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Socio-economic change due to media; a case study of Gangaw Township in Myanmar

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to identify the socio-economic conditions due to media in Gangaw Township. As communication has developed in the region, the postal service, the telegraph and phone communication have also developed. In addition, natural disasters such as floods and their consequences like losing human lives and animals and the destruction of belongings are effectively prevented, and thus it has become a great help for economic development. Motorcycles are being used as necessary, and icon phones are also great help for social and economic development. In this study, there different types of research methods were included to enable data triangulation, with findings from ethnographic study compared and contrasted with findings from in-depth interview (IDIS), Key informant interviews (KIIS) and data from document review. Forming the Philanthropic Parahita associations and contributing also help in the village welfare activities, to some extent, is a very important endeavor for the regional development of the whole area.

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1 Introduction

Environment refers to the totality of the external influences, natural or man made which impinge on man and affects his well being. It therefore embraces the socio-cultural environments (Helman, C.G, 1990). Moreover, it is important to study how weather, climate variability and change can influence upon population culture. Therefore, much attention will be paid not only to cultural patterns as adaptive responses to the basic problems of survival but also for reproduction among people living in this research area.

In this region, the majority is Bamar national and the second large one is Chin nationals. Most of them are Buddhists, and some are Christians. Gangaw District is situated in Magwe Region, Myanmar. Gangaw District was started to form in 1996 (Gangaw District Gazatter, 2003). The Gangaw District is administrative divided into three townships; Gangaw, Htilin and Saw. Gangaw Township was chosen for my field area. In olden days, due to topography and weather condition of this region, communication was difficult and the only transportation for the whole year round was by air. Airways commenced in 1952 linking with Gangaw, Kalay, Kyaukhtu, Pauk, Pakokku, Mandalay and Yangon by 3 to 4 flights per week. Road transportation was available only in summer because floods by mountain torrents are quite common in the rainy season in this area. Only bullock carts are common in the rainy season by crossing Myitthar

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River on rafts. Log rafts are floated down the river in this area, and dug-out boats are used for transportation.

Gangaw Township was once very hard to communicate as Pontaung and Ponnya mountain ranges were to be passed over to get there. Though post office and telecommunication have taken place in Kyaw region since 1964, communication was much delayed due to bad transportation. In 1970, traveling had to be made by hiking, naturally being a region that was hard to travel. In 1973, Mandalay-Sagaing-Monywar-Gangaw-Hakhar road was completed, and then the transportation became smooth; after 1988, communication has been booming. This paper is to explore social aspect due to media in Gangaw Region. The objectives of the study are:

- to identify the accessibility to economic opportunities due to media;
- to explore the disappearance of some traditional cultural values caused by the influence of alien cultures due to media; and
- to elicit the fact that the role of social associations is the most important one in carrying out regional development.

2 Literature review

Gerard O'Donnel (1988) pointed out that Himmelweit (1958) considered the children most likely to be affected by televisions and they are least critical – in particular the less intelligent 13 to 14 year olds- it must be presumed that television has some influence on tastes and opinions. However there is evidence that people in general tend to watch and read features that agree with their own views, or to interpret news and views through a mesh of previously received ideas. There is likely to be no sudden change in attitudes as a result of exposure to the media. However, there is what has been called the 'drip effect': constant repetition tends to familiarize us with the idea that certain types of behavior, perhaps violent or promiscuous, are normal.

It is also suggested that the media, like other institutions in Britain, are essentially conservative and are unlikely therefore to challenge accepted norms and values to any marked extent. Children who are drawn into delinquency are the result of an unsatisfactory home life and an environment within delinquency is a possible and even socially- accepted way out for frustrated youth. The supposition that they are perverted by the mass media alone is a gross oversimplification of a serious and complex problem. There are, or have been, horror comics and films which should not be shown to children, but to suggest that children have been turned

into delinquents in this way is to put the cart before the horse, since it is those who continue to be attracted by such books and films that are showing the symptoms of potential delinquency. Horror stories are, indeed, a natural component of growing up, but few modern tales could be as horrific, offensive (e.g. in their anti-Semitism, and we have tried to show that similar horrific fantasies occur in all children whether or not they are exposed to stories, films, or plays about them.

Multi-national corporations in their products and advertising tend to project similar images in a variety of countries which may, in the long term, contribute to growing similarities between the countries concerned. Student exchanges and grant-aided study overseas has made possible a greater exchange of ideas between the future leaders of a variety of cultures. It is tempting to assume that the opening up of ideas between differing cultures will lead to greater tolerance but there is little sign of this. Without doubt a certain amount of terrorism has been imported and exported (O'Dommel, Gerard, 1994).

