

A Glance At The Dynamics Of The Traditional Social Networks Of *Simihtun* Village, *Amarapura* Township, *Mandalay* Region

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Abstract

The government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar is trying to upgrade all the sectors of society such as the economy, health, the environment and welfare in this transition period. Most of the researchers concerned with community development take into consideration material resources. It is necessary to take the social network into consideration in order to carry out the development of the society. This research aims to examine the dynamics of the Traditional Social Network of a village in Myanmar and to point out the various possibilities of traditional social networks in the context of community development. The study site is *Simihtun* village, *Amarapura* Township, *Mandalay* Region. It is situated in the suburban area of *Mandalay*. In this study, interviewing methods (KII, FGI) and observation methods were used. Research subjects are the leaders and members of the society. In the research area, there are social groups based on gender, tasks and age such as social groups of bachelors, an unmarried women's group, a pagoda-trusteeship group, an administration group, cooking groups and so on. The relationships among individuals or groups are shown through their social activities, and this study focuses on the traditional social networks based on these activities. What are the changes in traditional social networks? How does the social networks provide for the development of society? What are the hindrances encountered by social networks? The foregoing questions are examined in this research.

Key words: Myanmar village, social network, community development

Introduction

Man is a social animal and all individuals are members of their society. Societies have definite boundaries, structures and customs. Members of the society interact in a network of social relations ordered and patterned according to prevailing customs (Srivastava, 2013). Members of the same group share their knowledge and customs with each other in their social networks. In addition, the structure of the society and the behaviors of its members can also be found within its social networks. Anthropologists have contributed much to the study of social networks (Johnson, 1994). The studies on kinship systems, social organization, social ties and relatedness have been the focus of social network studies. Some emphasize structure some emphasize actions or functions of the society. A focus of the relatedness of men cannot be limited to only blood relationship. Men have been weaving through life while building various relationships based on locality, society, language or religious beliefs (Takatani & Numazaki, 2012). This study attempts to explore the various possibilities of traditional social networks in the context of community development. How does traditional

relatedness or a social network exist? This research can lead to insights about changes in traditional social networks, how a social network provides for the development of society, and the hindrances encountered by social networks in community development.

The Republic of the Union of Myanmar is trying to reform and to develop such sectors of society as the economy, health, education, environment and social welfare during this transition periods. To bring about improvements in the various sectors, most people will consider technology, material resources and industrialization. The Ministry of Livestock, Fisheries and Rural Development is planning and practicing a National Community Driven Development Project from 2012-2013 to 2017-2018. Villages from 15 townships have been chosen for this project. The community driven development (CDD) project's goal is to help poor rural communities access and use basic infrastructure and services better. The project provides block grants to communities to rehabilitate and construct small scale public infrastructure. Examples of these include school repairs, footpaths and feeder roads, water supply systems, and health centers. The project uses a people-centered approach by which communities themselves choose, design, and implement the projects based on what they need most (Document of The World Bank, 2012). Therefore it becomes necessary to take social networks into consideration in efforts to carry out the community driven development in the society.

In developing countries, like Myanmar, the social connections among members of the same community are important to efforts to help labor and other forms of social need. Local people spin their web and construct social networks and try to extend their political, social and economic influence. Although community networks may improve outcomes for their members, a major limitation of these informal institutions is that their benefits are restricted to selected populations (Munshi, 2014). From this view it can be understood that, on the one hand social networks will try to unify and expand but on the other hand it differentiates people. This research aims to point out the dynamics of traditional social networks of a village in the context of a transition period of Myanmar. The study site is *Simihtun* village, *Amarapura* Township, *Mandalay* Region. The name *Simihtun* means Offering Light and every Thadingyut¹ month the entire local people participate in offering a lighting of Buddha. The name of village is derived from such a religious activity.

Interviewing methods were used in this study. Key informants were the leaders of the social groups and participant observation was done during village activities to understand the connections among individuals. In this paper firstly the background of the study site is expressed and then the linkages in traditional social networks are presented. The connection between development and traditional social networks are then examined and various hindrances encountered by traditional social networks are pointed out in the conclusion of the paper.

