in order to cope with serious adversity. As it is often believed that the illnesses are caused by the demons, evil spirits, black magic, or bad action that upset spirit or deity, practices began to take on ritualistic qualities in order to appease a local deity or cast away the demon or black magic.

Most Poe Kayin living in study area traditional belief and practices play more significance than religious beliefs and practices. The villagers have a great expectation on tradition spirit through fortune teller than the religious leaders. And it is believed that spirits make the good and bad interest of the people and, create, destroy and care the living and non-living things.

According to cite by Mahoney et al. (1999) worked on defining and assessing spiritual constructs that were closely connected to couples' experiences and perceptions of their marriage, stronger associations with marital adjustment emerged.

Results demonstrated that that these factors were related to greater marital adjustment, less marital conflict, more verbal collaboration, and less use of verbal aggression and stalemate in discussing disagreements. Thus, as these researchers assessed agreement and consensus in the spiritual practices and beliefs of couples, the link to positive marital functioning became clearer (Peter J. Larson & David H. Olson, p-2). In this research examined the relation between marital satisfaction and religious ritual practices. Couples were interviewed about how important religion was to their family life. Marital satisfaction was related to religious role.

According to Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government (2014), Religious freedom is one of the fundamental rights enjoyed by Hong Kong residents. It is protected by the Basic Law and other relevant legislation. There is a large variety of religious groups in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR), including Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Sikhism and Judaism important religious festivals, including Good Friday, Easter, Buddha's Birthday and Christmas, have been listed as public holidays. Adherents hold special celebration or memorial ceremonies on these occasions. Therefore, thesis focuses on they have many different kinds of religious group in study area. Most of them are Buddhism. Some of them believe in Christianity, Islam, and Traditional Spirits that have been worshipped by their ancestors. They were participated their rituals base on religious beliefs.

2.3 Relation between Rituals, Religious Beliefs and Practices on Symbols

Symbols, in the very simplest construction, are things objects, images, sounds, actions, gestures, utterances, and almost any other shaman that "mean" something, that "have a meaning." The "meaning" is that which the symbol "stands for," the phenomenon of which it is a representation or a place-holder. Moreover, the relationship between the symbol and its meaning is arguably arbitrary and conventional that is, there is no necessary connection between the particular meaning and the particular symbol.

This symbolic character, in addition to affecting individuals, also plays an important role in maintaining and reinforcing social structures and incorporating individuals into a larger social entity (Trice, Belasco and Alutto, 1969). Recognizing this symbolic element in the maintenance of social life gives the scholar a theoretical

tool to classify and study behavior which at first glance might seem irrational or counterproductive (Trice and Beyer, 1984), but reveals itself, upon further analysis, to be based on the symbolic life of a group.

Victor Turner 1969 develops the symbolic approach even more explicitly in the direction of “performance,” eventually (e.g., 1974) offering a theatrical model in which religion, especially ritual, is a drama unfolding over time, through various acts and stages. Elsewhere and earlier, he regards ritual as a “process” Jack David Eller, 2007, p-24.

According to the P.Steven (2013), Traditional Chinese family dynamics to draw attention to desire as a product of family life and to how crucial elements of family organization and instituted fantasies. He points out the Chinese family, family dynamics, gender ideologies, Symbolic culture and ritual forms.

According to Amots dafni said that, Wedding preparations under sacred trees, there are sacred trees which are called "Sajarat el Orsan (the groom's tree) or "Sagarat el Arus (The bride's tree). These names reflect the old custom of performing weddings under these trees. When people were asked why the ceremony was held under the tree some (Arabs) they said that it was to get a blessing, while others mentioned that the large solitary tree was a good place for gathering under as it offers much shade in the summer and is a good place for horse racing. This custom was more common among the Bedouin in rural areas but quite rare among the Druze whose religious leaders are strictly against this custom. In study area, they have to go and pay respect to the guardian spirits of Banyan trees to get their protection from many dangers and structure safety life or married life.

Heather MacLachlan said that, He describes an annual traditional wrist tying ceremony, and the issues it evokes; Kayin identity has been afoot for more than a century. Buddhist and Christian Kayin from Burma, now living in Fort Wayne, Indiana, USA, are forging –and contesting a universal Kayin identity through the celebration of the “traditional” wrist tying ceremony it provides a non-religious explanation for the symbolism of the wrist tying ceremony. The story is therefore important to many Kayin in Fort Wayne, especially the Christians, who need to reconcile their adherence to their faith with their commitment to a pan-Kayin identity.

According to the facts above, the values of these ethnic groups, their beliefs, and their acting customs can be seen in wrist tying ceremony. Additionally, function, symbolic culture, social identity of this festival can be observed.

In Myanmar, there are twelve calendar rites that occur periodically and predictably, accompanying agricultural work and religious beliefs. Seasonal and religious ritual is traditions of every nation and their people. These rituals are related to respective religion, society and economic condition. Over a hundred ethnic groups live in Myanmar and every ethnic group has traditionally long existing seasonal and religious festivals throughout the year. The tradition has been maintained until present days.

In Zin Mar Latt's study (2013), the Mon nationals, Buddhists since centuries ago, continued their religious belief on migration to Hinthargone. They are devout generous Buddhists who are eager for merit-making. And this trait is found to be recognized by other nationals. Moreover, most of the Mons and non-Mons in Hinthargone are Buddhists and the Buddhists constitute a majority in there. Mon migrants to Hinthargone, embracing Buddhism of their forefathers, have come to live among more Buddhists with the result that almost all the Mons now dwelling in Hinthargone remains Buddhists, maintaining Mon culture and customs. Moreover, among the Mon Nationals of Hinthargone the eldest son receives, on his father's death, the spirit-property and continues the practice of spirit propitiation. Other sons may share the practice on their own volition but daughters cannot inherit the family's spirit propitiation. By making offerings to the spirit, they believe they gain success in their economic and social affairs and are protected from the evil effects of bad deeds and harm.

In Thet Mar Aye (2015), point out the role and function of rituals and ceremonies of Zaiwa (Azi) Nationals, Waingmaw township in Kachin State. She points out, the role and function of ritual and ceremonies especially in their socio-economic life. The most Zaiwa changed their religion from spirit worship to Christian; they still practice some of their tradition, custom and belief as their culture.

Po Po Lwin (2012), wrote about Jainpaw, one of the ethnic groups of Kachin, from religious point of view. In this study the main themes: traditional religious festivals. According to her, Jainpaw people have festivals celebrated traditionally

such as Manaw-pwe, Kauk-thit-sar-pwe (Harvest festivals), New Year festivals, and Christmas celebrations. Among them, Manaw-pwe is the most well-known and magnificent festival. Jainpaw people spend months to celebrate Manaw-pwe. In celebrating Manaw pwe, they play the some music and musical instruments such as O-zi (pot drum) and others perform the same dance but the reasons for celebrating it are different. They believe that there are deities or spirit and spirits who can influence the fate of people. With this belief, they make offerings to Madaing spirit expecting protection from dangers, good harvest, happy social life and good economic status in return.

Mon Nationals believe in Buddhism devotedly. Then, they worship their traditional spirits (Bamboo spirit, Coconut spirit, Cloth spirit) house guardian spirit, town guardian spirit, village guardian spirit, farm spirit, mountain spirit and forest spirit, etc. There is ancestor worship of patrilineal side. The spirit legacy is handed down only the eldest son but no daughters are entitled. When the house is being built, the owner of the house worships traditional spirits together with house guardian spirit. Mon Nationals offer farm spirit, forest spirit and mountain spirit so that the crops could fructify. They not only worship their traditional spirits but hold religious festivals seasonally (Thida Aung, 2014).

Another important point to consider in this comparison is the relationship between the spirits is vital for Nationals such as Kachin, Kayah and Chin. In the world where all the living things live, it is believed that there are spirits. And it is believed that spirits make the good and bad interest of the people and, create, destroy and care the living and non-living things. The shaman has to lead the offering ceremony for worshipping the spirits. The shaman is usually inherited. The shaman has to be clever in offering spirits, reading the portent and predicting the future. He also do giving the herbal roots, doing good deeds, offering traditional feast and worshipping the spirits for the patients suffering from disturbance of spirits in accordance with belief. Moreover, they invite and offer to the spirits before people celebrate seasonal plantation, building house, wedding and other social ceremonies.

Economic anthropology is a field which includes the study of production distribution and exchange in comparative perspective, the ethnographic description of specific economic system. Every human living across the globe has to do a variety of businesses to earn their living. Agriculturalists are people who in addition to

gathering, trapping, and hunting also cultivate crops and usually keep domestic animal and fowl (Grant, 1933).

In Myanmar, businesses become different on the basis of the regions hilly, plain, delta, and coastal regions. Agriculture is the one of the main sources of income of the people of Myanmar. Observations on Myanmar agricultural system show that there are still worship practices in it. Most farmers believe the existence of the guardian worship of the farm.

In a book "The Tradition and Customs of Chin", (Myanmar Socialist Lanzin Party, 1967), Chin people usually work for family consumption only. They live in the mountainous areas and there are no big rivers flowing across their region. They do not have many plain lands, and consequently farming is not so easy for them. They have hill-side cultivations, though, and they are traditional. Their cultivation system includes farming, hill-side cultivation, and gardening. Both men and women work together.

In a book "The Tradition and Customs of Kachin", (Myanmar Socialist Lanzin Party 1967), it is mentioned that Kachin people have farming, hill-side cultivation and terrace cultivation. They grow sugar-cane besides rice for marketing. Their farming system is almost the same as that in other regions. They follow many rules in cultivation. They usually work together on the farm: cleaning out the space together, burning down the stumps, cleaning the grass, guarding the farm, or harvesting.

Zin Mar Latt (2013), wrote that East Poe Kayin people in Mukkadi Village have cultivation for family consumptions. They are busy with farming throughout the year. When they have extra products such as farming or fishing product, they sell them out in the market. Some of them have animal husbandries. They are honest and live contentedly with what they have, and consequently not much development is seen among these people. Before they go farming and after the harvest, they make offerings to Boe Boe Gyi Spirit, and other functions harvest celebration. Besides, they also have tree-spirit they make offerings to. They believe that offerings to spirit will bring good fortune to them. This book gives information about religion and festivals related to economy.

In present studies, Poe Kayin make on agriculture activities, one of the means of income of those peoples. The tradition they believe in, the methods they use, and

the rules they follow, and also the custom of working together were discussed. Besides, the work-sharing of men and women will also be studied. Studies on economic status can also reflect on social status.

2.4 Socio Religious Dimension of Death and Funerals

Death has been described as “an event which requires an explanation and every human society has recognized the importance of orientating its members to the phenomenon of death, the process of dying and death’s aftermath. Funeral rites have a significant role in this process of assisting individuals to deal with the reality of their demise (Samuel Ayinbora, 2006). Living in a society represented by many cultures and religious beliefs means that memorable events can be celebrated differently. This document looks at the different religious beliefs surrounding death and dying and what funeral or burial rituals may be undertaken. That death is certain and will come when it will is an undisputable fact in every culture and at every age in human existence.

According to Samuel Ayinbora 2006, Frafra death and funerals have two-dimensional implications. These can be summed up as social and religious. On the social plane, death and funerals are occasions that bring the family and the entire village community together to express their solidarity in grief. From the religious perspective, they arouse in the bereaved family a desire to commune with the dead, and this calls for sacrifices to be offered to the ancestors.

Tylor and Spencer saw funeral ceremonies, cults of the dead, and beliefs in an afterlife as the kernel of their studies in comparative religion. Tylor held that beliefs in another life were associated with a body/soul dichotomy, which was universal. - Journal of the Society for Psychological Anthropology. The dead ancestor, now passed into a deity, simply goes on protecting his own family and receiving suit and service from them as of old; the dead chief still watches over his own tribe, still holds his authority by helping friends and harming enemies, still rewards the right and sharply punishes the wrong (Norman Townsend, 1969, p-5).

Franciszek Satalecki (2014), he explores the subject on how burial was used by Viking Age population of South-western Scania to express their social identity burials he utilize regional, mourner-cent red and practice-based approach. The subject of deposition of cremated human remains in inhumation burials. The practice is

viewed as intentional and its possible explanation— as related to the importance of certain areas of the burial grounds, or as the way of displaying social connection, is proposed. He describes the evidence for post-funeral interaction with burial context.

Satalecki (2003), described the practice of interring bodies by region on the Nationalities living in Southern Scania. He made a discussion on the relationship between the ways of burial and the funeral ceremonies.

According to Fustel, the formation of Greek and Roman societies was based on a belief common to all Aryan races, namely that after death the soul continues to live, associated with the body in the tomb. Since the soul was still human, there was a need for periodic offerings of food and drink. It was the duty of the living relatives of the deceased to take up this responsibility (2001, p-14).

Tong Chee-Kiong 2004 mentions that, Death rituals continue with the worship of the ancestors at the family ancestral altar. Their role as a member of a group of ancestors guarantees that the individual ancestor will continue to be worshiped. Ancestors depend on the descendants for food, shelter, and money; the family, in turn, requires the assistance of the ancestors to deal with the problems of daily life. The ability of ritual to reflect as well as to shape social life therefore makes it a useful tool to understand the complex nature of Chinese society as the dynamic values important to the Chinese are worked out in the ritual process (Tong Chee-Kiong 2004, p-4).

Salone ethnic people drink alcohol and dance around the dead if someone dies. The aim is for conveying the dead for the heaven and not to grieve. They prepared the corpse and cry and dance by beating the drums. They entertain the villagers with drinks, cigarette, and quid of betel. The aged take care of the corpse and make the reception for the guests and accept rice, drinks, and money that the guests carry. This is why, researcher try to find out the cause of death during their funeral celebration and focus on the custom of the former area, how their religious beliefs have influence on the activity of funeral function burial practices, and what does the funeral practices symbolize for the community? In this study area, people celebrate monthly festivals, seasonal festivals and various ceremonies such as social activities, economic activities religious activities and spirit worship throughout the whole year Tin Yee (1999).

Belief, as a term, has been defined in a variety of different ways in the literature and used interchangeably with a variety of other terms including attitudes,

values, judgments, opinions, ideology, perceptions, conceptions, conceptual systems, dispositions, implicit theories, explicit theories, internal mental processes, action strategies, rules of practice and perspectives. These rituals have connections with people's works, living status, and their daily lives one way or another. Especially, the ritual, religious belief and practice of Poe Kayin in Haling Gabar Village was studied and presented based on the references cited above.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the research methodology used for data collection correlated with the impact of ritual, religious beliefs and practices on the socio economic life of Poe Kayin, living in Hlaing Gabar village tract, Hpa-an Township.

3.1 Study Design

This study was viewed from cultural anthropological perspective and conducting using qualitative, ethnographic fieldwork approach.

3.2 Study Site

Hlaing Gabar village tract was chosen as the study area since most of the natives are Poe Kayin. It is nearly five miles far from Hpa-an township. Hlaing Gabar village tract is located to the west of the bottom of the Mt. Zwegabin. It includes (11) villages. Among them, the selected areas for this study are Hlaing Gabar, Kawt Theit, Kawt Dan villages. The reason is that all villagers are Poe Kayin and they have many different types of religious groups and various beliefs systems.

3.3 Study Population

In this study, the population was **290** people in *Hlaing Gabar* village, **279** people in *Kawt Theit* and **275** people in *Kawt Dan*. Thus, there was a total of 844 people dwell in study area. The interviewees were at the age from 25 to 70 years old person. (157) of the total population was involved in this study as informants. (71) Males and (86) females of informants involved in this study.

3.4 Study Period

Duration of this dissertation was from 2014-2015 to 2017-2018. For the first year (2014-2015), the researcher would like to do the introduction and methodology. The data were analyzed and written. And then regular seminar and credit seminar were presented.

For the second year (2015-2016), the researcher would like to do the literature review on the books written by some scholars and experts. The data were analyzed and written. And then regular seminar and credit seminar were presented.

For the third year (2016-2017), the researcher would like to study the data from library, thesis and internets, and then to do field research for about one months. After that, analyze the data and write the reports for the remaining months. The regular seminar and credit seminar were presented.

For the fourth year (2017-2018), the researcher would like to collect the data from literature, thesis, internets and available information for the first four months, to do field research for about one month and analyze the data, to interpret the data, to write the reports, to give the regular and credit seminars and finally to defense the thesis for the remaining months.

Table-1 Schedule of the Research

Year	Month	Facts
2014	June	Read literature to choice the title
	July	Went to pilot survey to study areas
	August	Collected primary documents
	September	Presented seminar for thesis title defend (13.10.2014)
	October	Read literature for thesis introduction
	November	Went to field areas and met with supervisor
	December	Collected books from libraries & internet
2015	January	Read literature to write chapter-1 introduction of thesis
	February	Wrote introduction for chapter-1
	March	Prepared for 1 st year regular seminar
	April	Presented regular seminar for 1 st year PhD (4.4.2015)
	May	Presented credit seminar for 1 st year PhD (28.5.2015)
	June	Constructed basic questions and went to field
	July	Corrected needs in credit seminar
	August	Went to field and interviewed individually and participated in Poe Kayin Wrist Tying ceremony Wah gaung
	September	Discussed with supervisor
	October	Cross check for deficiency data
	November	Repaired for 2 nd year PhD regular seminar
	December	Regular seminar for 2 nd year PhD (17.12.2015)

2016	January	Went to field and interviewed individually and participated in Poe Kayin New Year celebrations
	February	Wrote report and analyzed data
	March	Repaired for 2 nd year PhD credit seminar
	April	Went to field and carried out interviewed individually with villagers and observed in government schools and Monastery.
	May	Credit seminar for 2 nd year PhD (28.5.2016)
	June	Wrote report and analyzed data
	July	Wrote report and analyzed data
	August	Discussed with supervisor
	September	Cross check for deficiency data
	October	Taking advice for supervisor
	November	Wrote report and analyzed data
	December	Discussed with supervisor
2017	January	Repaired for 3 rd year PhD regular seminar
	February	Regular seminar for 3 rd year PhD (5.2.2017)
	March	Cross check for deficiency data
	April	Repaired for 3 rd year PhD credit seminar
	May	Credit seminar for 3 rd year PhD (28.5.2017)
	June	Discussed with supervisor
	July	Went to field and collected data and took Sabbath as participant observation
	August	Wrote report and analyzed data
	September	Discussed with supervisor
	October	Finalized for deficiency data
	November	Repaired for 3 rd year PhD regular seminar
	December	Regular seminar for 4 th year PhD (30.12.2017)
2018	January	Discussed with supervisor
	February	Prepared for 4 th year PhD credit seminar
	March	Presented credit seminar for 4 th year PhD (3.3.2018)
	April	Revised the whole thesis
	May	Took seminar for the thesis defend (30.5.2018)

3.5 Data Collection Methods

For this dissertation, the data were collected by using qualitative ethnographic fieldwork approach. Ethnographic fieldwork is a research strategy to describe, interpret and explain behavior; meaning and cultural products of persons involved in a limited field by direct data collection of researchers who are physically present. In collecting data, in-depth interview (IDI), key informant interview (KII), direct observation (DO), Individual interview and informal conversation were used.

Three villages in the area were specifically chosen and permission to do the study was asked for from administrators in three villages. When the permission was granted, the monks in those villages were approached in order to get help. With the help of the monks and administrators, suitable informants were looked by celebrating the rituals, the people reduced to feelings because of Socio-cultural factors; some are based on religion while others are those of customs and traditions, thus, a total of (157) informant was involved in various interviews to develop the thesis. Participant observations were done in such activities as Kauk-thit-sar pwe, Phi-bu-yaw (ဝိပူယောဝါ) ceremony, Bone collecting ceremony (သုဋ်လင်) (အစိုးကောက်ပွဲ), Kayin New Year ceremony (ကိင်းထင်းသင်) (နှစ်သစ်ကူးပွဲ), Exorcizing the evil spirit (နာန့်တိုက်ခို) (မကောင်းဆိုးဝါးနှင်ထုတ်ပွဲ), Leikpyar chi pwe (လာရှင်ခါးပွဲ) (လက်ချည်ပွဲ), “MeePonPwe” (မီးပုံပွဲ) (မီးပုံပွဲ), Hose warming ceremony (အိမ်သစ်တက်ပွဲ), Wedding ceremony (အောင်းတရာမောက်) (လက်ထက်မင်္ဂလာပွဲ), and Funeral ceremony were observed by direct observation, indirect observation, and participant observation methods. In this dissertation, interviews were conducted with (71) males and (86) females, who have been living throughout in that village. Each individual interview only lasted for twenty to thirty minutes. Moreover, document surveys were also done at village libraries and some other offices.

3.5.1 In-depth Interview (IDI)

In-depth Interviews (IDI) were conducted with some believers representative of each sensitive issue in ritual. Those who participate in religious activities are questioned how they activate in the rituals practices. Six informants were interviewed for Individual in depth Interview. These special occasions were discussed more thoroughly when there were more emotions involved not only the rituals but also all the social connections inside the kin. IDI informants were selected and interviewed to know about the core concept of religion especially, about the history of Poe Kayin

religion, Shin Du wai spirit, procedures for the propitiation of the spirits, taboo concerning the spirits, how their religious beliefs has influenced on the worship of the ritual function.

3.5.2 Key Informant Interview (KII)

Key informants Interview (KII) were conducted with nine males and three females, who know well and point out informants to get complete data. They are the heads of three villages, the persons who have much knowledge in ritual practices and religious beliefs, the respective monks, and shaman. A total of (18) person was conducted as key informants in three villages.

3.6 Research Tools

Research tools used for qualitative data collection, note book, recorder, camera, and mobile were used. While conducting interview, taking note, recording tape, taking photographs and recording with video were done in the same time. Notes and tapes were then checked again to get verifiable data.

3.7 Ethical Consideration

Every study trip was affected with the permission of department head. In addition, Data collection for the research was conducted through older and authorized persons of Hlaing Gabar village tracts, and then it was explained that the description was published after obtaining approval only. All the informants were explained clear information about aims, procedures and benefits of the study. The participants' rights and sensitivities were safeguarded and they would not be affected in any way. To collect data, taking a photograph, recording their talks, using video camera were performed according to their consent. When interviews (KII and IDI) were conducted, willing persons to participate in interviews were invited. Participants were respected for their culture and avoided sensitive issues.

3.8 Limitation of the Study

In this study area, focus group discussion (FGD) for local people is not applied because to survey the village; they have been to go to Thailand for their income. As income that comes from farming is not compatible with the value of their labor, they no longer do the farming. They rent their land to those who come and do farming

from far villages. Local people were interviewed by using in-depth interview (IDI), key informant interview (KII) and Individual interview.

CHAPTER IV

RELIGIONS IN HLAING GABAR VILLAGE TRACT

4.1 Historical Background of Poe Kayin religions

A study of the history of Buddhism shows that Poe Kayin lived together with Mon Nations in lower Myanmar and Mon Nations have handed down the Buddhism to Kayin. Consequently, there has been the literary evidence that Buddhism existed in Kayin state in around “10 Century AD” (*Man lin Myat Kyaw*). Among the Poe Kayin, a Buddhist monk *Phutamake* (ဖုတာမိန္ဒ) known as U Nanda Mala in Myanmar name first disseminated Buddhism and he was the first to enter the Buddhist order among Kayin Buddhists. According to the Kayin literature and older men recounted as follow:

“U Nanda Mala went to Innwa in ME.III (*AD 1738*) and learnt Buddhist scriptures. He was conferred titles and awards by Head of the Religious Order of Innwa. On his return from Innwa, a monastery was built in Gyaing Village where Hongthayaw Creek in KawKareik Township and Gyaing River meet. He resided at the monastery and taught Buddhist concepts to the Kayins in Hpa-an township and Kawkareik Township”.

Poe Kayin not only believe in Buddhism but also in other religions such as Christianity, A Phoeweko Association or Talarkhon or Talagu recluse Buddhist sect, Wei beliefs, Brahmacara sect, Lei Kel sect, Du wai worship, Phoetakhit sect and Animism in Poe Kayin belief.

4.1.1 Belief in Chritianity

Among the eleven villages in Hlaing Gabar, Musali village is a place where most Christians live and only a few live in other villages. Christians in Musali accept that “The Lord can make all human escape from all the mistake and he is one and only savior” and believe that only a son of the Lord will be the God forever. Poe Kayin who believe in Christianity take refuge only in the Lord without following the traditions like worshiping the Spirit (*Nat*) and Natsarchin.

4.1.2 Talagu Yathè Buddhist sect

Talagu is the word in Mon and means a man with perfect knowledge of Dhamma. In former days, Spirit (*Nat*) worshipping Kayin believed that if they paid homage to Buddhist monks, their Spirit (*Nat*) would cast a spell on them because they did not agree with it. Due to this belief, Spirit (*Nat*) worshipping Kayin did not bow to Buddhist monks and stayed away from Buddhism. There was a priest known as Phoe Thaukkyar, a disciple of great priest, Boetaw U Saw Nyunt, who was well-known in Kyaukchaung village at the edge of Hongthayaw creek in Kawkariiek Township. Phoe Thaukkyar lived in a cemetery to the west of Kyoneoloe village and converted nearby Spirit (*Nat*) worshipping Kayin to Buddhists. He established TakakuYathe Buddhist sect.

Talagu Yathe` Buddhsit sect members-Kayin had to set up a pile of stones known as Talagu Ayemoh, erected the Sulamuni Zedi, made planetary posts, establish three Zedi to be meant for the Three Gems viz., the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha, erected the Zedi that wipes off evils and fills one's wishes, known as Paritta ye' (ဝရိဝိဝေရ) etc. In piling up a heap of stones, Spirit (*Nat*) worshipping Kayin had to say that "I am no longer Spirit (*Nat*) worshipping Kayin" after converting himself or herself into Buddhist and became a priestly Kayin. After saying that, each and every person at home had to come and add a stone each to make a heap. Doing this was to announce that they were no longer Spirit (*Nat*) worshipping Kayin. After piling up stones, they had to pay homage to the Zedi, erected to be meant for Sulamuni Zedi in Tavatimsa.

4.1.3 Wei (Hui) Belief

In Myanmar language, Wei means taking refuge. Poe Kayin lives in Kamawtle village and kwanki village in Hlaingbwe Township. Pha-u-bale` founded this belief. They put flowers into the vase (Nyaungye`-O) and place it on a high shelf. Wei believers do not pay homage to the Zedi and Buddhist monks.

4.1.4 Brahmaiara sect

Brahmaiara sect is the belief in which Christianity; Buddhism and Kayin traditions are blended. Saw Johnson D.foenam established it. Bwe' Poe Kayin in Taunggu District mostly believes in it.

