

Geographical Study on Tradition and Culture of Pa-O Nationality in Hopone Township, Shan State

Tint Moe Thuzar*

Khin Thein Oo **, Khin Win **, Khin Myo Myo Chun ****, Khin Lay Yee *****,
Win Pa Pa Myo *****, Khin Myo Myo *****, Khin Thiri Hlaing*****

Abstract

Hopone Township situated in Taunggyi District in Southern Shan State. It is located between North Latitude 20° 32' 21" and 21° 27' 53" and between the East Longitude 97° 03' 15" and 97° 27' 43". It is lying on 3541 feet above sea level. The research studies physical factors, social factors, economic factors and especially cultural and traditional of Pa-O nationality in Hopone Township. Analysis and assessment on these factors has provided with local need for local people. The research has been done by means of field observation, literature review, geographic method, and logical ways and systematic studied from geographical point of view.

Key words: culture, traditional, nationality.

Introduction

Culture geography is a branch of systematic geography that focus on traditional and cultural determined human activities, the impact of material and non-material culture on the environmental, and the human organization of space. This research provides the basic concepts, principles and process related to population, race, religion and education and socioeconomic in our country.

Aim and Objectives

- To make a geographical study on traditional and culture of Pa-O Nationality as a major aim of this study.
- To understand the activity of the races depend on their traditional and culture.
- To know the festival, costume, occupation and belief of Pa-O Nationality
- To find out the advantage factors for local people.

Data and Methods

- Define the location of study area with GPS survey, and topographic map.
- Experimental data are collected from field observation.
- Secondary data are collected from topographic map, internet assesses and it's concern department.
- Map, Photo, Graph, Figure are drawn with computer and digital systematically.
- Traditional and culture factors are investigated in field survey.
- Necessary data are interview and questionnaire with open and close questions.

Geographical Factors of Hopone Township

* Pro Rector .Dr, Yadanabon University

** Professor (Head). Dr, Geography Department, Yadanabon University

*** Professor Dr, Geography Department, Yadanabon University

**** Professor (Head).Dr, Geography Department, Magway University

***** Professor Dr, History Department, Pang Long University

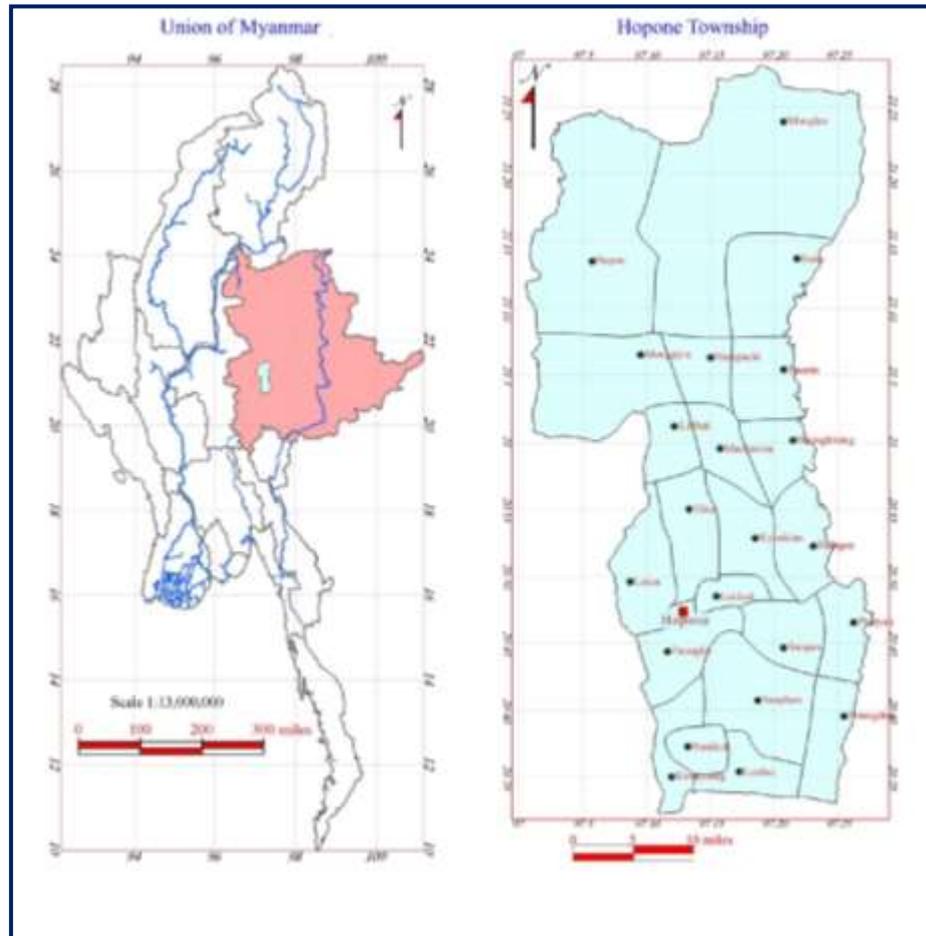
***** Associate Professor .Dr, Geography Department, Yangon University of Distance Education