As this paper is also based on the cultural material, the economic, social and cultural changes caused by the social organizational development, the improvement of the infrastructure such as roads, bridges, communication facilities, and media of the local communities from both emic and etic point of views are observed.

3 Materials and Methods

Qualitative research methods are used in this study. The emphasis is put on the use of ethnographic interviewing methods. Gangaw Township was chosen for my field area. There are (110) villages in the Township. Among them, Shon Shi, Zahaw, Taung Kin Yan, Myauk Kin Yan and Kyaw village were selected to conduct field research. In this study, three different types of research methods were included to enable data triangulation, with findings from ethnographic study compared and contrasted with findings from in-depth interviews (IDIS), key informant interviews (KIIS) and data from document review. (IDIS) were conducted with 12 informants who were housewives, the fathers who were the heads of the family and specialized personnel; 10 (KIIS) were conducted with village elders. Three of the village elders were also included in the in depth- interviews. Simple random sampling method was used to describe the Socio-economic change due to media; a case study of Gangaw Township in Myanmar. All interviews were conducted in Myanmar (mother tongue).

4 Result and Findings: Environmental relationship

Railway construction began in 1996. Similarly, telephone lines were extended; Kyaw and Myauk Kin Yan villages used telephones in 1996-97. Since the start of the railway construction, all members of village authoritative organizations were officially allowed to use Icon phones that were communicable within 12 miles. For emergency meetings, the Icon phones were very useful to make contact with each other among the committee members then.

Table-1: Status of phone communication of the five villages

Shou Shi Village		
1992	Dialing phone	
2005	062	(2)
2010-11	CDMA	
Zahaw Village		
2005	062	(1)
2010-11	062 (5); CDMA, Icon Phone	(15)
	(10)	
Taung Kin Yan Village		
2004	Dialing phone	(2)
2007	073	(4)
2010-11	IPStar (Satellite)(10); CDMA (3)	(13)
Myauk Kin Yan Village		
1996-97	Dialing phone (99)	(99)
1998	IPStar (Satellite)	(1)
2010	073(2); Dialing phone (3)	(5)
2011	073(5); IPStar (Satellite) (8)	(13)

Kyaw Village		
1996-97	Dialing phone (13)	(60)
2000	062(2)	(120)
2007-08	IPStar (4)	(110)
2010	CDMA	

Source: Gangaw District Gazette, 2007

Of the five villages in the study area, Shou Shi village began to use telephones since Gangaw started its telephone lines in 1992. Second earliest, Myauk Kin Yan and Kyaw villages were able to use telephones in 1996-97 when railway road had been initiated. After 2000, auto phones, satellite phones and CDMA phones have been in use. Zahaw and Taung Kin Yan villages began to use telephones in 2004-05, but CDMA phones were able to use only in 2010-11 (Table-1).

In Gangaw, TV relay stations were set up in 2001. Due to the emergence of TV, video and good transportation, dealings and trading with other localities, and the flux of migrants, the practice of wearing traditional costumes disappeared right away. The traditional costume pattern for male(plate-1) consists of a turban, two piece longyi (Hnanansat)(နံ့ဝံ့ဝံ့) coloured red, yellow and green and a spare longyi slinging across the body or a shawl covering the body, with a knife always taking place on the waist, regionally known as “dharkharchatti”(ခါးခါးချိတ်). It is because a knife needs to be always carried so as to use as necessary when traveling in the deep forest and jungles. A spare-longyi or a shawl was used to cover the body as the substitute of shirts because in olden days they had to weave themselves for their own clothing and thus there were no spare cloths. It is therefore women wore two piece longyi (Hnanansat) (Plate-2).

As per a 54 year old Kyaw villager, in the thingyan (water festival) days, throwing waters to each other (women and men) was a traditional practice, especially boys had to go to the girls' house at 4.00 in the morning and pour water. The boys had to wake up early and had to be watered, went to bed again; and again had to wake up when the second group came and were to be ready to be watered; and thus the process went on. Boys also could go to the girl's house at night to pour water. But nights now water throwing stages (mandats)(မာဏတံ) are set up

and throw water. I think, it is because water becomes scarce right now. Worst of all is the change of clothing fatten; male and female alike wear jean pants and drink beer; the water festival nowadays is just like a rumbling of a doomsday. Such changes have been going on for three years.