4.1.5 Lei Kel Sect

This sect is believed by some east Poe Kayin. Lei Kel` believers do not pay homage to the Buddha images and Datu Zedi. They worship the literature called Leik San Wei written in Kyet Yet Sar. Lei Kel literature treatises were fetched to Hnitchar Village on the western side of Salween River and entrusted to PhuHtiThaungHtawt and Phi Paing Tar Li there. They trust in Arimittaya Buddha.

4.1.6 Du Wai Worship

Du wai is a traditional custom for Poe Kayin. It plays an important role in the religion and belief of Poe Kayin, especially in making promise and loyalty of a couple's wedding. Poe Kayin believe that if they make a wedding without paying homage to Du wai, the wedding will not be accomplished completely or the couple will not be peaceful in their relationship. On the other hand, the society will not accept that this wedding is official. Therefore, Du wai belief is an essential spiritual custom and it is a way to hand down their tradition too.

4.1.7 Phoe Ta Khit Sect

The sect is believed by some Poe Kayin nation's believers living in Kyaik Kawi village. PhoTa Khit believers do pay homage to the Buddha images and A Phoe. The aim of such tradition is to remind the other people and nations not to forget their high traditions. The Phoe Ta Khit believers wear prayer beads around the neck keep precepts and participate in religious affairs under grandfather (*A Phoe*) Jying region. They are telling beads, doing contemplation of loving kindness, eating vegetable meals to wipe off evils. If they do not usually obey the rules laid down by A Phoe, he forced to get out of the monastery.

4.1.8 Animism in Poe- Kayin Belief

It is found that Poe Kayin worshipped Spirit (*Nat*) in the past. They have believed that different forms of the natural world such as rivers, creeks, forest, hills, mountains, trees, storm, thunder, lightning, as well as the planets such as the sun and the moon etc were the places and things where the powerful Spirit (*Nat*) of difficult types resided since the time of their parents and grandparents. They also believe that these Spirit (*Nat*) want to be propitiated by the people, so they used to offer them with food stuffs. In the past, they believed that there was the Guardian spirit (*Yotekasoe*) of the big trees which were located in the surrounding of the village. They usually keep

the surrounding of big trees especially that of banyan trees clean and clear. They usually build Spirit (*Nat*) shrines at the banyan trees where they offer the Spirit (*Nat*) with flowers, candles and votive water etc.

Poe Kayin believes that they can be healthy and happy enjoying peaceful lives if they make offerings to the Spirit (*Nat*) every year. They also believe that the Spirit (*Nat*) will get irritated and they will harm their lives if they fail to hold the annuals propitiation. If so they believe that their crops will be destroyed and their field, animals and their livestock will be stricken with diseases. Likewise, they believe that the Spirit (*Nat*) will certainly do harm to all the people living in the village. They believe that the Spirits (*Nat*) tend to show omens to warn the people of their failure to hold a propitiation ritual. When the village people become aware of the omens, they go either to the well experienced elders or to the spirit medium who can propitiate the Spirit (*Nat*) properly. Some people hold propitiation to the Spirit (*Nat*) at home only. In the past, village people used to propitiate by the offering them the blood and flesh of animals. They used to offer the Spirit (*Nat*) pigs or chickens depending on their financial status. Chickens are usually offered to the Spirit (*Nat*).

It is notable that spirit-worshipping plays a pivotal role in the religious beliefs of Kayin. It is also believed that Kayin who propitiate the traditional spirit-offering feast can have many benefits including the fact that the relatives will meet one another collectively at the feast and help solve the matters – big or small. One of the spirit-propitiating practices regarding Aung-Hae traditional spirit or the spirit-propitiating feast that Poe Kayin dwelling in Hlaing Gabar areas observed at a yearly basis is family homage-paying ceremony that has to be held without fail every year. When the specified day for the spirit-propitiating feast to take place comes, not only the married people who have lived and worked in other places but also the children come to their parents' houses and in a collective manner, hold a ceremony for paying homage to the deceased grandparents and parents that is handed down from the ancestors. In the evening when the spirit is believed to eat a feast, people gather at the house where the spirit-propitiating feast takes place and pay respect to the spirits.

One day before the spirit-propitiating feast takes place, mother takes a lead in inviting her parents and grandparents in advance. When the evening comes on the day of the spirit-propitiating feast, the family members have to put boiled rice and salt-less boiled pork as well as a cup of water on a bamboo tray prepared for the deceased

grandparents, and pay homage to the deceased, sitting in a circle. Under the leadership of the mother, the grandparents are invited to come and eat the rice and pork that have been prepared. While the deceased grandparents are supposed to be eating, the mother and the remaining family members pay respect to them the way they are treated with due respect when they were alive. After letting them have meals, they are also asked to drink water. While the parents were alive, the children visited the former's house and paid obeisance to them with rice, curry, refreshments, betel, flowers, candles and medical tea; in addition to the fact that the children came to take care of them from time to time. Concerning the spirit-propitiating feast, one of the elderly women recounted as follows:

“When we were about to hold a spirit-propitiating feast in my childhood, *Amoe* had a good large house. The present one is not a house; only spirit-house is a real house. We had to sleep together in that house – *Par*, *Amoe*, *Phi* and all the brothers and sisters. We all collectively held the ceremony. We had vegetarian food including *Mi tunn* (မိတုန်) in Kayin term glutinous rice. When we were much younger, we had meat and fish at the feast. Later, as *Phi* requested that traditions would be maintained by children and grandchildren, we had to eat glutinous rice in our turn. In my childhood, I enjoyed the feast as a child. We had to stay together in a small traditional house, pay respect to the grandparents who, in return, gave us pocket money, making all the grandparents happy and paying obeisance to the traditional spirits while eating together happily. When our times came, our children held the spirit-propitiating feast in the mountains and so there were only two left – me and my niece. Now that my husband has passed away, my children have come of age to be able to make a living by their own work. They usually transfer their wages to me from the mountain areas where they work. At present, I just do meritorious deeds while babysitting a kid born to my son and his wife. When the time of traditional worshipping comes, I propitiate the spirits. Most of my time is spent on doing household chores.” the word was recounted by an elderly woman concerning the traditional hoisting of offerings to the Zedi” (9.5.2017, Daw Nan Si Saw Phaung).

Based on these facts, it is observed that although all the family members are supposed to hoist the offerings to the Zedi according to Aung-hae traditional believers' cultural conventions, the changing situations of the modern age cannot give opportunities for the people who have to live and work for their financial matter to participate in the traditional offering-hoisting ceremony collectively.

This research was carried out in three villages from Hlaing Gabar and it was focused on Du wai Spirit (*Nat*) belief and Lei Kel Sect. It was included with ritual and religious beliefs and practices accustomed in the religious affairs and traditional affairs.

4.2 Taboo of Poe Kayin Practices

The Poe Kayin of Hlaing Gabar village has a practice of looking for supernatural guidance in their decision making. This practice which has been handed down by their ancestors is followed when they need to choose a new field area for building a new house or clearing for fielding. Firstly, the medium-sized mat of field area must be cleared for a spirit at the site of their choice. If the soil is soft, it must be compressed to become hard. Once the soil has become compacted, the ground must be prepared as if rice grains will be dried on it after harvesting. Then a bamboo stalk must be split into pieces and a small bamboo stick must be chosen. The bamboo splinters must be cut away. Two poles of the small bamboo stick must be equal in size. The length of the stick must be a hand width from the outspread thumb to the little finger. One of the poles must be sharpened in the shape of a quadrilateral or hexagon. Then the bamboo stick must be erected in the middle of the prepared field. Afterwards, in the evening, seven rice grains must be chosen from the finest grains. The chosen grains are to be tied around the bamboo stick. The end of the stick that the grains are tied to must be covered with the lid of a cooking pot. The reason for this is to prevent ants, termites and other insects from taking the grains away. After leaving the stick overnight, in the morning, if the bamboo stick and the grains remain whole and intact, it is considered that they deserve the field. If the grains are damaged they believed the field is not good for building the house and they choose another area to build on at a distance of a house away from the first area. This was how their ancestors would decide whether a particular field was suitable for them to build on and this practice is still carried out in some Kayin villages.

The Poe Kayin of the Hlaing Gabar village, when they buy a field, never buys the field between the two houses of siblings and relatives. They believe that if a person does so not only their wealth will decrease but also their health will be badly affected. Therefore the elders always remind younger generations to avoid buying the field between family members. They believe that such an action is not only harmful for the buyer but also for the seller. It will be like barbecuing a fish; the bamboo burnt as well as the fish. Therefore no one buy such field. Therefore only siblings buy fields between themselves. According to interview, an old grandpa recounted his personal experience.

“When I was young there were two brothers who lived in the southern part of the village. A man from another village came to buy the field between them. Everyone in the village warned them not to sell the field to the man but they sold it saying they don’t believe in the custom. Three years later lives became harder for the two brothers. They became weak with bad health. Their children became rude and bad. These were all consequences of selling the field between them to an outsider. The buyer also was affected by bad luck. After that, these three houses were all owned by three different owners from different families. These three persons who bought the field from them had to pay homage to the god “Shin Du wai” according to our tradition. They invited the monks and hold a ceremony to cleanse the house. They are the people who deserve the field. Therefore no bad things happened to them ever since” (Mg Kyaw, 4.5.2017.)

Du wai offering plays a key role in the marriage of the Poe Kayin. Only after the married couples have worshipped Shin Du wai Zedi, with a Kadaw pwe consisting of various offertories to inform the marriage, they will be formally recognized as the properly married man and wife by their community. The married couple who have not made Shin Du wai offering yet never pay visit either to their relatives living far and near or to their friends and acquaintances. If they have emergencies that they cannot avoid or if they need to take a night trip, they tend to pay a fee known as “a shaung” (အရှောင်) to the host because unless they do so, the host is likely to get into trouble. In the past, the married couple used to pay twenty five pyas (ငွေတစ်ပေတစ်) and a betel quid. They were also apologized the host for their mistake. At present time, however, the custom of paying “a shaung” (အရှောင်) to the host almost dies out because the parents of

bride and groom tend to propitiate Shin Du wai, at Shin Du wai Zedi, if the couple cannot manage to celebrate a formal wedding ceremony for various reasons.

Concerning the above-mentioned facts, Poe Kayin living in Hlaing Gabar village tract maintains their religious beliefs and traditions by holding such ritual, festival and they hand down those factors to new generations. Kayin living in study area has maintained their traditional festivals by performing of the youths. By doing so, they should perform further so as to preserve religious and cultural tradition

CHAPTER V

DU WAI WORSHIP AND POE KAYIN

5.1 Historical Background of Shin Du Wai Spirits

Although they are Buddhists, they still follow the custom of worshipping Shin Du wai, the traditional spirit. In fact, worshipping Shin Du wai is based on their most serious religious belief and it reflects their appreciation for customs and traditions. According to their belief, Shin Du wai is regarded either as a Venerable monk or as a traditional spirit Spirit (*Nat*). Some people even think that “Du wai” is a type of Monk. It is also thought that “Du wai” Spirit (*Nat*) is the one with serious appreciation for truthfulness. Shin Du wai worship is not only a religious practice of Buddhists Poe Kay living in Hlaing Gabar village tract but also that of all Buddhist Poe Kayin living elsewhere in the Kayin State. It is found that Poe Kayin adopts this practice just as their ancestors did in the past. They worship Shin Du wai traditional Spirit (*Nat*) depending on their health, social and financial conditions. Shin Du wai traditional belief is still well accepted by Poe Kayin and it is seen as a part of their social life and their custom. According to the interview,

In the past, the eastern side of Zweekabin Mountain was lush, green and beautiful with a large number of trees growing densely. Since it is densely crowded with lush green trees, all kinds of wild animals had come for refuge. It is also a treasure house for hunters because the large forest has varieties of trees of different sizes and various kinds of wild animals. Therefore, the hunters had always propitiated the guardian spirits of the forest before they went hunting in the forest. Whenever a hunter was about to enter the forest he came to a huge banyan tree which was more or less a hundred years of age, and he took loyalty and prayed to the guardian spirit of the banyan tree he believing it was guarded by a powerful spirit. In taking an oath and praying, he said, “For today, I’ll shoot only at buck deer, not any other animals.” Then he shot only two buck deer as promised in his oath-taking. When other hunters saw that the hunter communicating with the guardian of the banyan tree, taking an oath and offering a sacrifice every day, they came to believe that that place would fulfill their prayers and thus, the practice of offering the blood and meat of animals as sacrifices has persisted for many years. Some people have traditionally taken an oath and prayed for their own interest.

Later, a missionary Buddhist monk named Shin Du wai visited that place and witnessed the local people's conception that all the disasters and harms of the local people from the surrounding villages would be relieved by making daily sacrificial offerings including the blood and meat of wild animals and alcoholic drinks. According to the people's beliefs, he also found that the guardian spirit of the banyan tree would cast a spell on them and put them in danger if they did not propitiate the spirit during the propitiating season. Since the monk heard the noises coming from the daily killings of wild animals, he decided to end up those wrong religious practices.

Then he gave a sermon to the Poe Kayin, believers, who adhered to the practices which were in stark contrast with the Buddha's teachings. He preached the bad consequences of offering sacrifices. Some people realized the Buddha's teachings and forsook their traditional profession of hunting for good. Others could not immediately drop and of the hunting business that they had traditionally conducted. Therefore, Shin Du wai competed with the guardian spirit of the banyan tree in terms of power and influence. Shin Du wai recited the Buddha's *suttas* (သုတ္တ) and disseminated *metta* (မေတ္တာ) for seven days and seven nights to banish the guardian spirit from the banyan tree to the field of spirits by his power. When he had banished the spirit, he had the banyan tree felled down from the roots, taking an oath and praying on the site regarded as an auspicious ground. He built a wish-fulfilling 5-cubit-high Zedi on that ground for the villagers to worship. The Zedi was named Thitsar Man daing Du wai Zedi.

Shin Du wai permitted the villagers to hold a ceremony twice a year, once in the beginning of monsoon and once at the start of the summer. He told them to take an oath and said prayers during the two collective vegetarian events. After the establishment of the ceremonial practices in that area, because the people who wanted to have the propitiation practices abandoned took an oath and said prayers for their wishes depending on their intellect, Shin Du wai tradition has gradually spread all over Kayin State and the place has remained the auspicious center for taking an oath and saying prayers. Since more and more people visit the Zedi on pilgrimage and have come to think that the Zedi is guarded by a wish-fulfilling spirit, the religious leaders built a much bigger Zedi resembling Botahtaung Zedi by enshrining the 5-cubit Zedi originally constructed by Shin Du wai and by incorporating the Zedi and the tradition. Formerly, there was only one person to conduct the oath-taking and

praying services at the Zedi. After its renovation, however, each of the eight corners of the Zedi has a person to conduct such services for the believers who come to pray for their mental satisfaction. As the place is regarded as a vow-fulfilling place, many bride and groom (due to married in the near future) visit Shin Du wai Zedi pay respect to the parents' customs, traditions and traditional belief.



Photo (1) Shin Du wai Zedi

5.2 Du Wai, Beliefs of Poe Kayin's

Tradition is a custom that has been practiced and handed down to one generation after another. The custom consists of religious belief, life-style, dresses, social relation, festival and funeral affairs and their related practices. For Buddhists Poe Kayin, worshipping Shin Du wai is the most splendid and crowded traditional festival. Shin Du wai is considered to be a traditional Spirit (*Nat*) or some think it as a Venerable monk that fulfills their wishes. Anyway, Shin Du wai is their traditional worship for Poe Kayin in Haling Gabar village tract as well as all Poe Kayin Buddhist in Kayin State.

Hlaing Gabar village includes eleven groups of villages and most of them are occupied with Poe Kayin Nationals. Most of the people living in these eleven villages believe in Buddhism while some people from Kawt Thite village are Islamists. Other traditional religious beliefs also can be found around Dong Yin. Their respective rituals are celebrated in their respective villages. There are two types of ritual;

religious ritual and traditional ritual. People of any age or gender are free to participate in the ritual. The ritual is lively events with the participation of the host villagers and guests from neighboring villages. Buddhist Zedi ritual like Historical Zwegabin Zedi of Buddha's hair relic and Shin Du wai Zedi ritual are also joyously celebrated with much liveliness. Maha Pahtan is usually recited on the days before the ritual to keep everything safe. In the days of festival, funfairs, boxing matches, and Zat pwes (ဆတ်ပွဲ) (traditional forms of plays and dancing) can be enjoyed. The worship of Shin Du wai can be found in their auspicious and inauspicious affairs. Auspicious occasions include house warming, novitiation ceremony (Shin Pyu), ear boring ceremony, recitation ceremony and marriage etc. In auspicious are related to funeral rites.

There are three different types of Pwe, (ပွဲအစုံတောင့်) in Kayin term Kadaw Pwe (ဆိုင်တိုင်) (ကန်တောင့်), KunPwe (တိုင်ပိုင်ပွဲလှူတော်) and Pankan Pwe (ဆိုင်တိုင်)



Photo (2) Kadaw Pwe (ဆိုင်တိုင်)

'Kadaw Pwe' (ဆိုင်တိုင်) needs many more gifts (offertories) than a 'Pankan Pwe'. A typical 'Kadaw Pwe' consists of a coconut, Eugenia, three combs of bananas, betel leaves and betel nuts, a piece of cutch nut, candles, flower springs of auspicious Eugenia, joss sticks and a lighter etc. Such a Kadaw Pwe is usually offered at Shin Du wai Zedi. Some people usually worship with the Kadaw Pwe in the presence of skilled person who is good at making an offering to the Spirit (*Nat*). This is because

they fear they might do wrong in performing this ritual, or they may do so for various reasons such as health, social and economic ones.



Photo (3) PanKan Pwe (အိုက်ဂိမ်)

“Pakan Pwe,” (အိုက်ဂိမ်) mean offering Shin Du wai Spirit (*Nat*) with a variety of gifts including food and candles placed on an earthen or glazed earthen plate that has long been used from generation to generation. Three betel leaves, three betel nuts, three pieces of catch nuts (bitter), three candles, three flowers and the cooked rice mixed with glutinous rice are put on an earthen plate of a glazed earthen plate to be offered to Shin Du wai



Photo (4) Kun Pwe (တင်ပိုင်လှလေးအံ့)

Kun Pwe means offering with the Spirit (*Nat*) a betel quid consisting of a betel leaf spread with a little lime and small piece of bitter catch which is placed on the betel leaf. Some peoples use after this betel which prepared in the same way, to the Spirit (*Nat*). The purpose of offering is to ask for the Spirit (*Nat*)'s protection in their everyday activities such as on their journey for their work of any trade. They can offer Shin Du wai whatever type of Kadaw Pwe that they can afford.

Generally, Pankan Pwe is the most common type of worship they perform at their homes. Nowadays, the number of Poe Kayin youths in Hlaing Gabar village tract is becoming smaller and smaller because the cost overtakes the benefit. As they cannot earn enough income from fielding, they no longer work at field. They leave their paddy field and change to migrant worker. Most young people may work at factories in Thailand or at the orchards or at other work places where they can get good income. Local people usually call Thailand (*Taung Paw.*) Youths usually worship Shin Du wai Spirit (*Nat*) before they leave for Thailand, (*Taung Paw*). So that they can travel safely and that they can get a good job there. Some go to the original Zedi of Du wai, located near Taw Pont village to make a special offering. They offer a Kadaw Pwe with various offertories to Shin Du wai from whom they ask for his blessing to find a good job in Thailand. The offering is properly made by a spirit medium at the Zedi. In worshipping traditional Shin Du wai Spirit (*Nat*) it is important to offer a vegetarian diet only. This practice may be a modified type of sacrificial offering where ancient Poe Kayin used to perform. In the past they used to offer the Spirit (*Nat*) the blood, flesh of meat and liquor etc. The elder people believed that such a sacrificial offering might ward off all threats and dangers. They also believe that they might get into a great trouble if they failed to perform such ritual as the Spirit (*Nat*) got furious at their impudent behavior.

Their belief was too strong for Shin Du wai to persuade them into adopting other moderate practice free of cruelty on animals. He tried to tame the local people with utmost efforts cruelty on animals and he substituted the offering of vegetarian food to replace the blood and flesh of animals and liquor from the Kadaw pwe. Although the local people still perform ritual of offering the Spirit (*Nat*) they are only allowed to offer coconut, bananas, sugar care, and steamed glutinous rice. They are no longer of allowed to offer the blood and flesh of animals and liquor to Shin Du wai traditional Spirit (*Nat*) Since, the local people have made an offering to traditional

Spirit (*Nat*) with no blood and flesh of animals but with vegetarian food only. Poe Kayin usually makes such offerings to Shin Du wai at their homes twice a year to follow the tradition. They can make Shin Du wai offering from the first waxing day of any Myanmar calendar month to the full moon day of respective months. There is no fixed day to make an offering but they can choose convenient day on which the offering is to be made. They make Shin Du wai offering at dawn. The wife of the married couple has to cook the rice and prepare the offering. They must follow some *do's and don'ts* in making such offering. The things to be offered must be complete and to the man and wife (married couple) must be present at the place of performing this ritual. Noises such as crying of babies and quarrelling of the couple as well as other kinds of noises are prohibited. If something goes wrong during the propitiation, the couples have to prepare for a new offering the next day as they happen to make the traditional Spirit (*Nat*) annoyed by their careless behavior. For Poe Kayin, the right of preserving their tradition Spirit (*Nat*) has been given to daughters (women). They believe the daughters only are the inheritance of spirit legacy.

The traditional practices have been handed down to one women-generation after another. Thus, women have the leading role to play in traditionally celebrated propitiation ceremonies. If there is no woman (mother, daughter, or granddaughters) to participate, the ceremony of propitiation cannot take place. If they are far from the village or visiting other regions, all have to wait for them.

The women who worship Shin Du wai traditionally must never fail to come back when the worship ceremony is due. According to the mention of a 72 year old grandma;

“I’m waiting for my granddaughter to offer the Due wai traditional Kadaw pwe. My granddaughter has gone to work on hill. She didn’t come back home last year. So we asked A Phoe to give us an excuse to postpone the ceremony. This year we are ready to offer. If we are about to offer A Phoe, we will respectfully invite three Buddhist monks to (recite paritta – preventive discourses) purify the house. If my daughter does not participate, the traditional propitiation cannot be done”(Nan phu may, 9.5.206).

They never forget to pay obeisance to Shin Du wai at any time. They always respect their traditional dos and don'ts that have been handed down through ancestors.

5.3 Preparing for Offering Du Wai

Poe Kayin living in Hlaing Gabar village tract has the freedom of belief. In propitiating their traditional spirits, they have three modes of doing it: individual offering, family offering and community offering.

5.3.1 Individual Offering

For Poe Kayin living in Hlaing Gabar village tract in worshipping Shin Du wai tradition, they sometimes do it individually. They do it depending on their socio-economic affairs such as marriage, education and personal business. In other words, it is also depended on their aim and prosperity. For example, if they want to go to abroad, they will offer Shin Du wai individually.

Some Poe Kayin young people choose to go to Thailand for their income. As income that comes from fielding is not compatible with the value of their labor, they no longer do the fielding. They rent their field to those who come and do fielding from far villages. Instead, they work for factories on hill (actually, working in Thailand is called working on hill), in gardens, and other appropriate places. To be able to work smoothly on hill and to be free from dangers, they get used to propitiate Shin Du wai and say prayers before going on a journey. Some even go to the Original Zedi of Shin Du wai, offering a '*Kadaw Pwe*' without any fail and ask Shin Du wai hoe to fulfill their wishes. They believe that Shin Du wai takes care of them. Individual propitiation does take place at wedding ceremonies. Shin Du wai plays the vital part in wedding ceremony among Poe Kayin Buddhists.



Photo (5) Individual offering for Shin Du wai

5.3.2 Family offering

Poe Kayin in Hlaing Gabar village also propitiates Shin Du wai wishing their business to be successful. Their business consist of agriculture, fielding on the hill, live-stock breeding, Rubber plantation, Brick baking, concrete bricks making, and trading. But they especially do fielding. Poe Kayin in that village goes out to their fields only after paying obeisance to Shin Du wai. Shin Du wai is propitiated two times a year. According to the mention of 65 year an old man:

“Early at around 6 o’clock in the morning, the head of the family and wife prepare foodstuff to pay respect to Shin Du wai and pay respect to him. What we put the emphasis on is to keep maternal tradition. Thus women must be included. If there are no sons in their family, it is no problem. When they propitiate Shin Du wai, they need vegetarian foodstuffs put in earthen plates and earthen pots. They have been used since the times of our ancestors. So we preserve it. We have to preserve the tradition handed down by our ancestors until now” (saw mg thaw 26.5.2016).

In preparing vegetarian foodstuffs, the glutinous rice and paddy are cooked together. And then we put three spoonful of mixed rice into the earthen plate. Then we pay respect to Shin Du wai with three cut-pieces of coconut, tobacco, three quid of betel, three pieces of betel nut, three hand-made bee-wax candles, three springs of

Eugenia and three flowers. Then we have to go to our fields. Before going out, we make wish to have good-harvest, good weather, and to be free from poisonous creatures. In the month of December (*Nattaw*), at the harvest times, we pay homage to Shin Du wai again. In Kayin custom, **we have pay respect to Shin Du wai to first. And them**, they also go to other ancestral spirit. But it is correlated to their parent's tradition if their parents worshipped three other spirit, they has to go to these three other spirits. If not, they may face bad fortunes.



Photo (6) Family offering for Shin Du wai

5.3.3 Community Offering

Hlaing Gabar village tract which is located in Hpa-an Township is made up of 11 villages. The names of the eleven villagers are Hlaing Gabar, Kawthaik, Kawtdan, Kawhmu, Kawnanthar, Tawantar, Kyaikkawi, Kawdo, Mimaung, Konkalay and Musli. Poe Kayin people hold the ceremonies collectively according to their tradition. Social occasions are also held collectively. One of the traditions that cannot be left out is traditional Shin Du wai ceremony. It is found that, till the present time, the ceremony continues to play an important role in the social lives of Poe Kayin Nationalsities who believe in Shin Du wai tradition. The ceremonies in which Poe Kayin people dwelling in Hlaing Gabar Station usually participate collectively by the whole village to pay respect to the late Shin Du wai include Htamaung-treating ceremony, bonfire ceremony, planet-guardian propitiating ceremony, devil-driving ceremony and bone-collecting ceremony. Collective respect-paying ceremony for the late .Shin Du wai is

celebrated twice a year. During Shin Du wai respect-paying ceremony, many people from different regions who believe in Shin Du wai visit the Zedi of which the late.

