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## Land, Livelihood and Change of Family Structure

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### Abstract

The aim of this study is to explore the relationship between lifestyle changes based on land use and family structure in order to understand the real situation of rural development in Kyaw Detha, Gangaw Township, Myanmar. I utilized particular emphasis on the use of basic ethnographic method. After 1988, in the time of the Revolutionary Council and State Peace and Development Council (SPDC), such land use projects as road construction, construction of railway lines, timber extraction and establishment of oil company as well as Ka-pa-sa factory have increased and the confiscation of farmland of the local farmers have stepped up. In fact, the authorities and the private business persons were the ones who attained a great deal of benefits. Paddy land and farmland decreased and local people owned only small acres of land primarily, and so not all of their children could receive land as inheritance. Moreover, the Migrant workers in the vicinity came into Kyaw to seek jobs for their living. Thus, Kyaw became a populated place because local people opened stores, food center and other private businesses along the main road. They sold goods to migrant workers (local people called them Zingam a) rather than local people. So, local people changed their careers in order to survive. Now, Kyaw is no longer a village - it became a town in March 2015. This paper primarily deals with the land use, livelihood and change of family structure in the local community of Kyaw Detha. Therefore, I also looked at the historical development in that area and how it has shaped the land use pattern and livelihood strategies as well as the nature of rural-urban relations due to the state development project.

**Keywords:** Land use, Family structure, ethnographic method, livelihood, rural-urban relation

### Background to Study

My interest in the village tract called Kyaw in Magwe Region first developed when I read a book called *Journey to Pontaung Ponnya* (Pontaung Ponnya Kha-Yee -thee), written by Myanmar writer Mawgyin Soe Myint. He wrote about the difficult economic and social conditions in this isolated region. 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 River on rafts. Log rafts are floated down the river in this area, and dug-out boats are used for transportation. I noticed that Kyaw Detha was very sleeping town in the last (50) years.

The Pale-Gangaw road initiated in 1962 and completed in 1968. At that time, there were only three home shops in Kyaw region. It was, therefore, to buy salt and jaggery (palm sugar) to consume for the whole year round from Myaing (မြိုင်မြိုင်) and Pale (ပေါ့မြိုင်). The villagers use carts and coolies to buy goods that are to be resold at home shops (Myint Tin, 1992).

In 1962, People from Kyaw previously used to go and work in other places such as Namatu, Bawdwin and Mokoke after completing their farm work (Kyar Htun U, 1971). During the growing season, they came home again and engaged in farm activities. The villagers are invariably small-holders. I decided to do field research for my Ph.D. on this area, focusing on the relationship between natural environment and social organization.<sup>4</sup> Many changes took place in that area, including government projects to do with infrastructure development.<sup>2</sup>

In that area, some major developments took place, which turned this small village tract into a town. Those are

- (i) to work overexploitation of timber extraction in 1990-2000
- (ii) to work oil extraction near Kyaw area, 1995-2000 and to construct railway line in 1995 and the railway tunnel project on 16<sup>th</sup> October 1996 and complete it on 25<sup>th</sup> July 2006
- (iii) to involve in construction project of the Heavy Defense Industry (Ka-pa-sa Factory) in the area which is 20 miles away from the Kyaw Detha during 2008-2010.

Such activities as clearing village land, forming plots of village land, paving roads movement and other necessary activities were being carried out. Thus, Kyaw Detha becomes a main economic area. In fact they sold goods to migrated workers (local people called them Zingama) rather than local people, and thus the region become prosperous, causing great gap between rich and poor families. Some people become contractors engaging in building and construction, some owned ten wheeled trucks, but some become casual laborers. At the moment, Kyaw becomes populated place because villagers open stores, food center and other private business along the main road. Kyaw Detha is not village. It becomes to be a town on March 2015.

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<sup>4</sup>At that time, it helped that one of my cousins worked in Gangaw as a Police Lieutenant Colonel (Police Force, Gangaw District) which gave me convenient access to the region.

