

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **THE LIVELIHOOD ADAPTATIONS OF PATTANA VILLAGE COMMUNITY**

This chapter explores the living condition of villagers who had been resettled or moved to live in Pattana village community prior-to and post-resettlement. I first introduce and gives an overview of living condition of resettlers their former village communities before their resettlement, follow by their lives after the relocation. In the second part, I describe livelihood adaptation and changes as well as social relations and religious and cultural practices among villagers relocated to Pattana village.

#### **5.1 Pre-resettlement: General situation and livelihoods**

##### **5.1.1 The affected communities: Phonkoun, Pakse, and Pakhueylue**

The communities that relocated to Pattana village came from three villages: Phonkoun, Pakhueylue and Pakse. In former times, for 90 years or so, these communities were located alongside the Mekong River and were in the center of town near the markets, such as the shopping center and Daohuang market. This location facilitated trade and provided the population with good jobs. This area was also suitable for agriculture and fishing in the dry season, though as time passed the Mekong River flooded more and more. Particularly between August and October, vegetation would float along the river, creating natural fertilizers that the villagers in the area used to grow vegetables. In addition, local fields were used to raise livestock. The Mekong River ran just to the west of the three villages; therefore, the people in these villages had plenty as they could farm and fish. Three villages - Phonkoun, Pakhueylue and Pakse were located at the same area, bordered with Talouang village in the north, Phonesavan village in the south, Sangnamman, Phonesay, and Bantong villages in the east, and Mekong River in the west (Pakse District Administration 2011) (see Figure 17 and 18 below).



Figure 17 Before urban development



Figure 18 After urban development

The three communities of Phonkoun, Pakhueylue and Pakse were all established in a similar area around the mouth of the Sedone River and along its banks, and then expanded towards the Mekong River to the north and south. These three villages had different histories though, as described below.

### 5.1.2 The story of the communities

#### Phonkoun village

According to my interviews with the participants, the old name for Phonkoun village was Phonkoun pebble village, as there was much sand and many small stones in the area or *hathae* (pebble). Later, after the governance of the area was changed, the name was also changed to Phonkoun.

One villager told me:

*"The founders of Phonkoun village were the lowland Lao (Lao lum) who settled along both banks of the Sedone River, around present day Kae village.*

*The residents were farmers, gardeners and fishermen at that time. They farmed until the harvest had finished in December, and then returned to the*

*village. Some families stayed in houses near the termite mounds alongside their farms - about ten households, and they called the area Phonkoun village, after the Koun tree. The village was called this between 1936 and 1993. The French also built a first bridge across the Sedone River and this led to more people migrating to Phonkoun village during this period."*

(Mr. Phet, 52 years old, March 2013)

Another participant said:

*"In former times a group of villages situated alongside the Sedone River and next to Watlouang temple, and when a bridge was built across the Sedone River, some of the villagers migrated to Phonkoun village because there was vacant land there, only one kilometer from the Mekong River. However, the village was dry and did not have any drinking water, so people had to bring water from the Mekong River to drink each day. As a result, people moved their houses to alongside the Mekong to a new village called Hathae (pebble) (later changed the name to Phonkoun under a new governance regime). When the French had ruled in Laos, they built a town around the mouth of the Sedone River and this then expanded. As a result, the villagers' farms were changed into buildings, including the houses of rich people."*

(Mrs. Phan, 48 years old, March 2013)

Phonkoun village was located alongside the Mekong, and so tended to flood every year, especially around the southern end of the village where it was wet all-year-round (now Daohuang Market). This was the area in which people kept livestock throughout the year, until 1999 when the government built the new, Daohuang Market, the biggest market in Pakse District. Then, in 2000 a bridge was built across the Mekong River, causing more people to move into the Phonkoun area to run businesses and to trade, meaning the area became very crowded, as it still is today.

In 1999, the UDAA introduced a planning in order for the land alongside the river to be turned into a road; to prevent erosion of the river bank and to allow irrigation canals to be built for the community and prevent flooding. As a result of this project, people living alongside the river were asked to move to an area of land

allocated by the government at Pattana village. In 1999, the population of Phonkoun village was 1,639 people, of which 834 were women and 805 were men. There were 297 households in total covering an area of 2,167 square kilometers, and with a population density of 76 people per square kilometer. In this 297 households are 71 affected households but only 62 migrating to live in Pattana (UDAA Report 2000).