Shin Du wai is believed to be the venerable guardian, and say prayers for all the household members by repeating after the spirit medium's words. The spirit medium who recites the prayers also prays for the visitors according to the specific days when they were born. In order that the superimpositions of the planets on the visitors' luck will be warded off, they hold Hta maung-treating ceremony for the guardian-spirits of the respective planets at dawn. Hta maung means to get rid of omens and to escape from the ill- faiths. Since devil-driving ceremony is regarded as an inauspicious one, it is held not on the waxing days but usually on some waning day. According to the local Poe Kayin beliefs, the ceremony is held on some waning days of the month of May (*Kason*) because they have selected the incomplete retreating period to suit the inauspicious ceremony. It is commonly believed that if that ceremony is held during the waxing or full-moon days, the devil may become stronger and harm many human beings.



Photo (7) Community offering for Shin Du wai

5.4 Propitiation of the Guardian's Spirit of the Paddy Field

Poe- Kayin hold a ritual to propitiate the guardian spirit of the field as the main livelihood is fielding. They live in the flat plain where they do cultivation and so they believe that they need to worship the guardian spirit of the field. Traditionally they follow this tradition. Moreover they also believe that fielding equipment have the

guardian spirits. So some fielders also propitiate the guardian spirits of the fielding equipment such as grub hoes, hoes, mattock, sickles, rake, bradawls and choppers etc...When they were make an offering to the guardian spirit of the paddy field. Some fielders traditional propitiate the guardian Spirit (*Nat*) of the field twice a year. The guardian Spirit (*Nat*) of the Paddy field is a type of Spirit (*Nat*), who protects the paddy field and field of crops. This ritual is performed on the eve of the monsoon or at the time of preparation to cultivate the field, or at the beginning of cultivation season which usually falls on the waxing days of the Myanmar calendar month July (*Waso*) or, during the harvest, which take place in the late November (*Ta zaung mone*). Poe- Kayin fielders make an offering to the guardian Spirit (*Nat*) of the paddy field on any one of the occasions mentioned earlier.

The purpose of performing this ritual is to ask the Spirit (*Nat*) aid to give them good yield of crops, his protect of the fielder and his cattle from danger and poisonous animals (snake) from the paddy field. Some Buddhist fielders have abandoned the ritual of propitiation to the guardian Spirit (*Nat*) of the paddy field. They work hard relying on their own physical strength. Those who perform this rituals use different ways to propitiate different guardian Spirits (*Nat*) of the paddy field. Poe- Kayin fielders make sacrificial offering of a pair of the cock and a pig together with liquor to the guardian spirits who tends to have no tolerance for misbehavior at certain plots of paddy field while they make a typical offering to other guardian Spirit (*Nat*) Despite that, some fielders do not perform this ritual. Instead, they worship Du wai, traditional Spirit (*Nat*) only.

5.5 The Role and Function of Spirit Medium

In all systems of religion, individuals are required to perform, at least assist at the performance of, certain activities by means of which supernatural beings (gods, spirits, or ghosts) are in some fashion propitiated or influenced. In many societies, the prayers of individuals and other similar activities form the bulk of religious acts, but there are few or no societies in which such behavior is not supplemented and guided by religious practitioners. Full-time, or in smaller societies having relatively simpler cultures, part-time, religious practitioners are apparently universal (Beals& Hoijer, 1965).

In this study area, Mawchala is not only diviner but also a spirit medium. Maw means spirit and Chala means teacher. There are two types of Mawchala (spirit medium) by gender. They are female and Male Mawchala. The majority of the Mawchala are females. Mawchala can also cure sickness and if necessary, perform harmful as well as evil spirit. Spirit worshippers believe that spirits could support and provide economic, health and social matters, so, if they make offerings to the worship spirits in various ways. So, the Mawchala helps them because Mawchala know exactly how to propitiate the spirit. Their income would be 2000kyats to 5000kyats from people who come to the Du wai rituals. According to information given to massage the relationship between Du wai and Poe Kayin spirit worshippers, successful in this ritual it depends on the important role of Mawchala (spirit medium). But most villagers depend on the advice of Mawchala every time they face with the problem concerning.



Photo (8) The group of Spirit Medium for propitiation in Du wai Zedi

5.6 Constructing Shin Du Wai Shrine

One of the customs that Poe Kayin ethnic people in Hlaing Gabar Region particularly try to avoid is that of the way houses are constructing. Even when Poe Kayin becomes age of consent to get married and their parents make arrangements for their marriage or they get married to the ones they are in love with, there is a tradition of avoiding certain dwelling houses. Some people still live with their parents depending on the financial condition even when they have gotten married. Others who have been married leave their parents' homes to live in a separate house. Generally,

they live with their parents for a duration ranging from more than a year to three years, and start believing in Shin Du wai and constructing Shin Du wai shrines only when they have their children. At that time, there are also examples of occasions when they get separated from their families' houses. Some people continue to live in their parents' house and plan to build their own houses when they have saved much money, either by constructing Shin Du wai shrine at a proper place within the compound or by hanging the religious things on trees instead of building Shin Du wai shrines.

One of the beliefs of Poe Kayin is that there should not be two Shin Du wai shrines in a home at the same time. As a way of showing respect for the first Shin Du wai shrine of their parents, they are not allowed to put their own shrine onto their home. It is said that the individuals who put their own Shin Du wai shrines onto the parents' houses are not human beings but animals. It is widely accepted there that they may commit the sin of insulting their parents every day, that such people will get into trouble, that they will never become rich and their conditions of life will never be improved, that their work will never do good to them, and that their children will not obey to them. They are not immediately allowed to put their own Shin Du wai shrine onto the parents' house as soon as the latter pass away. Only after their parents' Shin Du wai shrine has been destroyed, are they allowed to put their own shrine. In the former times, only after the parents' Shin Du wai shrine as well as their house had been destroyed and a brand new house had been set up, they were given permission to put their own Shin Du wai shrine onto the house.

Nowadays when timber becomes scarce and costs of living become much greater, only a small part of Shin Du wai shrines is destroyed as a token. Hence, the parents are worried that their children may have more wrong doings or that they may get into trouble, the former usually build Shin Du wai shrines at the far southern side of their house compound. They do so because they intend to make their children easy to accommodate themselves within the compound. By observing how Shin Du wai shrines are constructed, one may be able to witness vividly the local people's custom of deep belief towards Shin Du wai and the accompanying practices. In other words, one can identify the rules and regulations followed as a way of showing the younger generations look after and maintain the symbol of a traditional house that their ancestors have handed down.



Photo (9) A place of offering to spirit Shrine of Du wai

5.7 The Importance of Shin Du Wai Offerings for Wedding Ceremony

A king of wedding called “Aung Ta Mauk” terms of Poe Kayin is vital ceremony. In Poe Kayin traditional custom, “Htoe Lite Phoe” means go-between in Myanmar is present. After the go-between leads to discuss for the wedding, the parents agree and make the engagement. And then, The wedding date is chosen after getting permission from parents and parents of both bride and groom usually choose the date by avoiding the period of Buddhist Lent. Especially weddings are celebrated on the days regarded as an auspicious day and also on new moon days. After confirming the date, wedding is celebrated at bride’s home first and then at groom’s. The wedding style of Poe Kayin can be regarded as a tradition which keeps the rule and customs of Mother’s side. Daughters (Poe Kayin Women) have to keep those rules and customs. And it is also a custom that grooms need to adopt and accept the customs and rites of their brides once they have got married. For those couple who has different cultures, customs and rites, the groom-to-be needs to go to spirit medium man to separate officially from his parents’ hereditary rites.



Photo (10) The groom separating the traditional spirit by a spirit medium

In the process of doing this, betel, tobacco, betel wax, flowers and Eugenia are offered at an altar. The spirit medium man recites prayer for the well-being of others and for the separation from parental traditional spirits Spirit (*Nat*). But the new couple needs to pay respect to the parents' customs, traditions and traditional belief.

Shin Du wai takes part as the main role in the wedding ceremony of Poe Kayin People, Buddhist. Most Poe Kayin People still believes and practices their traditional belief although they accept Buddhism as their religion. When they celebrate wedding ceremony, firstly Poe Kayin goes and worship at Shin Du wai Zedi near the Taw Pone Village, the very first important place is to make vow and pray wishes by newly-wedded couples. They also go to other Shin Du wai Zedi. But it is correlated to their parent's tradition. If his or her parent worshipped only two Shin Du wai Zedi when they celebrated wedding ceremony, the new couple have to go to worship these two Shin Du wai Zedi. If their parents worshipped three Shin Du wai Zedi, the new couple also has to go to these three Shin Du wai Zedi. If not, they may face bad fortunes. For example, their matrimonial affairs will be in trouble. Therefore they must worship before noon and then they can come back to their home and celebrate the wedding according to Shin Du wai tradition and custom. An ancient time, relatives and friends regaled at wedding as the bride and groom needed to worship step by step and celebrated traditionally.



Photo (11) The spirit medium preparing the offering items from the bride

On the auspicious wedding day, they need to vow at Shin Du wai Zedi and Thitsar Man Tine Zedi built by Shin Du wai. For making vow at Shin Du wai Zedi, groom holds up a coconut which is used to pour as consecrated or blessed water and bride takes special betel box wrapped with white cloth and in which, offerings are contained. There are betel, betel nut, tobacco, bitter tonic and beeswax in the special betel box and all those things are needed to be made by the couples. Moreover mordacious plants, turmeric, a pack of sticky rice, and a pack of rice and other offertory also placed in it. When the couple arrived at the Zedi, the groom needs to clean and punch the coconut tip outside of the Zedi's compound.



Photo (12) The groom preparing the coconut used in making a promise

After cleaning it, he can bring within compound. Then the spirit medium prepares things to make devotional offerings to Shin Du wai. They pray and worship

with offerings and then pour consecrated water. The consecrated water is poured for the couple to have Shin Du wai's protection and guidance. In pouring, other kinds of normal water cannot be used. They have to use only coconut juice from the start to until now. Because there is no pest and germ in it and it is also a fruit at the top of tree. Thus they regard coconut juice as holy water and use it in worshipping. The spirit medium man invokes and prays for the couple and pours the holy water into a bowl. The Buddhist Poe Kayin wedding ceremonies are officially granted when they follow the steps. But if there is no worshipping to Shin Du wai, no one will grant. Moreover, the couple is not allowed to visit other strangers' houses. If they did, a quid of betel and hundred kyats must be given as amulet. If the couple gets married at somewhere far away from their homes, their parents request Shin Du wai instead of them.

In second homage, they have to go and pay respect to the guardian spirits of Banyan trees to get their protection from many dangers and built safety life or married life. When they go to pay respect to the Guardian Spirits of Bayan trees, the bride carried betel box in which are three Baccies (Tabaco), three Wax candles, three betel leaves, turmeric packed in a piece of paper, rice packed in handkerchief, sticky rice packed in handkerchief, a roll of white thread, and money to the Bayan tree. When they were arrived at the respective Bayan Trees, the spirit mediums prepare offering things for Guardian spirit. At that time, the spirit medium takes out the offering things from the betel box which is brought by the bride and put on a glazed plate. After that the spirit medium offered them to the guardian spirits of Bayan trees, prays for a new couple' future life particularly to be perfect and successful. After spirit medium prayed for a new couple, the bridegroom has to loop the Bayan tree with the white thread which bride carried with other offering things in the betel box. While the bridegroom loops the thread around the Bayan tree, bride also walks beside of the bridegroom.

In the present day, they built the Buddha image under the Bayan tree. In the past, a groom had to turn around the banyan tree for three times and tied it with thread. The purpose is to have a pleasant marriage and healthy babies in the future. But now such kind of custom is rarely done and they invite the guardian spirit of Banyan tree (who is also known as a protector of the old branch of banyan tree from Buddha Gayer). Moreover the custom of tying thread at Bayan tree now has gone. Today's they tie thread at two twigs instead of the banyan trunk. The reasons why

custom are disappeared are such as having many Buddha images and statues at banyan trees, increasing the number of couples to worship at that place and having no enough places to do it at the same time. Thus tying at any two twigs now becomes as the new custom. The couple usually sprinkle the scented oil made of red sandalwood to Banyan tree. In offering at banyan tree, quid of betel, areca nut, tobacco, bitter tonic, wax candle, Eugenia, a pack of sticky rice and a bag of rice are needed to donate. If the forefather of couple has had three ways of worshipping, they need to worship in three ways.

After this praying ceremony, they continue their praying ceremony in Shin Du wai Zedi existed in Kamot Kasin, Kalout No and Hlaing Kar. For example, the couple needs to worship at Shin Du wai Zedi, Tawpone Village, at banyan tree, Kawt Munote and at Shin Du wai Zedi, Kamot Kasin. Among them, it is important to worship and offer at Shin Du wai Zedi and at banyan tree. Nowadays couples can worship before their wedding day. In the past, the relatives and friends of the married couple had to host and entertain the guest while the couples go to certain places to propitiate the traditional Spirit (*Nat*). In these days, the couples usually worship the traditional Spirit (*Nat*) on the eve of the weddings day. In the past, the weddings ceremony was held on the same day on which they worshipped Shin Du wai. Since the couple could not manage come back to the ceremony in time, the parent's siblings and relatives have to receive the wedding guests. At the same time, the present wedding, Poe Kayin couples usually go to Shin Du wai Zedi on the eve of the wedding day to follow the tradition.



Photo (13) Pay respect to the guardian spirits of Banyan trees

The married couple come back home after they have worshipped the traditional Spirit (Nat) from both sides. There is another custom to splash auspicious water on to the groom. This is to symbolize the cleansing of ill luck with the auspicious water. His wet clothes are to be hung onto the washing line in front of the house. This is done as a symbol representing the kind of Pa sou tan tin (ပုဆိုးတင်တင်) which means the groom's clothes have to be put onto the line to mark his position as the head of the family. According to Poe- Kayin tradition, the groom is dressed in Kayin traditional costume and sent to the auspicious bed room. Today, the groom is no longer splashed with the auspicious water at the entry of the bride's house. Instead he is sprinkled with water by using three sprigs of auspicious Eugenia soaked in the perfumed gold or silver water treated with red sandal wood and sandal wood. Thus it is found that a new type of custom has existed. After that the kit and kin waiting at the bride's house formally hand over the bed room to the married couple.

In preparing the marriage bedroom, the elderly married women with a perfect life have to make necessary arrangement with the bedding. Neither the divorcees nor the remarried woman are allowed to take this task. When they lead the married couples to the auspicious marriage bed room they make the bride sit on the left of the groom onto the bed. After the bedroom is formally handed over, the marriage fact is held and all the friends, family members and relatives including the bride's maid and the best man celebrate had vegetarian meal happily and end it together.



Photo (14) The auspicious marriage bed room

At here, the bride and groom have to feed three morsels of cooked rice without meat. And then the couple pays respect to their parents and depending on the amount of money, they also give presents. Their parents give money back and make wishes

for them, too. Previously, parents, relatives and friends of couple regaled the guests when the couple could not get back in time from their worshipping at Shin Du wai Zedi to home. However today, they can make apologies with the help of their parents if they have no chance to worship in person for all the steps.



Photo (15) Pay respect and worship at Shin Du wai

Especially they pay respect and worship at Shin Du wai Zedi to apologize for their absence or mistakes. For many years, it is a tradition to celebrate a wedding according to Shin Du wai and it is also regarded as weddings which are needed to follow the rules of Shin Du wai. Paying respect to three Gems (Buddha, Dharma and Sangha), worshipping at Shin Du wai Zedi and saying vow at the Zedi and so on are the main reasons to get merit and to live happily forever. According to Shin Du wai tradition, firstly the couple needs to worship Shin Du wai Zedi and then to their respective rites. For them, it is a restriction and must to follow the rule of Shin Du wai Shin Du wai from the past to recent.

5.8 Choosing for Life Partner

Generally, in the past, Poe- Kayin young women tend to select their life partners on the basis of good morality, diligence and courage. While at present times, this trend has already changed due to globalization process. Today's Poe- Kayin

women may probably make their choice for their grooms not only from the same ethnic group but also from the racial groups of a foreign country. When young man and young woman fall in love with each other is or when the parents arrange a marriage, a match maker is required to inform and to arrange an engagement ceremony. The match maker negotiates the parents from both sides to set a date on which the wedding ceremony will be held.

In choosing a day on which the wedding ceremony will be held the parents from both sides use a Myanmar calendar and they avoid holding the ceremony on the three months which fall in rain –retreat period (*July, August, and September*). They usually choose auspicious days (*Yet yar Zar*) and waxing moon days. Most marriage are held in May (*Kason*). On the day of marriage, the couple first go to Shin Du wai Zedi where they take oaths in front of Shin Du wai and Shin Du wai Zati known as Thitsar man daing (သစ္စာဖိစာည့်) . If both of the married couple Poe Kayin; there will be no problem in the propitiation of Shin Du wai traditional.

If the two people from different cultural groups with different traditions get married, the groom needs to separate his traditional before he worships the bride’s traditional. Before the marriage, he has to go to the spirit medium and propitiates his traditional. After that the couple worship the bride’s traditional. For example, if Poe Kayin woman who propitiates “*Aung Hei traditional Spirit (Nat)*” gets married with Poe Kayin man, who follows Shin Du wai tradition, the groom has to separate his tradition. Those who worship other spirit are not allowed to be married because they believe the daughter only is the inheritance of spirit legacy. According to interview, the groom has to separate his traditional.

“He will have to go to the spirit medium and he will ask the traditional to give him permission to leave them. He gives the Spirit (*Nat*) the reasons that he will have to propitiate the bride’s traditional Spirit (*Nat*) in the future. Then he worships his grandparents and the traditional Spirit (*Nat*) in the presence of the spirit medium. Among various Kayin ethnic groups, Poe Kayin women are responsible to preserve their tradition and they have to propitiate the traditional. They need to follow the tradition until death. Poe Kayin men give priority to the women in terms of their religious beliefs not only to appreciate

their role but also to uphold their tradition and their clan” (U phaung phaung,16.2.2016).

For examples a Poe-Kayin woman may probably get married with a Thai man due to her stay in Thailand as a migrant worker. But he will not get along with her to make Shin Du wai offering. So, she may need to hire a young man of Poe Kayin Nationals to substitute her groom, who will have to do certain specific tasks at Shin Du wai Zedi to follow the tradition. In such a case, the bride makes an offering of men’s clothes and accessories to propitiate Shin Du wai traditional Spirit (*Nat*)

“Regarding the hiring of bridge groom, the researcher has interviewed an elderly woman of over 60 years of age. She said, “My granddaughter passed the Grade six examinations. She had to leave school as we can’t afford the cost of schooling. She could not transplant the seedlings and she could not plant the paddy either. She can easily get tired. She cannot do fielding. It was also impossible to find a job in a city as she has not completed even the basic education. And there were very few job opportunities in our village. The jobs available here are poorly paid. Some people who went to Taung paw (*Thailand*) found well –paid jobs there. They can send some money back to support their parents. So, she also wanted to go there. They said that, they didn’t need to stay in the plots of fieldfield under the scorching sun.

They were able to work comfortably indoor all the time. So, she made contact with the elder sister of friend her to work at Thailand. She had to work at a rich man’s houses there. In the past, it was not as easy to go to Thailand as now. At present it is much easier to go there. We send her there as she wished. She got the job and she also could send money to us. Two years ago, she came back home and told me that had a boyfriend in Thailand. She asked us to make necessary arrangement for her marriage. So, I had arranged to make Shin Du wai offering to follow our tradition. She had already been old enough to get marriage. She’s now over twenty years of age.

Now, she has come back. Her bridegroom did not get along with her although he paid all the expenses of marriage. I want both of them to worship Shin Du wai traditional. You know, he is a foreigner with a different religious belief. She can't urge him to follow our tradition; Thai Nationals and Poe Kayin are different races. So, I have to hire a young man from our village to perform certain rituals at Shin Du wai Zedi there are to be done by as bridegroom. He must perform these tasks on behalf of the groom. When asked her view on the idea of hiring a bridegroom, she said, "In my opinion, the bridegroom himself should perform these rituals such as cutting off the coconut to get the water inside it and pouring the donation water. These tasks should be done seriously while saying the prayers. The head of family is obliged to perform them. But, now the use a substitute to get thing done. And on part of the bride, it is not convenient for her to take the help of the bridegroom on hire. As she has told lies to Shin Du wai with the help of a substitute, she will have to put up with her husband in everything in her married life. I've heard of the broken marriages. Most of them are arranged with the help of a bridegroom on hire. Such marriages usually get split soon. But we're obliged the worship Shin Du wai traditionally" (Daw Chit thwin 13.2.2017).

According to the narration of a 50-year-old Poe Kayin man, it is learnt that a certain couple from different traditions get into trouble as the groom has failed to do the formal separation before his marriage.

He said, "Kayin traditional Spirit (*Nat*) are very sensitive and they never tolerate any wrong doing to them. No man can have a happy and successful married life unless he formally separates his traditional Spirit (*Nat*). My uncle followed Shin Du wai tradition like his parents and grandparents. He got married with Poe Kayin woman who embraced a different religion with different religious practices. Like other Poe Kayin man, he adopted his wife's religious practices. He also failed to formally separate his traditional Spirit (*Nat*) before his marriage. Since then their married life become unpleasant as they had

to face hard times when they got their children. Due to the financial problems his social life also became inconvenient. Being disappointed with various problems in life, he began to drink liquor that he never touched before. Gradually, he became a drunkard. He became poorer and poorer as he drank heavier. He could not admonish his children and he became an irresponsible father. At last, his marriage broke and they got spilt due to his nervous breakdown, which put him to death. My uncle committed suicide and his life ended in a tragedy” Saw Maw thaw, 8.5.2016.

Then Shin Du wai instructor administers the worshipping ceremony and he raises the Kadaw Pwe and propitiated to Shin Du wai. Next three plates of offertories or three Pangan Pwe are raised to propitiate the Spirit (*Nat*) before pouring out the “Thitsaryay” (သစ္စာရည်) holy water and saying the prayers. They also develop loving kindness to all beings. At the last stage, the Shin Du wai instructor says prayers for the married couple to protect them under the guardianship of the Du wai. Finally the couple pour the holy water into a bowl calling upon “sudari- sudara” (မြေဇောင့်နတ်) , the guardian deity of the earth to bear witness.

5.9 Believer Perception on Du Wai

Du wai tradition is mainly concerned with married people. The traditional offerings do not necessarily demand the involvement of the sons or daughters since a married couple can do so. On the day of making the offering, children are prohibited beforehand to play noisily so that they will be able to have their meals peacefully. On the days of making offerings and during the ceremony, the couples are forbidden to quarrel; they must remain in love. Shouting at the others and speaking in an insinuating way are totally forbidden. Donations are to be kept neat and tidy. It is willing enough to propitiate the spirit. Their various offertories are to be done clean. At least, they are not even allowed to fart. If a person farts in the process of making the offerings, he or she has to offer new things again the following day. It is believed that if one offers things with strong devotion, the late Shin Du wai would like it very much and accept one's donations. Whether the donation are accepted or not are judged by looking at the lit candles offered to the late monk. If the candle lights continue to remain motionless and bright without swaying to and from even when the wind is blowing, people are convinced that their donation are accepted. If the candle lights are

extinguished, however, the people think that the late monk does not like the offerings and that they need to make offerings again the following day to satisfy him. The offerings have to be prepared by cooking the mixed rice coming from the ordinary rice and the glutinous rice in an earthen pot, putting the boiled rice in an earthen plate and finally sprinkling roasted sesame seeds over the content. Accompanied with a cup of water and a Eugenia sprig, the offerings are usually made. It is customary that Shin Du wai is worshipped at home twice a year without fail.

In some cases, the couple's parents go to the spirit medium and ask him to apologize the traditional Spirit (*Nat*) for their absence. Generally, the couples focus their attention to worship the original Shin Du wai Zedi only. In fact, they are required to make Shin Du wai offering in line with the regulations laid down by their ancestors. A marriage being held in accordance with their tradition is regarded as a decent one and the bride and groom are thought to be well-behaved and obedient couple who observe the regulations and adopt the practices laid down by the Shin Du wai. The purpose of Shin Du wai worship is to create a happy family and set up a prosperous household in the married life by doing meritorious deeds such as taking refuge to the three precious Gems i-e the Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha, worshipping Shin Du wai Zedi taking oaths at the Zedi and paying homage to the Buddha etc.,. The couples who follow the tradition have to worship the original Shin Du wai Zedi first. After that they worship respective tradition. The Poe Kayin have strictly followed the regulations and customs laid down by A Shin Du wai since the ancient time.

5.10 Seasonal Ritual of Poe Kayin

Poe Kayin living in Hlaing Gabar village tract hold Buddhism, they hold seasonal and religious ritual annually. Among these rituals, some are traditional ritual while other are religious ones. Everyone can participate in this ritual regardless of age and sex. Every people from nearby villages come to participate in some festivals, which are held in respective village tract. When Poe Kayin holds ritual, some are based on religion while others are those of customs and traditions that are based upon the Nationals unity. It is observed that Taunggalay Sayadaw composed a poem on seasonal. According to the Myanmar traditional calendar, which is the same as lunar calendar, he wrote Kayin language and how the ritual take place in addition to how the Kayin have celebrate the ritual of the twelve months.

When the months of the ritual come, they hold the ritual collectively at the levels of villages, townships and state. Such traditional ritual includes Hill-side cultivation propitiation ceremony, Hill-side ground-clearing ceremony, Harvest ceremony and *Phi-bu-yaw* ceremony, *Bone collecting* ceremony, *New Year* ceremony, etc. Among these ritual, white thread festival held in the month of Wa Kaung is one which reveals the Kayin identity. The host village people usually invite those of neighboring villages to come and participate in the festival, which are usually alive with a teeming crowd of people. In terms of religious ritual every year Poe Kayin Nationals living in Hlaing Gabar village tract always hold two religious rituals to show their veneration to lord Buddha in a special ceremony.

They hold a Zedi festival in veneration of the historic Zwe Kabin Zedi in which the Buddha's sacred hair was enshrined. They also hold a festival to sign by the effort of "Du wai Zedi was built to mark his great efforts in the propagation of Buddha's leading every year, and the local people hold a religious ceremony where the members of Samgha recite the Maha Pathan Pali text. The purpose of holding a Pathan Pwe is to ward off the evils and potential dangers to the local people. There are many kinds of funfair activities, traditional boxing matches and a theatrical performance (*Zat pwe*) during the festival, which usually lasts two or three days.