<sup>2</sup>The person who encouraged me to carry out research work there and introduced me to that region in 2007 was the District Chairman of the region, one of my cousins. He introduced me to the village chairpersons, the owner of construction companies. The person who gave me much help in this research, too. I conducted the research work in that Yaw Detha where I selected five study areas including Kyaw Detha for my Ph.D dissertation that was finished in 2012. Among these five study villages, Kyaw was rabidly developed after 1988. Therefore, I selected Kyaw as my study site to continue to study rural transformation in that area for Understanding Myanmar Development Program.

Therefore, I will illustrate that paddy land and farmland land decreased and how to change current livelihood according their changing of live-works and transforming of families. Therefore, the change in livelihood patterns also caused the changes in family structure, economic and management changes during 1995-2017. In addition, general infrastructural development turned Kyaw Detha into a much more populated town. In this paper, I will focus on how land use issue, socio-economic and ecological forces have created challenges for Yaw people, threatening their livelihood and impacting their social and cultural practices. I also look at the effects of these developments on the Kyaw communities. Moreover, I would like to study on historical development in that area and how it has shaped the land use pattern as well as the nature of rural-urban relation due to the state development project.

## Objectives

1. To explore the relationship between lifestyle changes based on land use and family structure in order to understand the real situation of rural families;
2. To elicit How local people develop their livelihood strategies in response to incoming development project;
3. To explore social, political and lifestyle changes in rural development.

## Conceptual Framework

Land use, livelihood and family structure are interrelated in complex ways. In my conceptual framework, I consider development program as an external factor (physical and biological environment) that has changed the land use of people in the local community, and I will thus analysis how this factor has influenced the local community in terms of demographic records and local economic activities, as well as the change to livelihood strategies that have occurred the change of their family structure.