Background of the Study Site

Simihtun village is included in *Taungthaman* village tract which is composed of four villages; *Taungthaman*, *Simihtun*, *Ohbo* and *Htan-taw*. *Taungthaman* is the name of a lake and *U-Pain* Bridge

¹ The name of Myanmar month (October)

is built over that lake. *U-Bain* Bridge is a famous bridge for tourist attraction in Myanmar and *Simihtun* village is situated near the entrance of that bridge. There are also historical religious monuments such as *Maygawady* Monastery, *Kyauktawgyi* Pagoda and so on. There are *Htan-taw* village on the east and *Taungthaman* Lake on the north and west and *Taungthaman* village at the south of *Simihtun* (see figure 1). At *Htan-taw* village, *Yadanabon* University, the biggest university in Upper Myanmar was founded in 2000. On account of these effects, plots of land and farming, road transportation, business and education have changed greatly (students' survey, 2012, 1013, Department of Anthropology, Department of Myanmar Language). Before 2000, in *Taungthaman* village tract there was no motor way to Mandalay or to other regions. When people went to other regions they had to cross the *U-Pain* Bridge on foot or bicycle. It was very difficult to go to Mandalay even though it is not so far from Mandalay. Now the people can go Mandalay by car or motorbike easily. Before 2000, homesteads were not fenced. Houses were built with palm fronds, matting and palm posts as palm trees were common. Mostly they earned their living by agriculture, fishing and weaving but these lines of business provided only for self-sufficiency. After the university was built, people then changed their types of subsistence to activities carpentry, painting, hostel, ferry operations and trading (mangoes, eggs, and drinks). At present most houses have been built with brick, timber flooring and corrugated iron sheets and homesteads are fenced.

In the education sector, there is a junior high school founded in 1986, June as a primary school. In 2014, it was promoted to be a junior high school. There are 552 students at the school. The total numbers of teaching staff are seven and one headmistress, two junior high school teachers and primary school teachers. In the health sector, a rural health center was established in *Taungthaman* village since 20 years ago. Now, there is a *Bawaahlin Parahita* Clinic (NPO clinic) and the villagers now go there for their health care.

