

**GENDER ALLOCATION OF LABOUR AMONG THE  
AKHA NATIONAL LIVING IN KYAING TONG  
TOWNSHIP, SHAN STATE (EAST), MYANMAR**

**PhD DISSERTATION**

**THAN PALE**

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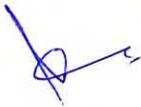
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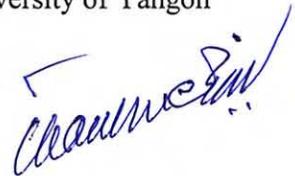
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## ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines “Gender allocation of labour among the Akha living in Kyaing Tong Township, Shan State (East), Myanmar”. This study intends to find out how work is distributed among men and women, to elicit how the existing gender allocation of labour affects on livelihood of Akha and to generate information for gender mainstreaming in formulating development planning in the study areas. The study period was from 2009 to 2012, May. The research was conducted four villages; Hwe Yoke 1,2, Naung Hlam in Mong Hkun village tracts and Namt Baw Oaw in Mong Zin village tracts in Kyaing Tong township. Qualitative data collection techniques had been used to collect primary data. Data was collected by using qualitative methods such as IDI (individual in-depth interview), KII (Key informant interview), observation and informal conversation. Firstly, the findings illustrated gender identity, family organization and socialization. It examines how gender identity concerned with masculine and femininity in Akha. Socialization is a relational process between children and parents and its objective is to build gender identity. In particular, parents’ attitudes mediate traditional gender roles and the effect of their attitude towards gender roles. This section also explores the data relating to ancestral offering, traditional beliefs, and cultural transmission in rituals from gender point of view. In this case, some gender differences were realized in sharing work. In maintaining the culture of genealogical knowledge, only sons have the chance to learn genealogical knowledge from father because as Akha practise patrilineal kinship system, this knowledge passes down to sons. Parents are the first teachers for the young to learn the cultures and traditional beliefs. Akha’s traditional beliefs reflect on sharing work based on gender. Secondly, the findings presented the data related to gender allocation of labour in household chores and livelihood work pattern in the study areas. An attempt has been made to ascertain whether gender disparities exist in the way of work distributed between gender groups. The findings of the study reveals that women spent a significantly higher time on agricultural production activities and household chores as compared to men, as women are defined as the domain at home and women are involved in agricultural activities such as seeding, weeding, transplanting, harvesting, threshing. As regards household work, the study reveals that it is confined only to women and there is hardly any male participation in such household work. The study also reveals that the women respondents spent

considerable time for taking care of children, sick and elderly. Thus, women have lesser time available to them for leisure time activities as compared to men. With respects to education, great disparities between male and female in schooling were found in the study areas. Akha women need to be educated because they have to look after their children and family members. It is necessary to reduce gender differences in education. In conclusion, lack of adequate education limits women's effective participation in development. Akha women must move into the mainstream and they must learn higher level of education. Akha women's empowerment is important for community development in the study areas.

**Key words-** cultural transmission, division of labour, gender disparities, gender identity, gender inequality, socialization, traditional belief, empowerment

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

UN	United Nations
NGOs	Non-Government Organizations
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women
WID	Women in Development
GAD	Gender and Development
WHO	World Health Organization
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
WE	Women's Empowerment
HA	Health Assistant
FGI	Focus Group Interview
IDI	In-depth Interview
KII	Key Informant Interview

# CHAPTER (1)

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background of gender in Myanmar and Akha

Gender refers to the differences between women and men within the same household and between cultures that are socially and culturally constructed and that change over time. These differences are reflected in role, responsibilities, access to resources and basic services, constraints, opportunities, needs, perceptions, views, etc. held by both women and men (Moser 1993). Gender is created by society (socially constructed), while sex is biological and physical differences between men and women. There are various constructions of gender within the anthropological realm of cultural diversity (Bourque and Warren 1987).

Ortner and Whitehead (1981) say that gender differences are culturally elaborated from one society to the next. Gender differences may vary with differences in cultural practices, pattern of socialization, traditional beliefs and religious beliefs. Gender differences and inequalities are a major cause of inequalities in social, economic, religious beliefs, health care and others. It is important to mainstream gender in every aspect of the development projects, to become developed nations. Gender equality is an important one of the development goals. Gender equality means equality of opportunity and a society in which women and men are able to lead equally fulfilling lives. The absence of gender equality means a huge loss of human potential and for development (Momsen, 2009). The United Nations Millennium Development Goal 3 is to promote gender equality and empower women. The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and the World Bank have also done extensive research on gender and development (UNDP, 2003b).

Gender disparities in household labour allocation are very important for overall rural development. By exploring gender allocation in the community, the disparities between men and women that exist as natural will be identified. Odame described that there were almost six million women directly employed in an agriculture-related activities in developing countries. In 2000 it was estimated that there were almost six million women directly employed in agriculture worldwide (Odame et al.2002). Gender division of labour is an important aspect of human social organization. The knowledge of how work is distributed between men and women in daily life, patterns of work and leisure, and social inequalities.

Firth (1995) stated that gender issues in South-East Asia, the detailed study of the role and position of females in society and the consequences for them of socio-cultural change and development, has only really emerged over the last decade. The Canadian council for Southeast Asian Studies began to take on gender issues seriously in the 1980. Many anthropologists, usually women, in the context of studies of family and kinship and household and village economies, were already providing ethnographic data on the gender division of labour and on the processes underlying consumption, housekeeping, and the socialization of children (Firth, 1966).

In Myanmar, Government, United Nation (UN) agencies and Non Government Organizations (NGOs) are implementing development projects on livelihoods, health, education, etc. The Republic of the Union of Myanmar participated in the 4<sup>th</sup> world conference on women Beijing in (1995) and acceded to the convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women (CEDAW) in 1997. The UN Gender Thematic Group was formed in Myanmar in 1996 as a direct consequence of the 4<sup>th</sup> world conference on women. It was emphasized on gender inequalities in education, health, livelihoods, private and public cooperate business according to gender.

It described about gender division of labour in Myanmar Gender Profile (2000). In this book, gender division of labour in Myanmar remains unclear due to the shortage of data. Although the majority of the population in rural areas engaged in agriculture, the allocation of time and division of labour depends on the types of agriculture they are doing, i.e. whether it is hillside cultivation or low land cultivation or their cropping system. The lack of data on time allocation and gender divisions of labour in rural areas require immediate attention at a national and regional level if future development interventions are to be gender equitable (Myanmar Gender Profile, 2000).

Throughout rural Southeast Asia, agricultural and household tasks are divided along gender lines. Women usually work longer hours and have less leisure than men (United Nations 2000). With regard to this, Ni Ni Myint (2002) described in the title of “The Status of Myanmar Women” that it is difficult to determine the exact number of women employed in agricultural sector in Myanmar. Traditionally, the female planter in rural areas and the itinerant street vendor in urban areas were recognized as female occupation.

Myanmar is a country of many ethnic groups with diverse traditions. It means that gender differences vary from one ethnic group to another. Among the hilly tribes, Akha is one of Myanmar ethnic groups, who live in Kyaing Tong, Mong Young, Tarchleik, Mong Hsat Township, in Eastern Shan State, Myanmar. As gender is concerned with the socio-cultural constructs of male and female identity, it is necessary to understand gender identity of Akha. Gender identity is closely related to gender socialization. Socialization is a part of gender allocation of labour for men and women. Therefore, it is important to examine Akha's socialization if gender allocation of labour of Akha is studied.

Seventy percent of the total population of Myanmar lives in rural areas and two third of the population engage in the agriculture sector. Agriculture is the main livelihood in rural areas. Like many other ethnic groups, Akha's main economy depends on agriculture as well. So, it is important to know gender allocation of labour based on agriculture.

With regard to Akha national, Paul and Elaine Lewis (1984) described referring to "Clothing and Ornamentation, Courtship and Marriage" of Akha in Thailand in the book "Peoples of the Golden Triangle". Kammerer (1988) demonstrated in the book "Shifting Gender Asymmetries among Akha of Northern Thailand" that gender system was elaborated in Akha culture and that it constructs as a primary organizational principle. An anthropology department conducted a research socio-economic life of Akha in 1996. Information which concerned with gender allocation of labour of Akha was weak in exploring in the previous research, particularly in Myanmar. It still lacks papers relating to livelihoods based on gender allocation of labour among the Akha in Myanmar. Gender is only one of several important factors in determining the division of labour. Gender unbalanced development aggravates not only income poverty but also leads to greater deprivation and dissatisfaction of social needs such as nutrition, health and education. Livelihood activities are closely related to the qualification of education as well as health care practices are mainly concerned with educational qualification. Therefore, gender access to health care and gender differences in education are very important to study for livelihood development.

This thesis focuses on gender identity, gender and socialization, gender allocation of labour on sharing household chores and livelihoods. Similarly, health and education are necessary to be examined for community development.

Yet gender allocation of labour in livelihoods and gender issue of Akha in Myanmar have not been explored much. This study looked upon the gender perspective on allocation of labour in Akha for community development.

## **1.2 Justification of gender allocation of labour**

It is important to understand the nature of work that is done inside the household as well as outside the household according to gender. First, the patterns of the household allocation of labour between men and women, decision-making processes and money keeping in the household were providing the data on the gender allocation of labour and underlying the decision making process for the dissertation. To understand gender allocation of labour in any society, it is important to examine allocation of labour and the distribution of important gender roles.

Second, it provides information about cultural beliefs and attitudes of both men and women. It is necessary to know the socialization process because parents play an important role in cultural transmission of socialization. It should know how they share their responsibilities concerning socialization according to gender. Mostly, women are main caretakers in a family. Gender allocation of labour based on socialization is also emphasized.

Third, as Akha people living in the study areas are highly dependent on agriculture, men's and women's labour are applied in the agricultural section. They do upland paddy cultivation, farm paddy cultivation and seasonal crops plantation in the whole year. Therefore, it is necessary to investigate how labour efforts are balanced or unbalanced between men and women in their livelihoods. This study is to contribute to a more complete understanding of the allocation of labour between men and women.

Finally, it is necessary to examine access to healthcare and education according to gender. Gender inequalities in the allocation of resources, such as income, education, health care, nutrition and political voice, are strongly associated with poor health which reduces well-being. Female's education not only directly benefits women themselves but is also important for the survival, growth and development of their children (World Health Organization, 2009). Access to healthcare services is also important. Therefore, it is also necessary to know decision making on health how to cure if one family member suffers from illness. Similarly, who is chosen to attend higher educational level is also important for this study.

Gender allocation of labour may be changed depending on the level of education in the future.

The research intends to provide important information on gender allocation of labour in Akha society. It is expected that the research will fill gender information gaps which is vital for development intervention.

### **1.3 Objectives**

#### **1.3.1 General objective**

General objective is to explore gender allocation of labour among Akha society for providing information on designing of development interventions.

#### **1.3.2 Specific objectives**

- To describe gender allocation of labour among the Akha
- To elicit how the existing gender allocation of labour affects the livelihood of the Akha
- To generate information for gender mainstreaming in formulating development planning in the study areas

## 1.4 Conceptual framework of dissertation

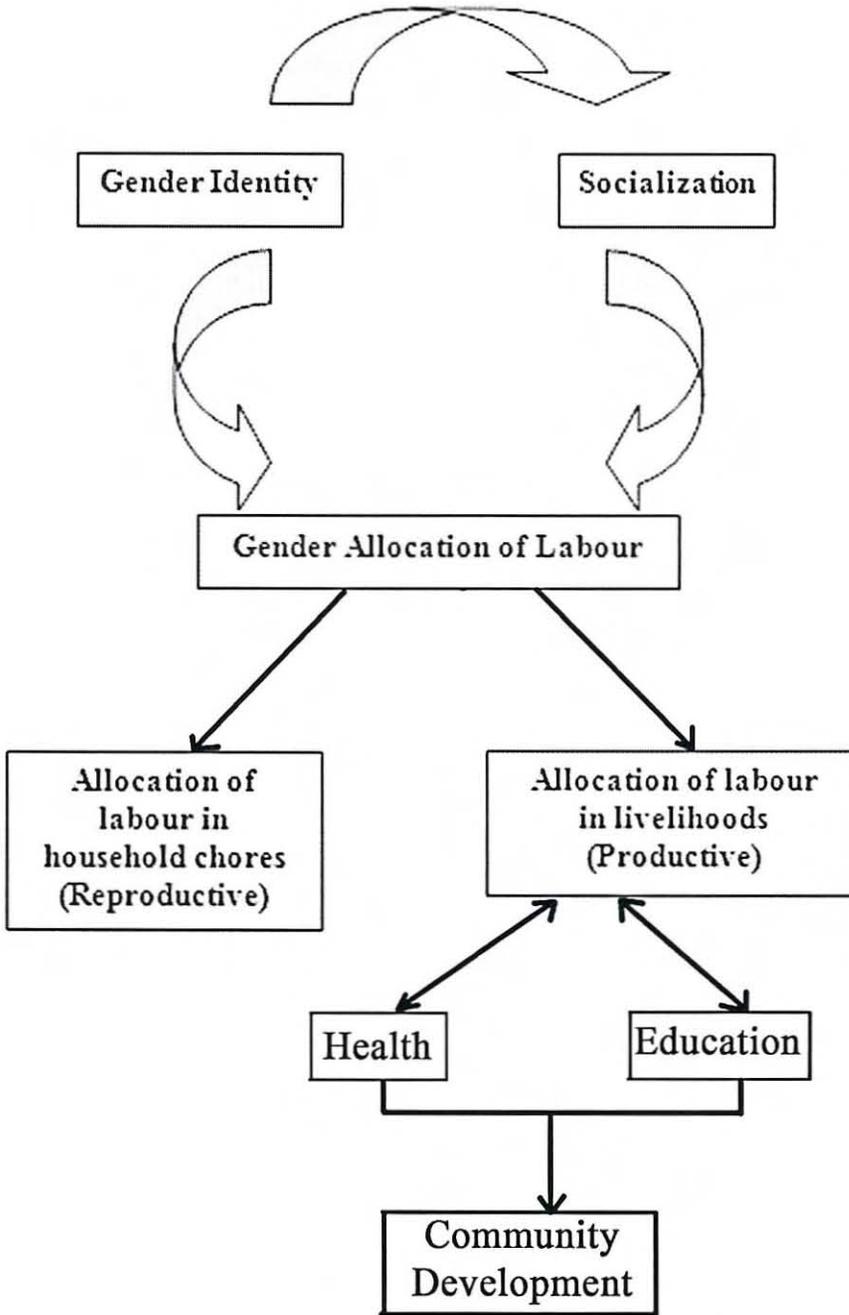


Figure 1. Conceptual framework of the dissertation

Every society has a dynamic gender identity. Gender identity is closely related to socialization as well as socialization is based on gender identity. So, socialization is done by differentiation of gender identity. Socialization is closely concerned with

both allocation of labour on housework and livelihoods. These allocations of labour are mainly dependent on parent's socialization and their cultural beliefs.

This study focuses on four main points; gender identity, socialization, sharing household chores (inside the household) and livelihoods (outside the household) with regard to allocation of labour by gender. Gender allocation of labour on household chores i.e. the reproductive role of women includes cooking, fetching water, collecting firewood, feeding the domestic animals and taking care of household members. Productive role of women emphasizes on livelihoods activities which are hill-side cultivation and farming, marketing in selling alcohol according to gender. These studies reveal that gender disparities, gender role in household chores, agriculture, marketing and decision making on economy. Also health and education underlying decision making and gender gap in education were investigated. All these information are leading to the community development in the study areas.

## **1.5 Organization of the thesis**

This thesis is organized into nine chapters. Chapter 1 is introduction with a definition of gender and gender issues in international and background of Myanmar Gender Profile and why gender allocation of labour is important. Justification of the dissertation thesis, general objective, specific objectives, and organization of thesis illustrate in this chapter. Chapter 2 constructs the literature related to the dissertation. This chapter includes literatures concerning gender identity, socialization, gender division of labour, gender and health and gender and education. Chapter 3 discusses data and methodology. This chapter provides the methods used to collect data and how the data was interpreted. Information from the research study area where fieldwork was conducted is discussed chapter by chapter. Chapter 4 includes Akha's gender identity, family organization and socialization. In the first section of chapter 4 discuss about gender identity based on masculinity and femininity and Akha's identity on head-dress. In the second section of chapter 4, gender differences in family organization, gender inequalities on inheritance of property, women's opportunities and the relation between husband and wife, are characterized. The last section of chapter 4 includes information on socialization process and cultural transmission in rituals. It examines socialization process regarding gender especially parental behavior and attitudes have an influence on the children. In Chapter 5, allocation of household chores such as cooking, fetching water, collecting firewood and feeding

domestic animals etc, and decision-making power according to gender are discussed. It reveals who spends much time on domestic chores in a day. In Chapter 6, how they allocate labour between men and women based on hillside cultivation and farming, showing estimation of time schedule about seasonal crop plantation, making alcohol, decision-making concerned with economic, health, money distribution are described. It includes who is the main care taker the seasonal crops in the whole year and who spends much time in the field. In addition, cultural beliefs concerning upland paddy cultivation, choosing auspicious day, opening the granary and selling agricultural products are described. As making alcohol is one of their livelihoods, who takes the responsibilities of making alcohol and selling alcohol including the fluctuation of alcohol prices in a year, were discussed. In Chapter 7 presents two main points: The first one is gender and health and the second one is gender and education. It reveals that who is main care takers in the Akha family when someone feels ill and who makes decision on health including traditional health care systems of shaman. With regards to traditional health care systems, the activities of the shaman and his assistant including how to cure with traditional health care system, are examined. In addition, taking treatment from the Health Assistant and midwife, are investigated in this section. With regard to education, why gender gap is in higher level education, is discussed. Various schooling obstacles in the local areas are discussed in detail in education sector. Local Akha people's attitudes and practices related to boys' and girls' schooling is presented in this chapter. Chapter 8 is discussion on the findings and Chapter 9 is conclusion and recommendation of the research.

## CHAPTER (2)

### LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter is organized according to the substantive chapters. The following theories and literatures may be related to the dissertation. These literatures address gender identity, gender socialization, gender allocation of labour on livelihood, gender and health and gender and education including gender and development. To provide these contexts, these literatures review addresses these subtopics concerning this dissertation.

#### **2.1 Gender identity**

Gender is a principle of socio-cultural organization, and it varies between cultures; it is subject to change through time; and it interrelates with other modes of categorization such as age, class, and cast so that the identity "woman" will also differ in a given culture, depending on whether she is young or old, high or low class and so on (Grijins, 1992).

Ghosh (2012) described that gender identity is defined as a personal conception of oneself as male or female (or rarely, both or neither). This concept is intimately related to the concept of gender role, which is defined as the outward manifestations of personality that reflect the gender identity. Gender identity, in nearly all instances, is self-identified, as a result of a combination of inherent and extrinsic or environmental factors; gender role, on the other hand, is manifested within society by observable factors such as behavior and appearance. For example, if a person considers himself a male and is most comfortable referring to his personal gender in masculine terms, then his gender identity is male. However, his gender role is male only if he demonstrates typically male characteristics in behavior, dress, and/or mannerisms. In sociology, gender identity describes the gender with which a person identifies ( i.e., whether one perceives oneself to be a man, a woman or describes oneself in some less conventional way), but can also be used to refer to the gender that other people attribute to the individual on what they know from gender role indications ( clothing, hairstyle, etc.).

Helliwell (1993) emphasizes that a conceptual distinction is made between sex, which is to do with bodily or physical features, and gender which is to do with

the set of cultural constructions associated with those bodily differences in any particular setting. In other words, cultures assign attributes - ways of dressing, behaving, and so on - to the cultural “categories” male and female; and these cultural elaborations, symbols, and values can vary considerably between different societies (Rosemary Firth, 1995). Therefore, what it means to be a man or a woman and what “manhood” and ‘womanhood’ might constitute are often expressed in varied ways. They are not homogenous, universal categories of identity. Gender identity may be affected by a variety of social structures, including the person's ethnic group, employment status, religion or irreligion, and family. It can be changed from time to time.

In this study, how gender identity was made among Akha was explored. Then, how this gender identity relates to gender allocation of labour and socialization is elicited.

## **2.2 Gender and Socialization**

Societies are changing more rapidly today than ever before because of globalization processes. In many countries around the world where society is changing, traditional teachings and moral values seem to be undermined. Such changes in society effect the socialization of children. Socialization has been defined as intergenerational transmission of culture (Williams, 1972) and as “the way individuals become members of a society, embodying in their own experience, and acting out in their learned behavior, a part of the culture of that society” ( Schwartz 1976b).

With regard to cultural transmission, Forte (1938) illustrated example of Tallensi culture in Ghana, Africa. Fortes described that rituals are recognized to contain specific educational functions. Tallensi society is patrilineal society. In this patrilineal society genealogical knowledge is critical, and children learn the identities of critical ancestors at sacrifices. It was described that their ancestor shrines are their books. Tallensi children learn kinship terms, skills, interests and observances (right conduct and obligations, ethical values, ritual requirements and so on), from childhood into adulthood.

