

Title	Economy and Society: The Changes of Marriage Patterns Due to Economic Changes in <i>Waphyutaung</i> Village Tract, <i>Yamethin</i> Township, <i>Mandalay</i> Region
All Authors	Win Win Soe
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## **Economy and Society: The Changes of Marriage Patterns Due to Economic Changes in *Waphyutaung* Village Tract, *Yamethin* Township, *Mandalay* Region**

**Win Win Soe\***

### **Abstract**

This paper aims to point out the changes of marriage patterns due to economic changes in Waphyutaung village tract, Yamethin Township. Through these changes, people have adapted to the new environment. People are usually conscious of their adaptive strategies, but often do not discern the adaptive processes. The processes of culture change are mentioned as diffusion, acculturation, innovation, and invention by cultural anthropologists. This study mainly considered the process of acculturation. Data were collected by using qualitative research methods. This research was conducted from 2009 to 2016. It is four villages which are found different nationals. Therefore, they possess different cultural backgrounds. This study is a comparison between the circumstances of marriage patterns prior to gold mining (before 2002) and that following gold mining (after 2002). Before 2002, the local people's main economy was based on agriculture. After 2002, migrants from other regions came into this region to take up gold mining, and then the local people gradually changed their profession from agriculture to gold-related economic activities. These changes led to the growth and improvement of the economy. Then the local people's social contacts with the migrants became broader and more frequent. As a result, there have been some changes in the marriage patterns of the village.

**Keywords:** marriage patterns, economic changes, adaptive strategies, adaptive processes, acculturation

### **Introduction**

A society is a group of people who are dependent on one another for survival and well-being and who share a particular way of life or culture (Nanda, 1990). In their way of life, they struggle to survive in their environment, and pass their cultural patterns, economic technologies to new generations. Moreover, all cultures do change in response to the changing requirements of the environment: physical and social environment. This

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\* Lecturer, Department of Anthropology, University of Mandalay

In these changes people adapt to the new environment. The concept of cultural adaptation is divided into two parts: adaptive strategies and adaptive processes (Bennett, 1969 & Kottak, 2013). People are usually conscious of their adaptive strategies but often do not discern adaptive processes. The processes of culture changes are occurred as diffusion, acculturation, innovation, invention by cultural anthropologists. In this study, the process of acculturation is considered as mainly. Acculturation means the process that takes place when contact between two societies is so prolonged that one or both cultures change substantially.

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**Figure 1.** The study site of Waphyutaung village tract, Yamethin Township

### **Aim and objectives**

The aim of this research is to point out the changes of marriage patterns due to economic changes in Waphyutaung village tract, Yamethin Township. The objectives are:

- To describe the economic changes in the study area after 2002,
- To find out the changes of marriage patterns depending on economic activities and
- To elicit the local's responses on economic changes.

### **Research questions**

- How and why have the local's economy changed?
- What is the difference of economy between before and after gold mining?
- What are the economic changes affected the marriage patterns?

### **Methodology**

The qualitative research method was applied in collecting data. Research tools are in-depth interview, key informant interview, life history interviewing, participant observation, etc. A total of 35 interviewees participated in data collecting. They are mostly bachelors' leader, married men and women, agriculture, gold mining and related jobs of traders and workers, etc. They are between thirteen and seventy seven years old. It was conducted from 2009 to 2016.

### **The changes of economic activities**

Most of the lands in this tract were found to be virgin soils or vacant lands. The local people could clear the land and cultivate them as much as they could. Before 2002 the main economic activity was agriculture. After 2002 the migrants from other regions came into this region to take up gold mining. Therefore the livelihood of the locals is found to be of two types: agriculture and gold-related economic activities.

**Agriculture:** The agricultural activity of this tract dates back to the times of the villagers' ancestors. It includes shifting cultivation, farming, gardening and cultivation.

Shifting cultivation was inevitable in the locality because it has few plains but a lot of slopes, hills and mountains. Year-by-year shifting cultivation in acres is given in table- 1. In 2001-2013 there was little change in lessening of shifting cultivation area. In 2016 the lessening is much, because Township Forestry Department has prohibited shifting cultivation and there was much development cultivation area. The crops of their choice are paddy, ginger, turmeric, etc.