In addition, there was a temple in Phonkoun village, which also contained the spirit house for the village, for the villagers had believed for a long time in the village spirit. According to my interview with a villager, Mr. Von, he told me that the *Chao Pha-ngoum*, king of Laos in the former time, brought Buddhism from Cambodia to Laos on the end of 14<sup>th</sup> century. Thus, all of Lao people had believed the religious spirit. Therefore, this makes some people believe it and still practice it nowadays. Every year, when the farming season had finished, a ceremony was held in which the village spirit was fed, before other activities were held. Nowadays, the villagers no longer have farms, but still hold the ceremony for feeding the village spirit, even though they have moved to a new location.

#### **The story of Pakhueylue village**

I interviewed one villager who lived in Pakhueylue village for 63 years. He said that many from the Chinese community lived there, having moved to trade in Pakse District during French rule. However, after Laos became independent in 1975, some Chinese migrated out to live in other places. After this, more Laotians migrated in, mostly farmers from the countryside who came to find jobs. At first they lived in the village only in the dry season from December to May, leaving in the wet season to go back to their farms from June to November. Later, they decided to settle in Pakhueylue village all-year-round, as Pakse District developed.

Pakhueylue village was located on a natural stream which flows into the Mekong River, and at the mouth of this stream was a big Lue tree (name of tree), hence the village was called Pakhueylue.

After the governance regime changed in 1975, Pakse District was developed into the capital of the four southern provinces, leading the inward migration of villagers from the countryside, including to Pakhueylue village. In 1999, Pakhueylue village had a population of 930 people, of which 501 were women and 429 were men. There were 147 households at that time. Pakhueylue village covered an area of 1,213



square kilometers and its population density was 77 people per square kilometer. In 147 households are 48 affected households but only 35 migrating to live in Pattana village in 2000 (Report from the UDAA 2000).

### **The story of Pakse Village**

According to information I gathered from the Pakse District Administration during my fieldwork visit, Pakse was established after the French moved the transportation station and the port from Bankhone - Donedet village; to bring the port close to the mouth of the Sedone River, where it joins the Mekong River. After this, about 25 households had members who worked at the transportation station, and then in 1949/1950, soldiers from Attapue and Salavan provinces also moved into the area to build their homes opposite the transportation station.

At that time, during the war in Laos between the French rulers and Lao resistant groups, Salavan District was also destroyed so people from there, Attapue and Sekong moved to Pakse village, leading to its expansion, then in 1975, some people returned to their old home towns. In 1999, the UDAA surveyed the population there; establishing a population of 1,469 people, of which 794 were women and 675 were men. There were 233 households and the village covered an area of 1,031 square kilometers. The population density at that time was 142 people per square kilometer. About 44 households out of 67 affected by the urban development project migrated to live in Pattana, partly 23 households move to live in other places (Report from the UDAA 2000).

### **5.1.3 The economy and economic activities prior to resettlement**

#### **5.1.3.1 The economy**

Prior to resettlement, most of the people in the three villages fished or carried out subsistence agriculture, relying on the local fields and natural streams, and planting rice mostly for consumption, not for sale.

According to my interviews with the head of the UDAA office, when the French governed Laos, Pakse was developed into the capital of southern Laos, covering Champasak, Salavan, Attapue and Sekong provinces, becoming an important economic, communications, transportation, post and construction area. In addition, it was also the center of education and health for the four southern provinces. This

meant Pakse became a strategic district for the development of the region. After the governance structure changed in 1975, the Lao government continued to improve the city's infrastructure – to make it less crowded and provide facilities to support people's livelihoods. Moreover, the government since then has looked to improve infrastructure and turn Pakse into the economic hub of southern Lao PDR - to persuade investors and tourists from Laos and abroad to move there.