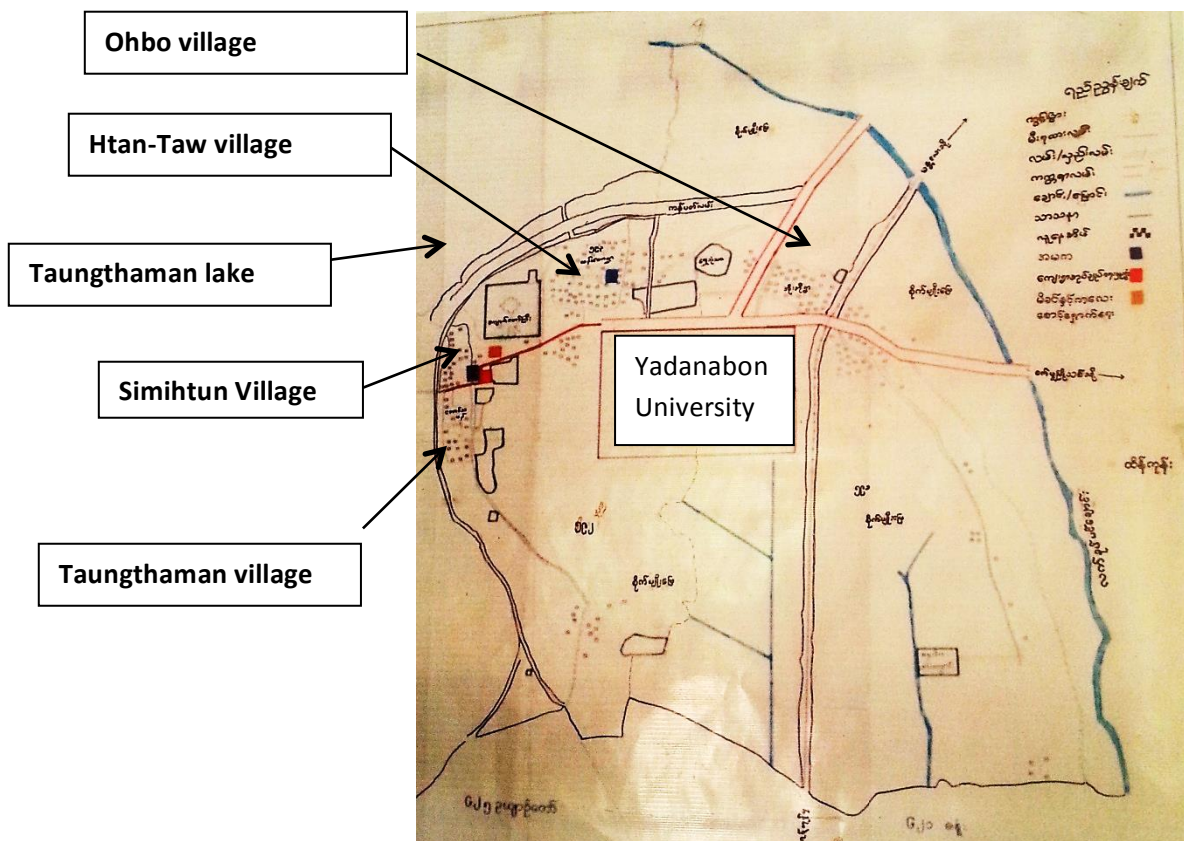


Figure 1 Map of Taungthaman village tract

Social Linkages in Simihtun Village

A social network is a number of interlinked dyads (Bohannan, 1992). The units in a dyad can be individual persons or groups. In this research the units in a dyad are villagers as well as social groupings. The social linkages occur when one person or a social grouping is involved with more than one other person or group. In *Simihtun* village, the social linkages are clearly based on locality. According to the responses, there are mainly two lines of social linkages, *Ywar Line* (village matters) and an administrative *Line*.

Social linkages in *Ywar Line*

The units of dyads are individuals, families and groups in *Ywar Line*. They are based on gender, marital status, age and task. By accessing gender and marital status, we find a Bachelor Group (*Ahmyotha-Aphwe*) and a Maid Group (*Ahmyothame-Aphwe*). A *Nayaka-Aphwe* which was also known as *Yat-mi-yat-pha-Aphwe* (Parents of the village) before 2012, is organized by age and wisdom, and a Pagada Trusteeship (*Gawpaka-Aphwe*) for religious activities. We can also find a rice cooking group (*Htaminchack-Aphwe*), a curry cooking group (*Hinchack-Aphwe*) and a meal-serving group (*Htaminkway-Aphwe*) (see figure 2). There are three patrons and 12 trustees. They usually prepare offerings for the monks and Buddha in religious ceremonies. In donation ceremonies and wedding ceremonies, trustees arrange for offerings to the monks.

The linkages occur when individuals, families or groups become involved in the above groups. Those groups are under the management of a *Lumuye* Committee or the village social committee.



Figure 2 – Cooking meals and serving the guests at a religious ceremony

The Organization of *Lumuye* Committee or Village Social Committee

There is a *Lumuye* Committee organized by twelve members of the youths in *Simihtun* Village. It was organized in 2012. Before 2012, there was no *Lumuye* Committee exactly. Under the guidance of *Yat-mi-yat-pha - Aphwe*, the village activities were done by *Ahmyotha-Aphwe*, *Ahmyothame - Aphwe*, *Gawpaka-Aphwe*, *Htaminchack-Aphwe*, *Hinchack-Aphwe*. The head of the *Lumuye* Committee is selected by the *Nayaka-Aphwe*.

Lumuye Committee leads the religious ceremonies and funerals of the village. The structure of *Lumuye-Aphwe* consists of one chairperson and the members. The criteria for a leader are making the sacrifice for the society, promoting the village-unity, and being able to advise village development.

One of the members of *Lumuye* Committee said:

When I was young I was a member of *Ahmyotha-Aphwe*. I married at 25 years of age and I did my duties for village activities. At that time I considered only the accomplishment of my own duties. At 35 years of age, I became interested in village activities and I wanted to develop my village. There were no clear activities for its developments and no funds for it. At that time, we thought that our village had no chance for development and that it was moving backward. Then the more recent members of the *Lumuye-Aphwe* gathered and had a discussion with former *Yat-mi-yat-pha - Aphwe*. After that we organized a new *Lumuye-Aphwe* in *Simihtun* village in 2012.