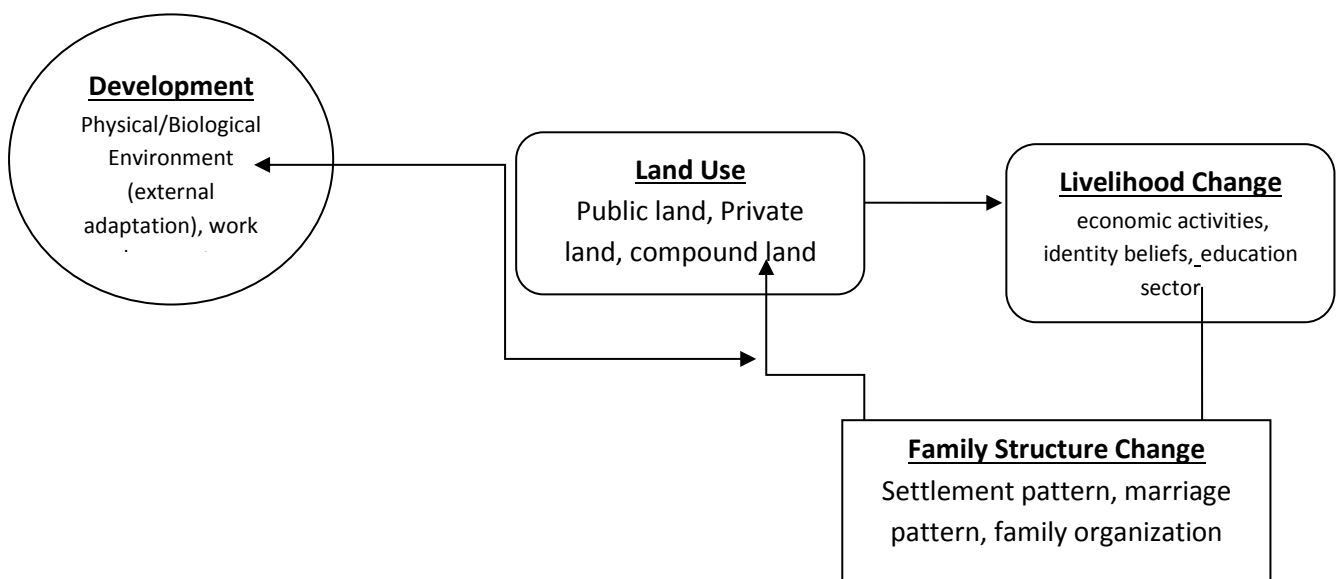


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

## Methodology

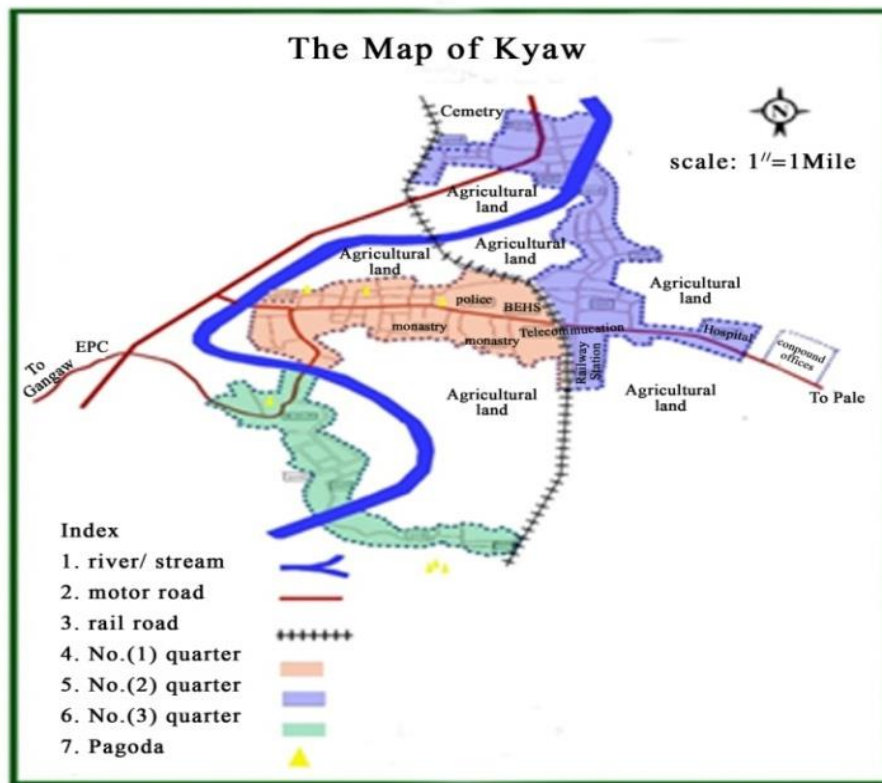
I conducted purposive sampling to select study site, Kyaw Detha, Gangaw Township in Magwe Region, Myanmar. In doing so, I utilized particular emphasis on the use of basic ethnographic method as well. I employed Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) and Participant Observation as a main research to collect the information. KIIs were organized with the former village administrators, the township administrator, the manager of Naing Min Company, shifting cultivators and other local farmers as well as some traders. I also collected documentary data in order to get statistic information or official records to understand about rural transformation in that area

## Kyaw Detha and its People

Kyaw Detha lies between Pontaung and Ponnya Taung mountain ranges that are eight miles far away from each other. It is (260) Kilometers far away from Mandalay and 61.6 miles far away from Gangaw. It is 68.64 squared mile wide and located above the seal level of (703) feet. In olden days, the Kyaw residents concentrated on farming, searching for forest produce, etc. Moreover, most farmers keep certain animals at home for home consumption. There are a total of (4565) people. Moreover, the migrant workers in the vicinity came into Kyaw to seek jobs for their living.

The majority of population living in the research site is the Bamar (Yaw) ethnic group; however, a few Chin ethnic groups also inhabit in this area. There are altogether (6) villages in Kyaw region. In 2015 Kyaw was officially declared a town. After the declaration of town level, the villages are divided into Ward (1), Ward (2), and Ward (3). There is an administrator in every ward. From Kyaw is also possible to go to Kalay by train conveniently: Indian consumer goods from the India border are traded here via Monywa as are products from Chin Hill.





