

# Constructing the Tealeaf: Cultural Symbolism of Laphet

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## Abstract

Since the first century, *the Pyu* era, the tealeaf or *laphet* has been acting as an exotic and delicious food for the people in Burma/Myanmar. However, the tea was discovered and used in China in 2700 B.C. Although China and Myanmar are neighboring countries, Myanmar has been eating *laphet* since very ancient times. In the Pagan era (849-1297), the *Ayloungsithu* King start to grow the *laphet* plantation. In the *Innwa*, *Taunggu* and *Koungboun* periods, the *laphet* was recognized and used as a special food for the Kings. After that, the *laphet* become the typical food for the people. In the *Botawpaya* era, *laphet* became a commodity, and people were encouraged to trade it. In the *Siphaw* King period, the *laphet* was the most productive food and income for the people in Myanmar. In this day, the *laphet* is vital for the economy of the people in highland and low land Myanmar. All things considered, the *laphet* is not only a cultural food but is also as a symbol used at wedding ceremonies, judging at the courts for criminals, as well as negotiation for peace and wars/conflicts between different countries. Thus, this research aims to explore the constructing of the cultural symbolism of the tealeaf of *laphet*. The specific objectives are to describe social meanings of tealeaf in social activities and to elicit the relationships between tea leaf and symbols in its community. This is a qualitative study using data collection methods: such as key informant interviews, in-depth interviews and observation. This research has found that the *laphet* is an essential customary food of Myanmar people that should be seen as having deep symbolic meaning, and that to understand Myanmar's culture it cannot be separated from this traditional food. As Myanmar exists in this world, the *laphet* is organic food for the Myanmar people, and it symbolized as the value of Myanmar culture and tradition forever.

Keywords: Cultural Symbol, *laphet*, constructing the tealeaf

## Introduction

Tea is the fundamental food for the people as it is attached to the tradition of the people in Myanmar. Even though different ethnic groups and language groups live in Myanmar in different areas of the country, tealeaf is the leading favorite food for all the people in Myanmar. Throughout the world, tea is the second-most-widely consumed beverage, and it is consumed by a wide range of people in different age and gender groups in all levels of the community (Hicks 2009). Generally, there are three kinds of tea identified in Myanmar and they are pickled tea (fermented tea), black tea and green tea. Only in Myanmar pickled tea is also known as *Laphet* in Myanmar is a form of tealeaf that is eaten. *Laphet* consists of tea leaves which have been fermented into a pickle. It is a famous traditional cuisine of Myanmar, which is one of the very few countries in the world where tea leaves are eaten (Soe Pyay Thar 2016). The black tea is commonly named as *Laphet-yay* which means a mixture of milk, condensed milk, and sugar with boiled black tea. The green tea is *Yae-nway-gam* in local meaning and in Myanmar dried tea is more popular among customers instead of green tea.

Fermented tea leaf locally known as *Laphet* in Myanmar is recognized as proper nutrition, and the Myanmar people believe that the agriculture of *laphet* has started since the Pagan era (849-1297). Myanmar is a standard signature and ancient national food that is eaten by all people in the country, regardless of race or religion, at get-togethers in family homes, in monasteries, or at traditional celebrations. The cuisine of Myanmar has a famous expression: Of all the fruit, mango is the best; Of all the meats, pork is the best; Of all the leaves, *laphet* is

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the best. Because of this, *laphet* is consumed in the daily life of the Myanmar people. In ancient times *Laphet* was used as a peace symbol or peace offering between warring kingdoms. Nowadays, *laphet* is a primary expression of hospitality offered to houseguests. (journal of Ethnic foods). The main production centre for *laphet* in Myanmar is in Mandalay. Mandalay *laphet* is the best *laphet* for the *laphet* lover and eater. This is very famous in Myanmar because people use it in donation ceremonies, traditional festivals, social ceremonies and cuisine. The *Laphet* is used for salad, including fried beans, sesame, peanut and cashew nuts and these are put into *laphet Yuan Ook*, which is a traditional Myanmar bowl (made with wood) in which many blocks are set up to put fried beans, peanuts, sesame and cashew nuts.