Electricity

Communication in the area becomes much better. Attempts to get electricity had to be endeavoured so as to use TV and video regularly. In Shou Shi village, the electricity has been obtained through individual self-help system. Only about 30 households in Shou Shi village are accessible to Gangaw electricity. Half of the village households get electricity distributed by Youths association: 2000kyat per month for a two feet lamp; for village welfare: 7000 kyat for the funeral day and 3500 kyat per day for the remaining six days. The cash thus earned is used in buying pots and pans for use in village welfare activities.

In Zahaw village, individual hydro-electricity plant is giving light to the village, using Zahaw creek water power. The hydro-electricity power plant (plate-3) cost 7 lakhs, capable of using for five years. The timber used in constructing the power plant was teak and hardwood that had been locally extracted. The electricity is available for six months (November, December, January, February, March, April). There are two persons who produce hydro-electricity power plant. About 30 houses and pagodas in the village regularly get electricity from 5.00 to 10.00 pm: 2000 kyat for a two feet lamp per month, 5000 kyat per TV set/ month, giving electricity for 5 TV sets. Battery charging enterprise is also carried out. 300 kyat per battery charging, charging 20 batteries / day. An average income of 2.5 lakhs per month is earned from hydro-electricity enterprise. It is an attempt to upgrade the living standard of the village based on the environmental situations. In Taung Kin Yan village, there are two bio gas engine power plants: One is the village-owned (plate-4) and the other is the private owned. The village-owned one was inaugurated in 2006, November-1. It has been established through the assistance loan by North West Command and the contribution of the villagers: 6000 kyat-25000 kyat per household with the exemption of widow and widower households. The individual-owned one was inaugurated in May 1, 2007: during the rice milling period, electricity is transmitted at 20,000 kyat IPStar (Satellite) Phones.

Village-owned power plant distributed electricity in 2007: 1000 kyat per two feet lamp/month for 180 households; in 2009, 1000 kyat per two feet lamp / month for 315 households (340 lamps); moreover, 3000 kyat per colour TV set for 61 sets / month, 1500 kyat per black and white TV set for 2 sets, 1000 kyat for a video hall/ month. In day time, village-owned bio-gas power plant mills rice on hire: 150 kyat per basket of rice (of charge), 85 baskets/day. Rice husk ash is available free of charge for use of fertilizer.

In Myauk Kin Yan village, too, there are two private bio-gas power plants, distribution light to the village from 6.00 to 9.00 pm: 1500 kyat per two feet lamp/ month, 4000 kyat for video, 1300 kyat for a TV set. In winter, light distribution time is one hour earlier; and in summer, one hour later than usual time.

In Kyaw region, private owned engine is used to distribute light: 1500 kyat per lamp / month. As Kyaw region is a prosperous commercial region, every roadside home is a shop and every home has a generator.

Social Sector

Previously, communication and road transportation in Gangaw region is hard blocking the process of dealing with other regions. Hiking was the only way to go from place to place sleep out. Therefore, the villagers are very helpful to each other, and thus “village crier” (Ywarzaw)(ရွာခေါင်း) has been created to make unusual incidents and village welfare issues known to the whole village.

The duty of a village crier is to inform the village elders whenever a guest arrives so that the guest’s requirements are to be fulfilled; to make villagers assembled in case of village affairs good or bad. Nowadays, the village crier has to invite villagers to attend meetings, to summon people to office appointments, and to collect money for bags of chemical fertilizer that were sold to local people per house / bag at a price of 24000 kyat bag.

There were only one village crier in Taung Kin Yan and Myauk Kin Yan villages previously. After 1988, two village criers have been appointed. Due to the construction of the Taung Kin Yan dam, and the construction of railroad, the duties of village crier have increased. Construction of railroad and car roads demanded a great deal of labour of the villagers. As the

participatory work increased so the responsibilities of village crier multiplied, sending messages to nearby villages and fulfilling the requirements of army forces at the same time.

In case of offering ceremonies, weddings and funerals in other villages, it is village crier's duty to inform them how many persons are coming from his own village, how many are there who can eat one viss (3.6 pound) of curry or fifty ticals of curry one ay in advance. A village crier is a person who facilitates between the villagers and village authorities, among the villages, in order to cooperate unitedly among the villagers and villages to accomplish all village activities. Being considered to be the leaders who are carrying out village welfare, village criers get exemption from cash contribution in every village affairs that need to contribute money.

Previously, four "pyis" of paddy (1pyis=46/16pound) per house / year were to be collected to give to village crier. For those who were not farmers, money equals to the value of four 'pyis' of paddy had to be contributed. Nowadays one basket of paddy is to be collected. Some villages have to give 150-170 baskets of paddy to the village crier: there is the slight difference among villages. In Kyaw region, 2000 kyat per house is to be collected, the village crier earning 6 to 7 lakhs per year. Village crier is appointed at least for one year; if agreed up to 4-5 years.