From the above statement, it can be understood that some of the villagers wanted to try to develop their village more than in the past. The *Lumuye-Aphwe* has to certify the village budget annually. On the first day of *Thingyan* (Water Festival) in April, the villagers (one person per household) come together at *Damaryon* (a community hall for religious purposes) and the members of *Lumuye-Aphwe*

audit and certify accounts as correct. Before 2012, there was no clear certification of the village-funds and some youth gathered and discussed with the former *Yat-mi-yat-pha – Aphwe*, for the organization of the *Lumuye* Committee and the development of the village. And then the former *Yat-mi-yat-pha – Aphwe* transmitted authority to *Lumuye-Aphwe* to carry out the necessary village-activities. The former *Yat-mi-yat-pha* is known as *Nayaka-Aphwe* at present and the head and members of *Lumuye-Aphwe* are called as *Yat-mi-yat-pha* by the villagers.

Ahmyotha- Aphwe

The *Ahmyotha -Aphwe* has been organized for a long time. There are 35 members in this group. The leader of *Ahmyotha-Aphwe* is called *Lupyo-Gaung*. He is selected by the members of *Ahmyotha-Aphwe* and he must be a bachelor. At present, the village *Lupyo-Gaung* is 46 years old and he has two assistants. He has been *Lupyo-Gaung* since he was 30 years old. The members are 18 years old and above. When the boys are 18 years old they have to enter the *Ahmyotha–Aphwe* to participate in village activities. But if there are three adolescent boys in a family, only one can enter and help with village activities. The members make a ceremonial round of visits with the *Shin-Loung*, novice-to-be prominently ensconced in the procession, and they are responsible for taking care of the novice-to-be (see figure 3). They have to manage the offering ceremonies so there is not a weakness. They also take responsibility for the wedding reception by gathering the presents of guests for the new couple. If they are students they will participate in village activities during their holidays.



Figure 3 - *Ahmyotha –Aphwe* participating in village activities

One of the informants, above 80 years old said that when he was young he was a leader of *Ahmyotha –Aphwe* he made a sacrifice for village unity. Even though it was raining, he went to every house and tried to get village unity through participation. He emphasized that he used much of his time for village without seeking to improve his own economy and that was making a sacrifice for the village.

One of the informants, 84 years old, and a practitioner of indigenous medicine said;

When I was young I had been a leader of *Ahmyotha –Aphwe* for many years. I made a sacrifice for village unity. Even though it was raining, I went to every house and knocked on the doors and then tried to obtain village unity.

He emphasized that he used much of his time for the village without seeking his own economic gain and it was his making a sacrifice for the village. From his statement, it can be understood that "sacrificing immediate individual gain" is a social criterion of this community and it is also a way to build linkages among the members of the society.

The linkages between members and leaders become visible during village activities. When a novitiation ceremony is held, the leader informs the members by shouting with a loud speaker from *Damaryon* for the people to gather and discuss the activities of the *Shin-loung* procession one month in advance. At the meeting, the leader gives instruction in dos and don'ts for the members in this ceremony. He said the members are not to tease the girls, to look after the girls as their own sisters, and to perform in the ceremony in a manner that is good for increasing the prestige of the village.

For the wedding ceremony, the leader and his assistants usually invite members with presents given by the new couple's families. In the wedding ceremony, *Ahmyotha –Aphwe* and *Ahmyothame–Aphwe* are mainly responsible for serving the guests. Therefore the leaders usually have to invite the members with certainty.

Ahmyothame-Aphwe

Ahmyothame –Aphwe has been organized for a long time. The leader of *Ahmyothame-Aphwe* is called *Ahpyo-Gaung*. The *Ahpyo-Gaung* is also selected by the members of this organization. She is usually a married woman. There are 50 members in *Ahmyothame-Aphwe* and two *Ahpyo-Gaungs* in *Simihtun* village. Both are over 60 years old. For both, their duties were transmitted by senior *Ahpyo-Gaungs*. The criteria of *Ahpyo-Gaungs* are being able to manage, having the courage to speak and perform, being able to exert authority and to make sacrifices for the village. The girls who are 18 years old have to enter the *Ahmyothame-Aphwe*. After entering into the *Ahmyothame-Aphwe*, they have to participate in social activities of the village. But if they are students, they can stay away from the social activities. Usually, during holidays, they may participate in village activities.