According to one village informant:

*"Before 1999, this area was fields and people ran subsistence farms, but when the country changed governance, the land was reserved by officials with the power to move in and not compensate people, those who had owned the land for a long time. In some places, the government reserved land for the building of facilities such as schools, hospitals, the provincial administration, and other government organizations. They also built state enterprises such as banks, post offices, telecommunications companies and a number of others."*

(Mrs. Keo, 54 years-old, April 2013)

The former Pakse, Phonkoun and Pakhueylue village areas quickly developed into the center of the town quickly, and this led to changes in the villagers' occupations, from having run subsistence farms, to traders and business people. For example, villagers started to sell their vegetables at the local markets or at home - to improve their incomes. In addition, in former times before 1999, people fished for consumption only, dividing the catch up between family members, such as cousins, and neighbors. However, after the changes in 1975, fishing became an important economic activity, with villagers selling their catches at the local markets, or even at markets in other provinces. In addition, the villagers started to buy items (vegetables, fruits, frogs, chickens, ducks and others) in other districts in order to sell at the markets in Pakse. All these activities become the main occupations of people in the area, allowing them to send their sons, daughters and grand-children to primary school and even on to university.

Some people in the villages became government officials, staff at state enterprises, or at hotels, travel agents and at other companies, as well as worked at the

markets; all to generate an income and improve the families' economic situation – to be able to send their children to school and gain a higher education.

The economic situation of the villagers prior to resettlement was quite good for their income each month when compared to after, especially those who do not have the appropriate education to work for the government or at state enterprises. Moreover, those who worked for the government, hotels and businesses etc, could afford to travel to work after relocation, whereas those who did not work for such organizations, and who could work everywhere at the previous location, now cannot as the new location is a long way from the Mekong River and any natural streams. Whereas before villagers could plant vegetables alongside the Mekong River, now they cannot. In addition, those villagers who fished in the previous villages but then moved can no longer catch fish to sell at the local markets, because the new location has no rivers or streams. As a result, people have had to change their occupations.

#### **5.1.3.2 Economic activities prior to migration**

The three villages were urban communities located alongside the Mekong River, and the households lived together as a big community, with relatives close to each other. People at this time helped each other, as they had done when living in the countryside. The economic activities carried out by the villagers were both urban and rural in nature – the two were mixed together, as described below.

##### **1. Trading**

From my interviews, I discovered that most people traded prior to the project, as the communities were located in an urban area which was good for trading or running businesses. Some villagers who had their own houses opened small shops selling noodle soup and consumables used by local people, while some opened shops fixing motorbikes and bicycles. In addition, some people both men and women bought goods from the port at the mouth of the Sedone River and sold them in local villages and districts, after which people sold them in Pakse. This port was next to the three villages (Phonkoun, Pakse, and Pakhueylue) so was convenient in terms of people trading or doing business. The goods bought at the port included animals (pigs, chickens, ducks, cows and buffalos), fruit and vegetables such as bananas, coconuts and sugarcane, plus fish and frogs, and some bought these items to sell at home. Some

people also bought goods from the markets early in the morning, to sell on later in Pakse, such as chilies, bananas, sugarcane, coconuts. Trading like this was very popular among the villagers both men and women because it did not require much investment and the items could be sold quickly. On this, one participant said:

*"Trading before the move was easier than it is nowadays because we did not have to compete; there were fewer traders in Pakse and more consuming. In addition, before when the country was less developed, fewer people came to the markets to sell, as they did not have cars or motorbikes. Now, more people have cars and motorbikes and the roads are better, so more people can bring their goods to sell at the markets in the morning and in the afternoon go back home. This has made it more difficult to trade and incomes have decreased."*

(Mrs. Many, 57 years-old, December 2013)

During my fieldwork I interviewed the old person 92 years old in Pattana community, and he described the villagers' jobs prior to the move. He said that young people were mostly employed in small factories, worked for small companies, in markets and in general earned a monthly salary. He added that some men worked in the port during the mornings and afternoons; with their earnings based on how much work they did. For example, they might find for the traders in Pakse or those from other districts or the countryside, with the amount earned depending on the number of goods they could find. The more goods they found, the more they could earn. However, this job was not stable and many people did it, and as a result, the men often could not earn enough income for their families. Some young people worked on construction sites, building houses, government buildings or state enterprise offices, and this would be the main income stream for the family, but would allow their children to study plus would cover their daily expenses such as food, water, electricity and health care.