Other scholars believe that individuals are socialized from an early age to follow a normative set of masculine or feminine behaviors that are traditionally defined to include domestic activity and caretaking for women and breadwinning and

providership for men (Marini and Brinton 1984; Marini and Greenberger 1978). The behaviors and attitudes transmitted by socialization thus produce and sustain the division of labor across the paid and unpaid labor contexts (Marini 1988). Greenstein (1996) illustrated that as social and family roles are traditionally linked to gender, gender ideologies are important for the division of household labor. Under the assumption that women are socialized to perform “gender traditional” labor with nurturing and caretaking skill requirements. These occupations presumably become female-dominated.

Greeley (1982) has focused on the enculturation which occurs early in the lives of individuals, when young people may adopt the basic religious cultures of their families and communities. Religious ideologies about family behavior are transmitted across individual life courses and between generations.

While few researchers have examined the effect of religious beliefs on the division of housework, religious participation has been linked to beliefs about gender roles (Brinkhoff and Mackie 1985). Parent’s level of religious participation will affect the children’s attitudes toward gender roles and housework.

This study is specifically designed to explain the ways that socializing experiences based on cultural transmission in a family and how to shape the attitudes that individuals hold about appropriate gender family roles. These attitudes affect the choices that individuals make about responsibilities between men and women in important affairs such as rituals, ancestral offering including tasks which in turn influence the way that household labor is divided.

### **2.3 Definitions related to the Thesis**

The following definitions are adapted from “Gender and Development: Concepts and Definitions” written by Hazel Reeves and Sally Baden, 2000.

#### **Sex and Gender**

Sex refers to the biological characteristics that categorize someone as either female or male; whereas gender refers to the socially determined ideas and practices of what it is to be female or male.

#### **Gender division of labour**

The socially determined ideas and practices which define what roles and activities are deemed appropriate for women and men.

## **Gender equality and Equity**

Gender equality denotes women having the same opportunities in life as men, including the ability to participate in the public sphere.

Gender equity denotes the equivalence in life outcomes for women and men, recognizing their different needs and interests, and requiring a distribution of power and resources.

## **Gender Mainstreaming**

An organizational strategy to bring a gender perspective to all aspects of an institution's policy and activities, through building gender capacity and accountability

## **Women in Development (WID)**

The WID approach calls for greater attention to women in development policy and practice, and emphasizes the need to integrate them into the development process.

## **Gender and Development (GAD)**

The GAD approach focuses on the socially constructed basis of differences between men and women and emphasizes the need to challenge existing gender roles and relations.

## **Women's Empowerment**

A "bottom-up" process of transforming gender power relations, through individuals or groups developing awareness of women's subordination and building their capacity to challenge it.

## **2.4 Theories and practices of gender division of labour**

A division of labour linked to gender has been found in all cultures. There are three theories which are strength theory, child-care theory and economy of effort theory, have commonly been used to explain the origins of cross-cultural patterns found in a culture's sexual division of labour (Quinn 1977). Strength theory shows that males should do the tasks that involve greater strength. Compatibility-with-child-care theory argues that women tend to perform activities that are most complementary with child-care roles, that is, ones easily interrupted and resumed, such as gathering wild plants, carrying water, cooking, and food preservation (Weisner & Gallimore 1977). Men, by contrast, are more likely to engage in activities that are sometimes dangerous, and often demand bursts of energy, such as hunting large land and sea animals, lumbering, clearing the land, long-distance trade, and war (Murdock & Provost 1973). Economy of effort theory argues that women's and men's tasks are

divided in such a way that they maximize total production through gender specialization, and that the specific activities will be dependent on the economic structure of the society.

The nineteenth-century theorists, including Marx as well as Durkheim, argued that certain aspects of the division of labour were universal and determined by human nature. The distribution and coordination of tasks by age and sex seemed self-evidently general: women cooked, took care of children and the sick, minded the internal comfort of the home: men dealt with making a living and ensuring security in the world outside the home. As the ethnographic record has become increasingly rich and varied, such simple categories and theories have been abandoned, without, however, the abandonment of the term “division of labour.” Hence the now accepted shift in terminology from the “sexual division of labour” to the “gender division of labour.”

Wickramasinghe (2000) wrote the explanation of “Gender division of labour” in the title of “women gender and development”. In this book, the author illustrated that gender division of labour tends to be seen as natural and immutable. These ideas and practices are socially constructed. This results in context-specific patterns of who does what by gender and how this is valued. Gender divisions of labour are not necessarily rigidly defined in terms of men’s and women’s roles. They are characterized by co-operation in joint activities, as well as by separation.

However, women are generally expected to fulfill the reproductive role of bearing and raising children, caring for other family members, and household management tasks, as well as home based production. Men tend to be more associated with productive roles, particularly paid work, and market production. In the labour market, although women’s overall participation rates are rising, they tend to be confined to a relatively narrow range of occupations or concentrated in lower grades than men, usually earning less.

Another author described the explanation of “gender division of labour” that the division of work roles and tasks into those considered by any cultural system to be most suitable for men and most suitable for women is referred to as gender division of labour. The division of labour between women and men depends on the socioeconomic and cultural context. It can be analysed by differentiating between productive and reproductive task. Productive tasks refer to work undertaken by either men or women to produce goods and services as well as the processing of primary

products. Reproductive tasks refer to child bearing and the different activities such as fuel and water collection, food preparation, education, health care and care for the elderly.

Gender roles and stratification among cultivators vary widely, depending on specific features of the economy and social structure. Martin and Voorhies (1975) studied a sample of 515 horticultural societies, representing all parts of the world. They looked at several variables, including descent and postmarital residence, the percentage of the diet derived from cultivation, and the productivity of men and women. Women were found to be the main producers. In 50 percent of the horticultural societies women did most of the cultivating. In 33 percent contributions to cultivation by men and women were equal, and in only 17 percent did men do most of the work. In parts of highland Papua-New Guinea the patrilineal-virilocal complex has extreme social repercussions. Women raise pigs, but men trade the pigs and control their use in ritual. Men grow and distribute prestige crops and arrange strategic marriages. They prepare food for feasts, as do the patrilineal. Women do domestic cooking, grow and process subsistence crops, and tend pigs before the pigs are slaughtered and cooked. Women are isolated from the public domain.

MacPhail (1991) illustrated that there is not a sharp division between male and female spheres of economic decision-making in South Sulawesi, Indonesia. Men and women are involved in both production and consumption decisions. Sometimes these are jointly made; sometimes a man or a woman will take decisions individually within each of these spheres.

Lao gender profile described that Lao women play a critical role in agriculture and the use of natural resources, and are primarily responsible for maintaining their families' food security. Men are described as the heads of the households representing their families' at all official meetings to discuss village development activities. Men and women spend similar amounts of time on agricultural work, but men spend more hours on income generating activities (including agricultural work). Traditional gender roles give women the responsibility for the health care of the household, including ensuring the immunization of children (Lao PDR Gender Profile, 2005).

With regards to agriculture, Van Esterik (1996) described in the book of "Women of Southeast Asia" that women's labor has been critically important in shifting cultivation and wet-rice paddies cultivation in Southeast Asia. Jayawardena (1977) wrote that among the Aceh of North Sumatra "rice cultivation has not

traditionally been regarded as the province of men” and that men admit that women know much more about it. In Thailand, women not only provide farm labor but also contribute to decision making in rural farming communities. Commonly women handle the financial affairs of their households and act as conservers of the family wealth, often reserving secret saving for the children (Hollnsteiner 1981).

Boserup (1989) identifies that Southeast Asian women are actively involved in market trading and entrepreneurial activity. They make up half of the trading labor force in Burma, Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, the Philippines, and Vietnam. Cristina Szanton did research on subsistence marketing in Philippine. This result demonstrates that vending is predominantly a woman’s occupation, with women substantially more than men in the market place.

With regard to this, Vietnamese women have the highest rate of economic participation among women in the region and constitute a large share of the labour force; 90 percent of men and 80 percent of women are economically active (United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and Pacific, 1998). Additionally, Vietnamese women’s labour force participation tends to continue across the life course, without interruption for childbearing or child rearing (Haub and Phuong Thi Thu Huong, 2004). Vietnamese consider housework unsuitable for men (Que, Tran Thi, 1996).

In Myanmar, gender divisions of labour in rural areas remain unclear due to the shortage of data. Although majority of population in rural areas engaged in agriculture, but the allocation of time and division of labour depends on the types of agriculture they are doing, i.e. whether it is hillside cultivation or low land cultivation or their cropping system. The lack of data on time allocation and gender division of labour in rural areas require immediate attention at a national and regional level if future development interventions are to be gender equitable (Myanmar Gender Profile, 2000). Chandler (1998) described that Rakhine women tend to do light work, whether agricultural or domestic, whereas men do the heavy work such as chopping wood, fetching water. Both men and women are involved in planting and harvesting rice. Men tend to do the daily shopping. In common with most other women in Myanmar, Rakhine women must respect their husbands and obey their decisions.

With regards to division of labour, Shelton and John(1996) collected data on the division of household labour in a variety of ways such as accounting time diaries, asking estimation the amount of time spending on household chores. From the time

availability perspective, the division of household labour is determined by the time each spouse has available at home.

With regard to time diary, Anxo (2001) illustrated in a paper on “Time allocation and gender division of labour in France and Sweden”. It revealed that in both countries, the women’s share of household activities (housework and care to children) significantly exceed the male’s share. But, the inequality in the domestic division of labour remains more pronounced among French couples. In France, around seventy percent of the time spent on household activities is performed by women, compared to around sixty percent in Sweden. In Sweden, spouses’ educational attainment does not significantly influence the division of domestic work. On the other hand, in France, men living with highly educated females significantly increases the time they contribute to domestic activities (on average two hours a week). Poorly educated women spend on average a significantly longer time on home production (on average more than three and an half hours a week) than moderated married women. The results show that the allocation of time is more unequal when French men are married with poorly educated women and more egalitarian when they are married with highly educated women. It indicates that the division of domestic labour is more unequal among poorly educated couples than highly educated households.

There are three different types of human labour in agriculture in most of the less developed countries. They are family labour, hired labour and exchange labour. Labour refers to effort, mental or physical, applied during a certain time for an economic purpose (ILO, 1969).

In this study, family labour between men and women was emphasized. The research prefers who performs specific tasks in the household for daily tasks as well as seasonal tasks in the field especially it is looked at who goes how many days in a week or a month. It is not easy to take the amount of time period regarding to spending household tasks and field tasks for daily life. Time period diary is not emphasized on this study. But, estimation of time effort between men and women according day and month schedule were explored.

## **2.5 Gender and Livelihood**

Livelihood is a crucial part of this research. Chambers and Conway (1992) define a livelihood as comprising the capabilities, assets and activities required

for a means of living. Capabilities, in this context refer to a person's, or household's ability to cope with stresses and shocks, and the ability to find and make use of livelihood opportunities. Assets refer to the basic material and social resources that people have in their possession (Scoones, 1998). Activities refer to the ways in which capabilities and assets are combined to achieve livelihood outcomes. A livelihood is considered sustainable when it can cope with and recover from stresses and shocks, maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets, both now and in the future, while not undermining the natural resource base (Chambers and Conway, 1992; Scoones, 1998).

Rajith and Lakshman (2010) illustrated "Gender impact of livelihood project" in Sri Lanka. The author began data collection in 2004. Quantitative and qualitative methods were used to examine sustainable livelihoods framework. It emphasized impact on economic and social aspect of gender inequality in the village level. Economic sphere was discussed about income level, access to loans and savings behaviour. Similarly, educational attainment and social participation and leadership opportunities for female in the village level was used to discuss the social aspect. It focuses only the gendered impact of the livelihood improvement. The funds allocated to livelihood component are used for three sub-components as credit and savings funds where 5 percent of this is allocated for onetime grants for severely vulnerable people, innovative seeds Fund and skill development loans. Before the project started, there was no any kind of these committees functioning in the village. Social interactions and leadership opportunities were quite low for female. Furthermore, women are not only confined to household activities but also there was hardly any acknowledgement for their voices in the village level common activities. According to results, women eventually got an opportunity for social interactions and held leadership position in the village activities and extended business based on homemade food with the creation of these committees by the project.

This study is looked on the perspective of paddy cultivation and seasonal crops plantation which is first priority of livelihood of local Akha people. These activities are examined from gender allocation of labour point of view.

## **2.6 Gender and Health**

Economic, social and cultural obstacles, the emotional and cognitive capacities of women themselves may limit their access to health care (Papanek, 1990).

Gender-based inequalities such as in education, income and employment – limit the ability of women to protect their health and achieve optimal health status. In the poorest parts of the world, women’s lack of access to health care is at its most acute (Jacobson 1993; Timyan, Brechin, Measham and Ogunleye, 1993).

Gender inequalities in the allocation of resources, such as income, education, health care, nutrition and political voice, are strongly associated with poor health and reduced well-being. Women provide the bulk of health care worldwide, both in the formal health-care setting as well as in the informal sector and in the home. Yet women’s own needs for health care are often poorly addressed, especially among rural and poor communities (World Health Organization, 2009). Gender mainstreaming in health aims to promote equality between women and men throughout the life course and to achieve health equity.

A number of health issues with gender-specific dimensions are emerging in modern Myanmar. They include unsafe, illegal abortions, sexually transmitted diseases, contraception, HIV/AIDS, aging populations, adolescent health and occupational health and safety. With respect to access to health care, Myanmar women get equal access to health care services. Social and cultural attitudes as well as specific gender-related constraints, determine the extent to which opportunities are translated into real equality (Myanmar Gender Profile, 2000).

In this study, gender based decision making on health and access to health care services are emphasized. It is necessary to know that who has decision power to cure the patient if severe illness happens in a family, how much traditional health care system is influenced on the local Akha people. Health care practices are mainly concerned with educational qualification.

## **2.7 Gender and Education**

Livelihood activities are closely related to the qualification of education. There is a much literature available at national and international level on gender inequality in education and its impacts and consequences. It is described that there are many empirical evidences that, increase in female education improves human development outcomes such as child survival, health and schooling ( World Bank 2001, Schultz 2002, Strauss and Thomas 1995, and World Bank 2007). Klasen (2002) explored that lower female education had a negative impact on economic growth as it lowered the average level of human capital. According to Knowles et al (2002), in

developing countries female education reduces fertility, infant mortality and increases children's education. Studies focusing on developing countries have found girls education particularly important for the welfare of the family and the future development. Many empirical studies conclude that increased schooling of the mother is associated with larger effects on child's health, schooling and adult productivity than increased schooling of the father (Schulz, 2001).

Gender inequalities in education exist in almost all poor countries and among the poor within these countries. There has been a considerable increase in gender inequality in education in low income countries over the last three decades (World Bank, 2007).

Ahmad et al (2005) explored the relationship between inequality in the access to secondary education and poverty in Bangladesh. According to their data, they confirmed that inequality in the access to education existed at post primary level majority of the poor are living in rural areas. It is confirmed in the regression analysis that the poor in the rural areas have low income, low education, high fertility and low investment in education. The most important result of this study is that poverty has negative impact on the education of the poor.

In this study, gender based decision making on education and gender access to schooling are emphasized. It is necessary to know gender differences in education and obstacles to schooling in the study areas.

## **2.8 Gender and Community Development**

Before the 1970s, issues of gender and development had been highly ignored within development theory. Women's concerns were first integrated into the development agenda only later in the 1970s partly triggered by Boserup's publication of *Women Role in Economic Development* (Parpart et al 2000). Until the early 1970s development policies were directed at women with a focus on mother and child health and on reducing fertility. The Women in Development (WID) approach rose in Western Europe and North America in 1975. The aim of WID was to integrate women into economic development by focusing on income generating projects for women. Gender and Development (GAD) approached originated in the mid 1970s in the UK.

Gender and Development perspective focuses on gender rather than women, particularly the social construction of gender roles and gender relations. This approach also emphasizes the importance of examining the gender division of labour

in specific societies, particularly the more invisible aspects of women's productive and reproductive work, and the relation between these labour patterns and other aspects of gender inequality.

Livelihood improvement project is one such development intervention which aims to mainstream gender in development, awareness building on gender equality, ensure women's equitable participation and benefit sharing and provision of special assistance to the most vulnerable women (Rygnestad, 2009).

The United Nations (1975) indicated that community development is a process whereby the efforts of individuals in the community were combined with efforts of government and non-government bodies to improve and developed community socially, economically and culturally. Maimunah Ismail (1999) also described that community development is a process of community activities that are planned and organized in such a way so as to raise the quality of life in the community in terms of economy, social, culture, spiritual and the environment through initiatives and active participation of the community members and with minimum outside help.

Based on the above literatures, this study focuses on gender and development perspectives particularly, allocation of labour on household chores, livelihoods, education and the effects of modernization trends. It explores positive and negative information for community development in the study areas.

## CHAPTER (3) METHODOLOGY

**3.1 Study design-** Cross- sectional exploratory study design is applied.

**3.2 Study period-** From September 2009 to April 2012

**3.3 Study areas**

As the majority of Akhas live in Kyaing Tong Township, Eastern Shan State, study site was chosen in Kyaing Tong Township. Most Akha people living in Kyaing Tong town are Christians. Some animists Akha are modernized now and their real traditional customs can not be seen. Their main livelihood is not agriculture. It is difficult to get information concerning allocation of labour. Therefore, pure animist Akha living in Mong Hkun village tract and Mong Zin village tract were chosen for the study areas. The study sites are Hwe Yoke 1, 2 and Naung Hlam village (Mong Hkun Village Tract) located in the southern part of Kyaing Tong, Shan State (East) (see appendix 1, 2). It is 20 miles far from Kyaing Tong. There are 28 households in Hwe Yoke 1, 54 households in Hwe Yoke 2 and 42 households in Naung Hlam. The total population of the three villages is 705. And, the last village is Namt Baw Oaw (Mong Zin Village Tract), 65 households and the population is 423 (see Table. 1). It is situated 8 miles away from the southern part of Kyaing Tong. Four villages were chosen to collect the data in Kyaing Tong Township. Most Akha people from these villages are animists but some are Buddhists. Buddhist Akhas also practise ancestral worship.

Table 1 Numbers of household and population according to village

Name of village	Household numbers	Male	Female	Total population
Hwe Yoke 1	28	75	62	137
Hwe Yoke 2	54	156	145	301
Naung Hlam	42	142	125	267
Namt Baw Oaw	65	250	173	423

Source: Information from village head in each village

### **3.4 Data collection**

This chapter illustrates the various methods used in this research. Qualitative methods were mainly employed. In-depth-interview, key informant interview, focus group interview, observation and informal conversation were carried out in the data collection. Field visits were conducted two times (August, 2009 and January, 2011). During the fieldwork, intensive survey was conducted. In the first trip, local Akha people were busy with picking up the peanuts. Interviewing with Akha women at day time were conducted only for two weeks in the first trip. At night, home visit was carried out in order to conduct “informal conversation” in Naung Hlam village. Akha men and women including grandparents were interviewed to get the data concerned with women’s and men’s responsibilities in the household as well as in the field and traditional beliefs including socialization were collected in these households. On the second trip, another home visit in Hwe Yoke 2 was conducted to get these data. Local Akha people were not busy at that time. They go two days a week for land preparing. There were chances to conduct interview with Akha men and women.

Data were collected during one month period for each time in the study areas. Taking photograph, recording tapes and taking video were used to collect the data. Two males and one female interpreter were involved in the data collection. The amount of acres for hillside and farm were collected in the Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation Department. The number of agricultural machines (hand generators), rice mills, modern transportation (motor cycles, three wheels cycle) and populations were collected from the village headman according to each village.

#### **In-depth interview (IDI)**

Qualitative method is mainly used for this dissertation. Individual in-depth-interview with married men and women (between 20 and 50 years old) were employed to get the data. The interviews were conducted at their house. It took approximately 1 to 2 hours in duration. IDI were conducted with fifteen females and ten males in each village about responsibilities in the domestic chores within their family. This qualitative research format includes open ended questions about domestic chores such as cooking, preparing food, fetching water, collecting firewood, child caring and weaving. Akha men and women were interviewed to get the information concerned with field tasks such as preparing the soil, felling the trees, burning the forest, seeding, weeding, caring for the crops, harvesting and threshing. It

focuses on who performs specific tasks rather than the amount of time spent on those tasks or the proportion of tasks done by the husband or wife. It is not easy to get the amount of time in the study areas. Only estimation of time was described. Based on the livelihood activities, sharing agricultural tasks between men and women were interviewed.

Four village headmen, ten knowledgeable old men and three shamans were chosen and interviewed to get the data concerning cultural transmission in rituals, important taboos and traditional beliefs. Ten married women and men having children (from 3 to over 11 years old) were chosen in the four villages with the purpose of getting socialization characteristics of behaviors, manner, taboos concerning important factors such as ancestral offering, omens etc according to gender.

To record the responsibilities of Yayeama (White skirted women), in- depth interview was conducted with her. This woman must be menopausal and purified. She can perform like a man in everything which a man does in ancestral offering and other tasks while the head of the household is away. All men in the village must pay respect to her.