**Table 1: The comparison of land areas by year in Waphyutaung village tract**

No	Kind of land	Total of acre					
		2001	2004	2007	2010	2013	2016
1	Shifting cultivation	413	401	348	352	264	70
2	Farming	82	95	122	135	147	300
3	Gardening	30	33	38	45	50	-
4	Cultivation	-	-	-	-	-	550

Source: Waphyutaung village tract (June, 2016)

Farming since 30 years ago had begun due to the acquirement of techniques by a local trainee and knowledge of deforestation. Standing farmland has been created out of many difficulties, taking into consideration possible long-term benefits. Farming in possession by year is given in table- 1. By the table a comparison of farming shows little growth in 2001-2013, but has grown more than twofold in 2013-2016.

Gardening was first started about 30 years ago after a local had attended a training course. The activity was not commercial and carried out on self-manageable basis. Year by year gardening acres is shown in table- 1. The table shows that gardening acreage increased a little in 2001-2013 but it was no more by 2016, because Township Land Records Department recognizes only two kinds of agriculture land: farming and cultivation. Tea leaf is major among the crops grown, including banana, orange, pomelo, vegetables, flowers, etc.

Cultivation was first taken up in 2013. Gardening and most of shifting cultivation land has been turned into such cultivation land as a substitute. On this a 50-year-old village administrator said:

*"Standing next year, Township Forestry Department will not allow our villages to engage in shifting cultivation. So, choose and create what plot of cultivable land you like now. Then, Township Officers will make us holders of our own plots through Form-7. Try hard now, lest you meet a scarcity of cultivable land later."*

Year by year cultivation land is given in table- 1. The table shows that there did not exist cultivation before 2013; but after 2013 that land is more than other agricultural areas. The cultivation began to include the rubber and eaglewood, in addition to crops previously grown in shifting cultivation and gardening.

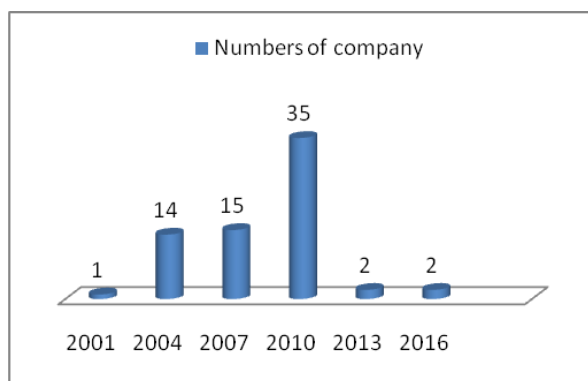
**Gold-related economic activities:** Before 1985, some migrant people had settled down in this area and also practiced shifting cultivation. They got water from the springs that came out from the rock fractures, by lining bamboo gutters to the needed places. In doing so, they noticed the particles that shine like gold. On the assumption of these shining particles to the possibility of being gold, they began gold panning. They got small amounts of gold. The news of gold strike spread like a wildfire that in 1985, about 100 peoples arrived in Waphyutaung area to do gold panning. The principal methods used by gold explorers were extraction gold from veins of gold bearing rocks or extraction of gold by water flooding or flow. As gold extraction needed some expertise and the obtainability of small amount of gold, the local people ventured only sometimes in this business.

In May 1997, the Cooperation of the Department of Geological Survey and Mineral Exploration (Myanmar) and Ivanhoe Myanmar Holding Limited (Canada) firstly founded and settled to search for gold in Waphyutaung and its environment. The villagers initiated carry service operation when they were asked for help to carry things by the company personnel. Extraction of gold was a small scale business as it was exploration period from 1997 to 2001.

After 2002 in the production period, the gold mining has produced the large amounts of gold. The local companies stepped in the gold mining enterprise as foreign company was not permitted to do business. Since that

time, the number of gold miners increased as well as those of economic businesses related to gold mining. Migrants came to be engaged in other gold-related businesses like gold prospecting, shop keepers, carry service passengers, and company employment. Considerable money could be made in a short while so that many locals made a livelihood change to become engaged in gold-related businesses.