Many researchers explored about the tealeaf with different concepts and research methodology. However, they have not focused on how the tea represent and gives symbolic meaning for the people. This symbolic meaning is also included in the socio-economy and politics surrounding the tealeaf. This paper filled the gap by using the concept of constructivism and has focused on how meanings are constructed around the tealeaf in Mandalay.

### Research Objectives

The objectives of this paper are:

- To describe the tealeaf, symbolically; and
- To explore the meaning of tealeaf for the people and how it is constructed for them.

### Research questions

- (1) What does the tealeaf symbolize for the people?
- (2) How are meanings constructed for them?

### Research Methodology

Secondary data collected from library, and ethnographic method was used as a part of this paper to find out the objectives of this paper. This paper elicited symbolic meanings related to *Laphet* in social events, disputes, religion, proverbs and *Laphet* shops in significant townships where Palaung national settled. So, this paper does not intend to a specific area but it aims all communities where *Laphet* is used as symbols to solve problems; as gifts, invitation, medium and proverbs because it may occur difficult to get enough data and to support the objectives of this paper. However, to understand the symbolic meaning used in names of *Laphet* shops, I selected two *Laphet* shops as study sites especially in *Yee-mon* and *Shan-shwe-taung laphet* because *Yee-mon* sells with the amount of weight priority to customers and customers can buy some amounts as much as they can. Particularly, *Shan-shwe-taung laphet* is very cheap to buy it for manual labours.

In this paper, I interviewed with the presiding monk who is Palaung resides in *Shwe-yay-saung Teik* (monastery in Local meaning) to get information about the meaning of symbols related to *Laphet* because he is Palaung national as well as he has knowledgeable about *Laphet*. Moreover, even though he lives in Mandalay City he visited to *Kyushaw* village on every weekend days and I chose him as a key informant. The next informant is a *Pantakar* which means religious leader in the village and he is a Palaung national and he lives in *Kyushaw* village. So, he gave information related to the meaning of *Laphet* and I selected him as key informant.

I have visited *Yee-mon* and *Shan-shwe-taung laphet* shops to interview the symbol and its meaning. I used informal interviews and had conversations with other persons. Although it was the best way, sometimes I would still encounter difficulties during the interview time. I also interviewed 15 people, including sellers, consumers and owner. The study site is Mandalay City where *Yee-mon* and *Shan-shwe-taung laphet* shops (the small restaurants) were chosen to find out the objectives of this paper. During my fieldwork, I tried to study the most famous *laphet* companies and the best seller *laphet*.

### Literature reviews

Gramza-Michalowska (2014) found that Tea is a popular food which has been widely consumed around the world for many years because of its attractive aroma, exceptional taste, and its health-promoting and pharmaceutical potential. This *laphet* is known as Nat leaves (the Lord of Leaves). The word Nat refers to "supernatural being person." It has pickle tea and dried tea. Pickle tea has an essential role in the social life of the people of Myanmar. In social activities and ceremonies, the *laphet* is used for primary food. For example, it is the wedding, social events (birthday and so on), religious events and Nat ceremony. In these events, the *laphets* are the main food as well as a cultural symbol for the celebrations. A symbol is a mark, sign or world that indicates, signifies, or is understood as representing an idea, object, or relationship( Geertz 1973). The above literature shows that the *laphet* is not only a popular food but also this food takes the most beautiful symbol for the event. This research has based some ideas and concepts previously studied, such as the history of *laphet* and its culture, the traditional poem of *laphet*. This research described the meaning and the symbol of tealeaf at the shops in Mandalay.