Working as employees provided people with sustainable incomes, though they had to spend money on electricity, water, food, health care, social welfare, and education and so on, like everyone else. Although their incomes were not high, they covered the villagers' subsistence needs, particularly as at that time the cost of living



and of health care was not high, plus they helped each other when encountered problems. In addition, education and social welfare were free, so there was no need to spend money as the government covered the costs. In addition, there were no telephones, mobile phones or the internet, so there were no expenses incurred for communications either. Instead they wrote to each other, asking friends and relatives who were traveling around to deliver them. They also did not have cars or motorbikes, as at that time the government had yet to open-up the country to the outside world, particularly with the conflicts taking place around the borders. People were poor; therefore, going to work and to study at school meant going on foot, though some people who had bicycles could ride to work or school. These are the reasons why villagers were able to survive on lower incomes in the past.

## **2. Agricultural cultivation, fishing and livestock**

### **Vegetables and fruit cultivation**

Growing vegetables was one economic activity the villagers carried out in the past, and this would often be the main income source for the family. For example, they planted vegetables along the banks of the Mekong River in the dry season, which runs from November to May each year, then after harvesting sell the vegetables at the markets and sometimes to traders who came to the villages to buy. In addition, people planted vegetables in fields, when there was not enough space alongside the Mekong River.

The vegetables the villagers grew and sold were those consumed in most people's houses, at restaurants and during parties, house festivals and other village festivals such as Lao New Year and weddings. In Laos, people like to have parties during the dry season among relatives, friends, neighbors, sisters and brothers, inviting people from different parts of the country - in other villages, districts and provinces. Due to the number of parties and festivals, people planted vegetables in response to the demand, plus the incomes generated covered costs of living, education expenses for the children, health care costs and other services.

In addition to vegetables, people also grew fruit in all three villages along the Mekong River bank, as this supplemented the income generated by growing vegetables, as most Lao people use fruit and vegetables in their cooking, such as tomatoes, chilies, water melons, lemons and bananas.

During my interviews with the villagers, they confirmed the incomes they used to earn from selling the fruit and vegetables they planted at the local markets, saying they earned around two million Kip (US\$ 266.6) per month, though in some months could earn 2.5 million Kip (US\$ 333.3) per month. Although these incomes were not high, particularly given the number of people in the families, as some had four or five people, it covered their expenses and at that time the cost of living was not so high, so the income they earned from these activities was enough to sustain their livelihoods. One villager said:

*"I had carried out these activities since I was eight years-old with my parents, and until I got married. Every year, after harvesting the rice at the end of December, my family would clear and burn the grass in the gardens and prepare to plant crops alongside the Mekong River and on our farm. We needed to earn an income at this time (November to May) because we had little work to do in the summer. After I had been married for two years, I built a new house in my parents' village, but continued planting fruits and vegetables to earn a living. Although I had to work hard and invest time and capital, I had to do it, as it had always been my occupation and I wanted to follow my parents."*

(Mrs. Noy, 62 years-old, December 2012)

### **Rice cultivation**

From my interviews with the villagers, I found out that some households in the three villages used to cultivate rice; those who still had rice farms in their former homes in the countryside. Some of these families would go back home in the winter, to tend to their rice farms with their relatives, while others left their relatives to cultivate and harvest the rice, then share the harvest/income at the end. They would plant the rice between June and August, and then harvest it from October to November.

Having these rice farms helped to support their livelihoods, plus provided them with food, especially those on low incomes or with no permanent job. Having a rice farm helped to cover their daily expenses. For example, if they were not able to generate enough money from other trade activities, they could use the rice from their farms. In addition, the rice harvest might sometimes generate a profit for the villagers,

as they could sell it at the local markets, in other provinces, or even export it to Vietnam.

Rice cultivation is a tradition among Lao people because Lao PDR is an agriculture-based country, with agricultural activities the main occupation of most of the population. During ten years, most of people in the country were cultivating rice farm. At that time the government had limited communications with the outside world – it had not opened the country to trade or business with other countries. As a result, people did not have the same opportunities to trade or run businesses as they have nowadays.