### Historical Context of Land Use

Between 1995 and 2011 a large number of construction activities took place. In 2010-11, the Ka-pa-sa road (Figure-2) had to be paved through Shwebin (ward II), resulting in the transfer of (41) households (Figure-3, 4) and a total of 3100 feet for the street. Total of (96) acres of land area were grabbed in Kyaw area as well. It was to transfer (9) houses first and (32) houses secondly, and so it was to confiscate the paddy land, at the price of (4) lakhs per plot (locally call Le-tad-twin). For the first (9) houses, a new quarter (40x60) feet, and for the second (32) houses (50x60) feet were systematically located with village main road. The first (9) houses were transferred by U Sanny Company, with no transfer changes and transitional charges.



Figure 2: Ka-pa-sa road



*Figure 3: The transfer of houses*



*Figure 4: The transfer of houses*

### **Farming**

Farming in Kyaw is practiced according to three main regimes, shifting cultivation (Taung Ya), paddy land and farmland. In 1958, the principal income-earning livelihood for their survival was merely paddy cultivation (Figure-4, 5). However, the farmers generally owned two or three acres of land utmost. So they didn't get enough rice for the subsistence of the family.

Men, therefore, had to go to Nammatu, Bawdwin, Mokoke, etc. to earn a living there after the harvest of their paddy crop. They especially engaged in such livelihoods as mason, digging stones, etc. When cultivating season came, they returned home to start paddy cultivation.

In 2013, high-yield paddy variety seeds were used by almost all farmers in the region. Cash-crops, including such paddy varieties as Ma-naw-thu-kha, Sin-thu-kha and Pa-le-thwal, were distributed by agriculture department and the local farmers grew these paddy varieties. These varieties can stand rough weather. The yield is better than the previous ones. In 2014, Taw Bo Sann, the villager of Pe-ma-sar village, selected big paddy grains from Manawthukha paddy variety, and the very paddy variety because popular among the farmers. It was a good creation for development. Taw-bo-sann paddy variety became popular thus. The sticky-rice produced from that Kyaw area is the best one in the vicinity.

Butter bean and groundnut are mostly grown on the quality farmland areas. Corn is grown as a multiple crop. The other crops sown in farmland area are green pea, potato, onion, chill and Indian mustard.





*Figure 5: Paddy cultivation*



*Figure-6: Paddy cultivation*

### **Natural Geography**

Availability of enough water in Kyaw Detha is inaccessible because there is only Kyaw creek in Kyaw Detha. Paddy cultivation only depends on rain. The soil types are “Kyit-myay” and “sand”, and so the soil type is not as good as plain areas. Paddy is grown on paddy land. There are fields fed by dam water, and fields fed by rainwater.

The local farmers grow paddy through the use of small dams in rainy season. These dams were being created by the local farmers themselves. The paddy fields – land no. (268,269,270) get greatest amount of water. Field nos. were given by the land record department. Almost all the local farmers know not only their own field nos., but also those of other farmers. These dam water fields exist north and north-east of Kyaw Detha. The paddy fields that exist south and east of Kyaw Detha only depend on rainwater. The yield of paddy is not good on the fields fed by rainwater. Such fields are locally call “Tan-lan-mya”: the land is not fertile and water is not available as well. Moreover,

As per the 70 year old farmer said that he also runs a home grocery, he had grown sunflower according to the instruction of the agriculture department, but parrots destroyed the sunflowers and the rain also damaged sunflowers. Pigeon pea did not yield very well as it was “kyitmyay” (muddy soil).

The state authorities may set out rules to grow project crops. But crops may not yield well due to weather condition and soil setup.

### **Land Ownership Law before and after 2012 Constitution**

Few of the farmers in Myanmar know rules and regulations regarding land ownership, authenticity, etc., that are prescribed by the government. It is regarded that land ownership is all right by handing over the land to new generations.



A 70 year olds local people said that the grant for homestead ownership is only in the hand of former head in the whole Kyaw area. No one knows the law on land grant for homestead ownership. They buy and sell homestead and farmland as well as mortgage farmland with their friends near them as witnesses. Loyalty and honesty solve all the problems, more reliable than the government prescribed rules and regulations.

The local people have to work on their lands, holding land revenue receipts previously. They had to pay taxes at one kyat per acre, and it is still going on the same. The tax receipts (Figure-6) are delivered to village administrators from Township land record department. It is, in fact, that the village chairmen are to collect taxes one house after another. But the village chairmen are too busy to collect taxes like this and so they pay taxes themselves on behalf of the land owners.