Three persons who have alcohol license were interviewed and collected the prices of alcohol within a year as regards the information on the sales of alcohol, both women who possess motor cycles and who do not possess motor cycle, were interviewed and asked “how many times did they sell alcohol in this month” and “how many times did their husbands accompany them?”

### **Focus Group Interview (FGI)**

Focus group interview was first conducted to get the data with regard to female and male with eight married Akha women between 20 and 50 years old. But, there was language barrier during the first discussion. Interviewees were not able to understand Myanmar language. Although interpreters were used in discussion, it might be misunderstand. FGI with Akha women were not successful. Therefore, FGI with Akha women was not done to get the data. As some of Akha men can understand Myanmar language, FGI was made with Akha men in the study areas. One FGI with eight males was conducted in each village. Total of four FGI were conducted in the study areas. FGI were conducted for data regarding gender identity i.e. the identification of male and female, decision making process which includes income

distribution within the family as a whole, health, schooling and borrowing money according to gender.

### **Observation**

Going transact walk in the village, observation in some social affairs such as opening ceremony of the granary, making animals figure by the village headman, making alcohol and feeding domestic animals were conducted to confirm the data. Having informal conversation with children and adolescent girls was conducted to get information related to socialization. The information of who works household chores, take the responsibility looking after the children, feeding the domestic animals and other activities were got by observation and visiting. Information concerned with making alcohol was got by observation and asking question to men and women.

### **Key Informant Interview (KII)**

To analyze the data, key informant interview was conducted. Key informants were four school teachers, two monks, one trader, two health staffs in the study areas and one nurse, five government staffs and two male teachers in Kyaing Tong. Seventeen key informants were interviewed for data collection. The interview questions include open-ended questions intended to who takes the responsibilities of selling alcohol, who are mainly involved in decision making, meeting talk with strangers and who does mainly in household chores and field tasks.

### **3.5 Work plan for the dissertation thesis**

#### **1. First Year- 2008-2009**

Discuss about the research proposal.

Search and collect the literatures.

Give regular and credit seminar.

#### **2. Second Year- 2009-2010**

Conduct the first trip for research survey.

Discuss the data with supervisor and co-supervisor.

Continue collecting the literature and data writing.

Give regular and credit seminar in a year.

#### **3. Third Year- 2010-2011**

Continue the second trip for research survey.

Conduct data arrangement and data analysis.

Thesis writing and discuss the results with supervisor and co-supervisor.

Give regular and credit seminar in a year.

#### 4. Fourth Year- 2011-2012

Continue thesis writing.

Give regular and credit seminar in a year.

Finalize dissertation.

Submit dissertation.

### 3.6 Limitations of the thesis

The objectives of this dissertation are to study the gender allocation of labour with regards to socialization, household chores and livelihoods among the Akha. The thesis as a whole provides a significant contribution to gender allocation of labour among the Akha. There are a number of limitations in the thesis. First, information described in this study can not be represented as a generalization of the overall Akha living in eastern Shan State because of using qualitative method. It represents animists Akha in the study areas. Second, focus group interview for Akha women is not applied because of language barrier. Akha women were interviewed by using in depth interview, informal conversation and observation. Third, daily time diary (working hours) is not taken on sharing household chores and field tasks as daily activities between men and women. Quantitative method is not applied in this study.

### 3.7 Ethical consideration

The thesis entitled: "Gender Allocation of Labour among the Akha living in Kyaing Tong Township, Shan State (East), Myanmar" and the work presented in the thesis is both my own work and have been generated myself. The result is my own original research. I confirm that when I have quoted from others, the source is always given. With the interviewees' permission, local Akha people's photographs were described in the thesis.

**CHAPTER (4)**  
**GENDER IDENTITY, FAMILY ORGANIZATION**  
**AND SOCIALIZATION**

**4.1 Gender identity of Akha**

Gender identity may be affected by a variety of social structures, including the person's ethnic group, employment status, religion or irreligion, and family. It can be changed from time to time. It is closely related to gender roles which are the tasks and activities that a culture assigns to the sexes. In this chapter, gender identity means the perceptions to be a man or a woman. It focuses on roles, behaviour, and the identity on head dress of Akha women.

**4.1.1 Concepts of masculinity and femininity**

According to research information, Akha emphasizes on behaviors of men and women for being a good female and male. Most Akhas said that “both males and females must have shame”. It is the basis for being a good female and male. Although most men do not emphasize on the beauty of women (physical features), they recognize that politeness in speaking, having shame, skill at hill-side cultivation and being a good house keeper which are needed to be a good feminine. In the past, fetching water, pounding rice, skill at with the loom and weaving were also important for women. Nowadays, as they were provided with water pipes and water tanks by NGOs (Non Government Organizations) in the village, it became easy to fetch water. It was also found that there are some private rice mills in these villages. Therefore at present, it is not necessary to think about pounding rice and fetching water activities are the duties of a female. Both men and women work in small scale rice mill.

According to my fieldwork interviews, the majority of Akha men said that “physical features are not important for being feminine”. One of the interviewees said that “my wife is ugly but she is a good housekeeper and she works hard in hill-side cultivation as well as household chores”. And, another man said that “although my wife is not beautiful, “she is very polite in speaking and can do very well at the field”. Most men said that “a woman must do house work very well, must have skill at house work and hill-side cultivation which are important to be a good woman”. Besides, shame and respects is also important for a woman. For example, when the woman

goes to the field, if she is in front of the men, she has to wait a few minutes and go behind them. If not, men assume that this girl does not pay respect to men.

Akha man, who has ability to solve the problem like difficulties in field tasks and to look after the safety of the whole family, is recognized as being masculine. Not only he must have good qualities to manage the household but also he must have good socialization with other people.

According to the research findings, men entertained the guest in front of the house (sitting room) and most of women did not join at the meeting talks but they were listening to the talks. It can be seen in my field observations. Most Akhas assume that duty of hospitality is men's responsibility. They said that "men mostly entertain the guests in ceremonies and most guests from neighboring villages are men". Men mostly can speak at least three languages; Shan, Lahu and Myanmar. Because of language barriers, mostly men are involved in social talks than women.

#### **4.1.2 Akha's identity on head-dress**

Akhas value traditional costumes. Married Akha women always wear the head-dress and the woman who wore Akha dress, is presumed as a graceful woman. Even when a man married a woman who is not Akha, his wife has to wear Akha dress in daily life and follow Akha traditional customs. It can be said that traditional costume is Akha's identity. Nowadays, although most men and some young girls do not always wear traditional dress in daily life, they wear it at festivals and rituals. Children and some young girls wear ready made clothes. It can be said that these changes are because of modernization trend. Ready made clothes can be bought in the market and it is easy to wear in every day life. Akha clothes are not casual clothes for children. For Akha girl, there are three types of traditional head-dress. One is at age 13 to 16 (see figure 2) and at age 17 (see figure 3) the girl changes for the head-dress of the adult woman. And the last head-dress (see figure 4) is worn after marriage. Head-dress style is different according to lineages.

The head-dress is Akha's identity. Married Akha women must wear head-dress. It is a symbol of marriage of Akha women. Even when a woman is sleeping, she does not remove her head-dress. Only when married Akha woman washes her hair, she removes it. The Akha woman who takes off her head-dress, as she breaks Akha's customs, she is despised by the Akha in the village. According to my observation,

married Akha women who live in Kyaing Tong town wear Akha head-dress rarely but the married Akha women who live in the study areas, still wear the head-dress.



Figure 2. Thirteen year old head- dress style



Figure 3. Seventeen year old head-dress style



Figure 4. Head-dress style after marriage

## **4.2 Family organization of Akha**

An Akha family consists of parents, children and adopted children. If the sons are married, they must live in a small house within the house yard. So, it can be seen both nuclear family and extended family. When the daughters are married, they go along to their husband's house. Akha practise patrilineal kinship system.

### **4.2.1 Gender differences in family organization**

There are gender differences in the Akha's family organization. There are two ladders; one for males and another for females. The men's ladder is placed in front of the house. The women's ladder is in the west of the house. Akhas build their house in accordance with to Akha's custom. Now, there is no ladder limitation for both male and female. Very few houses have only one ladder which is used by both men and women. It is changing on time. There is no window except the main doors.

There are two sleeping areas; one for men and the other for women. The head of the household, his sons (married and unmarried) sleep on the men's side. Mother, her immature children, unmarried daughters and daughter-in-laws sleep on the women's side. There is a hearth in front of each room. It is used to cook for special ceremonies. The men's hearth is used for meat cooking and the women's hearth is used for rice and vegetables. As there are only two rooms in the house, the women visitors stay on the women's side and the men visitors stay on the men's side. Neither visitors nor relatives stay in main house for a long time. If there is no place to live for relatives, a separate small house is built within the house yard. It can be seen in only Akha. Gender differences in housing were related to Akha's myths. According to interviews with local elder people, they told the following information about their myth.

In the Akha's myth, Apoe Myie (Great Spirit) created first men. One day, Apoe Myie invited the men to give a wife for each man. But, as Akha man arrived lately at that place, he did not get a wife. At last, Apoe Myie told them to return by singing on the return home. If so, he will meet a woman who will be your wife. As he did like these procedures, he met a woman on the way. She said that she is not human but she is a spirit. Although she refused to marry him, he possessed her as his wife. As Akha man was afraid of his spirit wife who will kill him at night, he divided two rooms; one for man and the other for spirit wife. Up till, one can be seen the two divided bed

rooms in animist Akha's house. This oral myth was passed on from generation to generation.

With regard to it, although Akha house is related to their cultural background, and myths, it is found that there is less limitation in real situation. For example, although there are two ladders; one for males and another for females, both males and females can use it in daily life except on important rituals nowadays. One of the old men said that "if these people are Akha, they must know Akha culture". If both men and women use the wrong ladder in an important ritual (offering ancestral spirit), they were not forgiven by older persons. So, sons have learned how to behave and how to do in rituals from father and daughters have learned their culture which they should know from their mother. Akhas still practise in accordance with their culture at rituals except in daily life.

In addition, there are limitations concerned with sexual intercourse. For a family, only one couple can have sexual intercourse. If the head of the household (father) dies, the eldest married son and his wife can live on the main house. Daughter-in-law must sleep in women's side and married son must sleep in men's side. But, this couple can have sexual intercourse in other place (e.g. in Taungyar) except on women's side in the house. If the widow is still alive in house, they must give respects to widow (mother-in-law). Until now, Akhas follow this rule. If mother first dies, son can mate his wife on the women's side in the house.

There was also a gender difference in eating meals thirty years ago. Men and women ate their meals separately. They said that Akha women are shy to have the meals together with her husband. Besides, husband and wife rarely go together to the field. Now, both men and women including their children have breakfast or dinner on a small dining table. The oldest man or woman first has the food or curry. Nobody takes the curry and eats it first before the old man or woman has eaten. This is to pay respect to the old person. Nowadays, both men and women go together to the field. One married woman said that "as we love each other, we married so that we go together to the field and come back home together". We help each other. We support one's need and vice versa. In the field survey, head of the household (grandfather), father and their sons including the researcher ate lunch together on a small table in Hwe Yoke village.

According to interviewee, Akha men have much time for leisure. When men finish their heavy tasks in the field, they stay at home for two days a week. At that

time, they look after their children and visit their neighbors without doing kitchen tasks. At night, some of the men visit the house which has a television and watch it. According to field observation, Akha women do not visit other house and watch TV. Women do not use to spend their time visiting and watching television. For example, if her house has a television, she watches television while shelling pea nut, tying up maize or doing something.

#### **4.2.2 Gender inequalities on inheritance of property**

Akhas practise patrilineal kinship system. Only the sons receive properties from the parents. When their sons set up and live in a separate house, parents give them land, cows and others as an inheritance. The last son who lives with his parents owns more properties from the parents' possessions. When the head of the family first die, although his wife can share their possessions with sons, relatives from father's side can participate and give advice in sharing the properties. Therefore, mother must take advice from relatives who are from the father's side. The mother has no right to refuse their decision. Akha women and girls have no inheritance rights to get property as an inheritance. When a woman marries, she has to live in her husband's house. She takes up patrilocal residence. Women generally do not inherit land from their parents. Gender inequality is most evident in access to land. Akha custom prohibits women from owning land. But, at present there is a little change concerning properties in the study areas. A few men said that “although daughters have no right to get properties, if parents are able to support to daughters, they can give them cow or buffalo after the daughters have married”. One man said that “although his daughter followed her husband after marriage, as they faced difficulties in economy, he supported his daughter with two buffalos for farming”.

There are very few people who make a contract concerning their properties in front of the village leader when they marry. If husband and wife divorce, they can divide equally their possessions except the land. If the widow did not remarry, she can use the land for cultivation. If the widow remarries and their sons stay with their mother, nobody possesses this land. Their grandparents or paternal relatives possess the land. If the widow remarries, she follows her husband and if her sons live in the house with grandparents, sons can possess the land for cultivations.

### 4.2.3 Women's opportunities within a family

When the Akhas get the first crop from upland field, mother is fed first as a respect because mother spends most of her time in the kitchen to cook for family members. When an Akha woman gives birth to a child, the mother or grandmother has a chance to give a name to the child. As Akhas practice patrilineal kinship system, the last name of the father is placed first in the children's name. For example, if Mg Ah Do has a son or daughter, the last letter of father's name "Do" is placed in the first place of son's or daughter's name. Akha boys or girls have two or three names but they use their two names in daily life except the name given on the birth day. When they become seriously ill, the name which was given on the birth day is used, and called this name to regain good health, to be relieved. This name is not used and called in communicating with each other.

In a family, the woman is the money keeper and she has an opportunity to buy and manage the family needs; clothes, food, etc. But, if valuable goods are bought, she must discuss it with her husband. She does not have the right to decide it herself, without consulting her husband.

Although women must not touch objects used in offering to ancestral spirit, these objects are placed in the women's room to keep it. As Akhas practise patrilineal kinship system, only the son must do the offering. If there is no son in a family, the husband's brother comes over and does it. On that day, only the wife or women go and fetch water from purified well or pond which is outside the village. Akhas call it spirit well. So, women play an important role in fetching water. With this water, the man cooks meat and the woman uses it for cooking rice. On other days, this water must not be used in doing daily household chores. When Akhas make an offering to ancestral spirit, they use this water. Although the duty of fetching water is a woman's, the responsibility of clearing the pond or well is men.

Akha woman has a chance to do special ceremony to become high prestige woman like Akha man. Not only the woman must be menopausal and purified but also she must not be character loose. She must know and understand fully the Akha customs of how the man performs in traditional rituals which are performed throughout the whole year. There are many steps for her special ceremony and it also involved a series of animal sacrifices.

On the first day of ancestral offering, at least 17 chickens are killed. If the woman can offer more chickens, it is the better for her. She invites the older people of

the village and feeds them. On the second day, a big pig has to be killed and is fed to the old peoples from the neighboring villages. The whole procedures of this special ceremony are led by the shaman (Natsayar) who knows how to do the processes of it.

After this special ceremony has been done, this woman can perform like a man in everything which a man does in ancestral offering and other tasks while the head of the household is away. All men in the village must pay respect to her. She is called Yayeama (see figure 5). Only Yayeama must wear white skirt. No woman wears white skirt. She is often called upon to give names to new-born babies.

Akha expend much more money and many pigs, cows and chickens in a funeral when the head of a household and wife die in old age. As some people are poor, they borrow money and use for the funeral as much as they can. But, when the wife dies, they spend much more money and animals. Akhas believe that the wife is always faithful to her husband and all animals killed in the funeral will follow the hostess as her entourage. She'll certainly wait for her husband after death.

But, if head of the household dies first, it can not be said exactly that the man will surely wait for his wife. Animals are not killed in the man's funeral like in the woman's funeral. Therefore, it can be said that the woman can get more opportunities than man when the woman died first. When young man and woman die, they do not need to kill many animals.



Figure 5. Yayeama wearing white skirt

#### **4.2.4 Perceptions of husband towards wife within a family**

Married Akha women must be faithful to their husbands. When the husband is away, his wife has to guide her son how to do ancestral offering. But, women must not touch ancestral offering objects. Women are not allowed to do it themselves because ancestral spirit comes from paternal line. As a man is the head of a household, she has to pay respect to him and when she quarrels with her husband, although the wife can talk back in words, she is not allowed to respond to him physically. According to field results, Akha men said that “Akha women must do household chores and look after their children including working in field tasks”. Some men interviewees said that “Akha men are not faithful to their wife like women”. During their travels, there may be some men who break their faith to their wives.

Mostly, both widowers as well as widows remarry in Akha society. They need reciprocity labour in field tasks. If the daughters are adolescent, they find themselves their life partner. Akha parents do not arrange for their daughters or sons for their life partners.

#### **4.2.5 Perceptions of wife towards husband within a family**

Akha women said that men must solve the family's problems, needs and difficulties as head of the household. Women consider that men can socialize very well rather than women. And, as men mostly travel to other places for business, they can speak other languages; Shan, Lisu and Myanmar languages. So, when they are invited to go ceremonies of neighboring people, they assume that only men should go to there and men should be involved in social meeting talks in ceremonies.

### **4.3 Gender and socialization**

Research findings indicated that Akha's socialization is closely related to ancestral beliefs and traditional culture. The aim of this study is to explain how to shape the attitudes that individuals hold about appropriate gender family roles, and the ways that socializing experiences base on cultural transmission in rituals.

### **4.3.1 Gender differences in socialization of Akha**

According to the survey results, it was realized that Akha men and women pay respect to the ancestral beliefs and traditional culture. Local Akha people said “every animist Akha must understand Akha culture especially ancestral offering matters”. Parents let their children know important matters concerning ancestral offering (such as taboos) and the responsibilities by gender.

Traditionally, the man leads the ancestral offering in a family, thus the 5-6 year-old sons learn their responsibilities from fathers at the ancestral offering. The father lets them listen to his recitation when the ancestral offering was celebrated.

The Akha always pay attention to the sayings of their ancestors and maintain the genealogical culture. As Akha practise patrilineal kinship system, genealogical knowledge is very important. According to the traditional culture, the genealogical knowledge was recited at the ancestral offering ceremony by men. Thus the knowledge of genealogy is important for the male children. Every Akha man must know the name of his generation list (see figure 6) and must recite them in order. The young male children starting from 9-10 year-old age learn their genealogical knowledge and the identities of critical ancestors at ancestral offering from father. Some male children who stay away from their parents can not recite the names of their ancestors by heart. The old people do not like the one who can not recite his genealogical list. The male children who stay together with father must know how to recite their generations starting from 10-12-year-old age. In this way, fathers socialize sons to let them know the Akha culture unnoticeably.

Akha needs sons for succession to their generations. Thus, they appreciate having sons for their inheritance of genealogical name. If father dies without bearing son or Akha woman has twins or the man marries with the woman from the same lineage, his genealogical name will be skipped. His generation can not be continued. Therefore, Akha men pass down their genealogical knowledge to their male children. As a son may be the head of household in the future, male activities are taught by father since they were young.



Figure 6. Generation list of an Akha family

On the ancestral offering day, women prepare the food to be offered to the ancestors. Daughters learn their responsibilities from mother. Mother teaches them taboos about the ancestral offering, social rules and the responsibilities of daughters starting from 9 – 10 year old. The Akha female avoids touching the ancestral offering tools such as bamboo cups, bamboo containers, box because they are concerned with only male. In using the materials utilized for the offering, Akha has traditional beliefs about fetching water and utensils used in the offering. The water utilized for cooking of offering to ancestors, has to be fetched from a specific well which is called “Nat Jei Dwin or Jei Thant Dwin (Spirit well or purified well)” by local Akha people. On that day, women fetch the water in the early morning. The girls starting from seven years old can follow with their mothers to the fetching place. Mothers teach them how to take care and how to manage to get the specific water.

In Akha society, the purity of girls is a precious matter and they maintain their respectable behaviours. Mother always tells her adolescent daughters not to stay intimately with boys before marriage. If a girl gives birth to a son or daughter before marriage, the whole family members including their relatives are marked as impure generation in the village and all the family members are disrespected in that society.

Moreover, if she bore a son, his name will not be listed in their generation. No Akha man wants to marry the girl who made a shameful important mistake in the Akha society. Mothers look after their daughters to be a good girl and not to make mistakes. According to results, one of key informants said that if Akha man made mistakes before his marriage, this man was recognized as not a good man.

The research information indicated that Akha children learn the daily tasks from their parents in a family by observing their activities. They observe their parent's behaviors and attitudes in daily life. It can be found that parents also directly influence children's household labour allocation patterns.

The 10-year-old girls help in household chores and learn weaving from the mother. Weaving skill is important for a married Akha woman. They have to weave their own dress, skirt, hats, and bags for use of family members. They are skillful with embroidery decoration on clothes by using threads of various colors. Mothers do not force their daughters to learn weaving. But, Akha adolescent girls are trained to have self-respect, be quiet and to be skillful at household tasks as well as field tasks by the mother. Akha men choose their life partners based on above qualifications of Akha girls. Nowadays, most of adolescent girls are unskilled in weaving because of wearing ready-made clothes in daily life

Fathers teach sons about the work related with cultivation and daily activities not only at home but also in the field. Since sons are the ones who will lead the family one day, they need to know the traditional customs, traditional beliefs and taboos. All the important factors are taught by fathers. They always teach them not to make mistakes at the time of choosing a wife for their life. They pay respect to their generations and it is strongly prohibited not to marry the girl who is of the same lineage.