5.10.1 The Activities during Tagu Month (*April*)

Poe Kayin ethnic people, like other Myanmar Nationalities, count the twelve months of the year, starting from the month of Tagu (*April*). Poe Kayin people call Tagu as "Lartar" (လတ်တံ). In the month of Tagu (*April*), commemoration ceremony which is conducted according to the tradition and customs is usually held. Commemoration ceremony marks the occasion during which the adorably-kept facilities left behind by the deceased grandparents and teachers are cleaned up and the ceremony of saying prayers and of wishing for the possession of the benefits of one's charities is also conducted equally.



Photo (16) Activities of Tagu Month

According to interview, 56-year-old man replied as follows:

“In the month of Tagu (*April*), most of the elderly people in our village go to monastery to keep the Sabbath (observe the eight Buddhist precepts). We have passed through our lives as long as we should. Depending on our own religions, we have to spare enough time to do meritorious deeds. During this month, we don’t need to work in our fields, so I must say that we have very few things to do. We have to do some housework. If we say about the beliefs concerning the month of Tagu (*April*), I have to say about a commemoration ceremony that I personally took part in. As a way of commemorating the deceased grandparents and benefactors, that ceremony was held by recounting how they lived, behaved and contributed to the welfare of the community. The main purpose of the ceremony is for the next generation to know and maintain the gratitude of the ancestors – it’s a kind of admonishment to the younger generation. In the later years, commemoration ceremonies have become increasingly infrequent and some villages rarely hold the ceremony. Many young people have moved to the mountains and have got used to living there, thus rarely returning home to participate in the traditional ritual. Even the youngest son of mine didn’t come back although he told me earlier that he would take a leave from his boss to return home” (U Nyut win, 30.8 2016).

The above-mentioned words are those told by the old man. Regarding the festival of the month of Tagu (*April*), a 36-year-old man recounted thus:

“Some young people in the village have to go to the Taung Paw (Thailand) according to their economic conditions. So, some can no longer come back for the local festival season. Consequently, some know very little

of Kayin tradition. Others have taken up the practices of the mountain people since they have lived among them for a long time. There are now a considerable number of youths who have forgotten the traditions and customs from their native villages. That's why the village abbot and the village elders have planned to make collective efforts to train the young people to know how to conduct good practices and to know the customs and traditions. Only if the youths are taught such things since their young age, they will be able to tell what their traditions are like and maintain them when they speak with other people." Such are the words told about his viewpoint regarding the tradition that has being faced" (Ko Chit Oo, 1.5.2016).

Nowadays, it is found that some villages continue to hold commemoration ceremony according to the tradition. It is found that such activities have been handed down in order to encourage the younger generation to know how to maintain their customs and traditions, to again discern the gratitude of the parents and teachers who have brought them up since they were young, to be united among them and to help one another. One of the religious practices pursued in the month of Tagu is that both the elderly and the young people, based on their devotion, take the precepts from HlaingGabar Sayadaw and keep Sabbath.

5.10.2 The Activities during Kason Month (*May*)

Poe Kayin people call Kason (*May*) Month as in 'La Ya' (လၢယာ). There are three type of ritual in Kason month. They are pouring water on Bodhi Tree in Kason, festival of Exorcizing evil spirit and Festival of Reciting Patthana. In Hlaing Gabar village pour water on Bodhi Tree as sacred object in the monastery on the full-moon day of Kason, the second month of Myanmar calendar. During Kason, the weather is very hot and dry. So pour water on Bodhi Tree Banyan Tree, so that they will not wilt. They perform pouring water on Bodhi Banyan tree as periodic ritual annually. On that day, young damsels carry water pots on their heads while men play drums, cymbals, bamboo clappers and flute happily and they all lead to the tree. Another ritual, it can be seen that the Ceremony of Exorcizing evil spirit and the Ceremony of Reciting Pahtan to ward off dangers are celebrated according to the traditional ways of Poe Kayin in Kason Month. Some places in Done Yin area hold those two ceremonies in one day, but in some villages, those are celebrated for two days.

5.10.2(a) Exorcizing the Evil Spirit of Kason Ritual

According to believe of Poe Kayin, except doing inauspicious occasions, donation are not used to doing in the days of waning of the moon. They do in new moon days. As exorcizing evil spirits in Kason month is regarded as a kind of inauspicious occasion, they do not hold that in new moon days, but in waning of the moon. The reason of holding that ceremony in the days of waning of the moon in Kason month is that that ceremony is inauspicious one so that it is chosen to hold in imperfect time. They believe that if they hold that ceremony in new moon days, then the evil will become powerful and can give harms to people. Therefore within Haling Gabar village area, the ceremony of reciting Paritta Suttas to ward off dangers and exorcizing the evil spirits are done traditionally. In Hlaing Gabar village area, it is discovered that the ceremony of exorcizing evil spirits has been holding for two days.



Photo (17) The ceremony of exorcizing evil spirits

5.10.2(b) The Function and Practices Exorcizing Evil Spirits

As the ceremony of exorcizing evil spirits is done by the custom of Poe Kayin people, when they hold that ceremony, they give foods to ghost, bogy and to those who are invisible and orded to leave from the village by doing together. Then in the evening of second day, they invite monks respectfully and clean the village. In the afternoon before holding that ceremony, the head of the village give sign to gather by striking a gong. At that time, the elders, young men of the village and some women gather at the place to be held the ceremony and they lead and assign the duties.

In making things which are used in exorcizing evil spirits, they arrange to make bamboo basket (to carry rice and thorny branches), to make pointed-end bamboos in order to kill evils, to make obstacles like seven layers of forests and mountains in order to head wrong ways , and so on. After making those things, by leading of the elders from the village (who know well) invite respectfully to the respective Spirit (*Nat*) from the allotted places. Firstly, Du wai, elders of the community, and guardian spirits are invited by Pan Gan Pwe (a kind of offertory things like betel nut, quid of betel, candle, and alcohol). In worshiping, alcohol did not include in the past but now it is used instead of water. It is discovered that alcohol is taking place little by little.



Photo (18) Activities of exorcizing evil spirits

After worshiping to traditional Spirit (*Nat*) from the western part of the village, villagers strike the gongs to exorcize ghost, and evils. The one from the front strikes the gong and cries out loudly. Then children and men go to every houses of the village and they take packets of rice and thorny sticks donated by women and put them in the new bamboo baskets. Packets of rice to treat the evils and thorny sticks are used to beat the evils in every corners of house because they believe those evils are gone with those sticks. The reason of using thorny stick instead of a normal stick is that evils will not be getting hurt if people beat them with normal sticks and evils can still hide. As people believe that thorny sticks have magical power and they can make evils hurt, people choose to use those sticks which have thorns. Those who ask for donation also do throwing stones to the corners of house, beating with sticks to evils, and exorcize the evils. The whole village does that together.



Photo (19) Activities of exorcizing evil spirits

Finally, when the light is out and darkens, treating and killing ghosts are started at the end of village and besides of the fields. Firstly, the place where ghosts are treated has to be dug over one meter long. Then the bamboo shoot which cannot be grown as bamboo is placed and also some donation rice is added in that hole. Over that hole, the seven layers of forest and mountain which have been made of bamboo are set as protection. The purpose of doing this is that after evils have eaten foods, they are hoped not to come back to their hide-out places easily. Because of passing through many layers of forest and mountain, they become weak and face shortage of food and they cannot know their way. This is a kind of protecting custom.

The donation rice and alcohol are poured inside the hole and thorny sticks are set up. Then those evil spirits and ghosts are invited to come and eat and people treat by pouring alcohol over rice. Then the one who leads treating asks for three times whether evils have finished or not and the rest of the villagers poke the sticks at once to the heap of rice. Then the leader asks for three times whether evils are dead and villagers reply they are dead. After killing the evils, villagers and children have to eat the rest of donation rice and foods. It is a custom to celebrate happily for defeating evils.

In the evening of next day, ceremony of reciting sermon is held at the village school. From every houses, *Pa-Yate pot*, centipede, *Pa-Yate rice*, *Stones* are brought and placed in front of monks. Moreover they do marking off an area by reciting sermon (Paritta Suttas) to prevent evil spirits from entering a certain area. After

listening sermon from the venerable monk, people burn the heap of hay not only within the compound of the house but also at the base of staircase. It is a traditional custom and the reason for doing so is that evils are afraid of fire and people make them not to enter inside the house if evils come along with them. The stones brought from ceremony of reciting sermon are thrown both inside and outside of house by rounding three times. They do it seriously as they believe evils and demons cannot have the resistance of the stones which have the power of sermon and they go away because of stones. Centipedes are hung both over the staircase of house's entrance and cowshed. This is because centipede is one of the most dangerous and poisonous animals and for that reason, people strongly believe that any kinds of poisonous animals can't come. In Kason month, Poe Kayin hold the ceremonies of exorcizing the evil spirit and reciting Paritta Suttas to ward off danger and it can be seen until now.

5.10.2(c) Preparation of Treating Meals

According to Poe Kayin beliefs, things used for exorcizing evils are not allowed to use as the way of using things for people. As evils and people are different basically, those things cannot be used as the normal way. If they use it, some bad fortunes can happen to the village. Therefore it can be seen that they make those things only when the day of celebration. When they treat foods, they do not treat foods to evils as the same way of treating food to people. When they treat foods to evils, they use rotten eggs, bad fruits, and raw vegetables. The reason is to make evils weak and prevent from the power of evils. People do that custom as they believe evils cannot give harm to human beings because they are weak for eating bad foods. Having evils and demons can make the village dangerous, sick and unsuccessful cultivation. Thus people give food to evils and protect from the harms given by evils. The different custom used between Spirit (*Nat*) and ordinary people is also observed.

5.10.2(d) Assigning duties in Ceremony and Practicing

In the past, ceremony of exorcizing evils and demons is held ceremoniously. According to the mainstream of today age, some customs are disappeared. But the purpose is same no matter however they disappear. In the ceremony of exorcizing evils, men mostly lead. People need to run and cry out loudly by using strength in holding that ceremony. In other words, women are not suitable for that situation.

Women do for cooking and donation. As the saying goes “Maung Ta Htan, Mal Ta Ywet” (မောင်တင်ထမ်း မယ်တင်ရွတ်) assigning duties can be seen in exorcizing ceremony. By looking at this fact, Kayin have a custom of taking equal responsibility. While men are making things involved for exorcizing evils, women cook rice and curry at home in order to protect the house. Concerning with that, the old man who leads the ceremony says that

“Exorcizing evils has been celebrated since the time of our forefathers. It lasts for a long time. The purpose is to protect the village from danger. We have to do treating in every year. If not, there will be dangers to the village like drought, flood, out breaking many diseases, death rate will be high, and so on. That’s why we treat them. Why we do that ceremony in Kason month is that in Tan Guu month, Spirit (*Nat*) goes for splashing water. It is an enjoyable month for Spirit (*Nat*) so we celebrate in the waning of the moon period during Kason month according to our forefathers. During Kason month, dates are not exactly set. The ceremony can be start once the moon is waning little by little and it becomes dark. Demons are usually weak during the time of moon’s waning. So we exorcize demons in those times by treating. In treating food, we only use bad foods which cannot be eaten. At that time, evils and demons cannot give harms to human beings because they become weak” (U Di Oo, 3.5.2016).

Since the time of forefathers, that ceremony has been held until now. Although the ways and steps are different to some extent, the purpose is the same. According to the changes of today, some of the customs disappear slowly.



Photo (20) Sharing to all creatures their merit deeds

5.10.3 The Activities during Waso Month (*july*)

Waso, the fourth month of the Burmese calendar, (from July to October) can be said to be a sacred month for Poe Kayin. Most Poe Kayin over aged forty offer Waso robes to monks according to their monasteries concerned. It was for these practical reasons that the Buddha enjoined his disciples not to make long journeys but to keep themselves to wherever they were for the three months Waso (*July*) to Thadingyut (*October*). During the evening of the full-moon day of Waso, the elderly persons go to monastery to take Sabbath and a team of the elderly people from the village or a group of youths collectively recite Dhammacakkara Sermons and pay obeisance to the Lord Buddha. The monk also preaches a sermon. The youth organization treats all the visitors with free traditional snacks.

On the day after the full-moon day of Waso, the custom of plucking Waso flowers is always observed. Waso-flower plucking means picking a medley of flowers that blossom in the month of Waso and offering them to the Buddha. The flowers that bloom from the flower plants at home are plucked; likewise, there is also a custom where people go to a forest to pluck flowers to be offered to the Buddha. Generally, in the evening of the 1st waxing day of Waso, all the young people from the village go to the nearby forest in a collective manner and pluck flowers. It is found that donation is made in a collective manner and the plucked flowers are normally offered either to the Buddha image at this home shrine, or to the monastery or to the monk, etc.

“Waso-flower plucking is one of the practices that have been taken since the time of my grandparents. At our time, most middle-aged people from the village have to work in the mountains. So there has been a shortage of youths. If the boss asks them to do overtime on holidays, they cannot come back home. Even for me, it’s been three years that I cannot go back. Now, I’m doing all the necessary things for the youth group while I’m here on a 7-day leave that my boss had given me. As I has been making money for a living, there are a few things that I could have helped for the festivals and ceremonies of my own village.” The above-mentioned words are those recounted by a young local man (Ko Khin Mg Win, 29.7.2016).

5.10.4 Wrist Tying and Belief in Practicing the Customs (*August*)

In Wah-gaung, Kayin hold a special festival where they tie the wrist with a hank of white cotton thread. It is also known as leik pyar chi pwe (လိက်ပျာချီပွဲ) i.e capturing the leik pyar or psyche in the physical body. According to the custom, in the past, the Poe Kayin makes living by doing field and growing paddy. While they are busy with doing field and growing paddy in the beginning of rainy season, it is not easy to meet each other, each family or each village. Wah -gaung month (when all the crops are cultivated and they have got a little bit free time is the best time to meet each other. Therefore wrist tying ceremony is usually celebrated together in Wah-gaung month.

In celebrating wrist tying ceremony, the reason of that ceremony is still remained the same although there are some differences in the ways of celebrating that ceremony or in opinion concerned with it. The story how wrist tying ceremony has become is that Kayin come together from Tibet plateau and they are nomadic one group in the early time, but later they split into different groups. Because of such splitting into different groups, they tie white thread on hand as a mark in order to recognize each other when they meet. Nowadays it can be said that there is wrist tying ceremony by doing so.

Poe-Kayin who are Buddhist do wrist tying ceremony and ceremony of calling the soul (the symbol of a human's spirit) by occult means or when they get married or when they worship to Spirit (*Nat*) (regarded as guardian spirits) or in doing bone collecting ceremony or after funerals. Such kinds of celebrations are called as “Kaing Su” in Poe-Kayin Language. “Kaing” means “Auspicious tying” and “Sue” means “Hand”. The full word means Tying hand for auspiciousness. Poe-Kayin is used to doing this kind of auspicious hand (wrist) tying ceremony as a traditional custom. There are three ways to do Kayin traditional wrist tying. Those three ways depend on time and circumstances. They are

- (a)Wrist tying in calling Soul (the symbol of a human's spirit) by occult means
- (b)Wrist tying in getting married and
- (c)Wrist tying in Wah-gaung month

5.10.4 (a) Wrist Tying in Calling Soul

Soul, animate part or symbol of a human being's spirit, is one of the traditional beliefs for Poe Kayin people. They cannot explain, however, about that animate part of a human, soul. That animate part of a human being, soul, leaves from human body temporarily while a man is sleeping and it is unstable wonderfully. It is believed that if that soul does not come back to its host body, that man is regarded as a dead person. If that animate soul leaves from a human body for some reasons, that person is regarded to be ill because of jitteriness. Concerning with that, that story of separation soul of a grandmother and her grandchild in traditional Du wai way is explained by a woman as in,

“There is a grandmother and her grandchild who live in the southern part of village. One day, grandmother goes for transplanting paddy in summer and she has got high fever and dies after being delirious. When she is dead, her grandchild is taken care of by the village but she is not seemed to be rest assured for her grandchild. Then the mother of child is informed and she comes back to village, but father does not seem to know about that. Few days later, grandchild starts to be sick.

At first, all people think she is sick because of missing her grandmother. But she does not recover month by month. She just feels well for a while even after visiting hospital in town. Once she gets back to village, she is ill again. Even Pyout Say Sayar (an exorcist) cannot make her to recover. So some of the elders of the village suggest to worship Shin Du wai and to complain A Phoe (Guardian of the village) to do separation the butterflies (soul) of child and her grandmother. So the child's mother prepares to separate the butterflies(soul). First, she places her child at the base of staircase. For the grandmother, there are foods to eat and also a white thread is strung between them. Then that white thread is burnt from the middle.

And it is believed that if the flame goes down, the soul (of the patient) can be called. If not, butterflies cannot be called when the flame goes up. In order to separate the butterflies, offertory things are prepared for a phoe and they invoke to him to protect the patient. They believe that if the flame goes up to the white thread, that patient can be saved by a phoe. If the flame goes down, then that patient

cannot be saved. That mother and child worship according to the traditional way to separate the butterflies, and now the child recovers and plays as before.” In this way, a woman explains how traditional way of Du wai is included in separation soul, an animate part of human being” (Nan Hta lon, 12.5.2017).

After doing separation soul ceremony, calling soul ceremony is celebrated. In celebrating calling soul ceremony, either grandparents or some elders who know well about it call the soul to come back. Since the night time, the soul which is happy in the bad places is called to come back to the parents and relatives. In the next dawn, all the family member sit together and grandparents start the soul calling ceremony. Not only the elders of a house but also the elders from neighboring houses come and tie the white thread in patient’s hands.

In the wrist tying ceremony meant for patient, tray, platter, seven balls of rice on bamboo tray, seven packet glue rice, seven ripe bananas, seven flowers and a bowl of water are placed. On those things, over ten inches length white threads are cut and set. The patient who is going to be tied the thread sits politely and stretches out his/her two palms. On the palm, a ball of rice, a packet of sticky rice, a banana and three flowers are being held. Those persons who tie the thread take the patient’s hand gently and sink the middle of the thread in water just a little bit. Then, in order to protect from evil spirits and diseases, the white thread is stroked with hands for three times on the wrist of patient. After doing this, the right hand is tied firstly with the white thread and prays as the following.

In praying, those who can say prayers very well do as they know. For those who can instruct by dictation the prayers to some extent say prayer short to the point. In the past time, the way of saying prayer was taught one by one by dictation, but now such kind of saying prayer systematically is rare to teach or learn. After praying and wrist tying, the two edges are stroked and its two edges are pulled and cut off. Together with those pieces of white thread, rice, and sticky rice are chipped away for a little bit and also a flower are put on the fontanel of the patient. Then the elders pray to live long until the hair turns to white like the color of white thread. At that time, the patient places those things on fontanel in order to show the respect of the elders’ prayers, then received by hand and put them back in platter. After tying white thread one after one by the elders, they have packets of glue rice for that auspicious wrist

tying ceremony happily together and that calling soul and wrist tying ceremony have come to the end successfully.

5.10.4(b)Wrist Tying in Getting Married

The main purpose of fastening the wrists at a marriage is to formally acknowledge the married couple as man and wife. Moreover the newly wedded couples are blessed with wishes and prayers. In other words, grandparents wish for the couple's good health and happiness at the ceremony. They traditionally pray that the married couple may remain good life partners till their death.

White threads are spread and food and snacks are placed in a tray or a large platter. Flower, packet of glutinous rice and packet of rice have to be included. The bride and bridegroom do not tie to each other. The marriage couple who has got married for two times (An event in which since the two people are so hardcore, not only do they get married once, but then they get married again on top of that and widow)or divorcee is not allowed to tie. The reason is that all the things which have done in early married period must be filled with good things. If those people help or do something for the couple, it is believed that couple's life will not be smooth. As the bad things can happen in the life of newly-wed couple, those couples (who have been married since their younger days and both for the first time) are invited to cheer up and tie. Those couple who are invited do not deny as it is an auspicious occasion. In tying thread for getting married, not only the prayers for the newly-wed but also the prayers which are said in calling soul are being honored for the couple. But it is not the same as the way of calling the soul before the bedtime by knocking the rack over the fireplace and staircase. A couple who tied the newly-wed couple proudly says that it is because of their tying if the newly-wed couple live happily, richly and can build a pleasant marriage. Likewise, bride and groom also appreciate and say which kind of honorable couple has tied for them and that's why they can build a pleasant marriage. The purpose of tying thread in getting married is to acknowledge the couple as a newly-wed couple and to give blessing.



Photo (21) Wrist tying in getting married

5.10.4(c) Wrist Tying in Wah-gaung month

According to custom, as Kayin have a strong sense of community, they live together and work together in times of peace and they tend to protect their region in times of crisis fighting against the enemies in unity. Accordingly they hold a communal ceremony of fastening the wrists with hanks of white cotton thread. They hold this ceremony on a large scale with all family members of individual household, all village people and all local people in their region. In fact, they preserve this good tradition, which can encourage the consolidation of unity among the folk. Since this ceremony is hold in Wah-gaung, it is known is “Wah- gaung lat chi pwe” The ancient Kayin people adopted this practice with the great aim. They hoped to celebrate a family reunion in this month.

The purposes of holding “let chi pwe” are to reunite with the relatives living elsewhere, to organize a family reunion, to enhance the unity among them and to work for solidarity of the Poe Kayin, to lay down guidelines and to give word of admonition to the younger generation by the elderly. In the past, Poe Kayin had to mainly rely on hill-side cultivation and paddy field for their livelihood. When the monsoon comes, they had to work very hard on their fields to prepare the field for cultivation and planting paddy. They were too busy to meet the other fellow fielders or to meet another family or to make a contact between the two villages. In Wah-gaung the paddy fields have already been ploughed and farmers could take a short

rest. So, it is the best time for them to meet one another. They held a communal ceremony of let chi pwe' in Wah-gaung, the least busy month for fielders.

As usual, foods stuffs and crops that they keep for their own consumption get less and less. No crops can be harvested in this period and there may be a shortage of food until the time of harvest. The elderly warned their children and grandchildren to consume food stuffs carefully and not to make any waste so that they could cover until the harvest. Regarding weather conditions, it is extremely cold due to heavy rain and potential flood of river and creeks. Accordingly, their region may be inflicted with various diseases. It is required to take care of health and not to travel too much. According to oral history, some people think that Wah-gaung is an evil and unpleasant month due to the high cost of living probably resulting from overeating and good appetite in the cold weather. In reality, the surrounding outside the human body is cold while the faulty of digestion inside is hot.

Since all foodstuffs being consumed got easily digested and people usually have good appetite. So, some people hold the misconception that these people with good appetite must not be real human beings but they must be possessed by some ghosts and demons alike. All food stuffs run out and Kayin call this situation “Phu Lar Plu Nar” in Kayin language. As a matter of fact the month Wah -gaung is not an evil month. People love good appetite only.

Nowadays, the communal ceremonies fastening the wrists with hanks of white cotton thread are held on the full moon day of Wah-gaung almost everywhere in the Kayin state. These ceremonies are usually organized by the young people of Poe Kayin who take charge of the ceremonies hold everywhere such as in the entire Don yin region, at the monastery located near the lower waterfall, at the monastery's located in famous places of interest, Taung galay monastery and Kyauk kaluck Zedi(ကျောင်းတော်စင်္ကြံ) etc. These ceremonies are always alive with a large crowd of village folk and some visitors. They are held every year to reveal a good custom of Poe Kayin and to preserve its cultural value.



Photo (22) Activities of wrist tying ceremony Wah-gaung

5.10.5 Preparation of the Wrist Tying Ceremony (let chi pwe)

The purpose of Kayin wrist tying ceremony is for their families and relatives who are away or abroad to come back together once a year for family gathering, sharing food and tying thread to the wrists to show and remember that they are united as one. This tradition becomes part of Kayin culture from generation to generation. So, grandparents set the things which are used for wrist tying ceremony and their ability and power are meant to live with unity by the new generation. Hence the tradition of making *Let chi pwe* (လဲချီပွဲ) which includes most of the used in a hand-fastening ceremony have many points with their own properties. They include bananas, packets of steamed glutinous rice, rice balls, pan nyo and pan phyu, water, white thread and sugarcane. In some places, both white and red threads are used. The properties of the constituents are described in the following texts.



Photo (23) Preparation of the wrist tying ceremony (let chi pwe)

- (a) **Banana**-When bananas are detached, they do not separate from one part to another but remain united; likewise, the use of bananas is aimed at making all the young generation of different Kayin nationality lives in a united and concerted manner.
- (b) **Glutinous rice**- Glutinous rice has the property of sticking together. If one throws away glutinous rice after it has been put in a pack, not all the content will go away; likewise, the use of glutinous rice in the ceremonial preparation is intended for making the relatives stick together like glutinous rice and remain united and lovingly among them without being disunited.
- (c) **Rice balls** -Concerning the use of rice balls, rice is an indispensable part of the diet for the existence of our human body. If a person does not eat rice, he or she becomes fatigued and may eventually die. Therefore, only when one eats rice regularly will one be rewarded with longevity, looking good and strength. With the purposes of taking care of and feeding their own nationality with the energy-fulfilling rice and of making them energetic, rice balls are included.
- (d) **Spirit (Nat) Pan Nyo and Spirit (Nat) Pan Phyu flower**-Regarding the use of brown-flowering spirit-propitiating twigs, the tree is quite resistant to the severe climate. The tree is endowed with the quality of being hard-to-kill as the branch does not die but thrive even when a tree branch is grown on the ground in addition to many good qualities including its extraordinary ability to penetrate the soil and its possessions of numerous root branches and of many branches and twigs. Hence, the use of the tree twigs is aimed at encouraging the young generation to seriously maintain and nurture their culture, literature and heritages in order that they will root them in their conscience like the brown-flowering spirit-propitiating tree.
- (e) **Water** -Clean water is included in the things used for wrist tying ceremony. Water has the properties of purity and cleanness, and of coolness and cleanness; in the same vein, water is used in the ceremonial preparation in order to foster pure and cool attitudes as like in water.
- (f) **White thread** -As regards using white thread, since the times of the ancestors, Poe Kayin have fastened white thread on their hands in order that they would

recognize one another. Therefore, if one is a real Kayin, one must have the sign of white thread.

(g) Sugarcanes; However hard sugarcanes are crushed, they can, nonetheless, produce the same sweet taste. Without necessarily making efforts to sow seeds again, sugarcanes can grow again as new plants on the ground where the first plantation took place when the time comes, apart from its capacities in that every section of the sugarcane can grow again as a new plant. As the sugarcane is endowed with the good quality of reproduction which is ideal for the younger generation not to be mixed blood by marriage to another nationality, it is included in the ceremonial preparation.