Figure 4 -The ladies holding some offerings and traditional stuff



According to *Yat-mi-yat-pha* and senior *Ahpyo-Gaungs*, the married women are assigned as *Ahpyo-Gaungs*. They realize that their duties are to look after village welfare and that they cannot refuse to perform such duties. They also lead the unmarried women into performing village activities. In the *Shin-Loung* procession, the members have to bring some offerings and traditional stuff such as *Kuntaung*², *Pantaung*³, Golden robe and *Takun lone*⁴ (see figure 4). Serial numbers are chosen by lot. In the procession of *Shin-Loung*, all of the members have to wear the dress uniformly. The donor usually provides for upper garments and the members buy the matched cloth for *longyi*⁵. One of the *Ahpyo-Gaungs* said:

I usually try to start the procession and always consider the fashion of my members especially in the matching of colors. I also observe the processions of other villages and from this observation I try the best for my team.

The statement above mentioned that the *Ahpyo-Gaungs* usually tries to make her team attractive in the *Shin-Loung* procession. There are regulations in the group. The members have to wear the dress uniformly, have to get to the ceremonial place before the time of the ceremony and not to go back home before 9:00 am. In addition, they have to walk politely. After the ceremony, donors used to pay money to the *Ahmyothame-Aphwe*. When they receive money, the *Ahpyo-Gaung* serves her members with cold drinks and saves the remaining money. By using this money, they buy the utensils such as cooking pots, plates, fans, chairs and tables to use in the donation ceremony.

A Brief Description of Village- Activities

According to the respondents there are seasonal activities in *Simihtun* village. In *Tankhu*⁶(April), during one of the days of *Thingyan*⁷ Festival the youths collect the food and offerings to serve the monks and people who come for keeping the Sabbath at *Damaryon*. During Lent, on the days of Sabbath there are *Thila-pwes*⁸ at *Damaryon*. In this period, *Lumuye* Committee collects money from the households of *Simihtun* village. Among the households, some offer 5000 kyats and others give offerings to the monks. The offerings for one monk are provided by one household. For example, in a Sabbath-keeping ceremony, three monks are invited to offer the *Thila*. There are 13 weeks during Lent and the *Thila-pwe* is held once a week. Therefore there will be thirteen *Thila-pwes* during Lent. Once, three monks will be provided by three households and during the *Thila-pwes* the offerings for monks will be provided by 39 households of *Simihtun* village. According to village administration records, the households in *Simihtun* village are 160 in 2015 and among them 39 households provided offerings for monks during Lent. The remainder of 121 households gives money 3000 kyats

² the betel offertory in a novitiation procession

³ the flower offertory in a novitiation procession

⁴ Cylindrical pennant

⁵ Traditional nether garment for Myanmar woman

⁶ Myanmar First Month

⁷ Myanmar Traditional Water festival

⁸ Repeating the precepts recited by monks

for *Phayar-pwe Kyay*⁹. *Phayar-pwe Kyay* is used for religious activities. Once a year, *Lumuye* Committee collects the fund in this way.

The main ceremony of the village is the *Shin-pyu-pwe*¹⁰. It is usually held in November. The staff of the administration office said:

When one earns money, he will consider doing *Shin-pyu-pwe* for his son or his relatives first. Then he will arrange to build his house and finally he will consider buying a car. *Shin-pyu-pwe* reflects the highest prestige of the people as well as the village.

Most of the people uphold the *Shin-pyu-pwe* tradition magnificently. The main task of the *Lumuye* Committee is to arrange the *Shin-pyu-pwe* neatly and successfully. One month in advance, the donor has to conduct a meeting in his house with all of the villagers and ask for their help. Every villager, *Lumuye* Committee and the leaders of the social groups come and discuss that ceremony. In *Shin-pyu-pwe*, every household head gives labor by serving meals to the guests. The expense of the *Shin-pyu-pwe* is over ten thousand US dollars, the numbers of guests are over one thousand and all of the people from neighboring villages and the relatives of the donor come and enjoy the meals. The donor hires elephants and golden bullock carts for the procession to show his prestige and his friendship (see figure 5, 6).