#### **4.3.2 Important taboos of Akha**

With regard to taboos, parents play an important role to let their children know important taboos of Akha. Father teaches his son to understand social taboos when important affairs are done in the family. When local Akha people face the problems such as economic, health and other difficulties, donation is given in the family. In this donation, vishi leaf plays an important role and it is very valuable for the Akha. Akha believe that vishi leaf can clean the place where ancestors live. Animals killed at the donation are brought to the ancestors with the vishi leaf. It is not allowed to grow

within the house compound by the Akha. They think that house yard is not pure to grow it. So, it is planted in the forest. In addition to this, on the way to pick the vishi leaves, if a snake is crossing or has crossed near them, it is not good for them. The person, who sees the snake while picking it at that place, must stop talking to the other one and is standing at the place. Another man has to inform to the head of his household. He has to stand silently at that place until ancestral offering is finished in his house. After that, one of family members comes and takes him to the house. Therefore, Akha males need to know how to behave when a snake is seen on important days. Snake is very unlucky for Akha.

The Akha believes snake is an unlucky creature and it brings bad fortune to them. They assume snake can damage the welfare of the family. The traditional beliefs about the snake are interesting among the Akha. Grandparents pass down their beliefs to their grandchildren about the snake. They still believe that snake has a bad temper and the one who sees the snake will face many troubles. They avoid from seeing the snake especially on important affairs such as ancestral offering day and the first day of planting and harvesting, donation to ancestors and long journey.

On the day of ancestral offering, if the snake is seen on the way to fetch the water, the one who sees the snake has to stop walking and stand up silently at that place. The followers (neighbours) have to inform the family members. Another woman from her household comes and fetches the pure water from that well. The one who sees the snake has to keep standing up at that place until the ancestral offering has finished in her family.

Another serious taboo is about the possibility of twins. Akhas' traditional beliefs have strong influence on their life. The most serious taboo is not to talk about the possibility of twins. Akhas dislike asking them about twins. When their grandchildren are grown up within 3 to 6-year-old, grandparents often tell them about twins. According to the informal conversation with children, they come to know the bad beliefs about twins. They believe that twins are born due to evil spirit. In the past, there was a custom to kill the twins by the parents themselves when they were born. Nowadays, if twins are born, the couple must stay outside the village by themselves before they are driven out by the village leader or the couples who gave birth to twins have to move to another place without telling anybody. These beliefs still remain in Akha society. So, Akhas follow the rules of Akha and the limitation of Akha culture not to bear the twins. Akhas do not want to get twins in their family

According to the interview with an Akha man who is a teacher in Kyaing Tong University, who gave us this information on January, 2012. He said that “a meeting concerned with twins was held in Tarchleik, 2009”. Every Akha village leaders, Phimas and Akha culture committee members living in different regions attended this meeting, which mainly discussed about the twins. According to the decision of the meeting, if the twins are born, these twins are recognized as normal Akha children by Akha society. Male Akha twins can succeed in their generation and these twins’s name can be included in their generation lists. Male twins or female twins are given name by the village leader (Dzoema) and Phima (Shaman). To bring good luck to the twins, donation is given in the village by the twins’ parents.

With regard to this, an Akha woman living in Hwe Yoke 2 gave birth to male twins in Kyaing Tong hospital in September 2011. Akha leaders from Akha culture committee in Kyaing Tong supported money, food and clothes for her twins. When this couple arrived in their village, they gave donation in the village. On the day of the donation, every house was invited to come to the donation. One Akha male who is teacher from Kyaing Tong University, went to the donation with Akha leaders in Kyaing Tong. The Akha culture committee members supported 500000kyats to the twins. On that day, nearly half of the household members from the village did not come and attend this donation. At that time, the village leader and village chairman announced that every Akha family must come and eat in the donation by force. After that, local Akha villagers were involved in the donation. He said that “although local Akha villagers came to the twins’s donation, they still worry about twins whether misfortunes will happen in the village” This is the first time donation concerning twins in the village. Three years ago in the study areas, local Akha woman gave birth to twins, but the twins were not alive. This couple stayed outside the village a few weeks and moved to another town. Now, although the twins are accepted to live in the village, local Akha people are afraid of twins and can not abandon their beliefs within a short time. If no misfortunes happen in the village, local Akha people may accept the twins who are not evil spirits. Depending on time, their beliefs on twins may change in the future. It can be assumed as the beginning of development in the areas as the twins are accepted for the first time.

### **4.3.3 Paying respect to the elders**

The Akha's traditional culture strongly restricts the social relation between the younger and the elder. If someone misbehaves to the elder, the organization dislikes that person and he is assumed as not a good man. Akha parents always teach their children how to behave towards the older people. Traditionally, Akhas always pay respect to elders not only at home but also outside the family. They enjoy sharing a seat when there is need on the way in their travels. Young men avoid disputing in front of the elders. At the time of having a meal, the eldest person has the first priority to take the food. Parents train their children not to do the bad things since they were young.

Paying respect to the elders is a lovely behaviour in Akha society. Young males avoid looking at elders straight in the eye. If the young man interrupts talking of an elder man, he is recognized as a rude person in Akha society. Concerning attitudes, young people respect and obey the elders. They take advice from elders. Parents teach their children how to help others and how to live to be a good man or woman.

In study areas, it was found that some educated young people did not agree with some behaviors of the elder people, but they avoid disputing with the elders. For example, if a patient suffers serious illness, some educated people would like to send the patient to the hospital or take medical treatment officially. However, grandfather or the head of the village wishes the patient to be treated with traditional practices. In such a situation, the younger person would not dare to do against the elders. At that time, they prefer the elder's suggestion and obey their decision.

### **4.3.4 Cultural transmission in rituals and social affairs by gender**

In the study areas, there are important rituals and community activities concerning ancestral offering according to seasonal cycle in the Akha society. These important communities' activities are building the village gate (Law Khaung) and driving out the evil spirit (Kha-yeh-yeh). The important rituals are chicken egg boiling festival (Khun-shu-khun-mie), rice planting ancestral offering, offering all the dead ancestors (Yaw La), swing festival (Yekku), chicken festival (Yet Kyit Kyit), plucking the first rice festival (Wo-Tou-Che-Nu), and New Year festival (Kha Htuan Hpa). These important rituals are made throughout the year in the study areas. As the

following data are presented according to month schedules, the activities of rituals and social affairs are not illustrated serially.

#### **4.3.4.1 Beliefs on village gate**

Village gates are important for animist Akha. There are many stories concerning the gates. Village gates can prevent evil spirits from entering the village. Village founder leader (Dzoema) plays an important role in the building of village gates. He makes offerings to ancestors to be safe, healthy and get bountiful harvest for all the villagers. There are two village gates: one is the entrance gate and the other is the exit gate. The gates are made of bamboo and wood. But, the gates of Hwe Yoke 2 from the survey areas are built with concrete. It has various kinds of birds' figures especially crow birds are made of wood to prevent the evil spirit (see figure7). There is a special carved figure with exaggerated genitalia (see figure8). These figures guard couples of village. The gates are rebuilt once a year. Although the gate made of concrete does not need to be rebuilt, the guard couples made of wood must be changed and the old one is not broken away. It must be placed near the new one. It will damage itself by the weather but nobody breaks it. The old men tell about taboos to the male villagers when they build a new one. This knowledge is passed down from generation to generation. Dzoema who controls the whole village, plays a major role in the construction of the village gates. He has to choose the best day for building the gates. Men villagers have to build the gates under the guidance of the "Dzoema. On that day, nobody goes outside of the village and they avoid making alcohol, pounding rice, weaving and doing heavy tasks, for example, repairing the house, preparing the soil for home garden. This day is important day for Akha. Husband and wife have to avoid sexual relationship on that day. Strangers are not allowed to enter into the village. If they have something wrong, "Dzoema" will start again to build the gate. Strangers are not allowed to touch the things which the gate has. If the villagers grow the paddy, they have to pass through under the gate. If so, they believe that very much paddy will be harvested. On other days, they can use the road which is beside the gate. If there is no village gate in the village, it shows automatically that the village founder leader is not in this village.



Figure 7. Village gate in Hwe Yoke 2 village



Figure 8. Guard couples in village gate

#### 4.3.4.2 Chicken egg boiling festival

It is called Khon-shu-kohn-myee in Akha language. It is also called dying various colours on the chicken eggs. It is celebrated in Monkey day of April according to Akha calendar. It is celebrated for 5 days. The first 2 days is called Khun-shu and the last 2 days is called Khun-mie. Khun-shu is for male and Khun-mie is for female. On the first two days of Khun-shu, each male gets a boiled egg in a family. If a man is traveling somewhere, an egg for that man is removed. The eggs are presented to each other not only in the same village but also to the other villages. Children put the eggs into the small sling and play together with them. On that day, village headman's household (Dzoema) begins pounding glutinous rice. After that, the couple from every household has to pound glutinous rice. The middle day is called Khun-shu Jay-laung. On that day, they are not allowed to go to the field and weave, make alcohol and do heavy tasks in the family. They stay at home and just waiting for the rain to come. It is meant the Sabbath day of Akha. The last two days is Khun-mie. It is for females. On those days, women make small glutinous rice dumplings and Kauknyin-htou. They share the food with neighbours not only in the village but also with other villages. Both young males and females observe the rituals by active participation. On the last day of the ritual, the village headman (Dzoema), shaman (Phima) and blacksmith (Gima) mainly participated in the village affairs in order to offer sacrifice with chicken to have good health and more power. The women and children avoid eating sacrificed chicken in the Khon-shu Jay-laung. So, it is important to know this social taboo for Akha female and children.

If the child was born during Khun-shu-khun-mee or if the new daughter-in-law arrives to parents-in-law's house, husband's relatives will give an egg for the new child or new daughter-in-law in order to introduce with Khun-shu-khun-mee. Parents tell about their family members concerning this ritual. The main purpose of this ritual is to pray for the rain to come and to pray for good health for the persons especially the village headman (Dzoema), shaman (Phima) and blacksmith (Gima). Most Akha males and females do not know why village headman, shaman and blacksmith sacrifice chicken on the last day. The majority of Akha said that this ritual focus on children who play happily with eggs. A few elder people said that this ritual's purpose is on getting rain. Anyway, children know chicken egg boiling festival because of active participation.

#### **4.3.4.3 Rice planting ancestral offering**

This ritual is celebrated in May. All heads of the households offer to ancestors with chicken. They believe the ancestors will take care of them by doing so. Females are not allowed to participate in the first planting ancestral offering. Every ancestral offering matter must be done by head of the household.

#### **4.3.4.4 Driving out the ghosts (Ka-yeh-yeh)**

It is done in August. On the evening of the day, spears, sword, guns are made of bamboo by the male villagers and all family members from every house have to beat with wooden spears, sword, guns, etc. The main purpose of this affair is to expel evil spirits, ghosts from the village. Both male and female villagers can participate in these affairs because it is not ancestral offering matter. All these wooden materials are placed outside the gate. Male villagers compete in air gun shooting. The man, whose wife is pregnant, does not go there as the baby can be affected. The older men tell about things to avoid to adolescent males and married young men. Akha's wedding ceremony is celebrated only after driving out the ghosts and evil spirit from the village. This knowledge is passed on from generation to the next.

#### **4.3.4.5 The Swing festival**

It is celebrated in August after driving out the ghosts (Ka-yeh-yeh). Paddy ear is nearly appearing at that time. Local Akha people said that the purpose of celebrating the Swing festival is offering to ancestors to get abundant paddy. Village founder leader (Dzoema) plays an important role in building the Swing. The Swing is made by the head of the village (Dzoema) and male villagers. Cutting trees, digging holes and doing other tasks were made under the supervision of the Dzoema, who offers to ancestral spirit with chicken and pray to bear much paddy, health of the whole village and to be safe while riding the Swing. If a man's wife is pregnant, he does not participate in doing the Swing. Akhas believe that it can affect the child by doing like this. Although the Swing festival has been finished, the swing is not taken off and not touched by anyone. Akhas assume that the spirit in the Swing is alive for the next the Swing festival. Children know taboos related to the Swing festival because parents tell their children not to touch and not to play with the Swing after the ceremony. It is very serious for Akha. If someone touches or plays with the swing, it is assumed that the paddy yield will be reduced and the inconveniences will occur in

the family and in the village. Akha strongly value the Swing festival. In the next year, Dzoema and villagers will take out the old Swing and a new one will be set up. If the Swing is not seen at the entrance of the village gate, it means that Dzoema is not in this village. Only the Dzoema must offer to ancestral spirit and build it. According to Akha old men, the Swing ceremony is very closely related to rice, which is mainly concerned with women. Therefore, the Swing ceremony is also concerned with Akha women. During the ceremony days, Akha females happily dance and sing with music. The musical instruments are made of bamboos. In the past, there was a custom that if Akha girls have menstruation, they were not allowed to ride the Swing. Nowadays, according to interview with Akha women, although Akha girls are menstruating, they can participate in the Swing ceremony.

#### **4.3.4.6 Offering to ancestral Dzoemas (Yaw -la-la)**

This offering is done to the dead Dzoemas (village founder). By doing so, they believe the spirit of Dzoemas will take care for abundant production of crops. This offering is made after crop planting.

#### **4.3.4.7 Chicken festival (Yet- Kyit-kyit)**

This ceremony is done after offering to ancestral Dzoema. They believe that their ancestors come and join in this offering and take care of them. Head of the household must offer this ceremony.

#### **4.3.4.8 Plucking the first rice festival**

It is called Wo-Tou-Che-Nu by Akha. On that day, head of household picks three ripe ears of paddy from the field and brings them carefully to the house. They believe that the ears of paddy should not be seen by evil spirit on the way. The paddy ears are placed in the ancestral bamboo tube and offered to ancestors with chicken and first rice crop. After offering to the ancestors, they can start harvesting. Every household celebrates this ceremony according to the auspicious day of each household. The old people and village head men are invited to the ceremony. The oldest woman gets the chance to have the first rice crop as a first person. The other people can eat after the oldest woman had eaten. They believe that women have the responsibility to take care of food for all family members and so the rice crop production is directly related to women.

#### **4.3.4.9 New Year ceremony (Khar Htaung Phar)**

It is the last seasonal ritual and celebrated in the last week of December. Celebrating days can be different from village to village. On New Year ceremonial days, Akha girl's head dress must be changed according to age by mother. After New Year ceremony, another animal will be represented for the next year will be arriving.

#### **4.3.5.0 Appealing to spirit concerning animals**

It is one of important social affairs in local Akha villages. It is called Kodar Hauk by Akha. It is done on the Sheep day or Tiger day in January or February according to the Akha calendar before cultivating in the field. It is intended to get good health for animals such as cows, buffaloes, dogs, pigs, and to have increased number of animals in a family. On that day, children learn about it by participant observation. Some 9-10 year-old boys and above participate in making animal figures. On that day evening, various kinds of animal' figures are made of mud by the head of the village (Dzoema) (see figure 9) and local male villagers except females. Akhas assume that this task is not female's task. But, both girls and boys from each house bring flowers, household goods such as chilly, peanut, maize, rice, paddy, salt etc, for the spirit concerning animals ( see figure 10). Then, head of the village (Dzoema) and Phima (shaman) pray for the animals to be healthy and has to offer various kinds of food, goods, flowers and crops to the spirit looking after the animals. After that male villagers carry them outside the village and put them on the tree. On the return to the village, one of the men must do three marks on the ground with knife and tell to the spirit that cares for the animals not to follow them and not to enter the village. Male and female children participate in the Kodar Hauk. According to informal interview with children, every child knows why it is used for animal's figures. But, 4-7 years-old child can not know why household goods, crops, flowers, etc, are brought. Above 12 years-old- child understand the purpose of taking the goods and crops to the Kodar Hauk. Male villagers do not teach directly to the children how and why animal' figures are made in this ceremony. Children understand easily by participant observation in the social affairs.



Figure 9. Village head making animal figure and observing it are the children



Figure 10. Participation of children in appealing to spirit concerning animals

#### 4.3.5.1 Men's participation in repairing shrine for spirit

There is a shrine for spirits in every Akha animist's village. It is located in the east of the village and the shrine for spirits is repaired once a year. There are many trees in that place but it is not allowed to cut down the trees. Children are not allowed to play at that place. Only men and old men repair the shrine for spirit. If the man's wife is pregnant, he is not allowed to participate. If someone breaks the rule, they believe that the baby will be affected by the spirit. Phima (Shaman) including old men pray for good health, increase in paddy and other crop production. After building the village gate, the shrine for ancestral spirit is repaired on the next day. If Tiger day is chosen as an auspicious day by the Dzoema, a house in the village must be chosen. Auspicious day is different from village to village depending on the Dzoema. On the day of repairing the shrine for the spirit, older men, shaman (Phima) and male villagers have to organize in the chosen house. Shaman leads to repair and recite for good economy, health for the whole village and apologizes with meat to forgive their mistakes during the year. After that, male villagers, the old men including shaman return to the chosen house. And then, they have to go back home from the chosen house. Akha men must know the procedure of repairing the spirit shrine.

According to the findings, it was realized that local Akha people respect their traditional culture and maintain their customs from generation to generation. Akha parents teach their children to understand traditional culture, social norms, taboo (avoidance) and responsibilities by gender. In celebrating traditional ceremonies, some gender difference was found in sharing work. On ancestral offering days, Akha male takes charge for offering because men are the head of the family. Akha women prepare food for ancestral offering. On traditional ceremony of eating the first crop day, only the oldest Akha woman gets the chance to have the first new rice because they believe that women are the one who take care of food for the whole family. Thus, Akha's traditional beliefs reflect on sharing work by gender.

The culture of paying respect to the elders in this society is a lovely thing. However, in some situations especially concerning health, there is a need to make the right decision by the young people. Some old people still use traditional custom (offerings to the spirit etc) even in a serious health situation. Even under such a situation, young people do not dare to make the right decision against the elders. This custom especially about the health could affect the development of the local people.

In the discussion of this chapter, perception of traditional culture does not show too much difference in socialization in these study areas. Concerning their belief about offering and the spiritual things, they have excessively credulous belief in and reverence for the supernatural. In the case of their assumption about twins, Akha still believe that it is due to the evil spirit and nobody wants to have twins in the family. In the past, there was a custom of twins being killed by the parents. Nowadays, local Akhas accepted the couple having twins in the village. Depending on time, their beliefs on twins may be changed in the future. It can be assumed as the beginning of development in the areas as the twins are accepted for the first time.

Another strong belief is about the snake. They believe the snake is unlucky creature and it brings bad fortune for them. They still assume that the one who sees the snake may face many troubles. If someone sees the snake on the way of his work especially on ancestor offering days, someone else (friends or neighbours) has to do his work on the behalf and the one who sees the snake has to stop there until the offering ceremony has finished. These points indicated that they have strong supernatural belief and it strongly influences Akha's customs. These superstitious beliefs are transmitted from generation to generation.

About sharing the work among the family, the interview results indicated that there was gender difference about sharing the work among the family. In maintaining the culture of genealogical knowledge, only sons have the chance to learn the genealogical knowledge from father because they believe that men have to lead the whole family. They learn how to define its relations with the members of its own paternal family and classification according to descent. When offering to the ancestors, only men have to lead that offering ceremony in the family. In this case, women are not allowed to touch the materials for offering. This belief comes from the fact that Akhas practise patrilineal kinship system and so only sons have to lead the ancestral offering. The genealogical knowledge is perpetuated from generation to generation. These facts suggested that Akhas pay respect to their ancestors and maintain their cultures.

For women, there are some rules about the marriage for the adolescent daughters. They are not allowed to stay intimately with the boys before marriage. If a young lady makes a big mistake before marriage, the whole family will be very ashamed among the Akha society. That family will be ignored by the villagers and the head man. Thus, mothers always take care that their daughters do not make any

mistakes before marriage. Akha men do not want to marry the girls who have made a big mistake before marriage.

In celebrating traditional ceremonies, some gender difference was found in sharing work. Ceremonies such as building the village gate, building the swing, rice planting and driving out the ghosts, are allowed for men only. The reason could be that they believe men are the ones who have to lead the whole family and these ceremonies are related with forefather ancestors and thus men should be the leader in these ancestral offering ceremonies. Women just prepare food for the offering ceremonies; however women are not allowed to touch such ancestor offering tools. Thus, it is evident that Akha practise and maintain traditional customs. This custom is maintained from generation to generation up to now. These traditional customs strongly influence gender differences in sharing of labour.