Forefathers teach young generation to live as the ways of things which are used for wrist tying. Concerning the properties of the paraphernalia to be used in hand-fastening ceremony in the month of Wah-gaung, an elderly local person gave a brief explanation. According to him, the elderly people have used the paraphernalia with the purposes of encouraging the younger generation to live united and lovingly among their own Nationals people. Regarding this, he said as follows.

“Poe Kayin came down from Tibet Plateau in forage of clean water and good food as a large group and then got separated into different groups. In order that they would recognize their own relatives when those separated groups met again at a later date, they fastened white thread on their hands. Descending from that tradition of putting a sign of white thread on hands, the hand-fastening ceremony continues to exist till the present time” (U Kayin Sein, 12.8.17).

With reference to the hand-fastening practice, an elderly person also recounted thus:

“When I was young, I used to travel to other towns and villages to make money. Before I left home, my father used to wear white thread on my hand. He said to me, “If you’re real Kayin, you need to wear white thread.” He also told me that the white thread would keep me safe on my journey, that it would ward off the evils imminent on me, and that it would reward me with due recognition among our own nationalities. Saying so, he fastened white thread on my right wrist by calling the souls with traditional thread. When I reached other towns

and villages, I had great difficulties since I could not speak their dialects very well. I was relieved and happy to find that our Kayin people have the habits of helpfulness and hospitality towards one another at the bottom of their heart. Only when I returned to my native village after having saved enough money as I have intended, I come to realize the compassion of our ancestors who have taught us to care for one another and especially, the very value of the white thread”(Saw tain lone, 15.8.17).

5.10.6 Mock-ship sailing ceremony

Mock-ship sailing ceremony, one of the ceremonies of Poe Kayin held in the month of Tawthalin (*September*), was celebrated in a teeming crowd in the former time. Nowadays, it is found that mock-ship sailing ceremony has become rare. It was also known that, around the area where A Phoetakhit who keeps cultural traditions and norms has been carrying out missionary matters, Kayin tradition and culture are maintained and the traditional festivals are still held in order not to lose track of them. Regarding how the ceremony is celebrated, a bamboo ship with the size 15 yard 6 yard has to be constructed. Then, making jackfruit leaves in rectangular bowl shapes, the people have to put boiled rice in the bowl-shaped leaves. They have to prepare a thousand bowls of rice in such a manner. Next, they need to prepare a thousand small bamboo cups filled with drinking water. After preparing a thousand rice bowls, a thousand flowers and a thousand cups of water, the participants have to offer them as well as different kinds of fruit and snacks to the Buddha. According to their beliefs, making such donation is believed to enable the donors to be free from *Samsara* (cycle of rebirths) and to be eventually elevated to *Nirvana*. The mock-ship sailing ceremony is also a collective ceremony. It was observed that the ceremony is still held and donations are made in the villages around the monastery near the lower waterfall.

5.10.6(a) Activities of Shin Du wai bonfire

According to the belief of Shin Du wai traditional worshippers, one of the tradition they follow is the traditional bonfire. Actually, Shin Du wai bonfire is based on religious belief of Poe Kayin ethnic people who live in Hlaing Gabar village. The aim of celebrating it depends on the concept of individuals. Some celebrate the bonfire to get rid of omens and to escape from the ill- faiths together with the burning

fire. As the month of January (*Tabodwe*) is much colder than the other months, they offer fire to warm up the lord Buddha. One of the most significant thing about the bonfire is that not only Poe Kayin ethnic people but also non- Kayin celebrate it to wipe off all evils.

5.10.6(b) Preparation of the kind of wood

In selecting the tree to be used for Mi- Si taing (မီးတိုင်တိုင်) (central burning pillar) at this collective ceremony of wiping off the evils, formerly Inn-bin tree (အင်ပင်) and Thet-yin bin tree were mainly used. Why they are selected is that they can be used as a whole for the benefits of the mankind. As the kind of wood that has been selected to be used since the time of ancestors has been rare, they substitute them with others.

The substitute tree must be easily grown durable in harsh climate and straight. Some use bamboo instead of wood. Some think that although bamboo is beneficial, it easily cracks when burnt and harm the environments. So, few use bamboo. So Du wai traditional worshippers usually grow the small three that are durable in three seasons at their hedges with the purpose of using than as main burning pillar later.



Photo (24) Bonfire plants

When the kind of wood has been selected in accord with the Shin Du wai belief, the small tree free from kraals and straight is cut. What is important in cutting is that the height of the small tree must be as exactly same as oneself because the small tree has to bear one's ill- faiths on behalf of oneself. The tree with such height is mainly selected. When the tree is cut, it's height must be as the same as that of the

household members. After cutting the tree, the outer bark of it must be cleared and it is to be soaked in the turmeric water.

Turmeric is used because Poe Kayin believes that turmeric has the power to get rid of all evils. The tree to be selected is often sprayed with turmeric water, smeared with turmeric paste in many ways. Beside, the fingers-nails and toe-nails of the family members are also cut, wrapped in paper and used to wipe off evils. They believe that the stem of tree is body of man and the nails of hands and legs are limbs, representing perfect the whole body that has to bear ill-faiths of the worshipper. On the full moon day of Tabodwe, the worshippers bring the substitute tree with nails to the Du wai Zedi. They fix the site for removing evils on a space within the precinct of the Zedi. They say prayers to remove the ill-faiths that fall on their bodies as soon as it is burnt and send loving kindness. In saying prayers, they recite the words according to their previous experience. When the time to start celebrating the ritual, the older concerned and worshippers collectively invite Buddhist monks that deliver summons to them to keep precepts. They share their good deeds with their traditional guardian – spirits. Finally the pile of wood is burnt. After that they walk around the bonfire for three times, in this way their omens are taken away with the flames. Finally the chief who leads the ritual shouts out “We’ve won!” For three times and all happily dance around the bonfire until the ritual is successfully finished. According to the interview,



Photo of (25) Activities of bonfire

One of the worshippers gives his opinion on the bonfire ritual

“My daughter comes and lives with us after getting married. No separate business. She lives and eats together. But my son-in-law is not a believer of Shin Du wai. So there arises a problem. He is non-

believer. My daughter is follower of the belief. They quarrel with each other every day. We never interfere them. We actually dislike the son-in-law who insults tradition. But in the face of daughter, he is accepted. He has never paid homage to the Buddha and the Dhamma. He never respects the elders. Gradually, they have troubles in business. Family's health is poor. That is followed by motorbike accident. Everything is inconvenient. At least, they believe in Shin Du wai and propitiate him by tradition. Now business runs smooth. They have own houses. He said to us about the story of his son-in-law" (Saw min than, 22, 10, 2017).

5.10.7 House Warming Ceremony

According to interview, in the past, Poe Kayin chose a field area to build a house according to their traditional rituals. Nowadays younger generations do not follow these traditions and they buy field according to their financial situation. However, modern day Kayin still practice rituals for building houses following their tradition. They make the decision where to build the house on the field based on four directions. Some Poe Kayin households include extended family members where children after getting married still live with their parents for financial reasons. Some after getting married leave their parents' house to build their own newly family. For most, married children live with their parents from one to three years before leaving their parents' house. When the married children leave their parents' house, their custom requires them to avoid buying field area or building a new house to the south of their parent's house. They believe that if a person lives to the south of their parents' house, such a person is not a human but an animal that is sinful for disrespecting his parents every day.

Such a person will be in great trouble. He will never be rich or progress in life nor have a stable life with proper income. Moreover, his family members will be weak suffering from diseases. His children will be bad children who are not obedient. Because of this belief, parents themselves when they build their own houses, they do so in the southernmost part of the yard in order to prevent their children from such bad luck. Although, when parents build their house they always prefer the south, if it is not possible, they then choose the east. Because the east side is the direction the sun rises and gives light to the world. They believe that by facing the east they will be prosperous and wealthy. They never choose the north or west. West is the direction

that the heads of the dead people laid towards. Therefore, the west side brings bad luck and misfortune. When they install the first pole in building the house, they erect it from the south side of the house. The kitchen is never built on the south side as they believe that would bring misfortune and disease.



Photo (26) Activities of house warming ceremony

After building the frame of the house, they hold a housewarming ceremony. The elders lead the occasion. First, they pay homage to the Buddha. Then to the venerable Shin Du wai and “Oo Yin” pole, which is considered to be the pole of Shin Du wai. While they are paying homage to the Shin Du wai, a fire must be burning in the area where the kitchen will be built. It is believed that the light of the fire will prevent evil spirit from taking up residence in the new house. Moreover they believe that at every housewarming ceremony a black cat must be brought to the house. They believe black cats are more powerful than other cats. A cat can see the evil spirit because of humans cannot be seen. Every house that owns a black cat is protected from misfortune. After paying homage to the Shin Du wai, the middle pole of the house called Kyat Tha Yay Tine is showered with water from a small pot called nyaung-yay-owe. Then the pole at the posterior part of the house must be paid homage to with liquor to request the spirit protecting the villages to look after the house. After the ceremony ends, all the guests and children are entertained with the dish “Kayin Mon-hin-kha”. The Kayin house warming ceremony is usually held in the evening.

Based on these facts, it is also noteworthy that Kayin contribute to the good and bad affairs of the community by putting their energy in traditional rituals.

Although the participants are just ordinary workers, they work in coordination with one another.



Photo (27) Utensils for house warming ceremony



Photo (28) Utensils for house warming ceremony

5.10.8 The Practices of Belief in Death

The concepts of death are differently found with some Buddhism. Poe Kayin have faiths on Buddhism and Christians. Buddhist believe that sudden death (snake-bite, drowning, falling off the tree) is caused because of unfortunate. Christians believe that there are due to the will of the Supreme Being. Funerals differ from each other. Buddhists believe that the dead person will come into being in the good abode if he does something wholesome when he is alive. He will be in hellish abode if he does something unwholesome. Christians believe that they will be blessed with the Heaven when they die. The Supreme Being suffers the punishment on behalf of all human beings.

5.10.8(a) Preparing the Corpse

According to the custom of the former area, there are two ways of preparing the corpse of Poe Kayin in Hlaing Gabar Village- tract. One kind of displaying is for immediate death and then there is for cause of illness. If a person die of an immediate cause such as (snake-bite, drowning, falling off the tree), the corpse is not allowed to carry to his house in the village. This corpse is temporarily put outside the village and cremated within one day. If the relative of the dead person are far away, they wait for them one or two days, but strictly not more than two days. If someone is death during the Thingyan festival or New Year water throwing festival, the dead body is kept outside the fence. Head is placed at the foot and foot is at the head places. There is an offertory or Kantaw pwe beside the corpse. After that, the family members sprinkle the turmeric liquid over the dead body. The aim of spraying that is to forgive than if they act or say something wrong against the dead person. If someone dies on the full moon day or the waxing day, they think, it is assumed that he is unlucky. Without waiting for his relatives, the funeral is take place. Without displaying the corpse, it is wrapped up and rolled up with a mat and cremated

At the head of the corpse is an offertory, Kantaw pwe and at the foot is a pot of turmeric liquid pot. The offertory consists of coconut, three hands of unripe or ripe banana, betel box, five branches of eugenic and a water pot. The corpse is made such as bathing; smear it with turmeric and talcum powder, and then tying the two big toes and trying the two thumbs with thread or long hairs by the leaders of the relatives. There are candles and foods beside the corpse. Why the thumbs and big toes are tied is not to let evil-spirit animal the dead body. Christendom makes like that not to become toe and fingers awkwardly from stiffing the muscles. In wearing clothes, some put ordinary clothes the dead body while some clothe it reversely. The clothes are traditional Kayin costume. When one dies, they have to inform the village administer of ten houses and administer of hundred houses with 1000 kyats, one cigar and candle. Their duty is to beat the gong in the village, making the announcement of dead. The village elders prepare the coffin which is decorated with beautiful papers and pennants.

5.10.8(b) The Disposal of the Body

According to the belief, funeral ceremony is a little different between Buddhist and Christians. The Buddhist take out the corpse of the house through the entrance house, one of the family elder brake the turmeric pot with some branches of Eugenia, saying the words: “ U (the name of the adult male death), Daw(the name of the adult female death), Mg(the name of the young male death), Ma(the name of the young female death), doesn't concern with the rest family” You enjoy in your good new life.

Hundred houses hold leader collected has to order young man to carry the corpse. Ten men carry to corpse on their shoulders. Before that they were made drunk with one viss alcohol and two bottles. The body carries do not include that ill-luck, unhealthy and with their crops unyielding, and the one whose wife is pregnant. If he does it, the child to be born will be short-lived or mother may also abortion, they think. The body carries get used to singing funeral songs on the way to the cemetery. The meaning of the songs that they sing is to move in a vicious cycle before Nirvana or immortality. On the way to cemetery, at the four ways junctions, the play by rising the corpse up and putting down without being touched to the ground, they shout “Lei Lei” about three times in Kayin Language. The relatives prohibit them from playing like think because they are worried about the body to fall off the ground. But the young body carrier, the corpse makes playing at every four way junctions and they stop doing like that when they are exhausted.

There is one cemetery for two or three villages. The coffin is placed on the shelf of the rest house at the graveyard to listen to a religious sermon. The lid of it is opened and the toes and thumbs. In the delivery Dhamma process, two offertories are included untying is done so as to release the psyche or soul out of the dead body. After that three or five Buddhist monks deliver the sermon on funeral and the audience shares the merits to the dead one and send their loving kindness to him. After preaching to the live and dead person, they take out the corpse from the coffin and put it on the firewood and destroyed coffin is put on it. And one person carrying the coffin with a fire stick says the reverse words like this, the east and says it is west, facing to the south and says it is north, he point the sky with a fire stick and he says this is the ground , he points the ground and he says this is the sky. After that, he cremated the corpse. If someone dies simply, he is cremated and if he dies suddenly,

he is put into the ground. After a few days or months, they dig from the ground and cremate it.

5.10.8(c) Bone Collecting Ceremony (A-Yoe-Kort Pwe)

In holding the traditional ceremonies according to Poe Kayin, there is an inauspicious ceremony which is called as ‘Thote A Shun’ (တုတ်အရှု) by Poe Kayin and Myanmar call as “A-Yoe-Kort Pwe”. That ceremony is standing up until now as the oldest ceremony of Poe Kayin people. A-Yoe-KortPwe is a ceremony of collecting and picking up the bones from dead body by the rest family members and relatives after cremating the body and they prepare food and drinks, funfair, offering and worshiping to ancestors and traditional (spirits), pouring water for meritorious deeds and sending the bones back to the forefather and A-Yoe (which means bone) mountain. The purpose of that ceremony is sharing good deeds to the dead person for next life if he or she did not do any good deeds while alive and some regard it as longing for the gratitude of their forefathers. Moreover some thinks it is the last great duty to do good deeds for the dead person. According to Kayin people’ beliefs, A-Yoe-Kort Pwe is the oldest ceremony which makes the reunion of dead people (who died for any reasons) with their family and forefathers in next life by sending their bones back to the A-Yoe mountain (အရှုတောင်).

In holding A-Yoe-Kort Pwe, people hold according to finance. Some people hold after one or two years later but others do immediately. And some people hold together if they have not done collecting their dead relative’s bones yet. In holding A-Yoe-Kort Pwe, the rest family cremates the dead body and they hold that ceremony after seven days last and when the weather is also fine. For example, if someone dies when the time is hard to go to and fro (like rainy season), the rest family and relatives do not hold that ceremony. They hold when the weather is fine or in those months like February or March. Mostly they hold in March (*in Myanmar, it is called Ta baung*). and A-Yoe-Kort Pwe is not held in new moon periods, but in wane periods. This is because people usually do auspicious occasions and ceremonies such as worshiping to forefather, donation and so on during new moon periods and they avoid holding inauspicious ceremonies during those periods. And it is not allowed to hold that ceremony in April (*in Myanmar, Ta Guu*) as in April, people believe that Spirit (*Nat*) go around in order being splashed water. So people avoid holding ceremony in April,

but in May (Kason). In collecting bones, if some people die in unusual ways like drowning or die away from home, their clothes are regarded as their bones.

To hold A-Yoe-Kout-Pwe, firstly the elders who well know about that ceremony hang a bamboo in the shape of branches with three blankets at the front of house. Then the village head is informed about that ceremony. The donation also needs to invite the rest villagers going door to door by giving a candle and a cigarette. Then within the compound of the house, people firstly build a stage for monks to give a sermon. Near that stage, a small hut (A-YoeAei which means a place to put on bones) is built and it is made of four bamboo poles and weaves thatch. On that hut, bones are prepared to be placed. Moreover a big pavilion is also built for guest to stay and have meal.

Mostly, the number of people who go to collect bone must be odd number, not even number. About three or five people go to collect. The custom to choose odd number is that it is not a place to go full complement. When people go to collect bones in evening, the one who leads has to grasp a chopper and carry a bamboo basket. People can buy the basket to use for collecting bones or make it by themselves. And the rest people follow them. They must not speak with others people whom they meet on road while they are going. The villagers also understood that they are going for collecting bones just by seeing the chopper and bamboo basket carrying by the leader. And the villagers do not greet. Long time ago, the people who go for collecting bones do not use the main road of village. They go outside of the village because it is an inauspicious custom. Today's some of the customs are slowly vanished. And the one who carries basket needs to carry on with one side of shoulder, cannot change the side of shoulder while carrying. And he or she cannot drop the basket recklessly. Before entering into the cemetery, they need to request the guard of cemetery (a spirit which guards cemetery) with rice and curry, water or one viss (ဝိသ) of alcoholic drinks.

Then they need to call the name of dead person for three times and pick up three pieces of bones and charcoals with bamboo stick. And some rinse those bones with water or coconut juice. Then bones are wrapped with white cloth. If the dead person is a woman, some pieces of Kayin traditional three layers *LonGyi* has to be placed at the bottom of bamboo basket. After putting the bones in basket, they need to step a bamboo to be crack not to follow by other spirits when they leave the cemetery.

The first people who are leading do not crack the whole bamboo. If they crack the whole bamboo, the last person has to be left at cemetery. Then the other people need to go back the village, invite monks respectfully to cemetery and do good deeds again. The monks have to re-choose the people to collect bones. On the way of coming back to village, they also need to face some barriers, questions and answers. Thus the custom of cracking bamboo is needed to do carefully. When they are near to reach the village, they need to answer the questions of the villagers who are waiting to welcome them. The villagers ask the questions such as who are the people, are they bad guys or good guys, and if they are not good guys, they are not allowed to enter into the village.

At that time, the one who is carrying bones has to response that they are good guys and ask for permission to come back to the village. Then the villagers stop them with sharpened bamboos and tell them to drink alcoholic drinks as the symbol of fidelity if they are good guys. In the past, coconut juice is used instead of alcoholic drinks. After drinking, the villagers regard them as good guys and remove the barriers.

When they get home, the bone collector says to the bones as in ‘chan yin yay choe’ (ချမ်းရင် ရေချိုး)(which means take a bath if it is cold) and then bones are taken bath in a cup for three times. Then he also says ‘pu yin meelon’ (ပူရင်မီးလှုံ) (which means warm itself at a fire if it is hot) and places the bones at bonfire to be singed. After doing that for three times, he calls the name of dead person at the front of the hut of bone and says to have the donation meal made by the rest family members. Those rice and curry are served with banana leave at the front of hut of bone. Banana leave and basket of bone is tied and connected with thread. While serving meal, according to Kayin tradition, the bone collector Sayar needs to say about the merits to be heard by the dead person and he also needs to teach the children of dead person instead of him or her. In saying that, the children become sad and cry because of the skillful words of the bone collector Sayar as they feel as if their parents are still alive. The other people who hear that words also feel deeply sadness. After serving meal, the bones are rewrapped with white cloth and placed in the basket and put on the hut. Then three or seven widows need to walk around the hut and splash the bone with holy water to protect the bone from the danger of using by witch or wizard or by using other black magic. According to the opinion of Poe Kayin people to dead person, using three or

seven widows is not even number, but odd number and they cannot treat the dead person as the way to people who are still alive, because there is a difference between them. As the life situation is different, they cannot use full complement. If they use full, the soul of dead person will be strong and hover in cycle of rebirth.

Traditional Spirit (*Nat*) and dead person are invited to be treat meal. Not to lose the bone, a candle is put in a bowl with rice and it is lightened the whole night at the hut of bone. The next morning, traditional respective Spirits (*Nat*) are worshipped with offering things. At 7 a.m., monks are respectfully invited and people listen to religious sermon given by monks and share all good deeds to everyone. Bones are placed besides the eldest son or eldest grandchild in order to listen the sermon and receive good deeds together. As A-Yoe-Kout Pwe is an inauspicious ceremony, it does not let to do at home. The eldest son or an eldest grandchild who does collecting bone is not allowed to be at home, too. In Kayin traditional A-Yor-Kout Pwe, if the eldest son is absent, the youngest son or the eldest grandchild can pour holy water. If there is no eldest son or grandchild, they can hire other family's eldest son in village. The second son cannot pour the holy water and share merit. If the second son does it, there will be danger because Spirit (*Nat*) do not like breaking out the steps and rules. Concerning the sharing merit by second son, a man at the age of 55 (who strongly believe in traditional customs and Spirit (*Nat*) says that "all the siblings discuss together at their home and invite all the relatives and family member to do A-Yoe-Kout Pwe for the remembrance of their parents.

Although their eldest brother told them to be in time for sharing merits, he cannot be in time on that day because of an important business matter. Then the second son says it will be nothing serious to share merit and pour water as it is a donation for their parents. Then he pours the water and share merits. After the ceremony finished and six months later, he tries to commit suicide himself though his business and health conditions are good. He is saved in the first time, but not in second time. Most people think it is the punishment given by Spirit (*Nat*) and then they apologize with offering things. But it is said that the punishment will be finished after three generations. Now two generations is being punished and only the turn of that man's son is left."

"Other over 60 years old man, also says concerning about the punishments given by Spirit (*Nat*) as in "There is a man in their village. Though he is

not dead, but he is going insane and his condition become worse day by day. If the traditional rites are broken and Spirit (*Nat*) are angry very much, they can punish people until to be dead, if not they can make people going insane or to be financially ruined and people will not make anything for living. Therefore he warns not to be rude to Spirit (*Nat*) and not to break out the traditional rites. If not, there will be a great danger” (U Myut Htut (10.2.2017).

After sharing merits, the three bones taken from cemetery are needed to be re-sent with foods to A Yoe (bone) Mountain. In resending bones to A-Yoe Mountain (အရှိုးတောင်) the eldest son or grandchild or the hired eldest son do not send bones by carrying basket. Only the rest parents or relatives send bones back to the mountain. Actually A-Yoe Mountain (အရှိုးတောင်) is cemetery. At the return of the people who send the bones back to the cemetery, they throw back some stones at somewhere of cemetery with the purpose of not following the dead person’s spirit with them. While they are sending back the bones to A-Yoe Mountain (အရှိုးတောင်) the people who left at home need to burn the hut of bone and the stage for monks to give sermon which are built within house’s compound. This is because those things are used for the dead person and thus, it should not be re-used in other matters. After A-Yoe-Kout Pwe, the people who come back from cemetery and the rest family members and relatives wash together their hands and legs with Myanmar traditional shampoo (Ta-Yaw Kin-Pon) and they can be at home after all those processes.

A-Yoe-Kout Pwe is held until now as a ceremony of donation for dead persons, a ceremony of remembrance, and also a custom to keep tradition and rites. A-Yoe-Kout Pwe is the oldest and former ceremony and it has been holding traditionally for many years. It is found that the majority of people in the study area embrace Buddhism. Poe Kayin has various kinds of worship. Parts from Buddhism, there are other religious beliefs in the eleven villages of the study area. Then the regional spirits have to supplicated with an offering Du wai traditional Spirit (*Nat*), Aung hei Spirit (*Nat*), Boe Boe Gyi Spirit (*Nat*), Pann Yoe Yar Spirit (*Nat*), Zweekapin Spirit (*Nat*), the Guardian Spirit (*Nat*) of the village, the Guardian Spirit (*Nat*) of the forest, the Guardian Spirit (*Nat*) of the mountain etc.

Table-2 Seasonal of ritual calendar

Month	Main ritual and festival	Religious rites
Tagu (April)	-Thingyan water festival and Commemoration ceremony	Welcoming the New Year with Thingyan and elderly people do Kaung Mu Kudo such as to keep the Sabbath.
Kason (May)	-Kason Nyaung Yay Thwn Pwe (religious ritual) -Exorcising the evil spirit (traditional festival) for 2 days. -Shin Du wai worshipping	Pouring water on the sacred bodhi (banyan) tree on the full moon day of Kason. On the afternoon of the first day, about the of Exorcizing evil spirit which shows traditional performance. On the evening of the second day recitation of Pahtan is held at the primary school. The purpose of offering is to ask for the Spirit (<i>Nat</i>)'s protection in their everyday activities such as on their journey of at their work of any trade.
Nayon (June)	In Nayon month, there is no great ceremony	
Waso (July)	-Waso robes to monk's ritual. -Traditional practices of Waso flowers	The elderly persons go to monastery to take Sabbath on the full-moon day of Waso, they can keep the Sila just for a sitting. A group of youths collectively recite Dhammacakkara Sermons and pay obeisance to the Lord Buddha. the custom of plucking Waso flowers is always observed

Wagaung (August)	-The festival of Wrist Tying and Belief in Practicing the Customs	They hold a communal ceremony of fastening the wrists with hanks of white cotton thread. They hold this ceremony on a large scale with all family members of individual household, all village people and all local people in their region.
Tawthalin (September)	-Mock-ship sailing ritual	According to their beliefs, making such donationis believed to enable the donors to be free from <i>Samsara</i> (cycle of rebirths) and to be eventually elevated to <i>Nirvana</i> .
Thadingyut (October)	-Festival of lights	One of the traditional festival in Thadingyut Laba Light pwe. It is also the month for paying respect to Monks.
Dazaumon (November)	-Khatain alms giving are to honor the monks ritual -Offering to Shin Du wai	The Kahtain robe offering ceremony for the monks who are shouldering the duty of keeping the Sussana.
Pyatho (January)	-Shin Du wai bonfire ritual -Kayin New Year Day -Phi Bhi Yaw festival	Celebrate the bonfire to get rid of omens and to escape from the ill-faiths together with the burning fire. It is a celebration by the Kayin communities in the Kayin State of Myanmar. The Kayin New Year celebrations are focused on preservation of Kayin language, culture and literature, Kayin Nationals unity, and development. The ceremony of paying homage to the goddess of paddy in the only

		occasion of Poe Kayin who believe and value it as the holiest as they live on agriculture for their livelihood.
Dabodwe (February)	Bone Collecting Ceremony	That ceremony is sharing good deeds to the dead person for next life if he or she did not do any good deeds while alive and some regard it as longing for the gratitude of their forefathers.