However, the situation is now different as the country has developed significantly in the last twenty years. The government has opened the country up to international trade; therefore, people have been able to implement new livelihood strategies, meaning that whether in the dry season or rice farm season, they can trade or run businesses. Some people trade in the villages while still do rice farming, while others trade or run businesses in the cities; they do not cultivate rice at all. In addition, some people have decided to migrate; for example, to Thailand, in search of a higher income for their families.

From my talks with some villagers, they mention that nowadays they no longer farm rice, and that is especially true of the people in Pakse District, because many have jobs in the city, such as working at hotels, for companies, travel agencies and others, and the wages are relatively high, improving their economic conditions. In addition, government officials earn a relatively high salary too, and the government has introduced a number of policies to help improve living conditions, both for the people in general and also government staff, such as the provision of social welfare and other services. Furthermore, those who migrate to Thailand do not return to farm rice; they remit money to their families as they can earn a higher income abroad. The results of this are that few people cultivate rice anymore.

#### **Fishing occupations before resettlement**

Prior to their relocation, the villagers had lived alongside the Mekong River, meaning they used to fish and sell their catches at the local markets – a good source of income for their families. Before, villagers worked mostly in the wet season, while

during the dry season they used their free time to fish in the Mekong and in streams, selling their catch to raise an income.

Data collected from interviewing villagers show that fishing also formed part of their subsistence and did not require much investment, though it was sometimes time-consuming looking for fish in the rivers and streams. The best times to fish were in the early morning, in the evening and in the middle of the night, as these are the times when fish go looking for food. Fishing in the wet season was hard because the water level is high at this time, and at times it rains a lot, leading to floods. Finding fish would be difficult at such times and meant their incomes would be low. In the wet season, on the other hand, the price of fish in the markets would be low because of the large number of fish caught in the rice fields, streams and rivers. Local people in particular would find it easy to fish by using their local knowledge. Traders in each district went to buy fish from the local people and then sell them at the markets in Pakse, lowering the prices there.

On the other hand, fishing in the dry season was quite easy for the villagers because the water level in the Mekong River is quite low at this time, so finding fish is easy, especially from the end of April to the beginning of June. The price of fish is also higher at this time because there are fewer fish in the rice fields and streams in the rural areas, plus the water levels in the rivers are low. As a result, fishing generated a good income. However, fishing was quite risky in the raining season because finding fish was not so easy in the Mekong River. When the water level was high, the price of fish at the markets in Pakse district were low, whereas in the dry season, the price of fish was high but this only lasted for two months.

### **Livestock**

In their spare time the villagers raised livestock to earn extra income and to remain active in the off-seasons, with most families raising pigs and chickens. Pigs brought-in earn extra income and could be taken care of by everyone in the family, requiring feeding three times a day - in the morning, afternoon and evening, plus having to be bathed and their pens' cleaned. Almost every household across all three villages kept pigs at that time, including farmers, traders and those who worked for their government. All the villagers believed that keeping pigs was a good way to save money, as after three to eight months care, they could be sold at the local markets or



to traders. Most households were able to raise one or two pigs a year only, as the community was quite crowded and so villagers could not keep too many pigs. However, some households along the banks of the Mekong were able to raise four or five pigs at a time to earn extra income.

### **Working at the sawmill**

In addition, in the past some of the villagers, women and young men in particular, worked at the sawmills, though opportunities were limited, and the sawmills only employed those with more than two or three years' experience. It was not easy to find work in the past, as the country had not developed and most people remained poor. However, some young men were able to work at the port, helping the traders who bought goods from the boats there. Also, the women sold drinks such as water, Pepsi, Seven-up, tea, and also rice at the port, and this was often their main income source. Others sold goods at the markets and other places where people gathered, such as at bus stations, schools and offices.

## **5.2 Post-resettlement**

### **5.2.1 Life in Pattana village: Changes and livelihood adaptations**

#### **5.2.1.1 Economic adaptation**

Pattana community has a different social structure to the old style communities – those from where people migrated. In the old villages people had subsistence lifestyles, whereas now those areas have become urban in nature. In Pattana, the villagers have had to fight against the changes that have occurred and adapt their livelihoods over the long term. Here I will explain the changes and livelihood adaptations that have taken place, to show the economic, social and cultural changes that have taken place, including the changes in social relations, religious and cultural practices.