***** Lecturer, Geography Department, Taunggyi University

***** Assistant Lecturer .Dr, Geography Department, Yangon Institute of Economic

Hopone Township situated in Taunggyi District in Southern Shan State. It is located between North Latitude $20^{\circ} 32' 21''$ and $21^{\circ} 27' 53''$ and between the East Longitude $97^{\circ} 03' 15''$ and $97^{\circ} 27' 43''$. It is lying on 3541 feet above sea level.

Most of the northern part of Hopone Township is at the height of about 1500 feet to 3500 feet above sea level. The remaining southern part is over 3000 feet above sea level. The Kho-ka-lar Stream, Nam-tha-phet Stream, Nam-paung-lin Stream, Nam Mei-tha Stream and Nam Pun Stream are important streams in this area.



Map (1) Location Map of Hopone Township

Source: Land record Department, Taunggyi, Southern Shan State.

Climate of Hopone Township is said to be Cwa (Humid Mesothermal type of climate) according to Koppen's classification. Average annual temperature of coldest is 16°C in January. Average annual temperature of hottest month is 22.6°C in April and it receives average total rainfall of about 1161 mm. Red Earth, Yellow Earth and Swampy Meadow soil are found in this area. Evergreen hill forest is found between 3000 feet to 7000 feet. Pine trees are found above 3000 feet.

The total population of the study area was 103241 in 2016 and its density is 85 people per one square mile. In 2016, there are 18232 people of urban population and 85009 people of rural population. The ethnic groups of Hopone Township are Bamar, Shan and Pa-O etc. The largest amounts are Pa-O with 69815 people. Pa-O language is the native language of Pa-O people and even though Bamar Language is generally spoken mostly in this area.

Culture and Traditional of Pa-O Nationality

Since time immemorial, people used to migrate from one place to another, where grass is green and water is clear to obtain food and security. As people of the same race chose to live in such places, where they would form societies and established their villages from which they developed into Towns, Cities and Nations. Shan State as their dwelling places. In particular, Pa-O villages are found in many parts of the Southern Shan State on the slopes of hills, at the summits and at the point where the banks of streams flowing between two mountain ranges converge with plains regardless of land elevation.

Houses Style: As bamboo is the main component in building houses, Pa-O Villages are usually found next to bamboo groves, as houses are built within a day with communal assistance, their structures are not very strong. Therefore, their houses are replaced once in four years.



Plate (1) Houses Style of Pa-O

Houses are built during summer, the dry season with building materials differing according to economic statuses. The fireplace of a Pa-O house plays an important part in the social life of these people. Families circle the fireplace and talk about things past and present, with elders telling stories from the lives of Lord Buddha so that children become knowledgeable and cultured, young men and women engaging in courtship and the hosts entertaining guests. The warmth of social relationship is developed at the fireplace.



Plate (2) Life Style of Pa-O

Life style: Human beings have been living in communities since time immemorial. Hence, there emerged lifestyles of these communities based on social requirements that are food, clothing and shelter needs. Social requirements of human being are based on the way they earn their living and their beliefs.

As it has already stated, agriculture was the main occupation of Pa-O. The basic aim was to fulfill food requirements and household needs. Thanks to the climatic and geographical conditions, Pa-O people could trade their surplus crops in addition to growing paddy. Hence, caravan traders came into being together with trade relations.



Plate (3) Daily go to farm their occupation

The local people began to grow cash crops during the Colonial Period, as there was demand. Then Pa-O people's self-sufficient agriculture was developed to commercial agriculture. Changes in trade patterns had also changed the social system of Pa-O. In the past, Pa-O were reluctant to extend relations with other races of the surrounding areas, because of their less developed economy.