Starting from 2012, Township land record department planned to initiate land ownership form (7), (Figure-7) going up the villages. To get form No. (7), it is needed to fill up Form No. (1).

As per the 52 year old local village chairman, it was three times that Township land record team came to the village to fill up from No. (1), but some local farmers didn't understand the process, failing to apply for it as yet. Even his sisters said that without form No. (7), they were able to cultivate our land.

Two-third of the local people don't have Form No. (7) as yet; only one-third of them have got it. Some are still working through the use of land revenue receipts for their farmland.

A 65 year old local farmer said that he has 3.5 acres of land; he has got permission form (7) for 1.5 acres of paddy land but he has to cultivate his land of (2) acres through land revenue receipt without any permission form (7). Moreover, another (0.7) acres of land for shifting cultivation which he bought (23) years ago for, is the Taung Ya which lies in forest reserve area.

Therefore, local people have to depend on land certificate. The real owners of land are state administrators. The local farmers are in fear of losing their land.

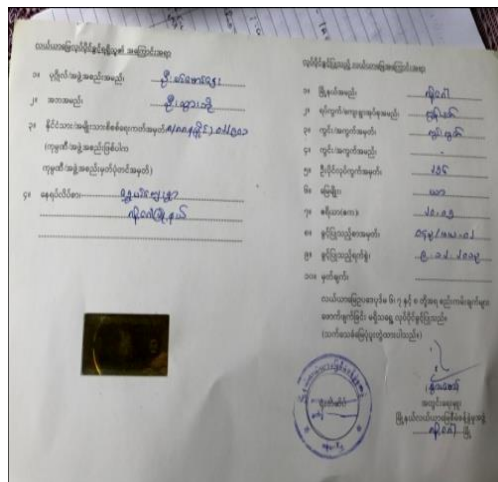
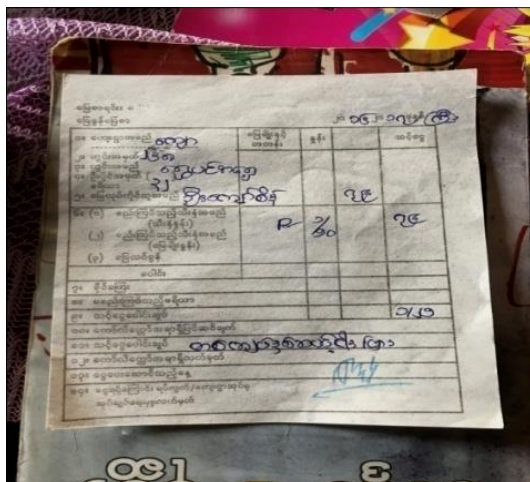


Figure-7:  
The tax  
receipts  
(left);

Figure-8:  
Form no.7  
(right)

### **Type of Land Ownership and Use in Kyaw**

In 1958, paddy land alone didn't work for food security, so taung-ya (shifting cultivation) was formed for the security of food for the family members. To clear forests, trees are first marked with knife as a taken of ownership. Generally, trees near the streams are marked, and cutting down trees and clearing forests, burning underbrush and leveling the ground are to be done for four to five years. Taung-ya is to be shifted in this case. The person who initiated the first cultivating taung-ya in this way is called the pioneer (locally called "dha-ma-oo-cha").

Although local development projects and activities were being implemented, some local farmers do not abandon shifting cultivation (Taung Ya). Though there is no practice of clearing new shifting cultivation, farmers continue to do their shifting land for the subsistence of the family. There are altogether about 42 farmers of shifting cultivation in Kyaw Detha. Nowadays, there are no new shifting cultivation in Kyaw Detha; instead, the shifting cultivation become permanent resident areas, locally known as living "Poke-sin-pin-sin"

Another one is leasing the farmland and paddy land, locally called "a-phet-pay-chin". Grocery owners, other business owners lease their land to landless people or to people who own a small piece of land. Moreover, the old age parents lease their lands to their one of the children who want to continue to work in their farmland. In this case, landowner has to distribute land agriculture loan, and the tenant, labor, harvest charges, cattle and weeding charges. The produce gained is shared equally. Some have to send the produces up to the landlord. There is no conflict of land use. That is only the resource for their survival. The present generation totally abandon farming and enter into other livelihoods, for example, involving in driving BedFords and Dozars, going to another regions especially Chin State and working there.