## Findings and Discussion

### Historical background of Laphet

In Myanmar, the *Laphet* were discovered in the first century A.D, in the Pyu era. In China, the *Laphet* started to eat in 2700 BC (Thinkhar, 2017). According to historical documents (Aung Cheing Bwar, 2014), the *laphet* trees emerged in the era of Tada-Paung King, Thayekhittaya Kingdom (AD 4-9) and Alaungsithu King (1112-1167), PauKang (Pagan) Kingdom. Thus, there are two kinds of evidence for the starting point of the tea tree. However, in TaungPaing history, the Alaungsithu King gave tea to the seven farmers. In addition, according to the Alaungsithu's Mhan Nan Yasawin, it was in 454 (Myanmar calendar). In Thwin Yasawin, it was 455 (Myanmar calendar) and 450 (Myanmar calendar) in U Kalar Yarsawin. The word "Yarsawin" means "the historical account" in English. In these accounts, the Alaungsithu King got the power of the Palace. Thus, this is quite different from the historical account of TaungPaing However, all the Yarsawin have accounted for and recorded different times because they focused on the issue rather than the time.

Regarding oral history, when King Alaungsithu did visitation around his Kingdom, he found Palaung people at the Loi Sai Mountain which is 5500 meters above sea level and he gave *Laphet* seeds to them because they were very poor to find out money for their family. At the top of the Loi Sai Mountain, there is the ruby pagoda (a pagoda made with ruby) as symbol and it is well known as the Ruby pagoda and it can be seen until today. The symbol of getting *Laphet* seeds from the King with one hand becomes historical evidence. In the Myanmar language, it says "*La Ta Phet*." It means "one hands" in English. In the present day, this has changed to *Laphet* in the Myanmar language (ibid). The Palaung people believe that the *Laphet* is given by the Nat (supernatural being). Thus, they recognize the *Laphet* as a tree from Nat, and they call it as Nat Tet Ywot. The words "Tet Ywot" means leaf in English. A 60-year-old

Palaung man said that the two *Laphet* trees are decorated with gold in Palaung villages because Palaung nationals wear golden belt in their waste.

### ***Laphet* as symbols with different kinds of meanings used in social activities**

Myanmar people believe that *Laphet* agriculture was started in the Pagan period. *Laphet* (tea) is one of the local products of Myanmar and since the Myanmar kingdom periods, Myanmar has consumed *laphet* for a long time. The *Laphet* was used at the Kings' festivals in Innwa, Taunggu and a Kongboun Kingdom period as well as it was an essential food at King's festival. In Myanmar language, these festivals are called "Pu Kat Tin" (ပုခက်တင်), Kin Puu Tat (ကင်ပွန်းတင်), Nar Ta and Na Twe (နားသ၊နားသွင်း). The *Laphet* is the vital food for these events and it is an essential food in Myanmar tradition and culture (Thinkhar, 2017). Moreover, during the Kingdom period, it was used in recognizing Myanmar national hero as a symbol of national hero prize which is the best and most respected prize.

From the above, *Laphet* was used as symbol since the Kingdom periods but the author did not explain how *Laphet* was used in royal activities. However, in my opinion, it may assume that *Laphet* was symbol to use in the Kings' royal activities with different kinds of meaning. Moreover, *Laphet* was not only symbol but also food used in the Kingdom regimes.

In the royal wedding ceremony, the wedding attendants have to bring *Laphet* as special gifts. Then, before this particular ceremony, the *Laphet*, Ta Yaw and holy water are mixed in the silver cup and used it to wash the head and hair. In the *Kun Oo khunt* (ကွမ်းဦးခွံ့မင်လာ) Mingalar ceremony, the royal son, daughter, grandsons and daughters have to bring Kun (betel nut), with a traditional herb and tea package (38 phyar mingalar)

The above literature shows that *Laphet* is essential symbols hosted in royal wedding ceremony as gifts and then in my opinion the *Laphet* package brought by the King's ancestors can be interpreted as a symbol of auspicious in wedding ceremony.