The Pa-O started to deal with traders of the surrounding areas where they began to produce cash crops in large numbers. During the market days, sellers from the villages in the surrounding areas carried their goods by buffaloes, bullocks or horses or by themselves. A market day was crowded with various national races, including Shan, Pa-O, Lahu etc. in their colourful traditional costumes. It was not unusual that they all had different likes and dislikes. Social and cultural relations occurred in those markets.



Plate (4) Market day of Pa-O's Village in Hopone Township

Customs: The collective system used by Pa-Os in agriculture involved irrigation, protection against pestilence, burning of taungya and helping out a villager who was lagging behind in his cultivation work. This called for mutual assistance known as "*ma pa do.*" (reciprocity) without taking into consideration of who benefited. Mutual assistance was practiced during the time of subsistence economy but with the growth of commercial agriculture, wages were paid in cash.

Occupation: There are no hunters in the Pa-O society due religious faith and belief. Holding weapons is also banned from the society. However, some young Pa-Os are interested in hunting and share whatever they catch with each other without selling it in the market. Hunting is an amateur hobby where no occupational interest is involved. Thus, the major crop stored for the whole year is just rice whereas potato, garlic, groundnut, fermented beans pulses and chili are also kept. Meat is also stowed after being smoke and dried.

Earthenware serves as utensils for cooking with well-to-do people using brass or bronze ones. Rice is cooked in bronze pots and curries are cooked in earthen pots. Some boiled water in bamboo joints, which were also useful in fetching water. The pottery industry lost its importance with the introduction of more long-lasting metal ware.

The agriculture practiced by Pa-Os can be categorized into three types farming such as Taungya (Shifting Cultivation) and Orchards. Livestock breeding is always conducted along with agriculture. Cattle and horses are necessary for tilling soil and for cultivation. In Pa-O villages, buffaloes, cows and horses are used as draught animals.

Foods: Pa-O people of Shan State specialize in growing sanzee or the taungya rice. Although consumption of meat, fish and cereals exist, eating vegetables is a more prevalent practice. Eating vegetables is the direct result of its easy availability and due to the scarcity of meat and fish.

Chewing and Smoking: Betel chewing was widespread among the laypeople as well as monks, except the ones who abided by the regulations of the Order. Even the toothless old Pa-O people chew betel quid after pounding them in small mortar used for the purpose.

Smoking was another rampant habit among Pa-O people, young and old. Methods differ with some using emerald pipes, copper pipes, bamboo pipes or wooden pipes, while others smoked tobacco rolled up in corn, than at or paper wrapping. Smoking was a habit, which descended from the Inwa Period. Soldiers of the Myanmar King's Army could have discarded their pipe

along their marching routes towards the Shan State. Old earthen pipes were found in Pa-O reigns.

It was stated by Shin Karavika that smoking pipes could relax muscles, make eyes clear, protect hair and make teeth firmer. Up to this day, the trade in thanat leaf is still prospering in Shan State (south). To stop smoking is hard according to a saying by Danu people: "Short cheroots, needed after meals and before bed time". It can be difficult to stop smoking.



Plate (5) Smoking (Tobacco & Thanat Leaf) the Pa-O Woman

Costume: Ancient Pa-O made and dyed their own clothes black. Being quite an intricate art, there were only a few followers of the crafts nowadays when black clothes can be bought easily, with the craft of weaving fading away gradually. However, Pa-O bags and head striped dresses are still made up to the present time. As there are many nationalities living in Myanmar, each wears their own national dresses for the sake of distinction.

Pa-Os believed that they were the descendants of Vija Zawgyis (alchemists) and Naga (dragons) so imitating the style of Zawgyis, Pa-O men wear loose trousers, jackets and headdresses. Pa-O women, imitating Nagas, were black outer clothes, black long-sleeved blouses, black arm rings, black skirts and black calf-rings as if these were the scale of a dragon.

A knot of hair is worn at the top of the head that is in turn converted with a headdress. Although Pa-O men and women wear headdresses, they are not of black colour but rather dull yellow, green, blue and violet. Casual wears are made of cotton but those for festive occasions are made of a finer material. Wearing jewelry is not restricted according to class but practiced by moneyed folks.