### **Effects on Land and Livelihoods**

The local people once engaged in agriculture alone have been involving in such livelihoods as trade, selling things setting up home shops as these livelihoods are easy to make money.

A 70 years old local people he set up a convenient store in 1990 selling out his paddy land, two acres. The goods came from Pakokku. Sometimes the transport changes were free if the goods were not much. It was only needed to serve the drivers and workers with meals. When his sons and daughters grew up, they didn't wish to touch fish-paste and dried fish; instead, clothes-shop was set up again. The children only engaged in selling. The youngest son grew crops on the two acres of paddy land through the use of a small tractor.

Thus the area along the Kyaw road becomes quite prosperous, and the prices of land are also expensive. The children build separate houses on farmland, paddy field, etc., to set up home shops as such livelihoods as selling things and engaging in other activities earn more money than farming. Parents especially buy the plots along the road for their children to establish home shops. This is one of the reasons why the area of farmland becomes scarce. Along with the disappearance of shifting cultivation, most of the local people don't engage in cultivation at all. As a result, the young men of

Kyaw area generally try to engage in such livelihoods as driving trusts Bedfords, Dozers, etc., entering into development activities and setting up home shops. They are in fact trying to get income for the food security of their families. In 2000, up to (40) home shops have been counted. In 2010, it increased up to (70) home shops. In 2016, the increase in home-shops reached up to 100 (Figure-8). Therefore, every house near Kyaw main road become home shops. The shops in Kyaw Detha are not the ones that are trading based on local people. They especially depend on the people who live near oil fields, and Ka.Pa.Sa factory.

As per the 35 year old girl who runs a teashop, it is observed, that she and her friend run a teashop investing equal shares. The local people eat fried rice for breakfast. They hardly spend money for breakfast. The shop is not, in fact, for local people but for those new comers who come from other regions. Cars make a stop over here as car tickets are sold here.

On Saturdays and Sundays, people from Ka.Pa.Sa. go out for shopping, promoting sales for shop owners accordingly. Every week-end, every shop is crowded with buyers. Due to booming trading business, the rate of charges for house letting has also increased.