Akhas respect their generation and maintain the name of generation in this society. It is not allowed to break the rules by the young women about the marriage. If a young lady makes a big mistake before marriage, the whole family will be punished among the Akha society. That family will be ignored by the villagers and the head man. Thus, maintaining the name of the generation is very important. In addition, Akhas use patrilineal kinship system, Akha emphasize on sons to recite the name of ancestors. Grandparents and parents teach their sons to know the genealogical knowledge starting from four year old. This information pointed out that Akhas emphasize on sons to recite their generation. Genealogical knowledge is perpetuated from generation to generation. It is evident that Akhas value their generation.

In conclusion, it can be said that Akhas still keep and maintain their traditional culture by holding the traditional celebrations. The young and old people actively participate in all celebrations. This is one way of cultural transmission not only inside the family but also in the whole organization. So, family members in Akha society play a key role in the socialization process, way of teaching the good manners and roles in accordance with age and gender including household division of labour by gender. Detailed information with regard to how household chores are shared according to gender will be discussed in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER (5)

### SHARING HOUSEHOLD CHORES

In the previous chapter, socialization perspective on ancestral offering and cultural transmission in rituals are described. Childhood socialization is involved in a part of housework in a family. Children learn certain actions of parental behavior in the family. According to results, children's gender role attitudes are associated with parents' housework allocation. This paper shows that how men and women allocate their labour concerned with household chores within a family.

#### **5.1. Allocation of labour on household chores by gender**

Household chores include cooking, washing, cleaning the house, caring for the child and make domestic animal's food etc. Akha women take much more responsibilities of the household chores. Akha women spend much time for preparing the meal, child caring, cleaning the house and feeding pig (see figure 11, 12). For these tasks, a woman gets up early before her husband. If daughter-in-law is in the house, she gets up first before her mother-in-law. However, women get up first to do chores in a family. Then, she prepares to cook breakfast for the family and also does for the pigs.

If there are no heavy tasks (clearing in the field, preparing the soil) for men in the field, men get up late. After having breakfast, both husband and wife go together to the field. For a woman, there are a lot of household tasks such as cooking, collecting vegetables (see figure 13, 14), preparing for breakfast, lunch and dinner. Besides housework, woman does cooking for lunch in the field as well as doing field works. In the past, women themselves pound grain to get rice. Now, as there are small rice mills in village, women get relief from pounding grain. The modern technology creates much time to spend working on other matters (see figure 29).

Their daily curries are pea nut, bamboo shoot, seasonal vegetables such as pumpkin, mustard, chilly and cucumbers, taro, maize, eggs etc. Women in particular play an important role in collecting and gathering these products. Women are primarily responsible for their families' food. They sometimes eat dog which they raise in the house. They rarely eat meat (chicken, pork) in their daily meals. Although they raise chickens and pigs, these domestic animals are only used for home rituals

and ceremonies. But, if the sow bears dead piglets, Akha believe that this sow is not good for their family (economy, health). So, men villagers except the family members cook and eat this pig outside the village gate. The husband rarely helps the cooking in the kitchen. But, when their wives are ill, if daughters are still young to cook for the whole family members, men cook the meals for them. When they offer ancestral spirit in house, men cook meat for offering except in daily life. Most men said that if the men do women's responsibilities such as cooking, collecting vegetables, child caring, etc, they are not masculine or they are afraid of their wives. Akha consider that housework is unsuitable for men.

Every house has a small home garden where they grow seasonal vegetables such as pumpkin, mustard, water convolvulus, rose lee, gourd for daily curry. When it is needed to prepare the ground for growing seasonal plants, men do preparation of the soil.

About fifteen years ago, although water resources were far away from the village, fetching water was women's work. As this task was dependent on women for daily use of water at home, it made them tired. Akha assume that fetching water is women's job. But, village leader and men were mainly involved in finding water sources and they arranged to get water easily. This job was men's responsibilities. Now, as Non Governmental Organization (NGOS) have supplied the water tank and water pipe to get water easily from water resources, both males and females can fetch water in front of the house (see figure 17, 18). Besides, as local people dug wells in the village, it is easy to fetch water any time. So, there is no need to spend much time for it. This makes it equal to be operated by both women and men. Now, men are also involved in fetching water. Now, there is no separation of labour between women and men in fetching water.

Women do a lot of household chores daily, as well as child rearing. Child rearing tasks include looking after, feeding, bathing, disciplining and others. Akha woman is the main person about child rearing tasks. Mother is not allowed to go to the field until her baby is six months. When the baby is over seven months, she takes her baby to the field. When women are busy with agricultural works, grandmother takes care of her grandchildren at home. If there is no person at home, family members take the children to the field and look after them as well as do field work. However, child caring is dependent on women. When the children have grown up to five years, both boys and girls are taught to know Akha culture by parents. When

father makes an ancestral offering, sons are taught man's responsibilities by father and daughters are taught to know woman's responsibilities by mother. But, as mother is always with her children at home, she tells her sons how to do in home rituals. Sometimes, when father is on a journey, mother plays a much more important role in child rearing.

Men mainly do house building, house repairing, fencing the house and preparing the soil for home garden. Slaughtering the animals is done by men. The persons who work in rice mill are men. Some families hire men laborers for working in the field and head of household take charge in rice mill. According to field observation, the woman is also involved in paddy weighing in rice mill.

According to the interviewees, Akha men get much leisure time. When men finish their heavy tasks in the field, they stay at home two days a week. At that time, they look after their children and visit their neighbors without doing kitchen tasks. At night, some of the men visit the house which has a television and watch it. According to field observation, no women had been seen who visited other house to watch TV. Women do not spend their time visiting and watching television. For example, even if her house has a television, she watches television while doing something such as plucking peanut and tying up maize.



Figure 11. Akha woman sweeping the house



Figure 12. Two Akha women looking after their children



Figure 13. Akha woman searching vegetables



Figure 14. Akha women gather vegetables for family members



Figure 15. Storing maize in a house



Figure 16. Storing peanut in a house



Figure 17. Water tanks supplied by World Vision



Figure 18. Fetching the water in front of the house

## 5.2 Collecting firewood

The Akha mainly use firewood for cooking. They collect it from January to March for the whole year. These months are not busy time for men. Felling down the trees and cutting the trees are men's work but women mainly carry the firewood. Women carry it in bamboo or rattan sling basket (see figure 13, 14). Most of men said that they do heavy works which means using physical strength. So, carrying firewood is light work for women. This does not mean that men neglect on women who are responsible for carrying firewood. Sometimes, men also participate in these tasks. The men who own Htaw Lar Gi car and some people who are able to hire it, firewood are carried by it. At that time, although both men and women are involved in this work, heavy tasks which means using energy to move or carry big firewood, are mainly done by men. But, a poor family can not hire it to carry firewood. For such family, carrying firewood is mainly done by women. They collect firewood for the whole year and store it under the house or separate places at home.



Figure19. Akha women carrying firewood



Figure 20. Carrying firewood by the cattle



Figure. 21 Akha man repairing agricultural tool



Figure 22. Two Akha women carrying thatch leaves

### 5.3 Preparing for domestic animal's food

Pigs and chickens are raised as domestic animals which are used in offering ancestral spirit, wedding, New Year and funeral ceremony. Women cook food for pig and feeding them (see figure 23). Although this task is mainly done by women, when women are busy in the field or women go back late, men or old men do this task. But, the Akha recognize that the task of cooking food and feeding pigs and feeding them is women's task. In addition, women mainly search for pig food such as taro plant, banana stem and others. Women mix maize, bran and taro leaves and boil it for pig food. They feed pigs twice a day. When both wife and husband are busy, the grandparents who are caretakers at home do the task of feeding pigs. There is no separate pig house. Pigs can be found under the house or under the trees or outside the village.



Figure 23. Akha woman feeding pig food

### 5.4. Decision making in the household

As the Akha man is the head of a household, he manages and provides the family's needs. The husband was the main decision-maker in the family. The woman must follow his instructions. However, on some occasions and on some matters,

women make their own decision on buying food, clothes for family members and management of the household.

If they face important matters especially health problem, although husband discusses it with his wife, only the man has to decide how to solve this problem. For example, if one of the family members feels seriously illness, the man is the most important person to decide whether this patient should be sent to hospital or treated by health staff in near village or cured by traditional healers. But, the man has to discuss with male shaman (Phima), village headman, relatives and take advice from them. If they tell him to treat with traditional offering, he must follow their decision. Therefore, the last decision for curing is dependent on village leaders and shaman. However, decision making on health is dependent on men.

With regard to child-bearing for woman, she is not allowed to induce abortion and to take medicine to prevent pregnancy without decision of husband. If the woman does like this without her husband's permission, he can divorce her or he can give severe punishment to her. The traditional role of the male as decision maker is also evidenced in the area of family planning. Therefore, it can be assumed that husband has more decision power concerning getting another child.

In most traditional Akha women did not take part in decision-making in community affairs. They were not expected to speak in public and had to ask for permission to do so from elders.

In the local areas, there is only one primary school in three villages. If the students pass primary level, they need to go to another town or another village which are far away from their village to learn further studies. Most children have no chance to continue learning education because they can not afford. Local Akha parents choose an outstanding child to attend elementary or higher education. Although both girls and boys get equal chance in education, some parents rarely send the daughters who are adolescent to another town for education. So, it can be said that boys get more chances than girls in education. Both husband and wife together make a decision for their children schooling. Decisions concerned with marriage are made jointly by husband and wife.

The important decision making is dependent on men in a family. If much money is needed for treating illness or for economic need in a family, the money borrower is the woman. But, the man as the head of the family makes decision on how much money will be borrowed for it and he is responsible to pay back the loan. So, if

much more money for health or economic need is borrowed, men's decision is more important because he takes this responsibility to give back the loan. If they need small amount of money for the family, only the women solve this problem.

In conclusion, this chapter described who performs specific task in the household chores. This result suggests that Akha women take much more responsibilities of the household chores. Although both men and women are included in domestic decision-making, important decision making is mainly concerned with men. It is necessary to know how Akha share their labour in their livelihoods. As Akha's main livelihood is paddy cultivation, gender allocation of labour in agriculture will be discussed in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER (6)

### GENDER ALLOCATION OF LABOUR IN LIVELIHOODS

This study explores what the Akhas do for their livelihoods in the research areas. It reveals that their main livelihoods are agriculture and making alcohol. They do hillside cultivation and farming. Akha people living in the study areas are highly dependent on agriculture. Most of those employed in agriculture are self-employed or unpaid family workers. Two main farming systems can be seen in the local areas. One is shifting cultivation and another is wet cultivation (farming).

Upland paddy, peanut, maize and seasonal crops are cultivated in upland fields. The research examines the different roles of women and men in the upland field as well as in farming. They are still practising cultural beliefs in upland paddy plantation. With regard to this, there are women's role and men's role in upland paddy cultivation. Brewing alcohol is the second priority of their livelihood. Their main income comes from selling agricultural products and alcohol. Weaving contributes a small amount of income for women.

The aims of this chapter are to describe the pattern of allocation of labor between men and women in agriculture and brewing alcohol and to explore how gender roles change in their livelihood by using modern technology. Based on the above livelihood activities, the labour allocation patterns were investigated.

#### **6.1 Sharing tasks of hillside cultivation**

##### **6.1.1 Preparing the soil**

The Akhas do mainly hillside cultivation and farming for their survival. In the study areas, 100% of the people's livelihood is agriculture. Agricultural activities are the main sources of income for Akha. Upland paddy, maize, peanut, soya bean and seasonal vegetables are grown in the field. Both males and females play an important role in agriculture.

There are specific tasks between men and women in hillside cultivation. From January to March, men mainly do searching for new plots, cutting trees and burning the forests which are heavy and dangerous work for women. Men villagers reciprocally help each other in these tasks. Women in general do not engage in these works. Similarly, men mainly do clearing the field and preparing the soil for growing the crops which are also heavy tasks. Although women are mainly not needed to be

involved in heavy tasks such as felling the trees, women go there to help their husbands as much as they can. For example, women help in collecting the small branches, clearing the leaves of the trees, carrying the light branches, etc. Both men and women including adolescent sons and daughters go to the field to prepare the land by using the mattock.

### **6.1.2 Choosing an auspicious day for the first planting**

Upland Paddy is grown in May. There are cultural beliefs in upland paddy cultivation. The “Dzoma” (village founder leader, controller of the village) has to choose one house to grow the first upland paddy in the village. His position can be passed down to his descendents when Dzoma dies. An auspicious day is chosen by the “Dzoma”. It is based on the Akha calendar which has twelve animals for a year. They are tiger, donkey, sheep, rabbit, monkey, horse, fowl, dog, pig, mouse, buffalo and squirrel. If sheep day is chosen as a good day for the ritual first paddy planting, he must choose a house in which the person must not be born on sheep day. If there are two houses alike, one of the two must be chosen again. It must not also have death within a year. The house which has a pregnant woman, twins been born, ill person and a woman who has been divorced, must not be chosen. After choosing the house, a man as head of the household must grow firstly the paddy seed on sheep day on the specific small plot in the upland field which is valued by the family. It must be a clear land. He has to build a small hut in the field by using three pieces of thatch and bamboo for the ancestral spirit. He has to sacrifice a hen, preferably, hen laying eggs. The effect is to cause the rice to be fertile like eggs. White chicken must not be used on offering day. The Akhas believe that it can not be effective to produce a lot of rice. For the first rice planting, paddy seeds from the ancestral box must be used. When he has finished growing for the first plantation, the Dzoma’s field is planted. The villagers help growing the paddy in the “Dzoma” field. After the “Dzoma” field has been planted, every patrilineal family in the community performs first planting on their own good day using rice seeds from the ancestral box. On that day, offering to ancestral spirit is made in the house to get much paddy and all family members from head of the house to be healthy. Similarly, the man as the head of the household builds a small hut in the field and offers to the guardian spirit like the above procedure. After that, the man starts growing the paddy. In the widowed family, her

son or one of her men relatives have to offer on a small plot like above and plant first in her upland paddy field.

If Yayeama is in the family, she has to offer and start growing the paddy plantation. The Akhas believe that Yayeama is equal to head of household. Yayeama is respected by the villagers. On the first seeding day, Yayeama must wear a white skirt which is meant as purifying. Every woman is not allowed to wear a white skirt. The white skirt is Yayeama dress. So, she is called white skirted woman by the Akha. (When the bride girl goes to the bridegroom's house after the wedding, she has to change into white skirt. She has a chance to wear white skirt at that time in her life.) Yayeama makes offerings to ancestral spirit in the above procedure. If the glutinous rice is grown in upland field, it does not need to be done like planting the rice. Rice is more important than other crops for Akha. They practise hoe cultivation. Men dig the ground with a stick and women put into it the seed. Therefore, both men and women are involved in upland paddy plantation. At the busy time for cultivation, the man gets up early and goes first to the field for preparing the soil.

### **6.1.3 Weeding**

In July and August, weeding task is mainly done by women. After men finish the heavy tasks in the field, they rarely come to the field everyday. They stay at home and do household tasks such as making alcohol or looking after their children or cooking pig food, etc. But, women go to the field every day for caring after the crops. Sometimes men help in the weeding.

### **6.1.4 Harvesting and threshing**

In November, upland paddy is harvested. The best days to harvest the paddy for the Akha are Tiger day and Sheep day. Firstly, only three paddy stalks from the whole specific land are harvested in the early morning by the head of the household and are put into the bag not to be seen by a snake. It is important for the Akha as they believe that seeing a snake is a bad omen. They are very careful to harvest the first paddy. These three paddy stalks have to be put on the small shelf. It represents as a granary for the ancestral spirit. After that, a man as head of a household starts harvesting upland paddy in the field. Both men and women participate in harvesting. They use simple tools such as sickles and knives to harvest the paddy by hand. The tools used in upland field are very simple and backward. So, they need physical

labour in upland cultivation. Harvesting is done by both men and women. Beating the paddy is first done by the head of the household. But, Yayeama too can first beat the paddy like a man. Winnowing, threshing and carrying the paddy are performed by both men and women. All activities are performed by manual or animal labour in upland paddy cultivation.

The paddy from the specific land must be kept in a separate container. Although it is not much, a little rice must be mixed with other rice and cooked for ancestral offering. It must be involved as an important thing. It must be used in every ritual of Akha. Generally, the paddy is carried out by buffalo, cows and horse, motor cycle and Htaw Lar Gi car. A horse is hired to carry the paddy. Some people, who are not able to hire a horse, carry the paddy by themselves in a sling. Most men carry the paddy by sling because this task needs more physical efforts. Upland paddy which is first harvested must be fed to old women and old men in the village. Only women take the cooking responsibility in the family so that older women are invited and fed the first paddy in the village.

#### **6.1.5 Storing the paddy and the ceremony of opening the granary**

The paddy is stored in a granary or a building by the Akha. When the paddy is put into the granary, the head of the household or son has to do it first. Strangers are not allowed to put it into the granary. After putting the paddy into the granary, it is not taken out without a small ceremony to open the granary to take out the paddy for use. If the paddy is needed urgently for the family, it will be kept separately without putting it into the granary. Opening the granary to take out the paddy for use will be celebrated by each household. First, head of the household has to choose an auspicious day according to “the Akha calendar”. Especially, the day which is not included in the family members, must be chosen for opening the granary.

On that day early in the morning, the woman has to fetch the water from a specific well outside the village. The water from the specific well is used in cooking for offering to the ancestral spirit. She has to boil two eggs and cook rice with this water, and prepares everything for the offering (see figure. 24). The head of the household or his son leads this ceremony (see figure 25). He takes the paddy which was firstly harvested from the field and which he has put in a specific paddy box for ancestral spirit. These paddies are used to cultivate the land in the next year.

If Yayeama does the opening ceremony of the granary, she has to do continuously for three years. If not, bad luck will happen in her house. She has to kill a pig near the granary and offer to the ancestral spirit. After that, anybody from the household can take it out. “The Dzoma”, village headman and older people are invited and fed with rice, pork and alcohol. If she is able to feed many people, neighbour people are also invited to join the granary opening ceremony. If Yayeama dies within three years, the household does not need to do the granary opening ceremony. It must be done after the New Year festival of Akha which is celebrated in December.



Figure 24. Preparing for opening granary



Figure 25. Doing opening granary by the household head

## 6.2 Gender role in farming system

Women and men have distinct roles within the farming system. Gender differences in rural farming households vary widely but certain features are common. In some settings, a rigid division of labor exists between men and women. In study areas, farming is started in June or July. Offering to ancestral spirit is not needed to be done on the first farming day unlike upland paddy plantation. Everyone can grow wet paddy if they are ready to grow it. It is based on the weather. Only men do the ploughing in the farm. Most people use cow or buffalo in ploughing. Very few households can use small ploughing machine (see figure 28). Although the gender-based division of labor in the farming system varies widely, it still affects responses to agricultural innovation everywhere. If ploughing machine and harvesting machine can be used in the farm, physical labor effort of men and women will be reduced. Farming days are very busy time for men.

Transplanting and growing the paddy is mostly done by women. Although men and women are involved in upland plantation, women are mainly involved in paddy plantation in the farm. Women conducted all farm tasks except ploughing. Women are hired as day laborers for transplanting. They get 2000kyats for a day. Farming generally requires more labor for weeding, harvesting and post-harvest processing.

This is an opportunity for wage employment in the farmless family. Men are hired in farming for the whole season. A few rich families hire men laborers to work all tasks concerning paddy plantation in both hillside cultivation and farming. In November, farm paddy is harvested by both men and women. Threshing the paddy also is done by both men and women. Mostly, paddy is carried by cow or buffalo.

The Akha from study areas are animists so that they must offer annually to the ancestral spirit with rice which must be upland paddy. Since the olden days, Akhas have been living in the hilly regions and growing upland paddy. They believe that their increasing harvest paddy depended on the ancestral spirit. Therefore, they offer first to the ancestral spirit upland paddy before plantation. Upland paddy is mainly used to offer to the ancestral spirit. Although they have a lot of farm lands, they must grow a little upland paddy to offer to ancestral spirit with upland paddy. There is no need to offer to ancestral spirit in farming. There is no limitation in farming like upland paddy plantation. According to old men saying, Akha live in the high mountainous regions and they cultivate the paddy in the upland areas. As they

worship their ancestors, they offer to ancestors before paddy plantation in the upland field. They do like this only in the upland paddy cultivation.

### **6.3 Seasonal crops plantation**

In April and May, seasonal crops such as peanut, soy bean and maize are grown in the upland field. The land areas are divided separately for growing seasonal crops. Before growing it, men mainly prepare the field. Besides, pumpkin, potato, yam, cucumber, garlic, taro, chilly, and other seasonal vegetables are also grown in upland field. April is workloaded for men in the land preparation. Women mainly do growing peanut and maize, weeding and caring for the crops. Although women finished at the tasks of paddy plantation and growing the crops, they go to the field to take care of the crops. This responsibility is mainly put on the women. They also do the picking of the produce. Women tend to concentrate on their agricultural activities. In general, however, women tend to have a wider range of activities and enterprises than men.

The major part of the job of men in hillside cultivation and farming is finished within a short time but women go on continuously to take care of their crops. Women rarely stayed at home without going to the field.

In August, maize is plucked by women. In September, women are very busy with picking the peanuts. They go to the field every day for picking up the peanut. Although men are not always mainly involved in these works, men participate in carrying it from the field to the house.