CHAPTER VI

THE RELIGIOUS BELIEFS OF LEI KEL ARIYA DEVOTEES

5.1 Background History of Lei Kel Ariya Religion

Lei Kel Ariya asceticism is one of the religious beliefs of Poe Kayin who are living in Hlaing Gabar Village, Hpa-an Township, Kayin State. Some Poe Kayin in Hlaing Gabar Village is those who believe in the Ariya asceticism of the future Buddha who will attain enlightenment in the life of the Arimeikteiya Buddha. The persons who founded Ariya asceticism were Phu Hti Thaung Htaw and Phu Meik Kar Li, Poe Kayin, and they established the religious practices in ME 1222 (*Christian Era 1861*). Lei Kel Ariya practices are a realistic, ancient type of religion. It is found that tomes on Lei Kel Ariya practices also include sayings, riddles, myths and historical evidences. Some suggest that Lei Kel Ariya asceticism is similar to Buddhism while others say that it has similar characteristics to Christianity. In fact, it is a unique religion.



Photo (29) Ariya religion

Lei Kel means salvation of sinful sufferers from the fetters of epidemic dangers. It is a religion full of essence that leads the sufferers onto the path of prosperity and righteousness. The essence is that the devotee has to keep the ten precepts which are based on the five precepts, and that he or she has to disseminate Spirit (Nat) e Metta (loving-kindness) and practice meditation. Especially, the devotee has to abstain from eating any meat and fish and live as a vegan for good. Saturday is a

special day for the devotees of Lei Kel religion. The reason for selecting Saturday as a special day is that it is the seventh day on which the earth was in the process of creation. Among the nine planets that rule over the earth, Saturday planetary king is supposed to be the most powerful and the hottest one. Saturday was specified as a special day by former religious leaders with the aim of cooling down the heat of worldly people always burning with different kinds of troubles by the aid of peaceful meritorious deeds on that scorching day. On that day, all the devotees have to do to their only tasks relating religion.

Hence, since Friday, they have to make sure that they have completed all the domestic chores including cleaning the inside and outside of their houses, and other worldly matters including settling all the business matters and so on, that they are supposed to do on Saturday. During Saturday, they perform only matters concerning religious practices. In most cases, it is found that they come to their religious temple to do meritorious deeds including making donation. On Saturday, those who live outside the temple compound also come to temple to say prayers. Although those living outside the temple compound say prayers at the shrine of their respective houses, they usually come to say prayers to Tawpon (တောင်ပုံ) Village, the place where Lei Kel temple is situated, either in groups of respective families or individually on Saturday. The ascetics who live within the compound of the temple have to say prayers four times a day between dawn and dusk.



Photo (30) Praying Buddha instruction

A group of people who volunteer to do meritorious deeds within the compound make them aware of the prayer time by ringing a notice bell and blowing a buffalo horn. The notice bells are rung with the purpose of making virtuous persons

aware of the time for doing meritorious deeds since there can be certain individuals who are anticipating to hear the good deeds being disseminated. In using the bell chime, it is customary that the bell is rung 24 times representing 25 consonants of Lei Kel alphabets. It is noteworthy that all the 25 chimes are not to be done continually but to be done with a pause after 8 times and then to be followed by another 8 times, as a salute to the wise men who created the alphabets used in the treatise.

In total, the bell has to be rung three rounds of eight times with pauses and stop chiming after the only remaining ring. The aims of ringing the bell in such a manner are to enable the posterity of Lei Kel devotees appreciate literature and to value the compassion and loving-kindness put in the industriously hard-earned formulation of 25 consonants, 12 vowels and 9 arithmetic numbers while the involved wise men are keeping precepts on Zweekabin Mountain in order to attain the literature. It is also customary that the bell chimes are followed by the blowing of buffalo horns. The act of blowing buffalo horns is performed with the purpose of making the great celestial being destined to become the Buddha and the king of the celestial abodes known about the meritorious deeds of the Lei Kel devotees. Since it is believed that the sound of buffalo horns possesses the power to make it more capable of reaching the highest celestial abode than that of the bell chimes, blowing the buffalo horns is a kind of raising awareness regarding their forthcoming meritorious deeds.

5.2 Lei Kel Ariya Asceticism and ‘Grandpa And Grandma’ Belief



Photo (31) Grandpa and grandma' belief

One of the customs of Lei Kel Ariya asceticism is the belief that only when missionary work is accompanied by a couple of grandparents by the names of ‘virtues’ and ‘concentration’ will it be sustained. As the moon exists in parallel with the sun, so does the sky in parallel with the ground. Therefore, the grandmother always has to accompany with the grandfather on the missionary journey. One of the beliefs of Lei Kel devotees is that there are numerous instances of incidents where men alone cannot do the welfare of a society and neither can women alone. Hence, men and women usually settle issues in a cooperative and balanced way. In Lei Kel religion, the religious leaders who live within the temple compound cannot live alone. It is essential that a couple of good virtues or a couple of man and woman who has virtues and good character and who is devoted to serving the welfare of the religion throughout their lives become the presiding individuals at the temple.

Therefore, it is noteworthy that Lei Kel missionary temples are regarded as having full characteristics only when there are a couple of grandparents in them. All the devotees dwelling within the temple compound keep veganism and precepts all their lives. By the leadership of the presiding couple of grandparents, the donation ceremonies are held according to the customs four times a year. It conveys the meaning of a virtuous person who keeps the precepts all his or her life.

5.3 Worship of Temple Belief

Poe Kayin who believes in Lei Kel Ariya asceticism does not worship idols or images. Instead of the Buddha image, they worship Kalun Wan Woke, a temple constructed with the particular aim of offering a place to live for the Arimeikteiya Buddha who has not yet attained enlightenment in order to make it ready for Him when He really comes upon the earth. In constructing that temple temple, one particular timber is not solely utilized but it uses nine types of timber locally known as Thein Lar,(သိင်းလာ)(ပိဋုပင်), Mar Nar,(မာလာ)(ပန်းခဲ) Thein Khara,(သိင်းခြာ)(တော်စီးရွက်) Kaik Hwa (ကါးစွာ)(နို့ပင်), Kwar (ကွာ)(တောင်သလဲ), Thein Chauk Khi(သက်နီ), Payit (ကျွန်း), Ah Naing and Maung Khu Lone, which are called in Myanmar by the respective names of Zee Phyu, Phan Khar, Taw Mee Kwet, Let Pan, Taung Thalei, Thin Gan, Kwan, Ah Naung and Ah Naung Poe Pin. It is also believed that those nine types of timber have to be put in their specified places so that the powers of the different timber types are discernible.

Thein Lar timber is to be placed on the western side of the temple since that type of tree is thought to have the power to gather all kinds of spirits. Thein Khara timber is placed on its northeastern side. The name of the tree conveys the meaning of a virtuous and noble child. Kaik Hwa timber is to be put at the eastern side and represents the honesty and justice of all the people in terms of their nature. The type of timber known as Kwar in Kayin and as Taung Thalei in Myanmar, which refers to its conveyance of virtuous things, is placed on the southeastern side of the temple. Thein Khauk Khi timber is always put on the southern side of the temple. This type of tree is supposed to have the powers of formulating the essence of Kayin and discerning sermons and wisdom relating to the nature of religious practices. The type of timber called Payit in local areas and Kyun in Myanmar, which is thought to be capable of performing mental operations and keeping an individual good-natured, is placed on the northern side of the temple. Ah Naing timber is positioned on the southwestern side of the temple and it is supposed to have the power to provide a person with opportunities to live near a temple and say prayers. On the northwestern side of the temple, Maung Khu Lu timber is placed since this type of tree is believed to possess the power to go airborne at top speed like an aeroplane.



Photo (32) Kalun Wan Woke temple

A Lei Kel temple is constructed by using those types of timber endowed with such magnificent powers. Nowadays when there is an increasing scarcity of timber used for constructing the Lei Kel temple, all the nine types of timber are no longer used wholly but partially by cutting those timber types into nine pieces of one finger-

joint length and placing those short timber pieces into the holes of the base posts of the temple as a token. All the devotees of Lei Kel religion pay obeisance not only to the Lei Kel temple but also to the symbol of sun and moon, the ear of paddy which is regarded as the life-giving benefactor and Dhamma treatise.



Photo (33) Don Seik Thar Phaung Lei Kel Temple

The temple where Lei Kel devotees take oaths and say prayers is situated inside Don Seik Thar Phaung Lei Kel Temple in Tawpon Village. Inside that temple also lies another temple for taking oaths and saying prayers in Lei Kelways, which looks like Du wai Oath-taking Temple. The shape of the temple is not that of a typical bell-like Buddhist temple but that of a rectangle. The temple is ten feet in circumference and approximately ten cubits in height with seven steps from the base to the top. Those seven steps represent the individuals born on seven respective days of the week and the four cardinal points at the top of the temple include posts representing the four basic properties of matter namely fluidity, solidity, volatility and heat.

On those posts, four animal statues which are supposed to be endowed with the powers representing the four spirits of the cardinal points are erected. They include the statue of a bird which represents the god of volatility, that of a stallion which is representative of the god of solidity, that of a serpent king which represents the god of fluidity and that of a white elephant that represents the god of heat. It is believed that the world is under the constant care and powers of those four spirits. At the center of the Lei Kel temple, a 17-cubit-long fig post with a white umbrella at the

top is erected and a throne is separately placed to get ready for the coming of the great celestial being who will become the Buddha in the future. Not every devotee is permitted to ascend the temple; only the grandfather and other religious leaders who have virtues and integrity are allowed to do so. Even when they ascend the temple, they first have to wear their traditional costumes – white long front-open smock-like garments and red-stripped double length men's longyis so that they will get access to the ascension onto the temple.

The religious leaders are not allowed to wear any other colored clothes during the ceremonial period. In most cases, they have to wear white smock-like garments and unsewn pieces of longyis. The individuals who wear unsewn longyis are usually those who always dwell in Hta Mauk and keep five and ten precepts throughout their lives along with such qualities as having more virtues, more mastery of learning and practicing veganism more seriously than other devotees. They usually do meritorious deeds such as offering alms of rice and curries, saying prayers, disseminating loving-kindness and sharing the good deeds with other beings. Moreover, they also take the leading role in matters concerning individuals' welfare and deaths.

In the act of kowtowing and saying prayers, they do so with special care principally for: (1) the Three Gems viz., the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha, (2) appreciating their ancestors, and (3) the teachers who teach them. They always perform the act of saying prayers by taking positions in the places specifically assigned in accordance with their different levels. According to ancestral provisions, male devotees usually take positions for saying prayers on the left side while female devotees take their positions on the right side.

5.4 The Areas where Lei Kel Devotees Live

The areas where Lei Kel devotees dwell in are those in and around Kayin State, the Union of Myanmar. Keeping as the center Hnit-Char Village in Hpa-an Village, Kayin State where the couple of Phu Hti Thaung Htawt and A Phoeo Mike Kar Ri compiled Dhamma treatises, the population of devotees are distributed in seven townships of the state by the names of Hpa-an, Kawtkaraik, Hlaingbwaet, Kyar-Inn-Seik-Kyi, Phapon, Myawady and Thantaung.

5.5 The Composition of the Temple and Tasks or Responsibilities

In the establishment areas of the Lei Kel devotees, the title of the organization is Lei Kel religion, Dhamma literature, Tradition and Culture Collective Leadership Headquarter. Under the headquarters, there are 5 sections. There are altogether more than 60 Hta Mauks (rest houses) in wards, villages and praying villages. The religious office of Lei Kel religion has been opened at an area named Htawmaepar which is situated in the 4th Ward of Hpa-an. In setting up the organization, the five religious leaders who are chiefly regarded as its life-blood have to make concerted, balanced efforts under patrons, a chairperson and executive committee members. Those five religious leaders are responsible for serving their duties well at Lei Kel Ariya temple without fail.

The organization has been founded with the following objectives of Lei Kel Ariya asceticism that the great religious leaders have laid down for its devotees to abide by:

1. To enable the proliferation of Ariya virtuous people's religion,
2. To keep and promote Lei Kel Kyet yet literature named Leik San Hweit,
3. To take care and sustain Dhamma halls and other religious structures according to the tradition and customs,
4. To do meritorious deeds according to the tradition, and
5. To keep paddy by the name of Phi Bhi Yaw in accordance with the tradition.

5.6 Duties of Lei Kel religious Leaders

The religious leaders who serve at Lei Kel Temple are responsible for doing their bits as a group of five in the religious matters in a harmonious and balanced manner. Those five individuals have responsibility to assume the essential duties of the Lei Kel Ariya temple fully. The tasks of the five individuals include assuming their respective duties based on the assigned topics: (1) constructing temples and prayer halls; (2) obtaining donation and other kinds of financial support; (3) Keeping and taking care of Phi Phu Yaw Barn; (4) Proliferating Leik San Hweit Kyetyet literature; and (5) Sustaining Dhamma treatises and those relating to the mundane world and the religious path. Master (Boke Khu), who is the leader of the temple and

prayer halls, is obligated to take the leading role in celebrating donation ceremonies seasonally held four times a year. Lei Kel devotees who mostly earn a living by farming start holding Spirit (*Nat*)-offering ceremony in June (*Nayone*), the third month of Myanmar calendar. With the aims of receiving care of the farmers who will start working in the fields, pleading the rain spirit to shower and rain sufficiently for growing paddy well, and increasing the harvest of paddy, Boke Khu takes the leading role in holding a ceremony of disseminating loving-kindness for the welfare of all beings and offering donation to them.

By the time September (*Tawthalin*) which is the sixth month of Myanmar calendar when it is getting hotter sets in, it is customary that a ceremony of saying prayers for and disseminating loving-kindness to aquatic creatures is celebrated. It is in (*Nattaw*), the ninth month of Myanmar calendar, that the ceremony of eating newly-harvested rice is held as a commemoration of the conclusion of the farming season. In this ceremony, some of the first and foremost harvest of paddy and ears of paddy from the respective fields are offered to the Buddha and good spirits. Undeniably, the ceremony which is held in March (*Tabaung*), the last month of Myanmar calendar, is the most impressive and best-attended last-of-the-year occasion of Lei Kel devotees. It is a ceremony held for presenting offerings to the Goddess of Paddy who is believed to take care of paddy, the life-giving benefactor for human beings, as a token of gratitude for her kindness. Besides, along with offerings to the Goddess of Paddy, it is necessary that planetary spirit called Hta Maung are also presented with such offerings at the same time. In such occasions, the people involved pray for the world peace, using the flag of sun and moon which symbolizes one of the Lei Kel beliefs and anticipating the Arimeikteiya Buddha who will attain enlightenment in the future.

Since Phi Phu Yaw Khu is responsible for performing the financial matters of Lei Kel Temple, he makes systematic management of cash donations. Ta Raw Khu (for prayer halls and temples) is a responsible person for constructing temples and prayer halls who has to take charge of such constructions. In other words, his responsibility is to serve as a secretary of the temple. Leik Khu (for literature and culture; in other words, for Leik San Hweit Kyetyet literature proliferation) has to assume the duty of teaching the individuals to comprehend Lei Kel Ariya asceticism vividly. He always has to be in charge of the temple in order that he will be able to

cope with daily matters concerning devotees who come for praying and visitors who come for observing.

Sasana Khu (for matters concerning Dhamma treatises and those on mundane world and the religious path) has the responsibility to play a key role in combining the two aspects of literature and culture, and to persevere for the proliferation of the religion to sustain the tradition. Especially, he teaches in a balanced manner the three primary matters of health, wealth and social dealings as well as the marital matter including how the male and female devotees of the religion should love each other on the basis of loving-kindness in commensurate with the tradition and customs.



Photo (34) Lei Kel religious leaders

5.7 Background and Conceptions of Kyet Yet Literature

When one describes the history of Kyet Yet literature, it can be regarded or assumed as stories and legends from a long time ago recounted according to the treatise. The legend goes as follows. Once, the Lord Buddha asked seven ignorant brothers to come along with him. Among the seven brothers, the eldest Kayin brother remained in the farm spending his time working instead of accompanying with the Buddha. Only the other six young men accompanied with him. They received slabs of stone, bronze, lead, iron, mountain rock and silver with valuable scripture inscriptions respectively since the Buddha shared them to the men. The only remaining slab of gold with valuable inscriptions was not given to any of them. In such a situation, the

youngest brother by the name of Kalar asked for and brought home that gold slab by taking a vow that he would give it to his eldest Kayin brother.

While he was midway on his return, he copied the inscriptions of the gold slab onto a sheet of leather and stole the original slab of gold. By the time he reached near his eldest Kayin brother's farm, he called out his brother's name, informing him that he would leave the valuable inscriptions on a tree-stump for him. In fact, he left only the leather sheet with copied inscriptions there.

That leather sheet was the cause for the later appearance of a piece of literature known as Kyet Yet. The reason for calling it by such a name is that the leather sheet showered with rain became so swollen and rotten that attracted dogs later ate it and again chicken raked in and ate its remaining parts, thus leaving it a permanent name as Kyet Yet literature. For instance, one can find different places by this name in various locations such as Shwe Kyet Yet Stream, Shwe Kyet Yet Ditch, Shwe Kyet Yet Pond, Shwe Kyet Yet Lake, Shwe Kyet Yet Mountain, Shwe Kyet Yet Field, Shwe Kyet Yet Temple and Shwe Kyet Yet Monastery, which are the supporting evidence. (This is the first part of Kyet Yet literature history.) By studying the history of Kyet Yet literature, it is obvious that the leather sheet was left on the tree-stump in the early spring, specifically in September (*Tawthalin*), the sixth month of Myanmar calendar. After three months of working in the fields, the eldest Kayin brother recalled the memory of his youngest brother's leaving of a valuable thing on the tree-stump.

Hence, he worriedly returned from work, passing by the tree-stump where he found no trace of the said thing, and so burst into tears remorsefully. From that time onwards, he became as if he were a crazy man. As a way of finding an outlet for his great sorrows, he put a big pile of rubbish around the tree-stump and set it on fire. Until now, it is still observable that some astrologers use charcoal to draw and calculate as a true literary landmark, that the chicken which raked in and ate the leather sheet were killed and that their bones are used for one particular type of foretelling known as Kyet Yoe Htoe Vaedin (ကျက်ယွေ့ဟွေ့ဗေဒင်). Till today, it is also still evident that people believe in the proposition that heads of dogs should not be discarded or buried in the farm as a consequence of the legend that the eldest Kayin brother did not eat the meat of the dog that had eaten the leather sheet since Phi Bhi

Yaw Spirit did not want him to eat it just before he started eating it and warned that the paddy spirits would fly away if he ate the meat.

5.8 Wedding Ceremony and Lei Kel Custom

It is found that there are many different ways of traditional homage-paying regarding Kayin traditional Lei Kel wedding ceremony. It is also observed that there are altogether seven types of wedding reception that can be voluntarily determined and agreed upon by the wedding couple and parents of both sides. The seven types of wedding reception include: the custom of an elephant owner, Hnaung Nwat Kar Li custom, the custom of a king, the custom of a poor person, the Boe Hwei custom, the Phakyune custom and the traditional custom. Depending on their degree of prosperity, some people choose to hold any wedding custom among the seven types that they like best. In most cases, it is found that the traditional custom is selected. In arranging a wedding reception, a consensus first has to be reached between the two sides of the wedding couple, then an auspicious wedding day is specified, and afterwards the respective relatives of both sides including the bridegroom and the bride have to keep Sabbath for three days. They are also obligated to practice veganism for three days. The reason why this is performed is that it is essential to conduct in accordance with the customs so as to ward off bad fates destined to befall them in their forthcoming life-journey commencing from the moments of engaging in the wedding reception. Only after having performed such activities must the wedding reception be held. At the wedding reception, the bridegroom and the bride usually wear the specified traditional costumes. Formerly, dowries for the bride's family used to include gold and silver as well as Phar-Si (ceremonial drums) and buffalo horns.

Nowadays, however, the dowries include gold and silver as well as, in most cases, two cloth sling bags. The reasons why the bags are provided are that those bags given to the bride by the bridegroom are for carefully keeping all the money that the husband earns and that those conferred to the bridegroom by the bride are meant to put religious treatises in. The auspicious bags are included with the purposes of keeping away from evil works in doing business and always keeping in mind the religious habits in dealing with any other Nationalsities. The arrangements of the wedding ceremony are usually made in various ways depending on the condition of prosperity.

Some couples hold their wedding reception with the three pairs including parents of both sides and the couple of grandfather and grandmother while some hold the ceremony with five or seven pairs. The ceremony is also ornamented as much as they can afford. It also has to include the preparation of three fairly large bowls of offerings intended for the Buddha, the Dhamma and the masters respectively. With the purpose of fastening hands with threads at the wedding ceremony, packets of rice, a kind of glutinous rice snack called Khor-Pyin, packets of steamed glutinous rice, bananas, flowers, threads of white and red colors and a lamp, one indispensable part of Lei Kel customs, are placed on a large tray without missing anything. The hands of the bridegroom and the bride are not to be fastened with threads by only one person, but by a couple. Couples who have married again, and widowed or divorced persons are also not permitted to tie their hands with threads. A couple who has been together as husband and wife since their first and last marriage are invited in advance to offer the hand-fastening service to the wedding couple, that is seldom denied by the invited couple because it is an auspicious occasion to do so.

During the act of fastening the hands with threads in a spirit-attracting manner at the wedding reception, the master of ceremony has to bless the wedding couple with admonishments and prayers while reciting the spirit-attracting mantras. However, the kind of action in which a person knocks ladder-posts and bamboo soot-rack with a ladle before going to bed as in an ordinary spirit-attracting thread-fastening situation is prohibited. When a husband and a wife have always adored each other, are well-to-do and can lead a peaceful marriage, the couple who has helped them with thread-fastening on their hands is proud to say that they are in such good conditions since they gave a helping hand at their wedding. Likewise, the bridegroom and the bride also feel extremely grateful to the dignified couple who has helped them with the act of hand-fastening for their kindness that has helped them lead a peaceful life together. In fastening the hands of the wedding couple with threads, the religious leaders have to do so first. After that, the parents from both sides have to fasten the threads. In the case of having a deceased parent on either side, another parent has to perform hand-fastening finally only after the invited grandfather and grandmother have done so. The reason for their final performance is that one parent has deceased.

For some couples, only after they have performed hand-fastening occasion do they go to Lei Kel Oath-taking Wish-fulfilling Temple in Hnitchar Village and keep

on performing in accordance with their customs. When the couple comes to the temple, they have to bring water in bamboo containers. Bringing water in such a way is a way of following the customs in order to ward off bad fates destined to befall them. The reason why they use bamboo container instead of other modern appliances for fetching water is that they carry water in a manner performed by their ancestors. When they have performed bathing in an appropriate place around the temple and taken an oath and said prayers in front of the temple, they have to share their meritorious deeds in front of the temple, the Goddess of the Earth. The wedding ceremony of the Lei Kel devotees successfully conclude after having completed the main performances including the thread-fastening on the couple's hands, paying homage to the Dhamma treatises and to the grandfather and the grandmother, especially paying obeisance to the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha as well as the masters, the parents and the grandparents. The wedding couple usually accepts the prayers and blessings of the masters and the grandparents who present their dignified attendance.

5.9 Donation and Lei Kel Ritual

Lei Kel devotees do not perform eating traditional Spirit (Nat) spirit feasts. They make great donation four times a year. They perform such donation in accordance with the respective seasons. In the rainy season when young aquatic creatures hatch and leave their usual places and when floods may prevent the creatures from reaching their destinations, the donation of cash and kind are made with a view to praying for the safety of the aquatic creatures. When the cold season sets in at the end of the rainy season, another praying occasion takes place in order to pray for the safe return of all creatures to their respective hibernating places with plenty water in the dry season. When the scorching summer starts, the dry leaves of forests and mountains are susceptible to causing wildfires which can kill small creatures. Hence, another praying occasion also takes place in order to pray for keeping the creatures free from the dangers of wildfires. According to the beliefs of some Lei Kel devotees, they have to do donation four times a year representing the four basic properties of matter including solidity, heat, fluidity and volatility in the same way that human body is made up of those four basic properties. Out of the four seasonal donation, the greatest and best-attended one is the worshipping ceremony for the Goddess of Paddy.

When this ceremony is being held, all the Lei Kel devotees in Kayin State gather at Don Seik Thar Phaung Temple in Tawpon Village in order that they can worship Phi Phu Yaw, the Goddess of Paddy who is regarded as the guardian of paddy. Of the four ritual that are celebrated four times a year, that of the Goddess of Paddy is undoubtedly one of the most valued special ritual of Kayin Nationals people most of whom earn a living by farming.



Photo (35) Activities for donation

5.10 Historical Background of Phi Bhi Yaw Spirit

According to interview, the history of Phi Bhi Yaw that is believed by Poe Kayin, he said Kayin has practiced growing farmland by piercing sharp bamboo since the most primitive period of the world. Early in the morning, ancestors went to their hillside farmlands at dawn. By that time, a young Kayin peacefully lived on hillside farming. He was broad minded and helped others. He contributed to the collective work of people. One day, when he was going to the farmland, he heard an old woman crying for help as she had fallen from a cliff and was injured. Regardless of his life, he came down with difficulties to where the old woman was. He brought her on his back to home. He looked after the old woman as if she had his own parent again. After some time, the old woman recovered from wounds, she also helped him with his household food. The food at the boy's home never ran short of though they ate it every day. The food was always full at home. The boy needed a partner to keep his house and his properties. The old woman brought a girl. On arrival back from farming, the old woman told him about the girl and made him married to her. After the old woman had stayed at home with the boy and the girl, she said she was the paddy –goddess, had to go back to her place and said good-bye to the son and daughter. Even when she was

back in her place, she would never fail to look after them. She promised them. If she was invited at the first growing time of paddy, she would be back. She said so and returned back. People in the village noticed that the young couple made huge progress in their business. They thus, asked them the cause. They told the villager about their whole story. People also believed in the goddess and have begun worshipping the paddy goddess since then.