Village crier especially has to take the responsibility in cases of offering ceremonies and funerals, whereas village lads and ladies association of weddings. In olden days, invitation was performed orally, but nowadays through invitation cards or presenting cigars, soaps, shirts or longyis. For offering ceremonies and funerals, oral invitation was previously used, at present both loudspeakers and invitation cards (Plate-5) are used.

Here in the sample invitation programme of the village crier using loudspeaker. There are two types of invitation for donation ceremonies: "byo cry" (ဗိုလ်တံ) (for all the villagers) and "selected cry". The extol (verse) of the village crier in "byo cry" donation ceremonies is as follows:

"Attention, please! All the respectable laymen and laywomen! The Layman U ... and Laywomen Daw ... would like to invite all of you to the donation ceremony as follows:

To come to dinner on the night of the 2nd waxing, Tabaung, 1320 Myanmar Era. To listen to the sermon on the 3rd waxing. All of you are cordially invited to the donation hall, taking the

hands of your sons, touching your husbands, closing the house with thorns (as there is no door at Yaw traditional houses, the branches of plum are put at the entrance of the house)(သားကိုလက်တွဲ၊လင်ကိုလက်တို့အိမ်ကိုဆူးဆို့) , addressing the chickens tee ... tee ... (ကြက်ကိုတီတီ) , the cat mee ... mee ... (ကြောင်ကိုမီမီ) , the dog ohh... ohh ... (ခွေးကိုအိုအို) , without leaving even the guests, including all the persons on the cart, in the stable (လှည်းနေလေ့အောင်းမြင်းစောင်းမကျန်).”

The village crier, it is observed, is inviting not only children, men and women and guests but also domestic pets to come and enjoy meals. Right now, every motorcycles needed to use by the village crier are contributed free of charge in some village crier are contributed free of charge in some village so that communication be faster than even.

Moreover, the village crier and fire fighters are responsible to search for suspected visitors, to inspect fire utilization and fire alarms. The forest fire usually starts from burning dry leaves so as to prevent mosquito bites when some of the villagers go to the East Yoma and the Chin Hills to gather forest products. To prevent these forest fires from intruding into the villages such preventive measures as cleaning the village environment, storing water for fire fighting, summoning one person per house are carried out under the guidance of firefighting association.

Parahita association

There is the Parahita association in the Kyaw village headed by the Youths founded in 2009 (21.9.2009). Membership entrance fee is 500 kyat with a total of 70 members. The roadside shops in the village are occasionally asked for donation. The association provides the following persons with service, cash, etc., accordingly:

1. Sanghas who are not sufficient for alms and other things;
2. Old ages who are poor and without supporters;
3. The poor children (donating materials needed in education); and
4. Funeral services

Monthly provision of 1000 kyat and 4 pyis of rice (1pyis=75/16pound) to 26 old ages in the village have been made. As per the 36 year old member of the Parahita association, a poor woman in the village had some problems in giving birth to the baby. Her husband was away from home at that time. We (member of Parahita) hired a car and sent her to the hospital.

We provided her with all the expenses. We also hired houses for students who came to Kyaw village to attend school, providing them with necessary books, pencils, candles, etc. It is observed that there are some people who are willing to help the persons that are in great difficulty through humanitarian ground instead of drinking alcohol and wasting money in useless ways. Such positive attitudes and philanthropic concerns may lead to a peaceful and pleasant environmental scenario at last.

5 Discussion

In the "literature", the links and changes between the impacts of TV, Video and advertisements and the attitudinal changes of some children and the influence of alien cultures in place of traditional customs have been mentioned. In this study, the analysis is given to such cultural changes as the loss of time to make friends and love to each other for lads and ladies, the disappearance of wearing traditional costumes practice, the emergence of undesirable culture of other countries during the water festival, and drinking beer by boys and girls alike.

In olden days, making love visits to village ladies by lads in groups in the evenings in the off-time of farm work was quite common. While the village ladies were busy with their weaving and entertaining the lads at the same time, the visitor lads were busy assisting in the work of the village ladies. In those days, it was quite common to build fires to get light as well as warmth. Nowadays, hydroelectricity, bio-gas electricity and generators are used to get light. As a result, video halls emerged; the practice of going love visits has already disappeared. Lads and ladies meet with each other at video halls. The charge per video show is 50 kyat per head; for two video shows only 100 kyat. So they spend the whole night there if the video shows are their likes, causing the total disappearance of making love visits.