The presiding Palaung monk who live in Shwe-yay-saung monastery situated in western gate of the *Mahmuni yoke-shin-taw-myat* said that *Laphet* history is very wide in Myanmar *Laphet* history. In the Myanmar Kings' periods, there were two big festivals - before and after the month of Wa Twing (Sabbath month in Myanmar calendar) and New Year. These had to pay honor and respect with *Laphet* to the Kings and Queens and it is Pu Zaw Ka Taw and *Thitsar Taw Khan* events in Myanmar language. In the past, there was no wedding invitation in Myanmar society. For the wedding and social events, the people used the *Laphet* package to invite the people to attend the event. If the people received the *Laphet* package, they needed to attend the events. This was compulsory, and this was a kind of giving the promise to attend if they received the *Laphet* package. If someone did not want to attend, they did not need to receive the *Laphet* package. This was the restricted discipline of *Laphet* culture.

Form the interview with the presiding Palaung monk, *Laphet* shows a kind of symbol which means to get agreement between the inviter and invitees in wedding ceremonies during the Kingdom period. In other words, this shows how the social relationship among them ties among them through an object, *Laphet* package.

Moreover, in the ancient time, the Shin Pu event (ရှင်ပြုအလှူ) also used the *Laphet* package to invite the people. In the *Laphet* packaging style, the *Laphet* was covered by the banana, and Banyan leaves. The package was triangle shaped. According to Myanmar educator Maw Be Saya Thein Kyi, if someone wanted to visit his friend's house, he needed to send a *Laphet* package in advance. After that, he can visit his friend's house. In this day, the fermented *Laphet* is a traditional food for the Myanmar people especially in Mandalay City, *Laphet* is one

of the essential foods in the special ceremonies. In Myanmar society, it is said ကွမ်းဆေးလှူခြင်းလက်ဖက်ကျက်သရေ. This means the betel nuts show standard as shown as the *Laphet* represent smart. The Myanmar people said this short phrase when they give a small *Laphet* package to the people in the special event.

From the above, it is known that the meaning of symbols differs in auspicious and un-auspicious events depending on the *Laphet* packaging style. Additionally, the *Laphet* shows different meanings to visit to a place as the talk of Myanmar educator Maw Be Saya Thein Kyi because *Laphet* package was sent in advance someone visits to somewhere and it means giving information to the host. However, it seems that the *Laphet* can be interpreted as metaphor in Myanmar phrase.

From the above documentations and its analysis, it is concluded that *Laphet* is a pivotal role in its community with different kinds of meaning shared by the community through different kinds of events but also it is a medium to communicate each other as giving information.

### ***Laphet* as a Symbol of Peace**

A-60-year-old Palaung elder man gave information me while I went to Kyaukshaw how *Laphet* was used in dispute setting during the Kingdom periods. By having *Laphet*, the cases were forgiven and free for criminals. At the court, before the judges, the people (suspected criminal and non- criminal) have to eat *Laphet* by sitting face to face. This was known as *Laphet Latt Lan Sar*. It means the two sides have an agreement and peace for the case. After eating the *Laphet*, the two sides have not any argument, and the case was finished forever. In the Shan, Myanmar, Chin, Kachin and Kayan culture, the *Laphet Latt Lan Sar* event was significant for the cases at the courts. The cases of stealing, divorce, inheritance and debt were free by *Laphet*. The argument cases should bring the *Laphet* to have peace. Regarding *Laphet* as symbol to interpret peace, he said:

*"Myanmar Laphet was not only crucial in Myanmar history but also an essential symbol in peace negotiation event in the Myanmar Kings' periods. When the two Kingdoms had a battle, they needed to give Laphet if they wanted to make peace for negotiation. If one of the Kings received the Laphet and ate it, it was a good sign for peace. The peace negotiation was successful. The Laphet was also an important symbol or item at the court and judge."*

From his reply, it seems that *Laphet* was used as a symbol to express regret for something that one has done wrong. So, it means that he or she gave her or him free from punishment if someone has guilt. Likewise, in sharing properties among family members, *Laphet* was used to reduce guilt.