Many of my respondents described life in Pattana that although it covers a larger area than their previous villages, it is not suitable for carrying out agriculture, as there is no natural stream. So, although the government allocated 800 square meters of land to the villagers, this land is not conducive to earning a living, unlike in the old area where they could plant vegetables and fruit alongside the Mekong River in the summer, and also adapt their houses to sell goods, earn extra income and cover

their expenses, as well as earn capital from trade and other activities. In addition, the new area is not suitable for trade or running businesses, because not many people live there, the houses are scattered and the roads are not all sealed, causing problems for the community in terms of their livelihoods. Basically, all the jobs they used to do in the old location are no longer available. For these reasons the villagers have had to adapt their livelihoods, especially in economic terms.

### **Occupational adaptations**

Relocation to the new government-allocated area affected the occupations carried out by the villagers because they could not do the same jobs as before. As a result, some households in the community have since had to adjust their occupations in order to survive within their new environment. The occupations of people in Pattana village before the migration could be categorized into four main types: 1) trade, 2) employees, 3) agriculture (home gardens, livestock and fishing) and 4) government officials. While some of these activities have continued since the move, occupations have also had to change to adapt to the new environment. According to my interview with 30 households at Pattana village. See details in Table 3 below.

Table 3: People's occupations before and after the resettlement

Main Occupations					Additional Occupations				
Occupations	Number		Percentage		Occupations	Number		Percentage	
	Before	After	Before	After		Before	After	Before	After
Traders	14	9	46.66	30	Agriculture	16	4	53.30	13.33
Government officials	4	2	13.33	6.66	None	11	26	36.66	86.66
Agriculture	6	2	20	6.66	Raise	3	-	10	-
Employees	2	6	6.66	20					
Fishing	4	-	13.33	-					
Unemployed	-	11	-	36.66		-	-	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>		<b>30</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

Table 3 shows the villagers' occupations before and since the relocation. Based on my study group of 30 households, prior to the move; most people were traders (46.66 percent), worked in government officials (13.33 percent), worked in agriculture (20 percent) or were employees (6.66 percent) and fishing (13.33 percent).

Other occupations tended to be linked to agriculture (20 percent) in some way. According to one villager, he had tried different jobs, such as driving, breeding pigs and raising livestock to secure his livelihood. "I found that the large open spaces in Pattana village made it suitable for rearing livestock. I now have 49 cows on which my family economy's is based", said Mr. Daeng, aged 53.

In Pattana, the proportion of people with no occupations at all increased by 36.66 percent after the move. There are older people who in the past, did old gardens along the Mekong River to be their income. On the other hand when they migrate to live in Pattana village, the old occupation disappear because of the new environment is not suitable for doing that activities that they used to do in the former time. Therefore, it is a result to make them stay at home or unemployed after migration. Though most of these people stayed at home and took care of the house, and only sometimes worked, they stay at home while their children go to work outside. Although, most people traded, the proportion was only 30 percent, while the number of people doing extra jobs in agriculture also decreased, to 13.33 percent. The number

of people with no additional work at all increased by 86.66 percent. I will give details for each of these changes below.

### **Traders**

Before and after the migration, trade activities brought the most income to the villagers' families, such as buying goods from the port in the Mekong River and picking the goods delivered by buses from Paksong and Bachiang Chaleunsouk districts, which are important agricultural areas. In addition, some traders went to buy vegetables and fruit from other communities then sold them at the local markets in Pakse early in the morning (between 4:30 a.m. and 7:00 a.m.), and for the rest of the day. Furthermore, the villagers in three communities brought vegetables and fruit they had grown alongside the Mekong River to sell at the markets, as well as fish.



Figure 19 Traders sell vegetables, fruit and other goods at the kilometer 8 market

In addition, some Pattana traders go to pick up goods such as watermelons delivered by buses travelling from different province such as Savannakhet province to sell along the Southern road no.13 that runs through Pattana village.