After 2005, gold mining areas have come to be much restricted so only a minority of locals remains in gold mining. Most of local peoples put emphasis on shopkeepers, carry service operation, etc. Number of companies by year is shown in Figure- 2. That figure shows only one gold mining company in 2002, because it was the exploration period. The increase in the number of companies from after 2002 to 2010 was the result of licensing small companies, not big companies. There were about 6000 acres as gold mining area in 2010. In September 2011 the Union Government prescribed that a new company must invest a capitalization of US\$ 2 million and Kyat 1500 lakhs. Some companies in operation got merged while some others stopped operation because of the officials' rules of many capitalizations. After 2012, only two big companies remained. By May 2015 there are a total 14884 acres of land in gold production. In this way, virgin lands of this tract changed into the valuable gold mining land because of high technology which makes for the development of economy of local people.



**Figure 2.** The comparison of number of companies by year

Source: Waphyutaung village tract administrator's office (June, 2016)

### The changes of marriage patterns

The marriage pattern of Waphyutaung village tract is found two stages: engagement and wedding.

#### Engagement

In regard of engagement, there is a little difference between the other three villages and Chaungphyu village.

**The other three villages:** Since ancient time to date the boy's parents choose an auspicious day and go in the evening together with village elders and relative elders to the girl's home to carry out engagement. This process is locally called *lephetphaukthe* or *nahphaukthe* (လက်ဖက်ဖောက်သည် သို့မဟုတ် နားဖောက်သည်). The tasks to be performed are: payment of the village dues, selection on the number of invitees, discussion of expenditures to be made, and choosing the wedding day.

The village dues were set at 2000 mmk for a couple of native girl and outsider boy. For a marriage by elopement the dues to be paid was 5000 mmk. Paying of village dues means the couple had been recognized by parents and relatives as well as the whole village. But after 2002, the village dues are: 5000 mmk (for a couple of native villagers); 30000 mmk (for a couple of native maiden and outsider bachelor); and 50000 mmk for a marriage by elopement.

In selection on the number of invitees, those to be invited were the abbot and the villagers at boy's and girl's village. The invitation for a monastery was usually accompanied by gifts of a packet of pickled tea. Villagers were not invited individually, but each village was invited through its elders with a present of a packet of pickled tea. But after 2002, the invitation goes out to all four villages; to all people in bride's or bridegroom's village but to friends only in the remaining villages.

The discussion of expenditures to be made is usually required of the bridegroom's side to incur the expenses of one-day wedding ceremony. But in two-day wedding ceremony the cost of the first day is borne by bride's side and that of the second day by bridegroom's side.

Wedding day was chosen in advance by parents in consultation with relatives, native elders and monks. The date chosen was auspicious day (ရက်ရာဇာ/*yetyaza*), not inauspicious day (ပြဿဒါ/*pyassada*). Again the



month of the wedding should not fall in the Buddhist Lent, and Pyatho, Tabaung and Tagu (January-February, March-April, and April-May) when the royalty usually go for fun. So the remaining months only were available for holding a wedding. But after 2002, selection of wedding date goes as before but the months shunned include, in addition to former months, Nayon (June-July), Tasaungmon (November-December), etc. of busy agricultural work.

**Chaungphyar village:** The pre-2002 practice in regard of engagement at this village, such as how the boy's parents chose an auspicious day, the group's visit to the girl's home to carry out engagement, village elders and relative elders already invited at the girl's home, and how the boy's side were given in entertainment and enjoyed by the congregation were like the functions carried out at the other three villages. The local term for a visit to carry out an engagement was *thwa-htauk-the* (သွားထောက်သည်), whereon the above-mentioned foods except for rice beer was brought along. Then the bride's side asked for property they value, which was mediated by village elders to resolution if the bridegroom's side finds it difficult to comply with. The property asked for includes jewelry, cattle, etc. The practice of seeking a bride with gifts has stood since former times to date but practices are very few now. Selection of invitees after coordination differs from that of other three villages but all other activities were found to be similar. All villagers of Chaungphyar were invited while only friends in other villages were invited. The invitation extended to the village tract was accompanied by gifts of cheroots. After 2002 the standing rule of understanding is “*No sound box, no thwahtauk*” (အထောက်လာလျှင် ဘောက်စံမပါလျှင် မလာရ) according to a 100-household Head, which is considered most essential in investigative initiation of an engagement. Through that item parents of the bride are declaring how highly regarded is their daughter by the bridegroom's side. The remaining functions are similar to those of before 2002.