Pa-O men used to wear earpieces before. Some men wear swords made of silver across their shoulders or waists. Wearing swords appear menacing to other nationals but these are hairpins and round pins, which are adorned with red gold and with scales like those of a dragon. The pointed hairpins stand for the crest and the round hairpins for the eyes of a female dragon.



Plate (6) Pa-O Nationality in Hopone Township (Ancient Style and Modern Style)

Health: Health is an important sector, apart from livelihoods in people's socio-economic lives. All people want to live a healthy life. The simple lifestyle of Pa-O people renders them unfamiliar with modern medicines. The belief that sickness results from the approach of evil

spirits due to the person's bad luck is one such instance. Making offerings to spirits is practiced. When someone did something not approved by certain spirits, he/she receives punishments. To escape from this, the practitioner offer apologies to the spirits concerned and later cure with traditional medicines. Nowadays, although modern medical practices are more commonplace, old beliefs and superstitions on the part of the Pa-O people retard health awareness and hamper development.

Teaching Systems: Pa-O has the duty to educate the new generation for the flourishing and perpetuation of their social relations. They have two teaching systems. The first is the parents who orally teach their children morals and manners and basic principles. The second is the monasteries where children learn their education. Parents teach their children since childhood to struggle life. The children learn by doing practical works. Therefore, since they were in childhood, the children help with housework and framework as much as they can. The Pa-O children have the opportunities to learn education as the Education Department has opened schools in their region. However, some have to drop out of school as their parents have extra work to do. Nowadays, realizing the disadvantages of lack of education, parents are encouraging their children's education.

Entertainment: As regard entertainment, Pa-Os have traditional dances and musical instruments songs. Drums, gongs, cymbals, mandolins, banjos and flutes are played at religious festivals and ceremonies such as Htidaw-hoisting ceremonies atop pagodas, merit-sharing ceremonies the building monasteries, communal notation ceremonies and Thadingyut light festival. Mandolins, banjos and flutes are played in courting, working at farm, tending the cattle and leisure time.

Festival : During the months of Tabaung and Tagoo (March and April) , works are few and far between thus it is a good time for holding pagoda festivals, donations, building new pagodas and going on pilgrimage. Festivities related to religious affairs are held in merry spirit. Some examples are water-pouring ceremony for plants, Hte-ma-nhe Pwe (known as Ya-gu Pwe in Pa-O language). Such festivals have to be held by groups of people and it helps strengthen the unity among the people. Those festivals are also related to faith. It was assumed that by working together, seasonal festivals emerged.



Plate (7) Pa-de-tha-pin Festival and Thidingyut Festival (Mee-kyar-hle Pwe)

During the Thadingyut, the entire village visits the monastery to do meritorious deeds there. They hold the Pa-de-tha-pin Festival (donation ceremony) in Tazaungmone, the festival of rice gruel in Pyatho, a festival to donate lights to the Buddha in Tabodwe and a pagoda festival in Taboung. In the light-offering ceremonies held in Pa-O villages on Fullmoon nights of Tabodwe, green bamboo is surrounded by sticks of tinder and dry bamboo to be burnt as an offering of lights to the pagoda. Celebration the Thidingyut Festival (Mee-kyar-hle Pwe / Pwe Lip May Bo) and Making an offering of food festival (Khaw poke htaung Pwe) have been engaged during the August to October.



Plate (8) Eating an offering of food festival (khaw poke htaung-pwe)

The Fire Rocket Festival (Pwe Lu Phaing) is celebrated from April to July. The purpose of the festival is to bring ample rain to the villages during the planting season. Pa-Oh Traditional Rocket Festival, held at Nong Taung village, Hopone Township, Taunggyi District, Southern Shan State. That rocket festival held to raise fund for school, temple and maintain the Pa-Oh traditional rocket and culture, and organized by Nong Taung Buddhist temple. There are more than 200 hundred rockets from different villages of Pa-Oh areas.



Plate (9) The Fire Rocket Festival (Pwe Lu Phaing)

Pagoda and Monastery: The tradition of building pagodas in groups is the significance of the region. If there is a cave in the region, the Pa-O build Buddha images in it.

First, Pa-O parents send their sons to monasteries to learn religious education. The rich usually held grand novitiate ceremonies. Some novitiate, their sons are at the monastery without holding a ceremony. Their belief is that males must enter the religious order at least once a year to be true Buddhists. However, they do not have the tradition of making their daughters enter nunhood. Pa-O people believe that they gain many merits by novitiate their sons, that females are not as noble as the males. Women are not allowed to learn lessons at the monasteries during their childhood days. Nowadays, women and girls can enter nun hood if they wish.