He continued that until nowadays *Laphet* is used as a symbol of power to solve problems such as disputes, debts, and inheritance cases happened in Palaung villages situated in Northern and Southern Shan State. From his information, I noticed that *Laphet* represents by means of symbols in Myanmar but also it includes in significant role not only in the Myanmar Kingdoms periods but also modern times.

### **The Role of *Laphet* in Religion**

To find out the role of *Laphet* in Religion, mostly Palaung nationals who lived in Kyushaw village could not give information to me because I thought they speak Palaung Language in everyday life; they could not read and write formal education. They are busy with tea leaf farm and production process. Thus, they do not have time to learn meaning related to *Laphet* and they are not interested to share knowledge related to *Laphet* in religious activities to us. Thus,

documents of Aung Chaing Bwar's were used to analyze data. In his book published in 2014, he wrote:

"In Myanmar language, it says that without these three kinds of fruits and leaves, the offertories consisting of hands of bananas, coconut, etc. decoratively arranged which is also known as *Ka Taw Pwe* in Myanmar, cannot occur. The *Ka Taw Pwe* means a big bowl of donation which includes coconut, betel nuts, candle and *Laphet*. In the Buddhist context, the words *Laphet* have a special meaning. The word "La" is *Budahu Nan*<sup>2</sup> which represent "4." The word "*phet*" refers to *Kyar Tha Pa Tay Nan*<sup>3</sup>, which means "5" in Myanmar Buddhist context of astrological perspective. Thus, these two words signify the number "9." The "9" number is dominant in the Myanmar context. It denotes mighty strength, no competition and success in life. Additionally, the "9" number also symbolizes iron, bronze and weapon. It is *Mita* season and in *Eain Shan Jo* (astrological knowledge). The affection (Myitta) is attacking and destroying sense. In this context, it has breakthrough power. Therefore, the *Laphet* is used with a golden bowl. This bowl is known as *Ook*. Both *Laphet* and *Ook* (golden bowl) represent the number "9". Specifically, the word *shwe* (gold) refers to "8" and *Ook* is "1." Thus, these two words present "9" in the Myanmar context. These words are influential and powerful. In Myanmar language, it is also called Koe Na Win and it has Ze Ya Tat Te Na Mad (ဇေယျသိဒ္ဓိနိမိတ်). Thus, the *Laphet* have a good connotation in the Myanmar context. That is why the Myanmar people mainly use it at the religious, Nat and social festivals. According to Sayakyi Dagon Natshin, he said that the *Laphet* have three kinds of things such as love, faithfulness and blessing. These three things are embedded in *Laphet*. It is undeniable that *Laphet* is love. When we interact with each other with *Laphet*, it becomes love in each heart. The *Laphet* is also faithfulness because it gives love. That love denies hate speech and hatred. Thus, the truth word has used at the stage of love. It generates love finally. When we love each other, we can get the blessing and good things in our life. The blessings will surely follow. Therefore, whatever the people do, *Laphet* is a very important food, and this food symbolizes love, peace, faithfulness and blessings for human beings. Thus, the Myanmar people use and eat the *Laphet* with a golden bowl at special ceremonies since the ancient time."

From this author's explanation, it is known that *Laphet* is attached with religious events and it is used in offering ceremony as essential object to accept good information. In my opinion, *Laphet* represents good luck for all people who believe in omens and *Laphet* may be essential in people who offer votives to the spirits (*Nat*).

### Myanmar Traditional Proverbs to do with *Laphet*

To get data, proverbs related to *Laphet*, different kinds of *Laphet* literature were collected through library. Only a proverb was given by a Palaung national who live in Kyushaw village because of lack of knowledge.