Due to good and convenient communication, timely awareness before disasters such as floods and storms makes it possible to harvest and store farm products in time, to protect men and cattle from disasters beforehand, and thus it has become a great help for economic development.

As per the 53 year old Kyaw local villager, local products previously had to sell at Monywa, Mandalay and Pakokku. Now due to good communication and transportation, goods required are only to be made orders by phone, cash for goods to be transfer red via buses plying regularly, and the goods required will be at home being carried along by that bus light away. Goods on credit are also available by phone, too, on credit system: pay for the old and get the new one. You don't need to go there by yourself: right at home you feel easy without

missing any of your house work anymore. The commission for transfer of money is 1500 kyat per lakh. If you want to buy gold, they will buy it for you, too. Quite convenient!

As per the 58 year old Myauk Kin Yan village, they had to go up to Gangaw and Kalay to make communication via telegram and mail. In 1996, there was no phone linkage here. My son applied for tutor post giving the address of Myauk Kin Yan village. The appointment was sent here: it was a bit late. At that time he was attending MRES (Master of Research) in Yangon. There was no phone to make contact with him. We had to go up to Kalay and send the message. He also had got sores and ulcers while in Yangon, but there was no phone and we couldn't go to Yangon as well; such were miserable caused by inconvenient communication!

Moreover, as per the 60 year old Myauk Kin Yan villager, before the availability of phone links, we did not have a chance to be aware of the flood invasion in Gangaw timely and so we had to suffer loss of cattle and the tractors were under water. In 2010, we got the phone message of flood twelve houses in advance when there was flood as we have already got phones in hand. Thus, we were able to escape from the disastrous flood without having much damage. Because of phones, we have a chance to know the current prices, causing convenience in marketing and trading. In the fields of social, health, and education, too, phones are of great help to us.

Thus, not only such media as post office, telegram, phone, and TV, Video, but also the role of village criers who have been serving for the convenience of social and welfare of village activities has been of great importance from then on. The village criers have served for the convenience of the village through sending letters and messages since the olden days. The topography of the region was naturally hard to communicate, so the village criers thus took the important role, hiking from place to place. After that, loudspeakers were used to communicate in place of hiking. Nowadays, motorcycles are being used as necessary, and icon phones are of great help for social and economic development.

To serve for the development of village welfare activities in Kyaw region, not only village crier and Youths association, the Parahita youth association is also organized to carry out village development activities. With the increase in educated youths, dealing with other localities has multiplied and the youths have obtained wide range of knowledge. The Parahita association has been providing the old age villagers, poor children for their education and health development, etc, accordingly. Forming those philanthropic Parahita associations and contributing help in the village welfare activities, to some extent, is a very important endeavor for the development of the whole region.

Thus, as the villagers in the study area have gained stable peace and development, even the people from other localities have migrated to the region. 50% of the total population of Taung Kin Yan and Myauk Kin Yan are migrants who have migrated to these villages where agriculture has been well developed. In Kyaw region, 70% of the total populations are migrants in 2010. All the villagers, in fact, will be in a stable and convenient existence only when the village environment where they have living is in good order. With such prospective and positive characteristic as loving kindness, passion, delight, etc., the villagers are trying to overcome poverty and obstacles, giving helpful assistance to each other.

6 Conclusion

As the communication has developed in the region, the postal service and the telegraph have also developed. In addition, natural disasters such as floods and their consequences like losing human lives and animals and the destruction of belongings are effectively prevented. Due to the installation and use of village bio-gas plants and hydro-power plants as well as private generators, villagers don't need to use oil lamps for height, to build fire to get warmth as well as light in winter. On the other hand, along with the use of electricity, the impact of TV, Videos causes the influence of alien culture, affecting traditional culture at the same time.

During the traditional Thingyan festival, even the girls drink beer and take part shamelessly in the festival. The need therefore is to lay down guidelines and instructions to take part in the Thingyan water festival through traditional dances and throwing water in a polite manner. Some youths are educated persons, and by dealing with other localities, they have accumulated some good knowledge and lessons, and again established Parahita associations, and thus have been trying for the development of their region of their own volition. It is a good characteristic and the best of good omen for the development of the region.

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Plate (1)- The traditional costume for male



Plate (2)- The traditional costume for female



Plate (3)- The hydro-electricity power plant using Zahaw creek water power



Plate (4)- The bio gas engine power plants in Taung Kin Yan village



Plate (5)-The invitation cards for offering ceremonies