Plate (10) Respect and worship to monasteries

Marriages and Funerals: Initiate a marriage, first the young man's parents ask the young woman's parents for the hand of their daughter in marriage on behalf of their son. Her parents can take four or five days to discuss their daughter's wishes. According to custom, guests at the marriage ceremony tie cotton threads around the wrists of both the bridegroom and bride, joining them together while blessing the couple with their best wishes. Common presents include money, farmland, houses, buffaloes, male cows and household items.

Villagers take care of funeral arrangements. The body is kept for a couple of nights at home. Food is cooked to offer to the monks and people play card games as a way of giving constant companionship to the departed. After two or three days, the family gives praise to the person who died. Common people are buried, while monks are cremated.

Finding and Conclusion

- In 2016, there are 18232 people of urban population and 85009 people of rural population. The largest amounts are Pa-O with 69815 people. Most of the Pa-O are Buddhist. All of the local people have been speaking the Pa-O language and the second is Shan language in this area.
- In the old Sawbwas days, the natives' nationals of this area were not interested in their education the natives preferred their traditional concepts, mainly on agriculture activities, collecting of forest by products and other small-scale foodstuff production for subsistent level.
- As bamboo is the main component in building houses. Past time, Pa-O people have a peculiar custom of migration. At the present, they have not migrated from their native town and they are living permanent their native place.
- A poor crop yield or a drought was believed to be due to gods. To have a good yield, offerings had to be made to gods of rain; water and wind instead of considering the poor method of cultivation.
- Chewing of betel started as early as the Bagan Period. Betel chewing was widespread among the laypeople.
- Pa-O people drink 'ta si: thi" meaning 'liquid medicine". Imbibing the spirits on a regular basis is believed to facilitate circulation and relax muscles and both males and females drink it.
- Pa-O nationals wear a uniform black colour regardless of social status, wealth or age. Qualities of the black colour are believed to be profundity, strength, constancy and contentedness. A knot of hair is worn at the top of the head that is in turn converted with a headdress. Although Pa-O men and women wear headdresses, they are not of black colour but rather dull yellow, green, blue and violet.
- The simple lifestyle of Pa-O people renders them unfamiliar with modern medicines. Nowadays, although modern medical practices are more commonplace, old beliefs and superstitions on the part of the Pa-O people retard health awareness and hamper development.
- They have two teaching systems. The first is the parents who orally teach their children morals and manners and basic principles. The second is the monasteries where children learn their education. Based on the Buddha's teachings, they are taught and admonished until their adulthood. Ideologies and beliefs are handed down generation to generation.
- Pa-Os have traditional dances and musical instruments songs. Drums, gongs, cymbals, mandolins, banjos and flutes are played at religious festivals and ceremonies.
- During the months of Tabaung(March) and Tagoo (April) works are few and far between thus it is a good time for holding pagoda festivals, donations, building new pagodas and going on pilgrimage. Festivities related to religious affairs are held in merry spirit.
- Pa-O parents send their sons to monasteries to learn religious education and their daughters enter nun hood.

Hopone Township would become one of the developing townships with its traditional and culture factors in the future. At present, it can be said that the socio-economics life of the Pa-O people has developed based on their traditional and culture. Pa-O Nationality involves the management and modification of natural environment or wilderness into built environment, human society and economic activities to develop our region. This research studies a lot of information of Traditional and culture of Pa-O Nationality in this area. This research may be provided to one or many places for the local people and Hopone Township

would become one of the developing townships with its traditional and culture factors in the future.

Acknowledgements

We would like thank to Dr Maung Maung Naing (Rector, Yadanabon University) and Dr Tin Maung Hla(Rector, YUDE) for their kind permission and encouragement this work possible. We also wish to express our thanks to U Tu Naung Moe (General Administration Department, Hopone Township) for his diverse ways contributed to our research. We also like to express my indebtedness to English Department in Yadanabon University and Yangon University of Distance Education for giving us guidance in English grammar in this research.

References:

ytDf; trstom; tzlcsyl(2006); jynaxmi pkluytDf?
 (15)Epfynhif;csrfa& txrf; trsw!
 ytDf; trstom; tzlcsyl/