Figure 5-*Shin-pyu-pwe* procession with elephants and golden bullock cart

⁹ For offering to the Buddha

¹⁰ Novitiation ceremony



Figure 6- *Shin-pyu-pwe* procession with elephants

In *Nataw*¹¹ month the *Sungyi-laun-pwe* is to celebrate. It is a communal offering of provisions and various articles to monks on the second day after full-moon day. Before that day, the chair of the *Lumuye* Committee arranges the numbers of monks and serial numbers of households who will provide the offerings to the monks. Then the serial numbers offering for the monks, by all households are decided by drawing lots. On the ceremonial day, the monks invited by the *Lumuye* Committee draw lots for serial numbers of households that will provide the offerings for the monks. Then every monk gets an offering from the household according to the serial number they got. The members of *Ahmyotha–Aphwe* help the monks in receiving their offerings.

Every 8th waxing day and 8th waning day of the Myanmar month, there is the *Bon- Sun-laun-pwe* in *Simihtun*. Every full moon day and new moon day the members of the *Ahmyotha–Aphwe* collect the rice and other offerings in the village. All of the households offer rice and make other offerings for the monks. Then on the morning of the 8th waxing day and the 8th waning day, the cooking group cooks rice and the meals for offerings to the monks. The members of the *Ahmyothami–Aphwe* get up at 4 o'clock and prepare for alms giving. *Bon- Sun-laun-pwe* is started after organizing the *Lumuye* Committee.

In funerals, the head of the ten households collects the money to give to the dead's family under the supervision of the *Lumuye* Committee. The head of the ten households are different from the administrative line. The houses are demarcated by village roads and the head is assigned as the leader of a small cluster. For funeral occasions the head will collect and gather the money to support the dead's family. Every household provide 1000 *kyats* and *Ahmyotha–Aphwe* and *Ahmyothame–Aphwe* and other groups have to help with the activities of the funeral.

***Ywarthwe* (village blood)**

There is a system called entering into *Ywarthwe* (village blood) in *Simihtun* village. It is a system to organize the individual families into a cluster of families. The origin of *Ywarthwe* is unknown. This

¹¹ Myanmar month (December)

system is operated by *Yat-mi-yapha-Aphwe*. The people from other localities who want to live in *Simihtun* village have to pay 30000 *kyats* for *Ywarthwe*. After giving money for *Ywarthwe* they will be members of *Simihtun* village and when there are social activities in the village they have to participate in those activities. By doing so they will have opportunities to use village common properties such as utensils for whenever they have social activities such as auspicious or inauspicious occasions. *Ywarthwe* is not concerned with census. The census is formal and *Ywarthwe* is informal. If the people who do not want to enter in *Ywarthwe*, there is no punishment for them officially but they do not have opportunities to use common properties and cannot get provision from the village. Even though the peoples who are recognized as *Ywarthwe* move to other places, village members have to support for their social occasions.

Regarding marriage between each other in the village, no one needs to pay *Ywarthwe*. But when a bridegroom from the other locality gets a bride from *Simihtun*, the bride groom should pay 30000 *kyats* for *Ywarthwe*. *Ywarthwe* is given to the *Yat-mi-yat-pha* when the bridegroom comes and engages the bride. Sometimes, the bridegroom doesn't live in the village after getting married, but he still has to pay 30000 *kyats* for *Ywarwinkye* (for the entrance fees). In addition the bridegroom pays 10000 *kyats* to *Lupyo Ahpwe* and 10000 *kyats* to *Ahpyo-Ahpwe*. The members of *Lupyo Ahpwe* and *Ahpyo-Ahpwe* do not use this money. They save them and use it to provide for village needs, especially for cooking utensils.

Enforcement Power

The consensus –building, decision making or labor mobilization mechanism are built into the village social networks. But these will not be effective unless accompanied by sufficient enforcement power. *Simihtun* village keep its own informal rules. Everybody has to carry out village- duties respectfully. Most duties are done through village ceremonies. If someone breaks the rules, he has to pay fine as a penalty. If they are absent in their duties they have to pay 8000 *kyats* per day. If the leader is absent, he has to pay 16000 *kyats*. This is an informal punishment. The penalty is always monetary now. Before 2012, they had to work on road building as a penalty. These activities are controlled by *Lumuye-Aphwe*.