In Myanmar Sakabon (traditional saying) or proverb, if the people use the Sakabon or proverb when they talk to each other, they realize as a useful conversation. Thus, the language of proverbs is used by different classes of people in Myanmar (Khin Saw Myint 2018). The moral term in Myanmar proverb presents Myanmar ethical norms and Myanmar cultural values. There are various proverbs in Myanmar language. All Myanmar is fond of to use proverbs in their daily life and conservation. In Myanmar proverbs, the *Laphet* proverbs are also well-known cultural norms, and people like to use it. It says that "အသီးမှသာရက်၊ အသားမှာဝက်၊ အရွက်မှာ လက်ဖက်". In English, mango is the best fruit and *Laphet* is the best leaves to eat.

<sup>2</sup> Wednesday

<sup>3</sup> Thursday

The Myanmar scholar, U Pon Nyga, talk about it deeply in his document (Matta Sar). Regarding with *Laphet*, it also has many proverbs. For this, the following table shows the proverb of *Laphet* in two languages (Burmese and English translation).

Burmese	English
လက်ဖက်ကောင်းစားချင်ရင် ပလောင်တောင်တက်နေ့၊ သမက်ကောင်းလိုချင်ရင် အလှောင် အလက်ရွေး။	If you want to eat good <i>laphet</i> , the Palaung need to climb the mountain slowly.  If you want to get a good husband for your daughter, you need to choose yourself.
အလှူလက်ဖက်နှင့် မျက်နှာလုပ်သော်။	With the <i>laphet</i> from donation event, use for favouritism
လက်ဖက်တစ်ရိုး၊ ကွမ်းရိုးတစ်ညှာ။	<i>Laphet</i> leaf and betel leaf
လူမတတ်ပေမဲ့၊ လက်ဖက်ထုတ်က တတ်ပါသည်။	The human cannot do, but <i>Laphet</i> package can do
လက်ဖက်တစ်ခွန်း၊ နှုတ်ခွန်းတစ်ရာ။	One spoon of <i>Laphet</i> and a hundred word.
လက်ဖက်ရည်ကြမ်း၊ တလင်ဗန်း။	A table of <i>Laphet</i>
လက်ဖက်ရည်အဖန်သောက်ရင်ဖြင့် ကျက်သရေ အမှန်ရောက် ပေလိမ့်၊ ကြံ့သလောက်ပြီးတဲ့ အရည်။	Drinking <i>Laphet</i> can get good condition and reach your goal of thinking.

By studying the above characteristics of tealeaf proverbs, *Laphet* plays an essential role in the construction of proverbs and are part of the language, an indispensable element of culture. In addition to these proverbs, there are symbolic meanings used in tealeaf business that enhance the value of tealeaf.

### The Symbolic Meaning related *Laphet* at tealeaf shops

The owner who is about 40 years old of *Shan Shwe Taung laphet* shop explained the reason why he gave the brand to me. He said:

*"My father goes to the mountainous area to find laphet. So, our economy is good. They are why we call the mountains as "golden mountain" (Shwe Taung in the Burmese language). Many Shan people are living in that region. So, in the astrological perspective, it is good to name Shan Shwe Taung."*

He continued what kinds of *Laphet* have been producing in his company. There are three main products- *Shu Shae*, *Zayan Nyunt Nad*, *Gin Mhwe*. Among these three products, this research has mainly studied *Shu Shae laphet* because it is only about fifty kyat in Myanmar and it has a good taste so that everyone particularly grassroots and students can buy with cheapest price it to eat as curry, snack, and relish. The reason why this name was given that the taste has sour and hot as it added many chilies. Many people like to eat this taste as they want to eat with *laphet thoke* (tea salad with dried beans and peanuts). In Mandalay, there are many brands of *laphet*. That is why the *Shu Shae* would not want to similar to these brands and tastes. As the taste is sour and hot, this brand is named as *Shu Shae*. It includes green tamarind, star fruit and green chili. The packaging system is used in the style of 2003. At that time, many