5.10.1 Phi Bhi Yaw (The goddess of Paddy) Festival

Lei Kel believers have no ancestral spiritual offering (Nat -sar gin). Instead they make donation four times a year. Donations are made according to the seasons. In the rainy season, aqua-creatures have reached the season of laying eggs; the donation for paying that those creatures would be free from dangers is a made. When the raining season is over and the winter comes, the weather gets dry. Another prayer recital was celebrated for those creatures to be able to safely go back to their hiding places by swimming through the water. When the summer come, it is hot and there is forest-fire that burns leaves, a prayer ceremony is held in order that the forest wildlife may escape from forest-fire.

Another tradition of Lei Kel believer is that they gather at the temple of Don Seik tha Phaung located in Tawpon village and pay homage to the goddess of paddy known as Phi Bhi Yaw. Among the four ceremonies held four times a year, the ceremony of paying homage to the goddess of paddy in the only occasion of Poe Kayin who believe and value it as the holiest as they live on agriculture for their livelihood.

According to the interview, a belief of Lei Kel believers, the human body is made up of four elements, So the donation are made four times a year , representing those four elements-Pathavi (*earth*) Tejo (*fire*) Apo (*water*) and Vayo (*wind*). The most splendid and crowded festival of all four donation ceremonies is the ceremony of worshipping the goddess of paddy. In celebrating this ceremony, the occasion is festively held at 36 temples of Lei Kel missionary in Kayin State at the same time. At one of the research area Don seik tha phaung Lei Kel missionary school, the occasion of Phi Bhi Yaw grandma goddess is ceremoniously held, the place where the festival takes place is the space to This square place is regarded as the festival ground and it is fenced around with bamboo poles in the type of trellis (*rajamat*) (ရာဇာမတ်) At the four

corners of the space fenced by rajamat, cane plant, banana plant and cotton plant are stuck straight. The fenced space must be smeared with cow-dung. Applying cow-dung is not to mix paddy with earth when Phi Bhi Yaw paddy is picked up there.



Photo (36) Offering paddy and paying homage to the Phi Bhi Yaw

After watching the space with cow-dung, the fair share of villages is brought there as a donation or some come and donate their paddy as much as they wish. They believe that the goddess of paddy takes care of their paddy field because they come and offer paddy to her. The paddy donation is placed in two separate piles. One contains paddy and the other belong to sticky rice. In other words, the first is male pile and the second is female pile. In order to make people know which is male or female, a red-blanket is hung high over the male-pile and the white one over the female-pile. The use of blanket means wrapping somebody with affection and looking after someone with love. The agricultural tools are also piled up beside the heaps of paddy. Before the festival day, grandparents create fantastic patterns with the create paddy to be hung over the storage-place of paddy. Doing it is to make preparation of displaying paddy crest for the goddesses to eat it easily the east of the Hthamout (community religious hall) or Zayat and Phibuyaw paddy storage-in the school compound. The festival space measures by 20 feet in length and 20 feet in breadth. This square space is regarded as the festival ground and it is fenced around with bamboo poles in the type of trellis (*rajamat*).



Photo (37) Activities of Phi Bhi Yaw ritual

At the four corners of the space fenced by trellis (*rajamat*), cane plant, banana plant, and cotton plant, are stuck straight. The fenced space must be smeared with cow-dung. Applying cow-dung is not to mix paddy with earth when Phi Bhi Yaw paddy is piled up there. After waling the space with cow-dung, the fair share of village is brought there as a donation or some come and donation their paddy as much as they wish. They believe that the goddess of paddy takes care of their paddy fields because they came and offer paddy to her. The paddy donation is placed in two separate piles. One contains paddy and the other belongs to sticky rice. In order to make people know which is male or female, a red- blanket is hung high over the male-pile and the white one over the female-pile. The use of blankets means wrapping somebody with affection and looking after someone with love. Early in the morning on the festive day, the master help celebrate not only the ceremony of Phi Bhi Yaw on the (Zedi) but also the offering of meals. Frist, the pay homage to the Buddha, say prayers and send loving-kindness.



Photo (38) Holding Phi Bhi Yaw ritual

At 8; 00am, the Phi Bhi Yaw concerned delivers a speech in praise of the benefits of the paddy-goddess to the guests. After that, Lei Kel youth group give a performance of Done dance (*ဒုးဒုး*) with the accompaniment of Phi Bhi yaw song. The most senior master invites the goddess, says to her to look after the sons and daughters, and request her to help harvest successful. Finally the master sends loving-kindness to the goddess. And the pairs of grandparents and master walk around the pile of paddy that has been prepared for the festival for seven times sprinkle it with fragrant water. The aim of circling it for seven times is to wish the goddess to guard seven-day born people. After Lei Kel believers sing song performs Don Dances, the festival is successfully over. After the festival, the paddy piles on the space are carried to the paddy storages concerned. And then some bits of earth from the space is picked up rolled as balls and put into the Paline(bamboo container) that is hung at a corner so as to guard the paddy-storage. Some place a picture of an eagle on behalf of the goddess as to guard the entire paddy.

They practice it to prevent the paddy from being damaged by chicken, rats and birds. When the Phi Bhi Yaw festival is being celebrated and the paddy is being grown, they seen an eagle flying in the sky and they believe that Phi Bhi Yaw goddess comes to them. The Phi Bhi Yaw paddy stored is managed by Phi Bhi Yaw khu to use some in the temple's affairs and to distribution among those suffering from food shortage in the rainy season.



Photo (39) Participation in Phi Bhi Yaw ritual

5.11 Lei Kel Practice and the Custom of Tying white Thread

Tying white thread or Wrist Tying Ceremony, one of the traditional ceremonies of Kayin, is the most famous and popular ceremony. The purpose of that ceremony and its procedures are same no matter how much different in places. The reasons of holding that ceremony are to keep five kinds of traditions such as Literature, Language, Art, Traditional Costume and Traditional Customs. Moreover it is the heritage left by forefathers and it aims to have white thread on wrist (the signature of Kayin people) so that people from different places can give help each other when they meet. In other words, Wrist tying Ceremony is the great heritage of the forefathers to young generation.

Kayin Traditional Wrist Tying Ceremony is held according to time and circumstance. Generally there are nine types of Wrist Tying. They are Wrist Tying for Marriage, Wrist Tying for Sick People or Wrist Tying after worshipping A Phoe (a guardian spirit), Wrist Tying for Pregnancy, Wrist Tying for New-born baby, Wrist Tying to People who are away from home, Wrist Tying for People who are startled and Wrist Tying in War-gaung month.

Poe Kayin people who believe in holy Lei Kel practice choose suitable Saturday in War-gaung month to hold Wrist Tying ceremony. According to Lei Kel belief, they don't choose full-moon day or waxing of the moon. The reason of it is that people who believe in Lei Kel practice follow the teaching of their teachers and they are used to holding religious or traditional ceremonies on Saturday. Traditional Wrist Tying ceremony of Lei Kel believers is a bit different from other Poe Kayin people. But the purpose of ceremony is the same. Lei Kel believers light the candle and call

Butterfly (the symbol of human spirit) when they tie white thread on wrist. The reason of doing so is to call back the butterfly which is temporarily far away from human body. It is believed that if the butterfly is far away from human body for a long time, that body is regarded as the dead body. If that butterfly leaves from a person's body for some reasons, that person would be sick. At that time, calling butterfly ceremony is held.

According to Lei Kel belief, the butterfly which is wondering is called by lighting the candle. The candle is lighted because the Butterfly is lost his way in the dark and the light may show the right way to human beings. With the light of candle, the Butterfly is called back by tying white thread on the wrist. The candle used in the ceremony is not normal one. Moreover it is also not the Kayin traditional bee wax candle. According to Lei Kel belief, the thing for wrist tying ceremony is placed in tray. To make the candle wick, the bamboo slat which has about five inches is cut for three or five or seven sticks. Those bamboo slats are wound with white thread for 15 times at least. Three bamboo slats are mostly used and the reason of using like that is to represent the Three Gems: Buddha, Scripture and Teacher. In lighting the candle, the banana leaves are cut and only stem is used. Then the bamboo slated immersed in oil are set up on the stem and it light up until the flame is stable. The Butterfly cannot be seen or heard if the candle is not lighted up. Thus Lei Kel believers have to use bamboo fire or Light in holding ceremony. When the light goes out, the ceremony is done.

The colors of thread are also different according to Lei Kel believer's identity. White thread is for men, red is women, and yellow is for single people. For baby, they used green. In wedding, both white and red threads are used to tie on the the wrist of bride and groom. Although there are some differences in traditional beliefs, Poe Kayin people who believe in Lei Kel practices hold the traditional customs and ceremonies like other Kayin people.

5.12 Lei Kel Funeral Rites

Some Poe Kayin as well as Lei Kel believers lining in Hlaing Gabar village hold funeral rites for three days. Some hold for only one day. When a man dies, they have to inform Lei Kel master of that obituary so that they can start funeral traditions. The type of rite depends on the dead man's age, moral and dignity. So, the rite

categorized into three levels- poor people, rich people and king. The funeral rite depends on how much the dead person keeps his or her precepts (sila). The poor man keeps precepts for one day, the rich man for three days and the kings for the rest of his life. It is important to know the level of one's death. For this reason, the prayer has recital and rite preparation with the also different. In preparing the coffin, a miniature of donation temple is included in it because it will be the sign of good deeds the dead person did in this existence that is to be carried on to next existence. Some include a miniature of a ship.

A three sets of offertory bowl (Kadaw pwe) aiming at the dead man. Two banana, betel leaves, betel nuts, tobacco and limestone must be included in this bowl or container. Four arm- length of white cloth must also be included. Before the coffin is laid down on earth, three oil- lamps are lighted so as to pay homage to the Buddha prayer are recited and fragrant water is sprinkled. Another rite the master do is reading Lei Kel scriptures for the whole night order to make the dead man hear it. If in the last dead they do for the dead man. On the day when the coffin is buried, the masters read out Lei Kel scriptures to make the dead man hear. The Lei Kel believers invited from all directions come and pay respect to the dead person. The youth group members sing and help the dead man peacefully to go on his or her last journey. When the dead man departs home, people pour down water onto the coffin, helping him or her to peacefully leave for whenever they lead. People send Eugenia flowers; quid of betel, small bowl made of Tabaco, bamboo water container, oil lamp and coconut offertory bowl are brought to the cemetery.

The head of the dead man is placed in the east. Placing east is to pay homage to where they would be Buddha is. Three offertory bowls are placed in order, are at the head, another at the middle place and the next at the place bowl at the foot. And prayers are recited. The bowl at head is for heaven. The bowl below the waist is the ritual masters. The bowl at the foot is for the earth. Some include only two. Master's and parent's bowls are combined. On arrival back from the cemetery, the ceremony of recalling soul by wrist tying is held.



Photo (40) Preparation of the corpse

CHAPTER VII

DISCUSSION

Based on theories of anthropology, the matters concerning traditional festivals and ceremonies which are related to belief and practices and their associated issues in the religious beliefs of Poe Kayin who live in Hlaing Gabar Village were explored and identified. Regarding ritual theory, Durkheim pointed out in his theory that social facts should be considered in expressing a particular thing. Redcliffe- Brown improved on Durkheim's theory by attempting to explain why some ritual chosen over others. Ultimately, Redcliffe- Brown suggested, ritual directly related to the collective and material well-being of a society are elevated to having spiritual, ritual value as well.

In the research area, where the researcher has studied, beliefs in their religion represent the identity for building their culture and also identity is preserved by the religion to produce much better personality. Moreover, the identity can be regained by developing personality. It can be assumed that culture, personality and identity are interrelated according to beliefs for the religion. Not only social facts but also the matters that can make beliefs strong can stimulate feelings. Consequently, it can be stated that value, emotion, attitude and identity of this ethnic groups are one of the crucial factors in nurturing the power of beliefs and their effectiveness.

7.1 Religious Beliefs and Practices in Other Countries

Poe Kayin ethnic people hold various traditional festivals in different seasons based upon their diverse assumptions. It is a festival which tends to be held for personal belief separately or individually. For example: In the case of a wedding reception which is one of the social events, it is essential to celebrate the ceremony for choosing customs when a couple of different customs get married. The acceptance of the idea of matrilineal is the customs of paying respect to the female Poe Kayin people. If they don't obey this customs, they believe that they may face a number of difficulties for the whole life. That is why the male Poe Kayin worships customs of his wife after holding customs choosing ceremony. Through the customs choosing ceremony, the beliefs and appreciation of customs and religion of the male Poe Kayin can be seen. It can be seen that the more serious their beliefs on customs become, the stronger their practice will be. As the heritage of the ancient pass through the

generation to generation, the family, kinship and even community are influenced the acceptance of the power of beliefs on the social customs and religion.

Mahoney et al. (1999) expressed the customs that is concerned with matrimonial affairs as one of the religious beliefs which contain in the chapter of religion. It can be found that for married persons, customs, religion and acting are ways not only for decreasing matrimonial problems but also for becoming smaller number of social issues in raising a family.

Similarly, in this study, Poe Kayin who relies on Buddhism, religious ceremony takes part as a major role when they are married. Wedding is a social rule that is assigned by a culture and a society. People can realize mutual respect and social rules and regulations between husband and wife, one-to- one, among families and relatives through wedding. In wedding Poe Kayin who relies on Buddhism, wedding ceremony is legal after they have prayed to Shin Du wai Grandpa and main temple. Swearing and praying in front of the Buddha Image or the wish-fulfilling temple is the type of their customs for wedding. It is one of the habits for tie-up between each other in order to possess a happy or peaceful family. In other words, it is not only social ties but also psychology ties. This customs is a practicing way for both ancient people and newcomers. Therefore, it can be regarded that rules and regulations for wedding according to the religion is a major role in building up the new life.

Rinchen Pelzang (2010) presented that the patients and family members do festivals for illness and praying as their customs in customs and religion of Bhutan society portion. They believed that they suffer from the diseases when the evil spirits are angry. Therefore, they perform the religious festivals that worship regional spirits, drive out evil spirits and ghosts. Additionally, they hold these festivals in monasteries besides at their home.

According to observation, when Poe Kayin who live in the villages are ill, they can get treatment in various ways such as treatment by modern medicine, treatment by medicine that is accepted by tradition , treatment by faith-healer, etc . However, they seldom being ill because most of them are farmers and they work in their farm from dawn to down (sunset) while breathing fresh air. But it is natural that everyone can face 96 kinds of diseases while their stamina is weak. At that time,

although they can be treated by the physicians, there are means for treating according to their religion and customs when they cannot relieve from suffering by the usual treatments. In this case, same ethnic groups but different religion can get treatment by doing asking ceremony. People who rely on Shin Du wai request the elders to participate in the spirit-inviting ceremony in giving treatment to patients. Some are praying for the patients at home or at a ritual shrine. People who believe in Leikel do spirit calling ceremony in front of traditionalists at home or somewhere appropriate they believe to pray. In calling spirit, the fact against Shin Du wai is that they call the spirit of the patient by lighting oil lamp. At present, calling spirit is accepted to be usable method for Poe Kayin. Thus, it can be assumed that Poe Kayin always obey and practicing their customs and religion in the case of unhealthy.

Galina Lindquist and Sidney M. Greenfield (2005) stated the festivals for calling spirit that is concerned with the treatment of the spirit shaman. In their statement, they presented that this festival is not concerned merely with the social opinions. It is also more than the assumptions of the spirit shaman as the religious beliefs. It depends on the floating of spirit due to the body that is suffering from diseases.

The Buddhist Poe Kayin people believe in persisting of spirits. While the body is sleeping, the spirit is leaving from the body and floating directionless. They assumed that if the spirit cannot return back in time, the body will be dead. Thus, the patient family members can call the spirit of the patient in order to be him/her conscious. The researcher observed that they are using these customs till now.

From the observations, it is a natural phenomenon that everyone is searching job opportunities for their survival, and working for their provisions. Poe Kayin is agriculturalist who is accepted by tradition. They grow paddy, plant hill-side cultivation, grow orchard as their ancient people. They grow various paddies according to the available farm land. When they grow paddy, they use irrigation canals if necessary. They also grow different kinds of beans as not only multiple crops but also extra crop if they can. To be able to do so, they make Shin Du wai and opulent of their farm as the focal point of an issue before they go to their farms. Then, they worship the Spirit (*Nat*) who take care of their farms, the paddy fairy who grown up their paddy, and Phi-bu-yaw Spirit (*Nat*). According to their customs, they grow the paddy that is intended for the paddy fairy firstly. If they do so, their products will

increase. It is successful as they grow. They will receive consequences if they try hard as their beliefs. Therefore, it can be seen that the power of their beliefs in traditional Spirit (*Nat*) and paddy fairy can be effective for their vocations as farmers. That is why they are using and relying this customs both individually and collectively.

Lokasundari Vijaya Sankar (2014) showed the role of Iyar women and festivals in Malaysia. In Iyar society, man takes part as an important role in praying for religious festivals. Women undertake in preparing for meals and the like. Moreover, women have to obey the customs and religion of the Iyar society. It can be known that women in Iyar are the second place in performing religious affairs.

Similarly, in this study, as religious performances, traditional praying can be performed by girl as a leader. For Poe Kayin who relies on Du wai tradition, husband reveres the hereditary rites of his dead wife before he has got next marriage. When choosing customs, a married daughter must serve instead of her mother by turning back home. The opportunity for preserving the traditional customs can be given by the daughter. Only girls can transit their customs and hereditary rites from one generation to another. Without having female (mother, daughter, granddaughter), it is impossible to celebrate customs choosing ceremony. If females are on trip, or working at another region, they must be waited. However, female who worship Shin Du wai tradition; they try hard to return in time by the time celebrating religious festivals. Thus, female Poe Kayin can ever prevent and serve their religious rules and regulations although there is a rapid change in physical environment.

By the detailed study, Poe Kayin who reveres Lei Kel celebrates their religious festival four times a year. Most of these festivals are based on the assumptions of affection. While celebrating these festivals, they obey and preserve their rules and regulations, affairs, and beliefs. Among the festivals that are held by Lei Kel believers, Phi-Bu-Yaw fairy festival is one of the festivals in order to express the assessing the value of their religion. When this festival is celebrating, the believers from different regions come and wish collectively. According to the facts above, the values of these ethnic groups, their beliefs, and their acting customs can be seen. Additionally, function, symbolic culture, social identity of this festival can be observed.

According to Trice, Belasco and Alutto (1969), this symbolic character, in addition to affecting individuals, also plays a crucial role in maintaining and reinforcing social structures and incorporating individuals into a larger social entity. Recognizing this symbolic element in the maintenance of social life gives the scholar a theoretical tool to classify and study behavior which at first glance might seem irrational or counterproductive but reveals itself, upon further analysis, to be based on the symbolic life of a group.

In contrast, most Du wai shrine is one of the obvious factors in preserving a symbolic culture of Shin Du wai customs. Only Spirit (*Nat*) shrine is a real home in the belief of the Kayin. Some believe that the living house is not the genuine house. Thus, the traditional shrine that recognizes the genuine house is as a sign of Poe Kayin tribe. Shin Du wai traditional shrine is mainly concerned with the married people. They start building this shrine when they get children after living with their parents about three years. One belief of Poe Kayin tribe is that two Shin Du wai shrine should not be built in the living house simultaneously. There is no right to build the younger Shin Du wai shrine to have respect for the existing older or parent Shin Du wai shrine. So, there can be some case that married children set up and live in a separate house with their parents. But, some stay on at their parents' house by building another shrine at the appropriate southern part of their yard.

Besides, traditional worship can be seen as Shin Du wai traditional worshipper by looking at the shrine in their yard whereas their socio economic status can be observed with the sizes of shrines in that the worshippers build their shrines as a brick house or wooden house when their economic status is good but they build the small ordinary bamboo houses when they have moderate money or others hang the things to worship at the tree for the purpose of building shrine at the time they are convenient the financial matters. In accordance with this point, through Shin Du wai traditional shrine that reserves as a symbolic culture, the worshippers' faith and practices can be seen for their social structure and socio economic status from the symbolic culture aspect. In other words, to conserve the parent's customs, a sign of traditional shrine that preserved with the rule and regulation of maintaining posterity, can be observed.

Another symbolic culture is at the weddings of Poe Kayin tribe who revere Shin Du wai traditional, the things they carry valuably as a symbolic, culture are coconut palm, betel plant, and banyan tree. Since the ancient times to now, to

asseverate the truth, the bridegroom carries the water in the coconut as oath-taking water to asseverate the truth. It is recognize as the oath-taking water because it is at a high place, and it does not have insects to enter in. In the same way, the festive betel box is the thing that is to carry the ingredients necessary for the wedding. After the wedding, the value of the betel box is more than as before. The banyan tree takes part a role to do obeisance. Not only to have firm and pleasant relationship but also to have treasured children, it has the custom that they come to the banyan tree and pray by tying it with the white cotton.

Symbolic culture can be seen at the weddings of Poe Kayin races who believe in Lei Kel. In wedding, two festive bags for the Lei Kel believers have the aim that the bag of bridegroom for the bride is for saving a lot of money that get by the husband carefully and the bag of bride for the bridegroom is for scripture with the purpose of not forgetting the doctrine of Buddha and finding with justice in searching for the living. These two bags have to be kept as a Lei Kel traditional inheritance. In comparing the weddings of Kayin who have different religions, faith and traditions, their culture can be noticed by looking at the symbolic culture materials in their customs.

According to the P. Steven (2013), he stated the symbolic and ritual customs, the gender issues and the communication types among the Chinese relatives. He wrote that the religion of mother plays a key role in faith and leads the traditional customs and religion of her children.

Some Poe Kayin who live in Hlaing Gabar region, Hpa-an, Kayin State follow the traditional Matrilineal type. In this type, the women take part in a leader role. The father has to take the tradition of his wife. It points to the changes of the tradition because of changes in time and place. The children have also to accept the religion of their mother. The twelve months of Poe Kayin celebrate the religious festivals and traditional festivals. In these festive months, the festivals hold in villages, townships, and states together. The festive symbolic culture customs can be observed in these festivals.

Heather MacLachlan (2011) wrote about the traditional hand tying of Kayin races in the United States. He stated the customs related with traditional hand tying of Kayin Union at USA with the Nationals opinion.

In Hlaing Gabar region, Poe Kayin races tie with the white cotton in their hands to recognize each other when they meet. Thus, the real Kayin tribe has the white cotton sign in his or her hand. In weddings or in celebrations or in propitiation of Spirit (*Nat*) spirit or after funeral or after the bone collecting festivals or in summoning the spirit of a dead person, this cotton tying is made by Buddhist Poe Kayin. There are three types of Kayin traditional hand tying. These three occur according to the circumstances and conditions. The tying methods differ in accordance with the religions, environment contacts and the purpose is the same with the customs of grandparents. The white cotton tying festival of the Myanmar month of Wah gaung points to the Kayin identity and solidarity.

Satalecki (2003) described the practice of interring bodies by region on the Nationalities living in Southern Scania. He made a discussion on the relationship between the ways of burial and the funeral ceremonies.

Similarly, in this study almost most of Poe Kayin the preparation of corpse in two types. One type is for sudden death and another is for poor health. They thought that the death in full moon and new moon days is bad. So, if someone dies in these days, he or she is cremated within the day. The dead body is not beautified and rolled with mat. Ten houses supervisor and hundred houses leaders are informed with 1000 kyats, one cigarette and candle. These leaders take responsibility until the end of death occasion. The coffin for the corpse is prepared by the knowledgeable elders. It is decorated with paper, pennon, flag bamboo stick (Kokka). Sometimes, if the corpse's relatives live in far-away places, they wait one or two days to cremate. But, the corpse is not kept more than two days. In rainy season, it is fired with petrol or diesel. They put out the fire with the water in three bamboo boxes. Then, these boxes are placed in three-way cross on the cremated body. It is to do the lattice fence according to the customs of Poe Kayin. The pennon and kokkar are set up over the fired bones and ashes. The aim is not to destroy by the animals such as chickens, pigs, and dogs because the bone collecting ceremony is not taken place.

Lei Kel Poe Kayin in Hlaing Gabar area celebrates the funeral three days. Some keep the corpse one day. As soon as one dies, Lei Kel leaders are informed and they carry out the task for preparing the ceremony. The corpse is bathed and beautified. The ceremony is taken place by the aged and a person with integrity. They pray for the dead person read the scripture the whole night. When they bury the dead,

they read the Lei Kel scripture to hear the dead for carrying the good deeds in his or her next life. Lei Kel believers in different villages come to the funeral. The young people sing in groups to convey the dead peacefully.

Tylor and Spencer saw funeral ceremonies, cults of the dead, and beliefs in an afterlife as the kernel of their studies in comparative religion. Tylor held that beliefs in another life were associated with a body/soul dichotomy, which was universal. The deceased ancestor, now passed into a deity, simply goes on protecting his own family and receiving suit and service from them as of old; the dead chief still watches over his own tribe, still holds his authority by helping friends and harming enemies, still rewards the right and sharply punishes the wrong (Primitive culture, 1891, as cited in Townsend).

Studies show as mention above, both Shin Du wai and Lei Kel Poe Kayin, All of the dead's own things are put in the coffin during the funeral. There are some similarities among different culture of different religion. In funeral function, it can be seen social network is as much as important in ritual.

Myo races Karamar or Kyamar religion is started by Malon. He came from Bangladesh in 1987 and approached Mro villages and spread the Karamar religion. Myo races pronounce the Kyamar as the Karamar. Therefore, it is named as Karamar religion. Their belief is that if someone does good things, he or she will have good fortune. It is the belief of Kan or deed. They said the next Buddha Arinmeikdeya is their Buddha. So, the Sukka sends the person named Maylay to spread the Karamar religion. He also invents the Mro literature. This day is the Thursday. The messenger Maylay was born in Sunday. So, they considers these two days as Sabbath days. They usually build the church near the gate of the village. They pray at 9 in the morning and at 12 at noon on Thursday. On Sunday, they pray at 9 in the morning, at 12 at noon and 4 in the afternoon.

Similarly, in this study, there is a religion in Hlaing Gabar areas whose worshippers believe in holy practice of Arimataya Bodhisattva. A Phoeo-thi-thaung-htaw and A Phoeo-mite-cale, Poe Kayin, started that holy practice in Myanmar calendar year 1222 (1861). Lei Kel means savior and care the people who are suffering from sins. That religion also gives the right way to make wealth to the poor. Saturday is a holy day for Lei Kel believers. On that day, the believers have to do

only the religion related chores. They pray three times in the whole day starting from morning till the evening. The believers in the church toll the bells and blow calf horn in the pray room to remind making good deeds. They are reminding the merit doers that it is time for praying and doing good deeds.