If someone absent in his or her duty, the leader has to inform the head of *Lumuye-Aphwe*. The head of *Lumuye-Aphwe* sends a formal letter to the absent person to come to his house and the head tells of his or her absence and asks for money for village fund. If the people don't give to the village fund even though he was absent in his duty, he will be shunned by the villagers. He will never receive provisions from the village. Fining through monetary means was started by *Lumuye-Aphwe* in 2012.

Social Linkages in Administrative Line

Before 1948, the *Simihtun* village head was chosen according to his ability and braveness by the British officials. After getting independence, the village heads were chosen by the villagers. The village head was called *Thugyi* and under his position there was a *Seaimmhugyi*, leader of the heads of ten households. At present, within the administration line there is a village-head, a clerk and the

heads of ten-households. The village-head is selected by the villagers and the clerk and the ten-household heads are chosen by the village-head.

To be a village-head, a person must have ever been a head of ten households in his or her work experiences. The people can also propose to be a village-head by themselves. The village-head has a right to be selected twice. Under the U Thein Sein Government, every village-head gets a grant. The grant is different from the salary. The salary can increase or be stable but the grant cannot increase and if there is not sufficient budget in the country the grant will be wiped out. The village-head gets 70000 *kyats* as grant per month and 5000 *kyats* for general expenditures per month. The officials help the villagers in obtaining identity cards and setting up a new household without difficulties.

The Responsibilities of the Village-head

In Amarapura Township there are 42 village tracts and nine quarters. Therefore there are 51 administrators and all of them have to meet twice a month, the 1st day and 15th day of a month at the township office. The main responsibility of the village-head is village security. He has to go on patrol every night around the village. When there is a *Saing-Wai*¹² in *Shin-pyu-pwe*, the village head takes as a duty not to quarrel or fight among the villagers during that ceremony. The security for auspicious occasions such as religious ceremony, wedding ceremony and the clearing the traffic lane are the responsibility of the administrative head.

He also needs to share information from the government regarding health, weather and social activities. If there are problems in agriculture because of insects, the farmers inform the village-head. The village head then informs the township officials and the officials inform the Agricultural Department. The specialists from Agriculture come and solve the problems. Most of the farmers from *Simihtun* go to agriculture companies such as *Myelatt - Yarzar*¹³ to solve their agricultural problems. These agriculture companies give full service to the farmers.

Sometimes, the village head asks for advice from village *Nayaka Ahpwe* to settle arguments regarding the possession of land and the fences of houses. There once was such a case for settling down the possession of land. About 15 years ago a man bought a plot. But he neglected that plot for many years and then he wanted to fence his plot. At that time there was a dispute with his neighbors. The village head needed to lay out the appropriate measurement with concrete witnesses. Some members of *Nayaka Ahpwe* told of the history of that land and the village head requested the *Nayaka Ahpwe* to advise in this case. And then, with the help of *Nayaka Ahpwe*, the village head was able to resolve the dispute.

There are no formal meetings for *Lumuye Aphwe*, *Nayaka Ahpwe* and village heads. They usually meet at the donor's house for the management of the *Shin-pyu-pwe*. At present, the village supporting group is organized and the members of this society must be in harmony with the administrative group and *Lumuye Aphwe*.

¹² Myanmar orchestra

¹³ an agriculture company

The Development of the Village and Social Networks

Education is emphasized in interviews with the villagehead of *Simihtun*. Before 1986, there were no schools in *Simihtun* village. The students had to go the primary school of *Htan-Taw* village. When the students passed grade four they had to attend junior high school in other places, especially in *Amarapura* City. There were few students in junior high school, not over ten students during that period. Now the primary school has been upgraded to a junior high school in 2014. The children from *Taungthaman* and *Simihtun* villages attend that junior high school. According to their responses, the former administrations support for health was very rare and the villagers tried to collect cash donations for a village health center. Village *Lupyo-Gaung* said:

Shin-pyu-pwe is a symbol of village. By watching the ceremonial procession, the people judge the unity, management and development of the village. So we have to do a lot of preparation.