Figure 26. An Akha family going to the field by motor cycle



Figure 27. Akha women coming back from the field

Table 2. Responsibilities of men and women in seasonal crops

Name of crops	Crop planting month	Men's responsibility	Women's responsibility	Harvesting month	Remarks
Peanut , maize	April	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Preparing the soil</li> <li>- Growing it</li> <li>- Carrying it to the house</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Growing it</li> <li>- Caring the Crops</li> <li>- Weeding</li> <li>- Picking up</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- August</li> <li>- September</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- More busy for men in April</li> <li>- Busier for women from May to September</li> </ul>
Upland paddy	April, May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Felling the trees and burning the trees</li> <li>- Preparing the soil</li> <li>- seeding</li> <li>- Harvesting</li> <li>- Threshing</li> <li>- Winnowing</li> <li>- Carrying it to the house</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- participating in clearing the upland field</li> <li>- Seeding</li> <li>- Weeding</li> <li>- Caring the paddy</li> <li>- Harvesting</li> <li>- Threshing</li> </ul>	October& November	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A bit more busy for men in April and May</li> <li>- Busy for both men and women in harvesting</li> </ul>
Farm paddy	June, July	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ploughing</li> <li>- Transplanting</li> <li>- Harvesting</li> <li>- threshing</li> <li>- Winnowing</li> <li>- Carrying it to the house</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Transplanting</li> <li>- Harvesting</li> <li>- threshing</li> <li>- Winnowing</li> </ul>	November, December	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- More Busy for men in ploughing</li> <li>- Busy for both men and women in November and December</li> </ul>

Source: Author's field survey, 2011

Table 3. Monthly time schedule of men and women for seasonal crops in the study areas

Month	Activities	Leaving time	Coming home time	Remarks	Men and women
January	- Breaking up the ground with mattock - felling the trees - collecting firewood	8a.m or 9a.m	5p.m	Do not go everyday	Men do much more work than women
February	- Breaking up the ground with mattock - felling the trees - collecting firewood	8a.m or 9a.m	5p.m	Do not go everyday	Men do much more work than women
March	- Preparing the soil - felling the trees - collecting firewood	8a.m or 9a.m	5p.m	Do not go everyday	Men do much more work than women
April	-Preparing the soil - planting maize	6a.m or 7a.m	5p.m	Go nearly everyday	Both
May	- upland paddy plantation - growing peanut	5:30a.m	6p.m	Go nearly everyday	Both
June	- ploughing the farm land - seeding - Transplanting	5a.m	6p.m or 7p.m	Everyday	Men go earlier than women
July	- weeding - caring the Crops	6a.m or 7a.m	5p.m	Not everyday	Women go more often than men
August	- weeding - caring the crops - plucking the maize	6a.m or 7a.m	5p.m or 6p.m	Not everyday	Women go more often than men
September	- picking up the Peanuts	6a.m or 7a.m	5p.m or 6p.m	Not everyday	Women go more often than men
October	- harvesting the upland paddy - threshing	5a.m or 5:30a.m	6a.m	Everyday	Men go earlier than women
November	- harvesting the farm paddy - threshing	5a.m	6a.m	Everyday	Men go earlier than women
December	- Carrying the paddy to the House	6a.m	5a.m	Not everyday	Men go more times than women

Table 4. Land ownership according to the villages

Name of village	Upland field	Farm land	Total
Hwe Yoke 1	30 acres	15.96 acres	45.96 acres
Hwe Yoke 2	50 acres	56.33 acres	106.33 acres
Naung Hlam	30 acres	30 acres	60 acres

Source: Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation Department, 2011

Table 5. Numbers of agricultural machinery, motor cycle and TV owned by each village

Name of village	Ploughing machine	Paddy husk generator	Small rice mill	Number of motor cycle	Number of TV	Number of three-wheels cycle
Hwe Yoke 1	4	-	4	10	2	-
Hwe Yoke 2	9	3	7	40	4	2
Naung Hlam	6	-	7	23	6	3



Figure 28. Agricultural machine



Figure 29. Akha woman utilizing small scale rice mill

#### **6.4. The process of brewing alcohol**

Selling alcohol is one of the livelihoods of the Akha. Alcohol is called “Kyin Par” in Akha language. It is made of paddy. There are three steps in making alcohol. Firstly, rice paddy has to be boiled for about thirty minutes. After that, it is spread out to dry on the mat. Secondly, it is mixed with “De chay” which is made of rice, glutinous rice, kinds of roots from the forest and ready made ingredient from China. De Chay is Akha language (see figure 31). It is essential material in making alcohol. After mixing with it, the paddy is put into the basket and kept for about two days. Thirdly, it is put into the plastic bag for two days and tied tightly to be air tight. It takes a period of thirteen or fifteen days. After that, it is steamed and the liquid from a still is called alcohol. It is directly put into the bottle or portable container by pipe. If ten baskets of paddy are boiled, three buckets of alcohol are obtained. One basket contains sixteen small baskets.

Both men and women make alcohol. As January, February and March are not as busy as the rest of the months, nearly every household makes alcohol during these three months. They store it in plastic buckets. If they have more paddies, more alcohol is made and stored for selling. According to my observation, alcohol is made by women (see figure 30). According to research information, as alcohol is made in every household during January to March, the price of alcohol becomes low price. In April, May and June, villagers are busy with field works and farm works so that land owners buy alcohol for laborers. At that time, alcohol prices rise in the market. In July, August and September, as every household cannot make alcohol, the price of alcohol is normal price. As October and November are harvesting time, the land owners buy a lot of alcohol to give to the villagers for contributing laborers in the field. So, it becomes highest price. As New Year ceremony is celebrated in December, alcohol price rise to the highest price. Although they still have new paddies in December, without opening ceremony of granary, it is not allowed to use for making alcohol.



Figure 30. Preparing for making alcohol



Figure 31. Day Chey used in making alcohol

Table 6. Showing the rate of alcohol prices in a year

Month	Name of goods	Price	Price of a bucket of alcohol (24 bottles)	Reasons for alcohol price rising and falling
January	Alcohol	Low price	25000kyats	Soil preparation
February	Alcohol	Low price	25000kyats	Soil preparation
March	Alcohol	Low price	25000kyats	Soil preparation
April	Alcohol	Normal price	30000kyats	Upland paddy Plantation
May	Alcohol	Prices rising	32000kyats	Upland paddy Plantation
June	Alcohol	High price	35000kyats	Farm paddy plantation
July	Alcohol	Normal price	30000kyats	Paddy becomes scarce for alcohol
August	Alcohol	Normal price	30000kyats	Paddy becomes scarce for alcohol
September	Alcohol	Normal price	30000kyats	Paddy becomes scarce for alcohol
October	Alcohol	Highest price	37000kyats	Harvesting& threshing
November	Alcohol	Highest price	37000kyats	Harvesting & threshing
December	Alcohol	Highest price	37000kyats	New Year ritual

Source: Author's field survey, 2011

Table 7. Numbers of households making alcohol according to village

Village name	Households number making alcohol for the whole year	Households number making alcohol for six months only	Households number making alcohol for three months only	Households number do not make alcohol	Number of alcohol License
Hwe Yoke (1)	1	3	10	6	1
Hwe Yoke (2)	10	30	7	7	1
Naung Hlam	4	17	10	7	4

Source: Author's field survey, 2011

### 6.5 Gender role in marketing

The Akhas in the study areas sell alcohol mainly to get income. Although transportation is difficult to go to the market in the neighboring village, most Akha women went there on foot to sell alcohol until three years ago. It takes one and a half hours if they go on foot to the Pan Li market. They carry it by a sling. One woman interviewee said that "if she goes to the market about ten times, her husband accompanies her only three times". So, responsibility of selling alcohol is responsibility of women. Very recently, local people were able to buy motor-cycles. It was seen that there are many motor cycles in the village and only men go from place to place with alcohol buckets on it. At the same time, the responsibility of selling alcohol was transferred to men. Now head of the household or adolescent sons carry alcohol buckets by motor cycle and sell them in the market. These tasks became gradually transferred to men. So, women's participation in selling alcohol has become gradually reduced in the study areas.

One of the men interviewees said that even if women are able to ride a motor-cycle, women are not allowed selling alcohol. He said that when his wife sold alcohol in the market, she was asked that "don't you have a husband".

According to informal conversation, one adolescent boy (University student) said that "since they have bought a motor cycle, he and his father go to sell alcohol" and "if he goes there by motor cycle, it takes twenty minutes only". The task of selling alcohol is finished within a short time. His mother, who is left at home can

make alcohol, do household chores and other tasks at that time. So, it surely can be said that modern technology has changed gender role.

But, there are still people who do not possess motor cycles. In these households, the responsibility of selling alcohol is still burdened on the women. Sometimes, mother and adolescent girls go together to sell alcohol in the market. Although men go together with their wives, he always doesn't go for selling it. According to key informants interviewed, they said that men are lazy and do not want to get up early to go to the market. Traders come into the village to buy alcohol with three wheels cycle. So, some people who do not possess motor cycle sell it to the traders who come to the village. Or they sell it to the person who has alcohol license. If alcohol is sold in the village, the price may be less. So, some women go on foot to sell alcohol to get more money. In the poor family, the task of selling alcohol is burdened on women.

#### **6.5.1 Case study on daily life of a married Akha woman**

Case-study of the daily life of a married Akha woman in Naung Hlam village is described as follows. This woman is over thirty five years old. She gets up at five in the morning and cooks for family members. There are seven members including parents- in-law in her family. Their common daily curry is vegetables and they sometimes eat eggs, chicken, dogs which are raised in the house. There is no market in the village and no need to buy vegetables for their meals. She gets them from the field as well as home garden. Then, she prepares food for pigs and fetches water in front of the house. After the meal is cooked, she and her husband have breakfast together. And, they go to the field. Sometimes, she and her husband go to the market on foot to sell alcohol. Mostly, she with neighbouring Akha women goes together on foot to sell alcohol. If she goes ten times, her husband joins two times. They can make alcohol for only six months. They do not have enough rice to make alcohol for the whole year round. When the husband is busy with agricultural work, she makes alcohol in the evening. In the field, she is involved in agricultural tasks and she cooks for lunch. She and her husband come back home at five in the evening. And then, she cooks dinner and washes the clothes and feeds the pigs. She has three children who are over six years and they stay at home with their grandparents on holidays. They are attending school in primary school. At night, her husband visits the neighbor to watch TV. She does household chores and cooks food for pigs for tomorrow. If she gets peanut, maize from the field, she spends much time storing it at night. She goes to bed

at last in a family. During the harvest time, the husband gets up early and goes to the field to carry peanut, maize with sling basket. After carrying peanut or maize to the house, he does not go back to the field. Men assume that picking the peanuts is women's task. Accordingly, his wife goes to the field to pick up peanut or pluck maize. Except Sunday, she goes to the field almost every day. There is less time for leisure for her. If she has spare time after finishing agricultural tasks, she weaves skirts, bags, hats, dress and others. If money is needed in her family, she sells them in the market. She can provide a little amount of money for her family. She can use it for her family's needs. The mother-in-law is money keeper in her family. She gives out the money to use for family's needs.

## **6.6 Making handicrafts**

### **6.6.1 Weaving**

The Akhas consider that weaving is the women's tasks. Weaving is not the men's task. Akha's weaving style is not the same as other ethnics. The Akhas weave the cotton standing (see figure. 34). The Akhas assume that every Akha girl should be skilled at weaving. So, when girls are grown, they learn how to weave the cloth from their mothers. But, some adolescent girls are not able to weave. One adolescent girl said that her mother teaches her how to weave the cotton. But she is not interested in it. She is skilled at embroidering by using various color threads (see figure. 32). It is decoration for the dress. In study areas, weaving is not specialized for economy. In their spare time, married women weave and make so many materials such as cloth, caps, shoulder bag, clothes, skirts, etc to wear for family members and to sell them in Kyaing Tong. January, February and March are not busy in the field so that most married women weave the cotton in these months. They sell these goods in the market when they need money. They can get income from selling them. It becomes a means of income for women. They can supplement their family needs. In the past, Akha women used to spin the yarn themselves and grew the cotton plant in the household plot or home garden. Now, they buy raw materials such as colorful cotton thread, shells, beads, etc in Kyaing Tong. They grow the dye plant which is used to dye black colour. Dyeing task also is the women's job.

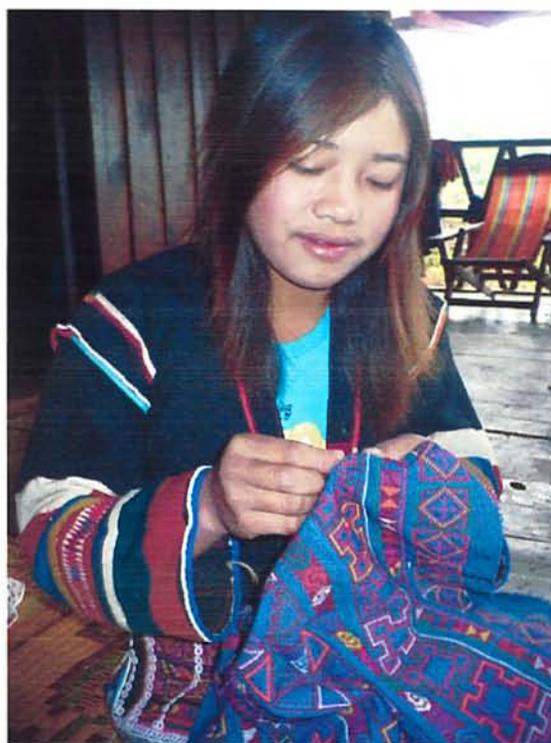


Figure 32. Decoration on the dress by two Akha girls



Figure 33. Akha old woman spinning the cotton yarn



Figure 34. Akha woman weaving the cotton cloth

### 6.6.2 Mat making

The Akhas said that mat-making is men's task (see figure.35). The men especially old men make the mats, bamboo basket, thin bamboo strips to use in the field in his spare time. This task is not the women's task. Raw material for making mat is got from the forest. The task of cutting and carrying the bamboo is done by young men. As the old men can't do field work, he makes mats while looking after the house. In the past, women sold the mats in the market. Now, men carry the mats by motor cycle and sell in another village. Although making the mat is not specialized in the study areas, they can get extra money from this task.



Figure 35. An old Akha man making the mat

### 6.7 Economic decision making

Akhas sell agricultural products such as peanut, maize and paddy etc to the traders who come to their village. Their main income comes from selling these products and selling alcohol. After the rainy season, in October and November, traders come to the village by Htaw Lar Gi car and buy peanut and maize from the villagers. Both husband and wife together decide to sell it. Mostly, traders set prices for goods. Akha men sometimes discuss to get high price of goods with traders. Akha men can speak Shan language, Lahu language and Myanmar language. Most of traders are Shan-Chinese. They can speak Akha language. While husband is outside, his wife can sell it with her own decision for family needs. The oldest woman keeps

money and distributes it to the family members. The woman is money keeper in a family.

As the Akha man is the head of a household, he manages and provides the family's needs. The important decision making is dependent on men. If much money is needed for economy, the money borrower may be both. But, the man as the head of the family gives decision on how much money will be borrowed for it and he is responsible to pay back the loan. So, if much more money for health or economic need is borrowed, men's decision is more important because he takes this responsibility to give back the loan. If they need small amount of money for the family, only the women solve this problem. Women are not allowed to buy valuable things such as sewing machine, TV, etc without telling it to head of household. Man as a head of the household can make and buy valuable things by his own decision: For example, buying motor cycle. If they extend their economy, man as a head of a family make the main decisions.

In conclusion, local Akha people are still observe cultural practices in hillside cultivation. Hillside cultivation used mostly physical labour. It is clear that the Akhas cultivated mainly by using labour intensive methods. It may be said that agricultural tools which are mattocks, knife, sickles and small grubbing hoe are very backward. In the study areas, some people are able to buy agricultural machines such as ploughing machine and paddy husk generator. Rice mills are more and more common in the villages. The utilization of machines meant that local people have reduced physical labour in farming. Technological modernization leads to development in rural areas. By using small scale rice mill, they can get rice easily within a short time. Women's responsibilities become gradually reduced because of using modern technology.

Local people make alcohol for income. Although men and women are involved in making alcohol, most women do this task. For people who owned motor cycle, selling alcohol is carried out by men. But, for people who do not possess it, this responsibility is still burdened on the women. Women take the task of selling alcohol more times than men. It is seen that Akha women spend more time in household chores, field tasks and making alcohol.

## CHAPTER (7)

### GENDER, HEALTH AND EDUCATION

This chapter focuses on two main points; Gender and Health, Gender and Education. The first one describes who mainly takes responsibility concerning illness and when and how medical treatment is used including who makes decision power concerning serious illness. The latter one is to examine why there are gender differences in schooling in the study areas.

#### 7.1 Gender and Health

In the study areas, health care system of Akha is mainly concerned with local people's education and traditional beliefs. Educational factors greatly influence a person's life in relation to their health and their family. Educational gender differences in study areas are closely related to economy and traditional attitudes. Traditional attitudes and other factors such as long distance, lack of transportation etc affect the educational attainment of boys and girls. During the field survey, gender and health were discussed with focus on decision making processes and social and cultural constraints.

When the grandfather as the head of the household feels ill, his wife takes care of him. But, if his wife (grandmother) is unable to look after him, the person who is free takes the responsibilities of caring for him. If both his son and his daughter-in-law are free, they do mutual care activities for him. If he is seriously ill, both son and daughter-in-law stay at home to care for him without going to the field. If mother-in-law is not very well, daughter-in-law mainly takes care of her. She prepares food for the patient, gives medicine and does domestic household chores. When a man feels sick and if his wife is busy with field tasks, his mother takes care of him. But, if their children are ill, mother or grandmother mainly takes the responsibilities of caring for them. When a woman feels normal illness, she takes care of herself but her mother-in-law can give advice for her illness. If one of the family members feels serious illness, nobody goes to the field. It is not exactly fixed who will take the responsibility for caring of ill person in the study areas. When the woman is busy, although the husband takes this responsibility in a family, the women may spend much time on family health especially preparing food, medicine to give, etc. In general, women tend to have a wider range of activities of health care.

When they face important health issues, for example, if one of the family members suffers from for a long period or severe illness, the husband discusses about it with his wife. They take advice from the elder people, relatives, friends and neighbors. The man is the most important person who makes final decision on whether this patient should be sent to the hospital or treated by Health Assistant (HA) in near by village or treated by traditional practices. Mostly, they call the HA who works at Pan Li Health Center. It is two miles far away from the village. After taking advice from HA, the patient is sent to the Kyaing Tong Hospital. The last decision for taking treatment is dependent on the man because if they go to the hospital, much money will be needed. If they have not enough money, they will borrow it from someone. Both the man and woman can borrow money for it but the man takes the responsibility to pay back the loan. Mostly, the local Akha people do not want to go to the hospital because of language barrier and high medical expense.

According to interview with local Akha people, they utilize both traditional and western treatment in the village. Mostly, formal western treatment was applied after utilizing traditional treatment.

In study areas, local Akha people are Buddhist as well as animists. They are still practicing ancestral worship. Animist beliefs exist in the study areas and it is closely related to ideas concerning health and disease. This affects their health care systems.

Both male and female can become shamans in traditional health care system. Seeking for spirit attack can be done by both female and male shamans (Nyi Pha). But, there are traditional practitioners (Phima) who give treatment to the patients. Only males can become practitioners. In healing the patients, the practitioners have to follow the instruction given by shaman who can be male or female. For example, if she or he gives instruction to kill pig or chicken or dog etc, male shaman has to do with his or her instruction. So, female shaman is respected by the communities same as male shaman.

With regard to the traditional practices, a fifty year old man said that “if there are more educated people in the village, it may gradually reduce traditions concerned with sacrificing animal for health in the young generation”. Some over forty year old men said that “it is not possible to abandon these customs for local people”. Until now, animistic beliefs exist in the traditional health care system in the study areas. If

someone feels accidentally serious illness in the household, mostly local Akha people first seek traditional practitioner.

But, they also utilize western treatment from Health Assistant (HA). If HA is informed to see the patient by the local people, he comes to the village. In rainy season, there are more sick persons so the HA visits the village once a week coming by motor cycle. Similarly, a midwife visits the pregnant women once a month to the village by motor cycle. They accept having injection with midwife before and after giving birth. HA explains to the pregnant women to have injection by the midwife. There are many reasons why Akha pregnant women bear their child with local experienced women. When local Akha women face difficulties at giving birth, the midwife can not reach the village in time because of difficult transportation. And, there is language barrier in communication for both. Although some of the women understand a little Myanmar language, they do not understand fully what the midwife means. During the rainy season, transportation is more difficult to reach to the village. Ninety five percent of pregnant women give birth at home with the help of older women, mother-in-law and grandmother. When a pregnant woman can not give birth normally, the pregnant woman is sent to the hospital.

With regard to child-bearing for woman, she is not allowed to abort and to take medicine to prevent pregnancy by the husband. If the woman does like this, he can divorce her. Therefore, it can be assumed that the husband has more decision power concerning getting a child.