In Myanmar culture, spirit believers' donation in many aspects. At this point, every man and woman, regardless of their positions or status, turn on to the spirits when they are solving their everyday obstacles in business and social duties. Most of Myanmar Nationals from different parts of Myanmar believe in spirits. Every national believes in traditional spirits.

The spirits is vital for Nationals such as Kachin, Kayah and Chin. In the world where all the living things live, it is believed that there are spirits. And it is believed that spirits make the good and bad interest of the people and, create, destroy and care the living and non-living things. The shaman has to lead the offering ceremony for worshipping the spirits. The shaman is usually inherited. The shaman has to be clever in offering spirits, reading the portent and predicting the future. He also do giving the herbal roots, doing good deeds, offering traditional feast and worshipping the spirits for the patients suffering from disturbance of spirits in accordance with belief. Moreover, they invite and offer to the spirits before people celebrate seasonal plantation, building house, wedding and other social ceremonies.

Role and function of ritual and ceremonies of Zaiwa (Azi) national, Waingmaw Township in Kachin State. She point out, the role and function of ritual and ceremonies especially in their socio-economic life. The most Zaiwa changed their religion from spirit worship to Christian, they still practices some of their tradition, custom and belief as their culture.

Although Mon Nationals are Buddhists, they celebrate their offering to traditional spirits every year. There are shrines at the east, the west and the middle of every village. There are no statues at the shrines but there have vase with flowers for religious offering and, water pot and cups instead. At some village, there is a habit of putting the statue of person who cares the village and horse for him. Traditional offering heritage is only for the eldest son. Traditional Mon spirit heritage is only for men. When a girl in a family wed to a man from another family, she will desert her family spirit and worship her husband's traditional spirit only. In the later days, a

housewife celebrated her last worship for her family traditional spirits regard to their gratitude in a convenient day. That ritual is celebrated because as a housewife, the daughter will not be related to her father's traditional spirits and that will be her last worshipping to her family traditional spirits.

They believe in their traditional spirits' power for their business and social duties. They make seasonal offering to the spirits. For offering, the shaman leads the ceremony. The shaman work either inherited or as a business, and also according to their hobby. They offer, worship and cure for the patients who are suffering from spirit disturbance. In addition to worshipping the spirits, eating traditional feast at the time of propitiation of spirits is also a tradition of Poe Kayin.

Traditional feast for spirits is also offering to the spirits of the deceased parents and grandparents. They know their parents' gratitude while they are alive, and also after they died and even long time after that they still consistently worship their parents' spirits. During traditional feast, the sons and daughters, and the grandchildren of the late parents and grandparents gather and stay at one home. Both the traditional feast for spirits and worship of the parents and grandparents are tradition of the nationals too.

Similarly, in this study, among of the tradition of belief in the Kayin state, Shin Du wai is the most believed tradition. Shin Du wai tradition is a place for saying oath and praying. At every village, there are house for traditional instead shrine. There is no statue in traditional house. Only stove and clay plates are stored in that house to be used during traditional offering. Twice in a year, while the day comes for traditional offering, they come to the house to cook and pray there. One can know the depth of belief and also the condition of business and social duties of the people by looking at Shin Du wai home.

Based on the above-mentioned facts, the ethnic people – however varied their living areas are – are found to propitiate the respective traditional spirits without fail in a specified season every year that are concerned with their own nationality and that are in harmony with their own beliefs. It was also observed that Kayin usually propitiate their traditional guardian-spirits that have been worshipped since their ancestors' times, punctually in a specified season since spirits are believed to possess

powers which can give good or bad effects to human beings despite their belief being not in the form of a particular worship.

CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Apart from Buddhism, there are other beliefs too. They are Christianity, LeiKel religious Sect, Kyaik kawi religion (or) Phatakhit Sect, A Phoeweko association (or) celibacy gaing,(byanazo gaing), Talakhon (or) Talaku recluse. Among the beliefs mentioned above, the history of Du wai traditional guardian spirit and Lei Kel Buddhism come into being, Poe Kayin Nationals' belief on them and their traditional customs and ritual will be reviewed and presented.

It is studied that the ritual related to Poe Kayin religious beliefs are yearly celebrated according to the seasons. There are ritual base on religion and some on traditions. Some rituals are celebrated for the purposes of livelihood, food, and way of living, recovering illness, disasters and village affairs. Some traditions are celebrated for the purposes of the hand down those factors to new generations' peace and unity. According to the situation, there are rituals also held among families. Sometimes, there are rituals that need to invite the villages in their neighborhood.

The rituals of Poe Kayin who believe in Shin Du wai traditional spirit are found to be celebrated in twelve months. They are the rituals of doing meritorious deeds in Tagu, recital of Paritta- preventive discourses and wiping off evils in Kason offering saffron robes for vasa to Buddhist monks in Waso, tying soul or white thread ritual in Wah-gaung floating balloons to pay homage to the Buddha in Thadingyut, averting impending misfortune in Tazaungmon Laureate day in Nataw, New Year festival in Pyatho, making htamane bonfire ritual in Tapodwe and Zwegabin temple ritual in Taboung. Twelve rituals are always alive with a teeming crowd. The traditional festivals are held in Wah gaung, Pyatho and Tabaung for solidarity, peaceful and harmony. Those in other months are held in accord with their respective beliefs. Those festivals can be looked at from the perspective of how much Poe Kayin value their beliefs and customs.

Lei Kel believers have four donation festivals in three seasons-summer, monsoon and winter. The four festivals, held for four times, represent 4 elements. They offer swam (alms-rice) to four enlightened Buddha and Arimitteya Buddha to be enlightened. After offering alms-rice to five Buddha: ie the Buddha who have already existed and the future Buddha who will attain enlightenment in the life of the

Arimeikteiya Buddha, they pay homage to eight ariyas (saintly, purified persons who have attained the noble path and fruition) and two parents. Lei Kel` believers celebrate their New year donation festival at the beginning of the year in Tazaungmon. Tazaungmon is the month of harvest and New Year donation festival is held in this month. The purpose of celebrating this festival is to offer first fruits produced by their garden-lands to five Buddha. One of the beliefs of Lei Kel` is that father and mothers are as great benefactors as the heaven and the earth. For this reason, they say prayers and send loving-kindness to the heaven and the earth. The earth creates the soil on which the crops are grown and the heaven pours water on to the crops to be grown well. Consequently, they pay obeisance to the glory of the heaven and the earth, and the glory of Phutawrom (ဖုတောဝ်) and Phithirom,(ဖိထိဝ်) the parents of Phuhtithaungtawt(ဖုထိထောင်တော) and Phimikkali,(ဖိမိက်ကလီ) the founders of Lei Kel Ariya tradition as benefactors for all until the time that is as long as the earth exists.

All their Lei Kel New year festival, not only the benefactors but also their traditional guardian spirit (*Nat*) are invited to enjoy food and to listen to Dhamma discourses delivered. Representing 365 days a year, Lei Kel believers include 360 dishes for every donation. The alms-dishes are strictly vegetables. A jack-fruit leaf is made into a form of square bowl to be used as an alms-food container. In this leaf bowl, eight kinds of alms-food such as rice, sesame, khawpyin(ခေါ့ပိုင်) (mixture of glutinous rice, sesame seeds and coconut slices),glutinous rice, Mont-Peinne seed(small balls of boiled glutinous rice),coconut, banana and Kyanthaka(ကျံသကာ) (brown sugar) are placed, including 365 sprigs of eugenia, 365 betel-leaves, and 365 bamboo cups. After listening to the sermon delivered, the New Year meritorious deeds are shared by pouring libation water as witnessed by Thokehtakri, Thakethara, and the Guardian spirit of the earth. What is significant in celebrating festivals of the same Nationals with different belief is that the food prepared to be offered is strictly vegetables.

The purpose of celebrating bonfire is for individuals with their respective beliefs to pay homage to the bonfire. The bonfire is built so as to wipe off bad omens, misfortune and evils. They are to be gone with the fire. Shin Du wai traditional bonfire is celebrated by Kayin and non-Kayin to avert impending misfortune. But Lei

Kel Buddhist does not have it. If the way of celebrating ritual of Shin Du wai Buddhists is compared with that of Lei Kel Buddhists, both usually believe in the power of the mysterious soul that can create the bad and good fortune throughout their lives.

In celebrating a wedding ceremony, both sides have to go to the Thitsarmandaing Shin Du wai Zedi to say prayers and asseverate the truth. In doing this, the bridegroom has to carry the coconut to be used in pouring water of truth and the bride has to carry the Mingalar(Auspicious) betel bowl, wrapped up in a white cloth, that contains offerings. The Master says the prayers that the wedding couple is to be taken care under the shade of the affection of Shin Du wai traditional spirit and send loving-kindness by making Thudari -Thudara Earth Guardian spirit witness the ceremony and asseverate the truth by pouring the water of the truth.

There are many ways of paying obeisance in Lei Kel wedding ceremony, mutual agreement of the parents on both sides is first made and the prescribed traditional wedding dresses are worn on the wedding day. In celebrating wedding ceremony, most follow the customs like other religious believers. After that, they pay homage to the Buddha-would-be and benefactors, mentors. Finally, two married people pour libation water and share merit.

When the bridegroom and bride with tradition different belief system, the bridegroom has to go to the spiritual maker Spirit (*Nat*) Saya and ask him to officially separate the bridegroom from his parents' tradition before the wedding takes place. After doing this, the wedding ceremony is celebrated. For Poe Kayin Du wai believers, paying homage to the tradition plays a vital part of the wedding ceremony. In accordance with the customs such as the paying obeisance to the tradition, separation from the tradition, there is a difference between Shin Du wai believers and Lei Kel believers; they all are the same in following matrilineal customs.

The most crowded and the mostly splendid festival of Poe Kayin is Kayin traditional tying with white thread-auspiciousness. In tying thread to the hands, the kind of thread to be used must be the one traditionally woven with cotton. Other thread is not allowed. In tying thread, the thread is wrapped from above to the bottom, symbolizing to wipe off the evils from three times. After that, the thread is wrapped from the bottom to above so as to bring in the blessings for three times. In this way, a

pair of old married people say prayers and help wrap around the wrist of bridegroom and bride for 3 or 5 or 7 rounds.

Lei Kel believers do this on Saturdays chosen as an appropriate and holy day from the first waxing day to the waning day in Wah gaung. Although they follow the way of Poe Kayin Buddhists, what is significant is that the thread is wrapped clockwise after lighting a candle or oil-lamp? Calling by lighting lamps needs because the strayed soul might get lost and lead to a wrong direction. So the soul is guided by lamp to the bright place from the dark who soul has troubles. The thread used in tying hand is classified in colors by Lei Kel believers; white represents men, red women, yellow unmarried people and green children. At the wedding ceremony, both the bridegroom and the bride are wrapped with the mixture of white and red threads on their wrists. Poe Kayin celebrates festivals on the basics of the preservation of the five cultures: literature, language, art, costume and tradition. Although Shin Du wai believers and Lei Kel believers are a little different in tying thread to wrists, the belief in that culture is the same.

The festival, known as Thoke ahrom in east Poe Kayin terminology is reputed as “bone-picking” or “A- Yoe-Kout” festival among Myanmar. This “bone-picking” festival has been preserved until now as the earliest festival. Bone-picking means the remaining bones of the dead person, after being cremated are collected by relatives so as to amuse the expired person by giving feasts, fun and pleasure and offering food to ancestors and spirits. Finally they pour libation water onto the bones and the bones are sent back to the Mountain -Bones of his relatives. According to the Kayin belief and custom, the “bone-picking” festival is still held everywhere and make the bones of the person died of any means unite with ancestors at the Mountain Bones-the earliest festival. According to the financial situation, it is held by some one year after the death and some who can afford to spend money immediately collect bones. Sometimes, a collection festival is financial situation held. By studying the Bone-picking festival of the Poe Kayin, it is found that they practice the custom of doing whatever through their concerted efforts. In the belief and custom of Lei Kel Buddhists, there is no festival of Bone-picking.

In summing up, It has been also learnt that, since Hlaing Gabar rural administrative unit is composed of eleven village tracts Poe Kayin living there have faith in different types of religious beliefs. The religious beliefs include Buddhism,

Christianity, Islam, Leikel, Kyeikkawi and other traditional types of belief. It is remarkable that the people there respect and abide by the customs of the people who have faith in the types of religions apart from the ones that they really believe in. It has been also found that those people even help one another and participate in the other's religious rites because they have the policy of peaceful co-existence. Therefore, it can be observed that no religious discrimination is found in Hlaing Gabar administrative unit but only the deeds of helping one another deal with the matters concerning the benefits of their native villages with the concerted efforts of the local people are clearly visible. To put it all in a nutshell, by studying the religious rites of Poe-Kayin, one can vividly see the values that they typically place on their religious beliefs and their traditions and customs. With the aspect of social organization, it can be observed that they make social dealings among themselves in harmony with the traditions and customs laid down by their ancestors. It has been also found that their community has endured for a very long time because of the unity among the community members.

8.1 Recommendation

After analyzing the findings of this study, the following recommendations emerged concerning ritual, religious beliefs and practices of Poe Kayin Nationals.

Since the people living in Hlaing Gabar rural administrative unit have been practicing many different types of religions, it is truly necessary that their respective children are trained not to have mixed opinions and practices among the traditions and customs associated with the specific religious beliefs in the socialization and enculturation processes of the children since their childhood.

2. The necessity to keep the records and evidences that are related to the Du wai traditional practices which play a key role in the life of Du wai Poe Kayin.

3. As there are only a few researches in Lei Kel Poe Kayin, traditional customs of Lei Kel Poe Kayin should be conducted in further research.

REFERENCES

- Amots Dafni, 2007, Rituals, ceremonies and customs related to sacred trees with a special reference to the Middle East, Haifa University.
- Anning Hu Felicia F. Tian. 2008, still under the ancestors' shadow? Ancestor worship and family formation in contemporary China, Demographic Research Volume 38, Article.
- Barfield, T, ed, 1997, *the dictionary of anthropology*, Blackwell Publishing Ltd.
- Bell C. 1992 Ritual theory, ritual practice, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Bell C. 2009 Ritual: Perspectives and dimensions, Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Crapo, R H., 2002, *cultural Anthropology*, 5thedn, McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc.
- Cathrine bell, 1992, *Ritual Theory and Ritual Practices*, Oxford University Press, New York.
- Durkheim E. 1954, *the elementary forms of religious life*, Karen E. Fields (trans), New York: The Free Press.
- Don Handelman & Galina Lindquist "*Ritual in Its Own Right*" Exploring the Dynamics of Transformation, First published in 2004.
- Evelyn J. Grey, 2016, Cultural Beliefs and Practices of Ethnic Filipinos: An Ethnographic Study, IRA-International Journal of Management & Social Sciences ISSN 2455-2267; Vol.03, Issue 03 (2016).
- Franciszek Satalecki, 2014, Death as an architect of societies Burial and social identity during the Viking Age in South-western Scania, LUP Student Papers, *Lund University*
- Geertz C. 1973, *Religion as a cultural system the interpretation of cultures*, London: Fontana Press. 1993
- Galina Lindquist 2005, *Healing in Its Own Right: Spirit Worlds*,
- Gilat Levy and Ronny Razin, 2006, *A Theory of Religion: Linking Individual Beliefs, Rituals, and Social Cohesion*.
- Hong Kong, 2014, *Religion and Custom Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government*, Published by the Information Services Department, Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government GovHK Website: <http://www.gov.hk>
- Haviland, 1996, *cultural Anthropology*, 9th edn, Harcourt Brace & Company.

- Heather MacLachlan, *Creating Pan-Karen Identity: The Wrist Tying Ceremony in the United States*.
- Hillary Rodrigues & John S. Harding, 2008, *Introduction to the Study of Religion*, McMaster University.
- James A. Forte, 2005, *Symbols and rituals: An interpretive approach to faith based behavior*, presented at: NACSW Convention 2014.
- Jack David Eller, 2007, *Introducing Anthropology of Religion: Culture to the Ultimate*, Routledge 270 Madison Ave., New York, NY 10016
- Karen E. Fields, 1995, "*the elementary forms of religious life*", printed in the United States of America
- Linda Woodhead, *Discrimination on the grounds of religion or belief*,
- Lokasundari Vijaya Sankar, 2014, *Women's Roles and Participation in Rituals*, in the *Maintenance of Cultural Identity: SEARCH: The journal of the South East Asia Research Centre for Communications and Humanities Vol.7, No.1, 2015*.
- Leonore van den Ende, 2015, *The Power of Rituals: a Study of Transition Rituals in the Life Cycle of Complex Construction Projects*, Vrije University.
- Michel J. Zyphur, 2009, *Rituals in Organization: A review and expansion of current theory*.
- Miller, B., 2011, *Cultural anthropology*, 6th edn., Pearson Education, Inc., Upper Saddle River, New Jersey 07458, U.S.A.
- Mohamed Salih, 1991, *Islam, traditional beliefs and ritual practices among the Zaghawa of Sudan*, St Andrews Research Repository, St Andrews University.
- Nathaniel Aminorishe Ukuekpeyetan, 2014, *Current Trends in Theories of religious studies: A clue of proliferation of religion worldwide*, global *Journal of Arts Humanities and Social Sciences Vol.2, No.7*, European Centre for Research Training and Development UK.
- Norman Townsend, 1969, *Ancestor worship and social structure: a review of recent analysis*, Mc Master University.
- Numa Denis Fustel De Coulanges, 2001, *the Ancient City: A Study on the Religion, Laws, and Institutions of Greece and Rome*, Batoche Books, 52 Eby Street South Kitchener, Ontario N2G 3L1 Canada email: batoche@gto.net
- P. Steven Sangren, 2013, *The Chinese family as: instituted fantasy: or, rescuing kinship imaginaries from the 'symbolic*, JRIA, *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*.

- Peter C.hill, 1996, "Conceptualizing religion and spirituality": Points of commonality, points of departure, *Journal for the theory of social behavior* 30:1.
- Peter J. Larson & David H. Olson, *Spiritual Beliefs and Marriage: A National Survey Based on ENRICH*.
- Rajah, Ananda, 2008, *Remaining Karen: a study of cultural reproduction and the maintenance of identity*,
- Rolando M. Gripaldo, 2008 *Religion, Ethics, and the Meaning of Life*, Philippine National Philosophical Research Society.
- Radcliffe-Brown, 1965, *Structure and function in primitive societies*, New York, Free Press.
- Rinchen Pelzang, 2010, *Religious Practice of the Patients and Families during Illness and Hospitalization in Bhutan*, *Journal of Bhutan Studies*, 22 (Summer 2010).
- Rosemary Lyn Aird, 2007, *Religion, spirituality, and mental health and social behavior in young adulthood: A longitudinal study*, The University of Queensland.
- Susan A. Johnston, 2009, *Religion, Myth, and Magic: The Anthropology of Religion*, the George Washington University,
- Samuel Ayinbora Atinga, 2006, *Death and Dying: A Study of the Mortuary Rites of the Frafra of Northern Ghana in the Light of the Christian Funeral Liturgy An Attempt at Inculturation*, Katholieke University Leuven.
- Sidney M. Greenfield, 2005, *the alternative economics of alternative healing: Faith-based therapies in Brazil's religious marketplace*, University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, USA.
- Sccupin, R 2000, *Cultural Anthropology: A global Perspective*, 4thedn, Pine Tree Composition, Inc.
- Spiro, M. E. 1978, *Burmese Supernaturalism*, 3rdedn. , ISHI.
- Steven Sangren,(2013) *The Chinese family as instituted fantasy*, Cornell University
- Trice HM & Beyer JM, (1984) *Studying organizational cultures through rites and ceremonials*. *Academy of Management Review* 9(4): 653-669.
- Tong Chee-Kiong, 2004,*Chinese death rituals in Singapore*, Simultaneously published in the USA and Canada by Routledge Curzon, 29 West 35th Street, New York, NY 10001.
- Yanow D and Schwartz-Shea P. (2006), *Interpretation and method: Empirical research methods and the interpretative turn*, New York: M E Sharpe.

Zin Mar Latt , 1996, *Social Life of East Poe Karen people in Mukkadi Village, Hpa-an township, Karen State.*

Zin Mar Lat, 2013, *Identity and Adaptation "A case study of Mon National Living in Hinthagone quarter, Bago Township.*

စင်ကြယ်၊ မောင်၊ ကရင်ဘဝလေ့ ၊ ခေတ္တရာပုံနှိပ်တိုက်၊ ရန်ကုန်မြို့

တင်ရီ၊ ဒေါ်၊ ဆလုံတိုင်းရင်းသားများ၏ လူမှုစီးပွားဘဝ၊ ပညာရေးဝန်ကြီးဌာန။

ပါတီ၊ မြန်မာ့ဆိုရှယ်လစ် လမ်းစဉ် တိုင်းရင်းသား ရိုးရာယဉ်ကျေးမှု လေ့ထုံးစံများ ကရင်၊ စာအုပ်ထုတ်ဝေရေး ကော်ပိုရေးရှင်း။

ပညာ၊ ဦး၊ ကရင်ရာဇဝင်၊ ဇွဲပုံနှိပ်တိုက်။

ဘုန်းမြင့်ဦး၊ ဗုဒ္ဓဘာသာ ပိုးကရင် သမိုင်း၊ ၁၉၇၅ခု ဇန်နဝါရီလ သီဟရတနာပုံနှိပ်တိုက်။

လင်းမြတ်ကျော်၊ မန်း၊ ကရင်ရိုးရာ သုတပဒေသာ၊ စာပေလောက ပုံနှိပ်တိုက်၊ စာပေဗိမာန်။

လင်းမြတ်ကျော်၊ မန်း၊ သိမှတ်ဖွယ်ရာ ကရင်ရိုးရာ ပြည်တောက်ကျက်သရေ ပုံနှိပ်တိုက်၊ ရန်ကုန်မြို့။

လဲကယ်အရိယာဘာသာ သာသာနာပြန့်ပွားရေး အဖွဲ့ချုပ်၊ လဲကယ်အရိယာ ဘာသာအစ၊ ဒုံးရင်းတိုက်နယ်၊ ဘားအံမြို့နယ်။

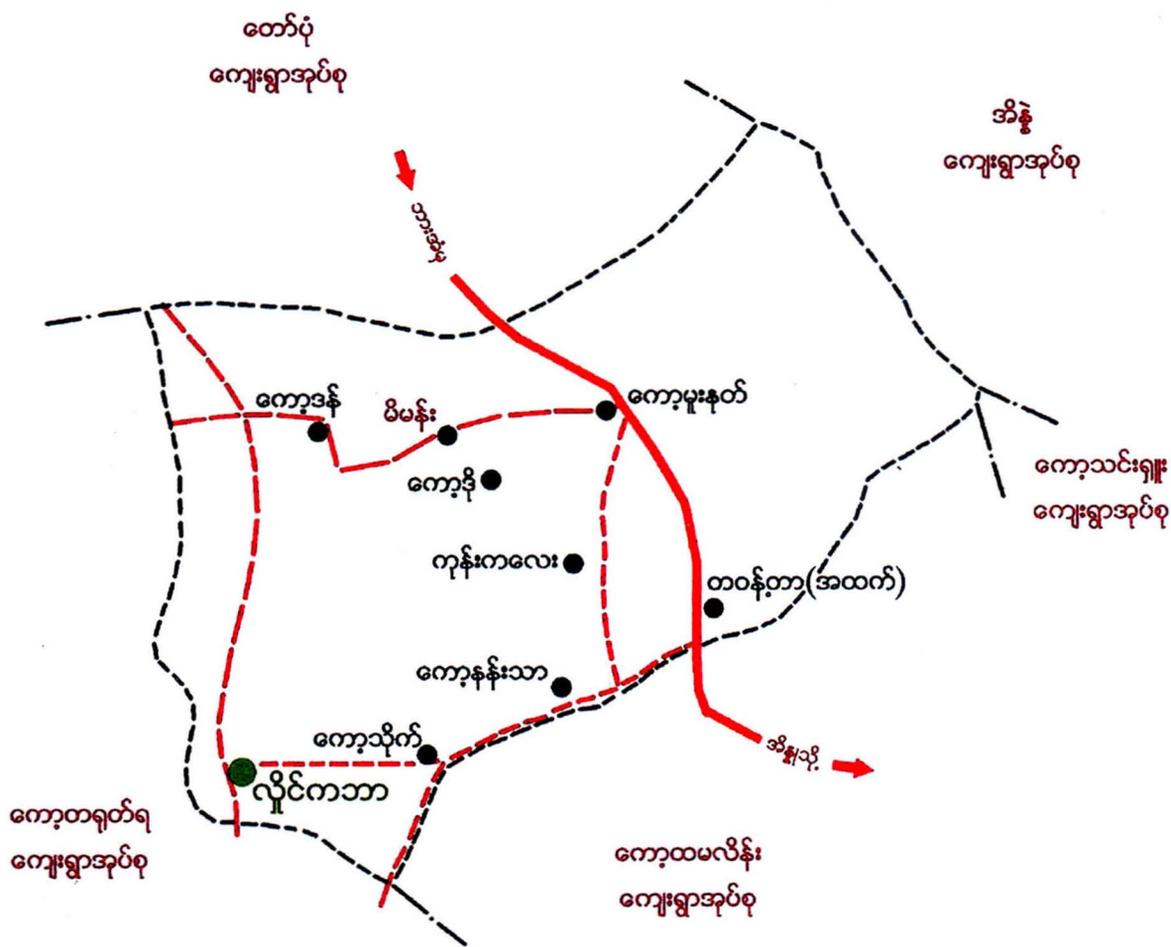
သင့်နောင်၊ မန်း၊ အရှေ့ပိုးကရင်၊ စိုးမိုးမိတ်ဆက် ပုံနှိပ်တိုက်

ဂုဏ်သမီ၊ အရှင်၊ ဘာသာရေးနှင့် ယဉ်ကျေးမှု၊ ကရင်တိုင်းရင်းသား၊ K.T.A Raiso Graphic Sasana University (MDY)။

ဘားအံမြို့နယ်၊ လှိုင်ကဘာကျေးရွာအုပ်စု အခြေပြမြေပုံ



ဘားအံခရိုင်
ဘားအံမြို့နယ်
လှိုင်ကဘာကျေးရွာအုပ်စု



ရည်ညွှန်းချက်	
	မြို့နယ်နယ်နိမိတ်
	ကျေးရွာအုပ်စုနယ်နိမိတ်
	ကျေးရွာအုပ်စု/ကျေးရွာ
	မြစ်/ချောင်း
	ကားလမ်း/လှည်းလမ်း