The quote above shows that the prestige and power of donor impact on the village. It becomes village prestige. Therefore although donations are made by individuals, all of the villagers participate and give labor to this ceremony. It shows pride in development of the village. The head of the *Lumuye-Aphwe* also explained that the main task in his duties is to manage the procession of *Shin-pyu-pwe* to be free of gaps. The cooking group and the meal serving group have to be tidy in every ceremony.

After 2012, the *Lumuye-Aphwe* can build the *Damaryon*. Before 2012, *Damaryon* was made of timber and now it is built with bricks. The cooking hall for *Sun*¹⁴ was also built by the management of new *Lumuye-Aphwe*. In addition, *Lumuye-Aphwe* can complete of the necessary cooking utensils used in village social activities. Before 2012, there were not enough utensils and whenever they held ceremonies they had to ask for other villages to lend them such utensils. When a donation is held the *Lumuye-Aphwe* asks for the cooking utensils from the donor. By this way, *Lumuye-Aphwe* complete the cooking utensils used in village social activities and the *Lumuye-Aphwe* lends the cooking utensils to raise village funds. The head of the *Lumuye-Aphwe* said that he can save for the village funds about 400,000 kyats (400\$) within two years.

In *Ywar Line*, all of the leaders of social groups consider development in the context of village activities. Most of the village activities are concerned with religion and those religious activities are important factors for village development. In other words, religious activities are functions of the social networks and the social networks work for the unity and development of the village through those activities.

¹⁴ The meals for monks in religious ceremony

Conclusion

This study introduces the traditional social networks of a Myanmar village. In the research area there are social group of bachelors, an unmarried women's group, a pagoda-trusteeship group, a cooking group, a *Nayaka-Aphwe* and *Yat-mi-yat-pha-Aphwe*. These social groups are organized by the people who are the same *Ywarthwe*. *Ywarthwe* is one of the doors for entrances for the outsiders who want to live in *Simihtun* village. In other words *Ywarthwe* is building relatedness between insiders and outsiders by extending the area of social networks.

Before 2012, under the guidance of *Yat-mi-yat-pha - Aphwe*, village activities were done by *Ahmyotha-Aphwe*, *Ahmyothame -Aphwe*, *Gawpaka-Aphwe*, *Htaminchack-Aphwe*, *Hinchack-Aphwe*. Some young villagers wanted to do the development of their village more than in the past and they organized *Lumuye* Committee in 2012. The linkages among the social members and leaders appeared in village activities. Especially in *Shin-pyu-pwe*, a religious ceremony all of the villagers participate and take their duties respectively. *Ahmyotha-Aphwe*, *Ahmyothame-Aphwe*, *Gawpaka-Aphwe*, *Htaminchack-Aphwe*, *Hinchack-Aphwe*, *Nayaka-Aphwe* and *Lumuye* Committee are linked together to transform into the whole village ceremony from the individual ceremony. Therefore, we can say that *Shin-pyu-pwe* is a vehicle to bring the unity and development of the *Simihtun* village as well as resources to add village-funds. All of the leaders of the social groups consider such development through the context of village activities. To complete a full set of cooking utensils, fans, chairs and tables is one of the development activities in their mind. The building of new *Damaryon* is one of their successful activities in village development. The enforcement power means is also one of the factors for the village unity and village funds.

In the study area the development and unity of the village depends on the head's management. When a strong leader leads the community, the community will be also strong. But if the leader is weak the development and unity of the community will decrease. In addition there is little opportunity for leaders to do development. Most of the leaders can meet only during the *Shin-pyu-pwe*. There is no formal meeting among the social groups. In addition, there are no clear linkages to economic development, educational development and health development of the community within these traditional social networks. This may lead to the hindrances encountered by social networks in the context of the development within the research area or there can be expectations placed on development from the dynamics of these traditional social networks.

In conclusion, this study focused on linkages of traditional social networks within a Myanmar village and tried to describe the development of the village in the context of traditional social linkages. There may be not harmony in the idea of development between government and community. Nevertheless, in order to carry out community driven development of the society, it is necessary to take social networks into consideration.

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