Shampoo brands are using a small package style. Thus, the Shu Shae have used the sample of this style and produce many Shu Shae *laphet* package in Myanmar. It has a reason to sell the Shu Shae *laphet* because many young people are not interested in having *laphet* and tea (drinking tea), as well as the *laphet*, become a donation item for the pagoda and Nat Palace. Thus, the *laphet* market and price are gradually declined. By learning this reason, the *Shu Shae* have made different taste and packaging system and sell it at a low price (50 kyats). From that time onward, the *Shu Shae laphet* become the best food and snack for the young people, farmers and this product are selling at the grocery stores and schools. As it has a unique taste, the selling rate has significantly risen.



Shan Shwe Taung products

### Symbolic meaning of Shan Shwe Taung Products

The *Shu Shae* package's colour is red, and it represents the chili. The logo has two tea small leaves. One big leaf has two leaves. This is a good *laphet* or tea leaf. The star fruit has a slightly bitter taste and sweet, and the tamarind taste has a sour taste. Thus, the *Shu Shae* have tasty, delicious, sour and hot. This is the method of *Shan Shwe Taung laphet* company. *Shu Shae laphet* is the essential brand for the *Shan Shwe Taung*, and many people recognize it as *Shu Shae laphet*.

#### Yi Mon Laphet

The *Yi Mon laphet* was started in 1994. The owner of this company said that her mother's name is Daw Yee Yee. When his mother sells *laphet*, she has a very polite and hospitable attitude towards the customers. That is why people call it Yi Mon laphet. In Yi Mon company, they have *Ar Nyunt Chin Sat*, *Zayan Nad*, *Zayan Chin Sad*, *Sake Taung laphet*, *Mayanthee*<sup>4</sup> *laphet*, *Da Nyin thee*<sup>5</sup> *laphet* and *Nga Ni Tu*<sup>6</sup> *laphet*. *Mayanthee* and *Da Nyin thee laphet* is seasonal *laphet*, but the people like to eat *Sake Taung laphet*. In this company,

"people can buy the product by weighting them. The *laphet* and *Nhat Pyan Kyaw* (deep-fried beans and peanuts)".

The owner of the shop (40 years old woman) said that over two hundred kilograms of *laphet* are sold per day.



### Yi Mon Tealeaf Products

The background colour is yellow, and it represents the deep-fried beans and peanuts. It also contains tea leaves, *laphet* bowl (traditional bowl) and teapot.

From the responses of two Laphet owners, the two *laphet* brands have the best system of packaging, attract to consumers, and the price of the *laphet* is very reasonable. It also includes the expiry date and ingredients information at their packages. Regarding marketing strategy, these two brands have attractive package styles, reasonable price and good taste. However, these two brands did not show the information for health issues such as nutritional values, fats, and carbohydrates. The people who buy more *laphet* (fermented tea salad), need to be careful about the information on hygiene and fresh food.

### Conclusion

This article has argued that the tealeaf (Laphet) has different kinds of symbolic meaning regarding food, religion, disputes, proverbs, taste, brand and social activities. Because the two brands that I selected created Laphet with new symbolic meanings which are attractive packing, expiry dates, and the demand of Laphet increases in the market. Moreover, these two brands possess significant taste, affordable amount of price and it seems that these are symbols of the two brands and the symbols look like medium to link between producers and consumers. Thus it is concluded that formerly Laphet has symbolic meaning related to social practices during the Kingdom period but nowadays its practices change to daily use as food, snack and relish for manual labour family members through new creations of symbolic meaning of the two brands. In ancient times, the fermented tea leaves were used as a peace symbol or peace offering between warring kingdoms. In the present day, the *laphet* is the vital illustration in food which is treated to grassroots.

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သင်္ခါ၊ ၂၀၁၇၊ လက်ဖက်ယဉ်ကျေးမှု။