## **7.2 Gender and Education**

An examination of the educational system in the study areas shows great disparities between male and female in schooling. According to research information, there was a primary school in the areas thirty years ago. But, the local Akha people did not attend the primary level. Most of the local Akha people did not finish even in the primary level. At that time, they were not interested in education. Most of the local Akha people were also uneducated people in the areas. They thought that sons have skill in the field tasks and daughters must do household tasks and field tasks. If they are skillful at field tasks, it is enough for their livelihoods. Their traditional attitudes did not value the education of girls because they were expected only to be a good housewife in the family. This situation is the main cause to limit female's access to education. Poverty caused both boys and girls (but usually more girls than boys)

quitting school to engage in economic activities to contribute to the survival of their families. This study aims to explore what gender disparity in schooling is, changing perceptions on education by local Akha women and who has decision making power in education.

During the past ten years, parents became interested in education of the children. Within their community, they saw educated person especially school teachers, health staffs, midwife, other government staffs, etc. They want their daughters to be school teacher and they want their sons to be government staff. Nowadays, local Akha people accept that education plays an important role in their children's life.

In this regard, one married Akha woman said that "I often tell my children to study hard" and if they do not pass the exam, they have to work in the field like us", and "if they pass primary level, I will send them to attend in the middle school". In the past, if children did not want to go to school, they took them to the field. They did not urge them to go to the school. Now, when their children are absent in school, they sometimes beat them and send them to school. Children are not allowed to go to the field on school days.

In the study areas, both boys and girls get equal chance to attend to the primary school. If the students pass primary level, they have to attend the middle school which is 2 miles far away from the village. It takes one hour on foot to reach the middle school. Because of physical distance, poor road condition and lack of transportation, both boys and girls dropped out of middle school level. It creates gender disparities in the middle school level.

The majority of the local people are not able to support money for accommodation, school fees, tuition fees etc to stay in town for their children. It is the main problem for them so that both boys and girls drop out of school. In the poor families, it is believed that both boys and girls are quitting school to engage in economic activities to contribute to the survival of their families. After dropping out of school, the boy helps with his father in the field and works as laborer in the field or as caring for cows or buffalos. Girls do domestic tasks as well as field task with their mother. So, there are very few chances to continue high school levels for the children from a poor family.

Although most of local Akha parents wish to send their children for studying higher level education, they can not afford their children to continue studying to the

end of education because of lack of enough money. At that time, there may be gender difference in choosing to continue for higher level school in these families. Both husband and wife together make a decision for their children's schooling. It is mainly based on money whether children continue to study in middle school or not.

Most parents said that if they have enough money, both son and daughter were sent to learn in middle school level without distinguishing between son and daughter. Some parents from poor families said that if they can send only one to continue to middle school level, they would choose the son. One mother said "I prefer the son for education because I am confident to send son who can stay at any place and he will lead his family in the future". The majority of Akha parents worry to send their daughters to another town to attend in middle school level after passing primary school. So, it can be assumed that boys get a greater chance of education than girls. It depends on parent's decision making. Female education not only directly benefits women themselves but is also important for the survival, growth and development of their children. To have gender equality in education is more important.

Very few of children from well-to-do family stay in Kyaing or Mai Khon or Tarchileik or other towns and attend both middle school and high school. It is clear that only children from well-to-do person family get the chance to continue studying higher level education. Socioeconomic status causes unbalance between males and females in education. With regard to this, fifty five years old man from well-to-do family living in Hwe Yoke 2 said the following information concerning education of their children.

"I have two sons and two daughters. Now, two sons have graduated and one daughter is attending in the "Education College, in Taunggyi". The youngest daughter failed two times in her tenth standard. But, I sent her to boarding house in Kyaing Tong to take exam in 2010. She passed her tenth standard in 2011". Two sons are government staffs so that they cannot help in the field tasks. We hire male labourers for field tasks. We have also small rice mill. In busy times, we hire male labourers in the rice mill".

According to field survey, there is only one family which has educated persons among the study areas.

Table 8. Students attending in Primary school in the study areas,  
from 2008-2009 to 2010-2011

Level of Standard	2008-09		2009-10		2010-11	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
Kindergarten	30	20	23	13	13	6
First Standard	11	8	19	14	12	13
Second Standard	15	8	8	8	15	13
Third Standard	5	3	12	7	8	8
Fourth Standard	10	6	5	1	12	7

Source: Primary school in the study areas

Table 9. Students attending in Middle and Higher Level (2010- 2011)

Level of standard	Boys	Girls	Total	Year of enrolment in the fifth standard
Fifth standard	2	-	2	2010-2011
Sixth standard	2	-	2	2009-2010
Seventh standard	1	-	1	2008-2009
Eighth standard	3	-	3	2007-2008
Ninth standard	3	2	5	2006-2007
Tenth standard	2	1	3	2005-2006
Total	12	3	15	

Source: Nationality Youth Resource Development Training School, 2011

There is not much gender difference in attaining the primary level education and girls have an equal chance to have access for school. But, starting from middle school and onwards gender disparity can be seen evidently. In 2008-2009, there were 16 students who passed the fourth standard. Among them, the number of male students was ten and six students were females. Only five male students applied to the Nationality Youth Resource Development Training School, Kyaing Tong for attending middle school. This school provides free for accommodation, meal cost and school cost for the students and if a student is chosen, he or she gets to attend up to tenth standard. According to limitation, two male students got the chance to attend

middle school. In 2008-2009, only 20% male students got this chance and 80% of male students missed this chance. No female students applied to attend middle school. Similarly, in 2009-2010, only two male students attended in the middle school and female students are not included to attend middle school. Like wise, in 2010-2011, no Akha female students attend the middle school. In addition, most of male students did not attend the middle school. Even though schooling is free for both males and females, as their labour is needed in their field, home and work place; they did not apply to attend school. According to the information from 2008-2009 to 2010-2011, there were no female students in the middle school level. It can be seen that the number of attending male students at the middle also are evidently reduced if it is compared the number of passing fourth standard in the local areas.

There are many reasons concerning dropping out of school for male and female students. First, there may be economic problem. Even if they should get a chance to attend this school, pocket money must be sent monthly to them. Most parents can not afford to send money for it. Second, knowledgeable parents and well-to-do parents are interested in sending their children to middle school and high school level. Children coming from these families get the chance to attend to the middle school. Third, parent's perception on daughters is important for female's education. Most Akha parents in the study areas do not want to send their daughters to another town and some daughters themselves do not want to go to attend school in another place. They want to live with their mothers to help in household chores and field tasks. Especially, the mother needs female labour at home at busy time in the field. If the female marries, she has to follow her husband so that she has to be skilled in household tasks. Fourth, as money is needed for schooling, parents prefer the sons to have schooling. Sons will be head of household in the future so that they get more chances than daughters in schooling. These factors create less female attendance in schooling.

Although the number of female students increased in the fourth standard, there was less female enrolment in the middle school level. It reveals that there is evidently gender disparity during 2005-2006 to 2010- 2011. Within these periods, 44% of male students and 21% of female students got the chance to attend the middle school. Table 2 shows that Akha parents favor sons concerning education. There are very few students attending school by staying in hostel or relative's house. Twelve percent of students stay with relatives or in hostel and attend middle school and high school.

With regard to it, lack of enough money for school costs, meals costs and accommodation expense, etc, are important factors for schooling.

In the real situation, if the students pass primary level, they have to attend to the middle school about 2 miles far away from the village. It takes one hour on foot to reach the middle school. Physical distance, poor road condition and lack of transportation create to drop out of school for the students. In the poor families, it is believed that both boys and girls are quitting school to engage in economic activities to contribute to the survival of their families. Both boys and girls work as part time labourer in another's field. They get 2000 kyat for a day. It is a support for their family. So, there are very few chances to continue high school level for the children coming from a poor family.

All male and female children have chances to attend school. Those living in the mountainous regions of Eastern Shan State are accepted to attend in the primary, middle or high school with free accommodation, school fee, meal costs, etc by Nationality Youth Resource Development Training School, in Kyaing Tong. But, there are limitations concerning getting into this school. First, they prefer children from orphans. Second, children from single parent household especially female-parent household and third, the poorest households are chosen to stay in this school without distinguishing boys on girls. So, in the study areas, not every student gets this chance because of this limitation.

But, there is another chance for girls. Vocational Training of Women's Centre in Kyaing Tong had opened in May, 2010 by the Social Welfare Department. It is only for female students. Any female national is accepted from the fifth standard to eighth standard by Vocational Training of Women's Centre in Kyaing Tong. All education expense, accommodation and meal costs are free for the students. For 2010-2011 Academic Years, thirty female students were accepted. It has a plan to extend to the tenth standard. There are limitations to accept female students like the above procedure. However, there may be good chances for both local female Akha and other female nationals. In addition, "Domestic Training School" in Kyaing Tong is also intended for female. These projects are improving female's life in these regions.

Even under such situation, Akha parents prefer to choose boys than girls because they believe that sons have to lead his family one day and boys can stay any place without any difficulties. As a result, the numbers of educated female persons are

very few and gender difference in education becomes high. Most girls lost their precious time by spending in agricultural work, household chores and child caring.

Very recently, there is a positive trend in the parents' attitude to education. They became interested in the child's education due to their awareness among their community. They want their daughters to be school teachers and their sons to be government staffs. They now accept that education plays an important role in their children's life.



Figure 36. Primary school in the study areas



Figure 37. Akha mother and her daughter going to the school

## CHAPTER (8)

### DISCUSSION

#### **Gender identity and socialization**

According to the results, it was realized that the value of gender is identified by their feminine and masculine qualities. Akha man who looks after the whole family and has the ability to solve the problems in cultivation and social affairs is assumed as masculine. Akha woman, who can perform well in household work and good management in hill-side cultivation, is recognized as a good woman. The interview results indicated that Akha males appreciate those women who possess the capability and good management in household work, hill-side cultivation and good characters of females. Physical features are not important for Akha men in choosing a bride. So, it is very clear that women's labour is very important in Akha society. It is also stated that gender identity is affected by a variety of social structures, including the person's ethnic group, employment status, religion or irreligion, and family. It is closely related to gender roles which are the tasks and activities that a culture assigns to the sexes. Besides, gender identity is closely related to socialization. Childhood socialization is a part of housework in a family. Children learn certain actions of parental behaviour in the family.

Socialization theories suggest that children and adults acquire beliefs about appropriate roles of men and women, and that they fashion their own family behaviours according to these gender scripts (Bem, 1993). According to the study, it was found that Akha children are socialized at the age of four to follow cultural norms in an Akha society. The data reveals that Akha parents teach their children to understand traditional culture, social norms, taboo (avoidance) and responsibilities starting from four year of age. The five - six year old child knows the taboo and appropriate manners concerning the ancestral offering. Nine to twelve years old girl children are socialized to help in domestic tasks such as cooking, feeding the pig food, child caring, etc as well as Akha boys are trained to know traditional customs and cultivation tasks by the father because sons will lead the family in one day. Domestic work and caretaking are assumed as the tasks of women whereas breadwinning is for men. Since Akhas use patrilineal kinship system, Akha emphasize sons to recite the names of their ancestors.

When offering to the ancestors, only men have to lead that offering ceremony in the family. In this case, women are not allowed to touch the materials for these offering. This belief comes from the point that Akha practices patrilineal kinship system and so only sons have to lead the ancestral offering. The genealogical knowledge is perpetuated from generation to generation. These points suggested that Akhas pay respect to their ancestors and maintain their cultures.

In celebrating the traditional ceremonies and some social activities, some gender difference was found in sharing work. The activities such as building the village gate, building the swing, for the first rice planting and driving out the ghosts are done by men and women do not involve at all. The reason could be that they believe men are the ones who have to lead the whole family and these ceremonies are related with forefather ancestors. Throughout the ceremony, women do not participate since these events are assumed as the tasks of men. Women just prepare food for the offering ceremonies. Akha worship forefather ancestors and practise patrilineal kinship system. Therefore, only Akha men take the responsibility to offer to the ancestors. Women are not allowed to touch any of the ancestor offering tools. Brinkhoff and Mackie (1985) illustrated “the effect of religious beliefs on the division of house work”. With respects to this, Akha women prepare food for ancestral worshipping. They do not participate in ancestral offering. Only men are mainly involved in the allocation of labour in rituals. Thus, it is evident that Akha practice and maintain traditional customs. This custom is maintained from generation to generation up to now. These traditional customs strongly influence gender differences in work sharing of labour.

Allocation of labour is mainly dependent on parent’s socialization and their cultural beliefs. Greenstein (1996) illustrated that as social and family roles are traditionally linked to gender, gender ideologies are important for the division of household labor. Under the assumption that women are accustomed to perform “gender traditional” labor with nurturing and caretaking skill requirements. Childhood socialization is involved in a part of housework in a family. With regard to this, the findings illustrated that Akha girls are trained to be feminine by the mother since they are young. To be a good female, it is needed to be skillful at household chores and field tasks. It states how important a women’s labour is in an Akha family. So, Akha girls learn a mother’s responsibilities by observing. They work together with the

mother in domestic chores. Similarly, boys learn their responsibilities from their fathers.

### **Allocation of labour on sharing household chores and livelihoods**

Gender allocation of labour is an important aspect of human social organization. Myanmar gender profile (2000) indicated that precise patterns of work and gender division of labour in rural areas remain unclear due to the dearth of data in Myanmar. Site-specific qualitative research estimates that in some areas women do at least 80% of the agricultural work in addition to the bulk of domestic chores. In some areas, women do work that is characterized as light while men do work that is characterized as heavy. According to research information, sharing household chores and livelihood varies in accordance with gender in this Akha society. The variation of sharing work in accord to gender is due to the type of task that is heavy or light. In the case of felling down the trees, land clearing and soil preparing for cultivation, etc., are heavy tasks in comparison to household task and these are directly related to the men.

Quinn (1977) described that the three theories: strength theory, child care theory and economy of effort theory are found in a culture's sexual division of labour. In this case, gender differences in sharing work is related to strength theory because heavy task is done by men and light task is performed by women in this society. Similarly, child care theory also agrees with work sharing of gender in this society. Household chores such as cooking, cleaning the house, caring for the child and preparing food for domestic animals are practiced by the Akha women. It can be said that Akha women take much more responsibilities of the household chores. They spend much time for preparing the meal, child caring, cleaning the house, feeding the domestic animals. Household chores are light work in comparison to men's task like cultivation, land clearing and ploughing, however a lot of time is involved by doing household work.

Akha men rarely help in the household tasks because they assume that taking the responsibilities of the household work makes them to be shameful among the men. The men practise and believe that men have to do heavy work and light work is the women's responsibility. Moreover, child caring is mainly done by the women in a family. These data pointed out that there is a difference in the patterns of gender allocation of tasks and women devote a larger share of household tasks on domestic activities and child caring. Thus, inequality of allocation of household labour was

realized in these study areas. This inequality of labour allocation could be due to the indigenous concept about the work sharing between husband and wife.

A similar pattern of work sharing was found in other ethnic groups in Myanmar. Chandler (1988) described that Rakhine women tend to do light work, whether agricultural or domestic, whereas men do the heavy work such as chopping wood, fetching water. Both men and women are involved in planting and harvesting rice. This situation is markedly different from Chin women. They tend to do the heavy work, cultivating the sloping land (shifting cultivation), fetching water from the river, pig rearing, harvesting and chopping firewood. The husband is responsible for land clearing and child caring. The child caring does not extend to cooking and laundry which is chores carried out by women. There is no relief for women during pregnancy and only a few days' respite after giving birth. These data give the information that work sharing of labour within a family is based on their concepts of the natives about the work and their traditional culture and beliefs. This indicates that there is a variation of labour allocation across the communities and ethnic groups within the same country.

A similar pattern of work sharing is described in the book of "Gender differentials in work pattern of rural household in Haryana (India)" by Singal (1989). It indicated that women virtually do all the household work, three quarters of other agricultural work and half of the work with animals. These findings reflected that housework (child care and household chores) and economically extended work (i.e., fetching of water and fuel and making of cowdung cakes) which is crucial for the family's survival. So, it is still exclusively a women's responsibility.

Similarly, Shimray (2004) conducted research among women in Naga society in India. The results indicated that Naga women have a greater responsibility from domestic work to various other agricultural activities.

A World Bank report (2007) indicated that, in most countries, women work longer than men when the time they spend on domestic work is added to the hours they work outside the home and in family enterprises. The data for developing countries showed that girls tend to spend more time on domestic chores than boys and thus have less opportunity for education and leisure activities. Like these patterns, Akha women spending more time on domestic and field tasks can be found in the study areas. Akha women get up earlier than her husband and cook breakfast, pig food and after coming back from the field, Akha women prepare dinner and storing the

agricultural product and child caring is in their day life. According to Table 2 showing monthly time schedule of men and women, Akha women spend more time than Akha men in July, August and September in the field. Weeding, caring the crops, plucking the maize and picking the peanuts are mainly done by Akha women. The data reveal that Akha women spend more time on domestic tasks and seasonal crops plantation. With regard to leisure, some Akha men spend time watching TV at the neighboring house which has TV. If Akha men have done heavy tasks such as felling the trees, preparing the soil, and ploughing in the farm land, they take rest for two days a week. The data reveals that Akha men get more leisure time than Akha women.

Twenty years ago, water resources were outside the village. Fetching tasks were done by the women. Men took responsibility to search for water sources. As World Vision supplied the water pipes, and water tanks, in 2006 in the study areas, women did not need to spend much time fetching water because of easy access to water. There, men's role also changed and they also carry water.

With regard to livelihoods, the main economy of the Akhas in the study areas is agriculture and their main agricultural products are paddy, peanuts, and maize. They can not produce the food made of maize and peanuts. Lacking technical knowledge, they can not utilize maize and peanuts for their livelihood improvement. Other income generating economies are weaving, mat making and brewing alcohol. In the field work, heavy task is mostly done by men and light task is the responsibility of women, however men and women cooperate together in some situations especially in busy season i.e. land preparing, farming time, harvesting. Akha men spent more time in agricultural activities like felling the trees, preparing the soil, ploughing in the farm, planting and harvesting which require more physical strength. In this case, Akha men are involved with higher work load than women; however in terms of working hours, women spend more working hours than men. The data with regard to the participation of women in different agricultural activities reveals that the Akha women are mostly involved in activities like transplanting, weeding, harvesting, picking up peanut, maize and vegetables. These agricultural activities do not require much physical strength so that Akha women undertake such activities. It can be assumed that although Akha women work light tasks, they spend more time on different agricultural activities during the whole year.

In brewing alcohol, men and women work together. The duty of selling the alcohol in the market is normally taken by the women. They go to the market on foot.

Nowadays, the motorbike becomes a popular means of transportation and some families can afford to use the motorbike. In the families that can afford motorbike, men take the responsibility to sell alcohol in the market. By doing so, it saves a lot of time and they have more time to work at home or in the field. For the families that do not own motorbike, selling alcohol is still a burden on the women. Women take the duties of selling alcohol and doing household chores after coming back from market. Thus, it is evident that women take more responsibilities than men. Nowadays, as most of local Akha people possess motor cycle, women's participation in selling alcohol has gradually reduced in the study areas. So, it can be said that modernization trend changes the role of gender especially in allocation of labour.

With respects to income generating, weaving and mat making are small scale income business for local Akha people. The Akhas consider that weaving is the women's tasks and they weave different materials such as for dress, hat, bag, skirt etc. in the spare time and the home made products are sold in Kyaing Tong.

Rogers (1980) illustrated that women in developing countries were targeted with courses centered on home economics, maternal and community health, nutrition, food processing and preservation, sewing, knitting and needlework based on the ideology of domesticity. Like this, Domestic Training School can be found in Kyaing Tong. But, local Akha girls in the study areas do not participate in the Training School. Only one Akha girl in the study areas attended it and learnt sewing, knitting, handicrafts and food processing methods and other activities. But she did not apply her knowledge to get income. It may be investment problem for business and transportation problem. There is no demand for the products in her communities and nearby villages. The products can be sold only in Kyaing Tong and transportation hinders her to engage in these activities. It is very closely related to create income generation for local Akha people. If local Akha women have investment and there is an easy access to go to the market, they will create income generating activities such as handicraft production, food processing which involve a more useful approach to women's work. It means that investment and transportation have limited their livelihoods. In the study areas, local Akha women and girls are skilled in knitting and needle work on the decoration in Akha dress, bag, skirt, hat, etc. which they learnt from their elders. This task creates small scale income for the Akha women. Men are not involved in this weaving business. In mat making, they assume it is men's task. The old Akha men who cannot go to the field normally make mats, bamboo baskets

and thin bamboo strips. The materials are sold in the market by the men. These data pointed out that gender difference of labour allocation were realized in these small scale income generating activities. Based upon type of work and nature of work, they share their work.