## Wedding

Wedding is locally called *mingalarsaung* (မင်္ဂလာဆောင်ခြင်း). A wedding is divided into two parts: specific chores and stages of wedding.

**Specific chores:** Before a wedding takes place, a meeting led by village elders, bachelors' and maiden's leader (before 2002) or by village

administrator and 100-household Head (after 2002) is called to urge village people to dutifully carry out chores assigned to them. Organized for a wedding are: 1) group for preparation and serving of plain tea, 2) group for construction and dismantling of the pavilion, 3) group for making a list of wedding gifts, 4) group for serving the guests, 5) maidens group, 6) group for cooking, 7) group for gathering of firewood, and 8) group for fetching water.



**Figure 3.** Cloth pavilion

The group for preparation and serving of plain tea, consisting of bachelors, is responsible for boiling water to make plain tea and preparation of refreshments. The group for construction and dismantling of the pavilion is also responsible for decorating it. All along the time it comprises bachelors and middle-aged men (aged 14-30) who are responsible for gathering bamboo, splitting bamboo into thin strips, etc. Before 2002, decoration of the pavilion was done by locals themselves. After 2002, cloth pavilions (ပိတောက်/ *paitmanhtut*) are being used like other regions (see Figure- 3). The group for making a list of wedding gifts, created only since 2006, comprises village elders, village chairman or administrator and 100-household Head. It is also responsible for assigning chores and estimation of money expendable and expenditures. The group for serving the guests comprises middle-aged married women (aged 25-40). Their responsibilities are: reception of guests at the pavilion, waiting on them, giving instruction to the group for preparation and serving plain tea and taking the guests to the dining area in a systematic way. The maidens group is responsible for

making cakes and eatables and picking flowers and making bouquets of them for presentation to guests. The group for cooking comprises middle-aged men (aged 25-45). The group for gathering firewood, before 2002 and no more in existence since that year because Township Forestry Department prohibits gathering of firewood from nearby the village. Anyway firewood is no more available for gathering in a short time. Thus the quantity of needed firewood is estimated, then a bunch or two (a basket or two) of it is sent by each house to the bride's home. The group for fetching water can have any person. Such a group existed in every village before 2005. After that year the group for fetching water continues to exist each in Upper Waphyutaung village and Kyaunggone village because of difficulties to pump up water. But there are no more fetching water groups in Lower Waphyutaung village and Chaungphyar village as they now have piped water into their houses. Therefore division of labour by age or sex is observed in the above-mentioned social activities.

**Stages of a wedding:** A wedding ceremony can last a day or two, usually dependent on the holder's economic circumstances. Before 2002, the one-day wedding ceremony was most common in the other three villages. During the years from 2002 to 2006 the two-day wedding ceremony became more common, and after 2006 there have been two-day wedding ceremony only. For Chaungphyar village there was existed a few one-day wedding ceremonies before 2002, and after that year only two-day wedding ceremony has been held. There is a little difference in the mode of holding a wedding between Chaungphyar village and the other three villages.

**The other three villages:** The one-day wedding ceremony held at other three villages means a wedding is held immediately after the engagement. It is locally called night feasting wedding (ညကျွေးဖြင့် မင်္ဂလာဆောင်ခြင်း) which does not need a pavilion for wedding venue. Chores like gathering of firewood, fetching water and cooking are done in the morning by group members altogether. In the evening the village elders take bridegroom and his relatives to bride's home to have an engagement, bringing along an offertory and food. The handler of the offertory, if an unmarried man, must be free of physical defects and have living parents. If he is married, he must have been a loyal spouse all along. Arriving at bride's home and being welcome in the parlour, the village elder takes charge of effecting an engagement, whereafter he seeks permission of marriage of the couple on the spot. Once permitted, bride and bridegroom pay respects to parents on

both sides and village elders, presenting the bride's parents with the offertory. After the feasting of the congregation is over the one-day wedding comes to an end.