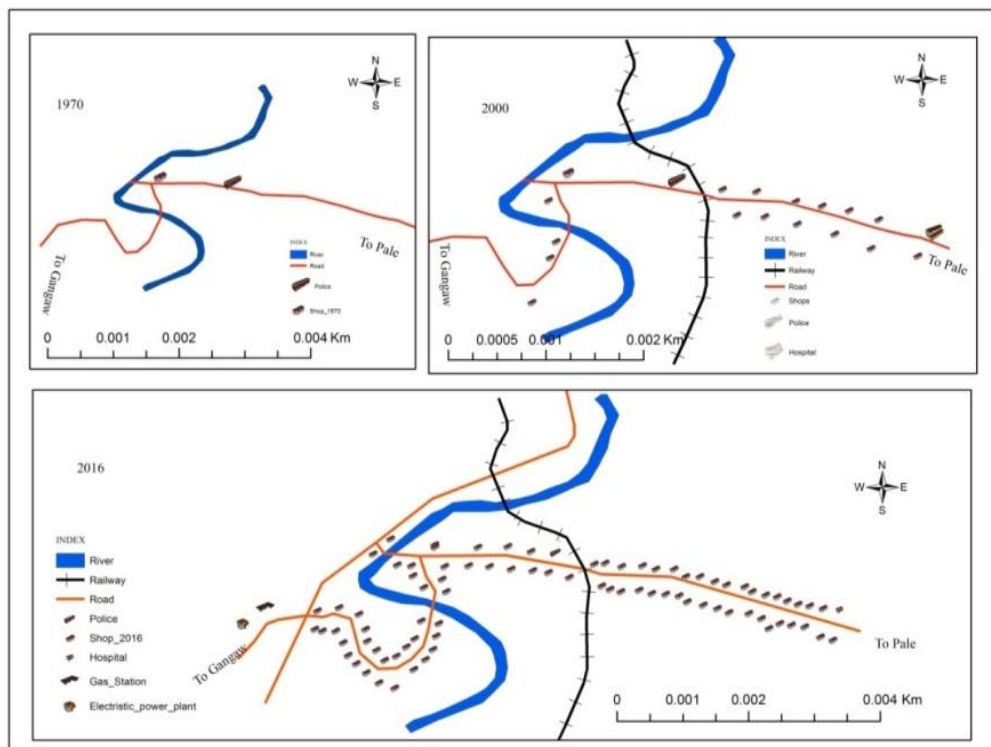


FIGURE - 2 RURAL EXPANSION OF KYAW IN GANGAW TOWNSHIP  
Source: Field survey in 2016

*Figure 9: Rural expansion of Kyaw Town*

## **Effects on Families**

Before 1996, women had to live with their husband's family after their marriage. This is known as "Yaung-nauk-sadone-par". Therefore, Yaw ethnic group practiced patrilocal residence system. After they got marriage, they live with their paternal parents' families at least for three years and save money. They built houses near their parents' houses in the same compound which are owned by husband's parents when they can be able to build new separate house. If the family had five male children, five would be five houses; seven male children, seven houses, etc. mother and eldest daughter had to take the responsibility for the daily task of the family and health-care of all family members. They got up early every morning and prepared meals for breakfast and lunch of all family members. She often went to their farmlands to help her husband. At that time, father alone had to seek for money and was the most influential person in the family.

Now a day, the marriage couple can choose to live paternal or maternal side according to their economic exploitation. So, they practice small extended family system which is based on bilocal residence. Moreover, the whole family member are to take the responsibility for income earning for the family. The majority of women in Yaw Detha go out of the house and work for their living. The casual laborers become to involve in such jobs as cutting bamboo (tinwar), firewood collection, washing clothes, mason, etc. Crushing stones becomes popular among housewives, because they can do the work even at home. The big stones are sent up to door, and those that have been crushed are carried from the house. Right now both the casual laborers and the middle class, nearly every household, participate in this business. Some people from middle class set up home shops and communicate with outside world. Some become government staff, company staff, etc. And thus women become influential persons in the family. Therefore, Insufficiency of land areas to make a livelihood forced them to change their livelihood styles and family structure.

## **Conclusion**

According to the location of Kyaw, the two mountain ranges, Pontaung and ponnyartaung naturally separated village from other region. Thus, it has limited farmlands because of its geographic location. This means that local farmers of Kyaw do not have much land that they possess. Moreover, they face with the problem of losing their own farmlands due to the government projects like railway and highway road construction, and constructing Ka-pa-sa factory project. In this case, poor farmers did not receive a large sum of money over the loss of their farmlands, as the owners of the company who co-operated with the government for their benefits did not pay a current amount of money for the farmer's lands. As a result, those famers could not effort to buy other farmlands for their living. Therefore, most of them become landless. On the other hand, those who possess farmlands are the ones who are the business owners of a certain company branch related to government projects. In this case, policy maker didn't care of villager's feelings and neglected how much land that they belong to. Therefore, local farmers faced with the big challenges for their survival in their living.

Moreover, having no land certificate is one of the main reasons which leads farmers get into those trouble. Most of those farmers didn't have any legal land ownership certificate. According to their tradition, they inherited those farmlands when their late ancestors passed them down from

generation to generation. Besides, the policy makers not only make laws, they also should educate the local farmers to get awareness of land certificate law.

In addition, the authorities should have collected the correct list of the land that local farmers belong to and so they will be able to the true situation of their living. As a result, this would help them in promoting the development of Kyaw area smoothly. Furthermore, in upgrading the development of rural areas, the authorities need to count on the real socio-economic condition of local people's, educational situation and health issue so that they will be able to promote the development project successfully. Moreover, the authorities should not forget the villagers' traditional rules and regulations as well as the indigenous knowledge in that area.

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