In these areas, their main economy is based on agriculture; hill side cultivation and farming. They use mainly physical labour and so it takes a lot of time to finish their work. If agricultural machines can be substituted in farming, physical labour will be reduced and they will get more spare time. At the same time, they can consider other income generating opportunities. Their income mainly comes from selling agricultural products. With regard to livelihoods, there is no home-based production economy to get income except seasonal cultivation crops and making alcohol. Herson (1990) described that where markets do not exist, the household produces only as much as is necessary to feed themselves. It was found like this in the study areas. Local Akha people do not extend their livelihood beyond selling agricultural product and alcohol for income.

Their incomes are not enough for buying agricultural machines, studying higher education of their children and supporting their needs. Higher incomes could create for the development of their lives, education and health standard. If home based economy is increased for women, they will have more time to take care of their children while doing home business. At the same time, they will get daily income. In these regions, peanut and maize are mainly produced. If they know the techniques for food processing such as making peanut snacks and maize snacks, they can sell them not only around the neighbouring villages but also distribute to other cities by motor bike. Similarly, Akha men should extend the orchard as long term plantations. According to the saying of local people, the weather and soil are suitable for orchard plantation; however, they don't know how to grow them systematically. Thus, local people need the advanced techniques for good management in orchard plantation. In this case, the role of trainings plays an important role. If the government and non-governmental organizations (NGO) organize local training programmes such as long term plantation (tea plants, sugarcane, oranges, etc.) for the Akha people to upgrade the role of agriculture and other home based income generating activities such as food processing, handicrafts that would contribute high knowledge to the local people significantly. If so, men can lead agriculture as well as women can lead at home-based economy. It is hoped that if they earn much more money daily, their education

standard will be upgraded and so health care management and living standard will be advanced accordingly.

Recently, National Strategic Plan for the Advancement of Women (2012-2021) in Myanmar has drawn up twelve objectives. These are women and livelihoods, women, education and training, women and health, violence against women, women and emergencies, women and economy, women and decision-making, institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women, women and human rights, women and media, women and the environment and the girl child (Government of the Union of the Republic of Myanmar, Social Welfare Department, 2011). The Myanmar government has turned their attention to “women and empowerment”. Sanga (2007) described that “gender equality and women empowerment” have been for a long time considered as a moral and legal issue. Recently, these issues have taken on a very different connotation mainly in terms of “economic efficiency”. In Myanmar, UNDP projects are implementing the practices of “women and empowerment” in rural areas. These projects emphasized on livelihood improvement projects which aim to mainstream gender in development, awareness building on gender equality, ensure women’s equitable participation and benefit sharing and provision of special assistance to the most vulnerable women. The funds have provided loans to rural women at suitable interest. Likewise, if Akha women are provided with loans, they can create income generating by making homemade production, setting up small and medium enterprises, and engaging in small scale training, etc,. By doing so, Akha women will have their own income. They can make decision in their household. They will be self confident in their economic role as providers for their family and decision making. Their living standard becomes developed and Akha women will get social contact with outsiders and can get knowledge of economic, social, health and education. Their traditionally allocation of labour may be changed in the future.

Recently, the government is implementing to reduce poverty in the rural areas. With respect to this, it was described in the “New Light of Myanmar” published 25, Feb, 2012 that small scale loans projects are introduced in the Northern Shan State by the government. For the time being, there is no such project in the study area, but the project could be implemented in the future.

## **Gender, Health and Education**

Livelihood strategies are closely related to the level of education and health. With respect to education, great disparities between male and female in schooling were found in the study areas. The survey results indicated that boys got more chances than girls to continue education. Parents wish their daughters to be skillful in field tasks and household chores since agriculture is the main livelihood in this society. It is sure that educational gender differences in study areas are closely related to the economy and traditional attitudes. Traditional attitudes and other factors such as long distance, lack of transportation etc. affect differences in the educational attainment of boys and girls. Myanmar gender Profile (2000) described that male and female educational attainment rates differ in Myanmar as in other countries.

The role of education is important for human resource development. Thus, it is very important to upgrade the role of education for both males and females in this community. It is probable that their superstitious belief about serious illness due to spiritual attack could be reduced if new educated generation is increased. If they have strong superstition, it could hinder human resource and development. Education plays a major role not only for individual's opportunities in society, but also for the productive capacity and wellbeing of a household. Gender inequality in educational levels is important (World Bank, 1999) for a wide range of outcomes, including malnutrition, health, employment opportunities, and technology adoption, all of which ultimately affect household incomes and economic growth at the national level (World Bank, 1999)

Female education not only directly benefits women themselves but is also important for the survival, growth and development of the children. If a female is married, she has to look after her children as a mother. In this case, educational experiences strongly influence the health care practices. Educational factors greatly influence a person's life in relation to the health of themselves and their family (World Health Organization, 2009). Pal (2003) described that child mortality rates are highest in the households where the education of the mother is lowest in all countries. This data points out how important the role of mother education is in all societies is. The education and living standard are closely related to each other since it is considered that education is critical in the ability to fully participate in the social, economic and political life as well as to the development of society as a whole.

The educational level of the wife has been considered as an important factor in household decision-making. With regard to this, Germain and Smock (1974) have suggested that the roles of women in division of labour and decision-making in the family were determined by the quality of education they had received. Similarly, Oppong, (1970) has noted that households in which wives have higher education are more likely to have joint financial arrangements and to make decisions together.

The health care management system of local Akha is not modernized. They still practise animist beliefs in health care system. Thus, it is important for the new generation to be educated in order to make right decision about health. In health caring within a family, women are the main care takers in preparing food and medicine. So, Akha women need to be educated. Education and health is very important to develop Akha society. Livelihood strategies are interrelated to health as well as the level of education. Therefore, it can be assumed that if Akha women are educated, their allocation of labour in household chores, their livelihoods and decision making may be changed.

### **Gender and Community Development**

Though every society seems to be stable, it is not stable in facts; it experiences influences or impacts from others. Even Akha society is influenced by modernization and impacts from other societies. In Akha society, some people want to maintain the traditional way of life. But, others hope to change for modernization. As Akha society is not isolated, it must develop in the long term.

After basing on literatures, the findings will discuss from gender and community development point of view. According to the results, as agriculture is still important in the study areas, land ownership is also essential for them. Access to land is a basic requirement for livelihood. As Akha practise patrilineal kinship system, only the sons get to own land and properties. Akha still keeps women's positions subordinate for land ownership. This is negative point for Akha women which lead to obstacle in the community development. Fortunately, it can be found that inheritance of property in local Akha people became gradually changeable positive point for Akha women. There was evidence that one Akha man said that "when his married daughter faced difficulties in the economy, he supported her with two buffaloes".

Traditionally, in all of Akha's indigenous cultures, the public space is considered to be the male domain. Only some Akha women participate in the meeting

talks. This is one obstacle for community development. Women's empowerment is important for community development. Therefore, Akha women should participate in the public sectors such as meeting talks with outsiders, participating in school committee meeting. It is evident that women's role in the process of community development is still limited to basic activities at the household. These are affecting the overall development process.

As local Akha people has culture contact with neighbouring people, NGOs, health official staffs, school teachers, strangers and traders, gender differences are gradually reduced in Akha society. For example, both Akha male and female go together to the field and eat together without separation. These are positive points for community development.

With respect to household chores, Akha women spend more time in the household chores such as cooking, child caring, feeding domestic animals, collecting firewood, carrying thatch leaves and others. Although these tasks are light tasks, Akha women are very tired by working day after day. In addition, Akha women are also mainly involved in plantation, weeding, caring for the seasonal crops, harvesting on hill-side cultivation and farming. Akha men assumed that the tasks of weeding and caring for the crops are light tasks. If Akha men help in domestic duties like child care and home making and agricultural tasks like weeding and caring for the crops, Akha women's physical labour will be reduced and they will get spare time to create income generating activities like weaving. In order to ease the women's burden on household, Akha men always looked up to as the head of household and create more freedom for Akha women. The aim of the United Nations Millennium development Goal 3 is to promote gender equality and empower women. Gender equality is very important for community development. In the study areas, it is found that inequality in labour allocation between men and women is one of the barriers for community development.

In the agricultural sectors, it can be found that there is very little technical assistance in farming. As there is lack of adequate technology and agricultural machines, it can be seen that the study areas are underdeveloped. However, it can be found that small scale amount of rice mills in the study areas which makes process rice easily within a short time without effort women's physical labour is reduced. Small rice mills like machine should be distributed widely in the study areas. In the past, the duty of pounding rice was burdened on women. Nowadays, Akha women are

released from these tasks. Fifteen years ago in the study areas, the duty of fetching water was women's tasks. Recently, water supply was provided with water pipes and water tanks by World Vision in the study areas. Fetching water activities became easy and Akha men are also involved in the water fetching task. In addition, when motor cycles are popular, transportation became convenient to go to the market and other places. As Akha men take these tasks from the Akha women, Akha women do not need to go on foot for selling alcohol. Akha women became relieved in these activities. Modern technology like rice mill, agricultural machines and motor cycles should be utilized widely in the study areas because these are one of modernization trends leading to community development.

There is no gender disparity in the level of primary school in the study areas. After passing primary school, inequality became evident between boys and girls in the middle school level. Poor road condition, lack of transportation and physical distance create gender disparities in the level of the middle school. Boys get more chances to continue studying higher level education. Girls do not have the chance to learn as much as boys. Akha women have remained invisible in the development process because low level of education places them in the informal sectors of the economy. Akha women have been restricted into household chores, which have consequently limited their chances of pursuing formal education. Lack of adequate education limits women's effective participation in development. The educational level of the wife has been considered as an important factor in household decision-making.

With regard to this, Germain and Smock (1974) have suggested that the roles of women in division of labour and decision-making in the family were determined by the quality of education they had received. Similarly, Oppong, (1970) has noted that households in which wives have higher education are more likely to have joint financial arrangements and to take decisions together.

With regard to education, there is only one family which has three educated persons in the study areas. An Akha girl in the study areas is attending the "Education College", in Taunggyi. When she finishes her school, she will run her own business or work a government department. If she has her own income, she does not need to depend on others in the family. In addition, she can take care of her household monthly expenses. That woman can make their own decision or she can provide consultancy to other family members as well as others in the community members.

It was found in the study that Akha women are the money keepers in a family. The decisions concerned with using financial resources and in education are made between men and women in a family. It can be said that Akha men do not subordinate the women's role in the above the matters.

Akha women must move into the mainstream and they must learn to better use the financial and technical resources available to promote their own development initiatives. Raising the vocational qualifications and skills of women contributes to improved productivity and chances of employment, and effective investment in human resources. Akha women's empowerment is important for community development in the study areas.

In Akha communities, women are responsible for taking care of the whole family but their works are invisible and undervalued in many cases. In any development programme, women's work should be taken into account and indigenous concepts should be acknowledged. There are a lot of rooms to improve the lives of women in the community by means of improving access to credit, by providing vocational training, for income generating activities or providing women's training programmes in household-based activities and providing assets, cash transfers to start small enterprises.

## CHAPTER (9)

### CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### **Conclusion**

In this chapter an attempt has been made to better understand the household allocation of labour among the Akha and how the existing gender allocation of labour affects the livelihood of Akha. In the study areas, differences in gender allocation of labour were found in all sorts of life. Gender allocation of labour plays an important role in human social organization. To be a good female, Akha women must be skilled at household chores, field tasks and have a good management of household tasks. Gender identity is emphasized on qualities of the female and male. In celebrating traditional festivals or ceremonies, the head man from the family is the important person to lead the festivals or ceremonies due to their beliefs that the man is the head of the family and the ancestral offerings are related with forefathers. Women are not allowed to touch the offering materials. Thus, they appreciate having sons in the family to perpetuate their culture from generation to generation. Sons learn important taboos and responsibilities concerning the offering to the ancestors from fathers. In the same way, daughters learn their responsibilities from their mothers. Childhood socialization is involved in part of house work.

In sharing household work, Akha women spend much time in cooking, food preparing, feeding domestic animals, and child caring. In addition, Akha women take the responsibilities of collecting firewood, fetching the water, gathering vegetables for the family's food as well as domestic animals. Akha men do the house repairing, fencing the house and slaughtering the animals. Therefore, Akha women are busier than Akha men in doing household chores. Women spend far longer amount of time on domestic tasks as compared to men.

With regards to livelihood, hillside cultivation and farming are important for Akha people in the study areas. This study attempts to find out the gender division of labour in agriculture which is intended to find out how work is distributed among men and women. According to the findings, Akha use labour intensive method in agriculture. Agricultural tools are very backward. The allocation of labour in agricultural activities has been based on gender. Both Akha men and Akha women are involved in field tasks. The Akha men do the heavier tasks such as felling the tree, preparing the soil, ploughing, harvesting. The Akha women are mostly involved in activities like seeding, weeding, harvesting, threshing, and vegetables picking. Akha

men assumed that these tasks are light tasks. But, Akha women spent much time in the field tasks. The study reveals that Akha women spend a large portion of their time in the field tasks and household tasks (see table. 3). So, Akha women are burdened with a dual task.

Work sharing agrees with strength theory and child care theory because the heavy work like clearing the land, cultivation, cutting trees are directly related to the men while light work like household chores and taking care of domestic animals and caring the children are the responsibilities of women. Moreover, there is a difference in the patterns of gender allocation of time, for women devote a larger share of household time on domestic activities and child caring. Inequality of labour allocation could be due to the indigenous concept about the work sharing between husband and wife.

If Akha men help to reduce women's physical labour in domestic chores and light tasks in the field like weeding, caring the crops, Akha women will have spare time to create income generating activities like weaving, making alcohol. Akha men can create more freedom for Akha women. The findings of the present study also indicate that the women spent lesser time in leisure time as compared to the men in the study.

As there is lack of adequate technology and agricultural machines, both men and women are very tired with agricultural tasks. If development technology can be substituted in the field, they can accomplish agricultural activities within a short time. When small scale rice mills were used in the study areas, Akha women were released from pounding tasks. These changes led to a change in the roles of women. As technological development made products became available within a short period, the women were no longer needed for production purposes within the household. In addition, as it provided water pipes and water tanks by NGOs (Non Government Organizations) in the village, fetching water activities became easy and Akha men also became involved in the fetching task. In addition, when motor cycles are popular, Akha men take the task of selling alcohol in the neighbouring market. Akha women became relieved in these activities. Thus, the present findings illustrated that modern technology has created changing gender role.

The findings regarding to education showed that boys get more chances to continue studying for higher level education. Girls do not get the chance for education as much as boys. The majority of Akha people said that "it is important to be skilled

at household management and field works for Akha girls". Akha women are committed to do household chores and consequently limited to study higher formal education. Lack of adequate education limits women's effective participation in development. Akha women must move into the mainstream and they must learn higher level of education. Akha women's empowerment is important for community development in the study areas.

In Akha communities, women are responsible for taking care of the whole family but their works are unseen and undervalued in many cases. In any development programme, women's work should be taken into account and indigenous concepts should be acknowledged.

In conclusion, it is evident that gender allocation of labour varies in accordance with their traditional culture, and education standard. It was also found that the education level of women depending on the economic situation in the research area is changing. That results in the change of livelihoods of women and also their voice in the family as well as in the community events. Although Akha women in the area can produce some handicrafts, the goods cannot be produced in a mass because there is no big market or the lack of marketing information or problems in transportation issues. Therefore, there is a need on marketing and improvements in infrastructure which includes transportation and communication. This information would be very useful to implement the development research in these areas.

### **Recommendations**

- (1) Income generating activities such as home business have to be improved. Akha get seasonal crops like peanut, maize. So, food processing such as making snack with maize and peanut should be introduced. Food processing trainings should be conducted in the study areas organized by governmental and non-governmental organizations. Women can work making snacks at home and take care closely their children.
- (2) There should be marketing about handicrafts products for livelihood improvement in the study areas.
- (3) Mechanized farming should be introduced to reduce manual labour in agriculture. Local people are interested in orchard plantation. Thus, training programs for technicians concerned with long term and short term plantation are necessary to be successful in the plantation and good care management system.

- (4) It is primarily important to have an access of secondary and high school in the study areas in order to promote the education standard. Governmental and non – governmental organizations should organize together to fulfill their basic needs.
- (5) Group meetings or general discussions with the group of villagers and HA or midwife are necessary to get the health awareness. To improve health care management, both men and women should have basic knowledge about health and they need to be educated. The number of local educated persons should be increased to promote the role of health, education and living standard in these villages. Since local educated persons have already understood the taboos, their traditional beliefs and culture, it would be much easier to share their knowledge to the local people.

### **Further Research Suggestion**

The study clearly shows that the research on gender allocation of labour among the Akha focusing on socialization, sharing household chores, livelihoods. Very few information on health and education was undertaken in the study areas from gender point of view. The concepts on health and education are gradually changing basing on time in the study areas. Future research on education could investigate the contributions of individual members in both male- and female-headed households. It will be useful to find out whether the economic affect schooling for children. There is the need for an investigation into the factors concerned with health care practices of Akha. Although local Akha people are still practicing traditional health care system, they accept western treatment. So, it is necessary to explore the changes on the health care treatment of local Akha people. If quantitative method and qualitative method will be used, the data will represent the whole Akha people living in Eastern Shan State. The results will be advantaged for development of local people.

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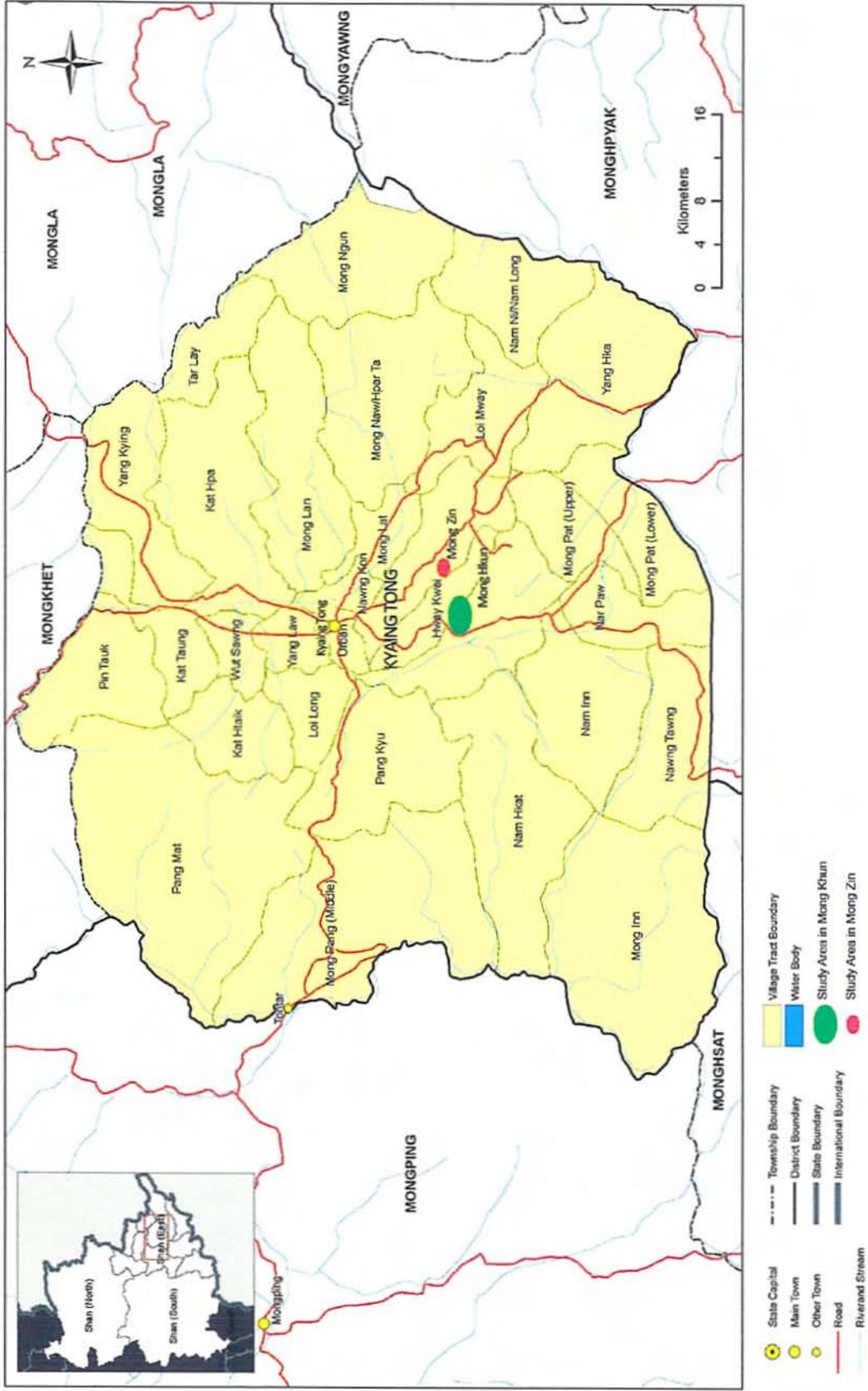
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# APPENDIX -1 Village Tracts of Kyaing Tong Township, Shan (East) State



# APPENDIX-2 Map of Mong Hkun Village Tract

Situation Of Mong Hkun Village Tract  
 Kyaing Tong Township  
 Scale- 1 Inch= 8,000 Feet