The two-day wedding ceremony follows a few days after the engagement. But its functions, before and after 2002, are found to be a little different. The first day (အဝင်ရက်/*awin-yet*) saw in the morning gathering of firewood, fetching water, picking of flowers, and construction of pavilion. In the evening decoration of the pavilion and cooking of rice and curries were done. On the second day (ပွဲကြီးရက်/*pwe-kyi*) morning alms-food was offered to monks at the bride's home (see Figure- 4). They delivered auspicious sermons while the new husband and wife offered alms-food and offertory. Afterwards, like the one-day wedding activities such as paying obeisance to parents relatives on both sides, their well-wishing, giving wedding presents and feasting of all villagers followed. After the congregation had been feasted in the pavilion, it was dismantled to mark the end of the two-day wedding ceremony.



**Figure 4.** Couple's offering of the first alms-food to monks

After the production of gold mining (after 2002), proceedings of a marriage ceremony are similar to those of before 2002 but the accessories become more up-to-date and some manners have changed, namely: beautiful cloth pavilions are bought and used; fans are presented to guests in addition to bouquets of flower; singing sessions with *song box* karaoke instead of the microphone which was formerly used; traditional pudding is offered instead of fried sweet glutinous-rice pancake which was formerly

cherished; every household now sends a guest with a wedding present while in the past only a few gave wedding presents but the whole household came for a complete meal at the wedding ceremony; the dining place, formerly set at the pavilion, may now be set at neighboring houses also (see Figure- 5); and bride and bridegroom, unlike past times, may have special dresses for the occasion in addition to more beauty care of themselves.



**Figure 5.** Entertaining with a meal at the village wedding

**Chaungphyar village:** The proceedings of one-day or two-day wedding ceremony of this village are found to be similar in other three villages except in bringing along an offertory and rice beer. On this a 68-year-old Bamar male of Chaungphyar village said:

*"Our village does not cherish or allow intoxicating drinks including the khaungye, nor are they officially allowed because we will come to harm if we use then in contravention of the Buddha's teachings. But the three villages value and cherish the rice beer. This is the difference between our village and their villages."*

Therefore values are found to differ for different nationalities and different regions.

## Discussion and Conclusion

Waphyutaung village tract is inhabited by different national groups. Most of the lands in this tract were found to be vacant lands and they were mainly practiced shifting cultivation. But farming and gardening were first undertaken in 1983 and cultivation in 2013. Then gold-related businesses appeared, with gold panning which was started in 1985 and the after 1997 entry of small and big gold mining companies. It can be found that the adaptive strategies are shifting cultivation, farming, gardening, cultivation gold panning and gold mining. The adaptive strategies in Waphyutaung village tract are found to be different from those studied by Yehudi Cohen. Yehudi Cohen (Cited in Kottak, 2013) used adaptive strategy to describe a group's system of economic production. His typology includes six adaptive strategies: foraging, horticulture, agriculture, pastoralism, mercantilism, and industrialism.

Leslie White (Cited in Moore, 2004) explained that culture is the totality of the technological, sociological, ideological, and sentimental or attitudinal features of a given society. Among them the technological system is basic and primary. That study is similar to present study. In the past, agricultural technologies were little known to the local people, so shifting cultivation was mainly practiced. After 1983 the livelihood has expanded to farming, gardening and cultivation as the technologies become familiar. Similarly the gold business has also developed from gold panning to gold mining through use of technologies. These changes led to the growth and improvement of the economy. Therefore, the local people's social contacts with the migrants became broader and more frequent.

In marriage patterns, a prospective marriage had to pass through the stages of engagement, and wedding. Before 2002 in the other three villages, engagement and wedding were consecutively held at the same time. The obligations include the services of the village elders and relative elders who will talk to bride's parents to smooth things out in the engagement. In wedding reception the chores were differentiated according to age, labour, and gender, but the majority of them gave labour in unity. After 2002 the engagement and wedding have gone separate. Chores needed for a wedding are assigned to villagers who, however, are less likely to cooperate. But Chaungphyar villagers before 2002, the minority of villagers held engagement ceremony and wedding separately. After 2002, all factors in Chaungphyar village and the other three villages are similar, except for the

fact that *song box* is used at the engagement ceremony. In conclusion, comparison between the factors before 2002 and those after 2002 shows: village-wise customs, rules, and obligations were strictly followed in the past but are adhered to a lesser degree. Therefore, it can be learned that the relationship between economy and marriage patterns is evident and their traditional values systems, behaviour patterns and customs have changed thanks to its adaptation.

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