Figure 20 Selling watermelon along the Southern road no. 13

I also found that five villagers particularly those with no jobs in the markets ran noodle soup stalls in front of their houses after migration to earn extra income. These stalls sell to the general public, staff and employees. These noodle soup stalls were one way for the women to earn an income while taking care of the house while their husbands, daughters and sons work outside; they could trade and also be housewives. Some villagers set up noodle soup stalls in the markets - to sell noodles to people from different districts, provinces and different countries. However, this involved a large capital outlay, as the owners had to pay tax, a fee to the market, plus pay for electricity, water and other services, every day. These expenses add up to about 2.6 million Kip (US\$ 346.6) per month, not including the capital used to trade, such as to buy noodles, meat and vegetables, plus other ingredients.

As one participant told me:

*"I had a noodle stall at Daohuang market for several years. At the beginning, I invested about 5.2 million Kip (US\$693.3) to have this stall but my earnings were not enough, as the number of people in the area was quite small and most were quite poor, meaning they had to be careful with their money. However, I continued running this stall as I had no other way to make a living. After a year-and-a-half my income started to increase and I made a profit due to the greater number of customers, plus the fact*

*that people began to have more money to spend, due to the jobs being created in the area. As a result, I have continued to run this stall."*

(Mrs. Ampaphone Keobuesy, 48 years-old, March 2013)

Another villager told her story:

*"I migrated from Pakse village to live in Pattana village. Before migrating to live in Pattana village I had a noodle soup stall at Daohuang market, but the profits were small. After moving to Pattana village, although it is a larger village, I did not have many customers like Daohuang market, as the houses are scattered and the roads were not good. As a result, I decided to sell noodles from my house. Although, at first I did not make much profit and sometimes lacked money, once Champasak University was opened 600 meters down the road, more people moved to the area, particularly students, so I started to earn much more income from my noodle soup stall at home."*

(Mrs. Ta, 46 years-old, March 2013)



Figure 21 A noodle soup stall at Pattana village

### **Villagers who work as employees**

Many villagers who worked as employees in Pakse prior to the move still do so. Nowadays, it is easier to find work because the country has developed and opened its borders to international trade. As a result, foreign investors have entered Lao PDR, such as the Vietnamese, Chinese and Thais, who have opened rubber plantations in the north and south. As a result, Laotians have been able to find work, including those at my research site. Other companies such as travel agencies, painters and decorators and others have also opened and now provide jobs, as have guest houses and hotels which now receive guests from inside Laos and from overseas who wish to visit the four southern provinces as Pakse is an accommodation center. All this development means it has been relatively easy for people in Pattana village to find work since moving there.



Figure 22 Daohuang market



Figure 23 Champasak shopping center

The employment situation is better now than in former time, as the country is more developed, and most people have more money. Trade and investment have flowed into the big towns, servicing clients who consume more - employing labor and promoting business and trade. It is this which has made it easier for people in Pattana to find jobs, those with higher salaries than in the past, such as at the Champa Grand Hotel in Pakse. Nowadays, the job situation is different to how it was in the past; the



jobs available are easier and the living conditions of people in Pattana village have, as a result, improved.



Figure 24 The Champa Grand Hotel where some Pattana villagers work

#### **Staff jobs in the community**

I interviewed two participants during my research visit to Pattana village, and they said that prior to the migration most people did not have staff jobs, even as government officials, because at that time the salaries were low so would not cover family expenses such as education, social welfare, electricity and water. As a result, most people liked to trade or run small businesses, practice agriculture or rear livestock to earn an income. However, since migrating the situation has reversed, as most people in the community especially want to work as government officials, due to the benefits such jobs bring, such as social welfare, health care and accommodation. In addition, the salaries are much better than they were in the past, which means they are able to support people's living costs.

Most people I interviewed said that people in Pattana village now want to work for the government (as doctors, teachers, policemen, soldiers and general office staff), or as state enterprise staff (at banks, telecommunications and electricity companies) and at private company (hotels, hospitals, colleges, schools, travel



agencies and factories). Most people prefer to work for the government because of the benefit in term of the accommodation, social welfare and health service. For instance, when government officials have an accident or give birth, the government will provide money for health care; the salary is monthly and rises every year, more than at other businesses. As a result, many people are attracted to become government workers.

Nowadays, working as a government official has become popular in Lao PDR, including in Pattana village, because the government has offices throughout the country, attracting cooperation with external businesses, investment, concessions, information and technology. This means beneficial for the country's development and improvements. For example, infrastructure, personnel, academic affairs and others services have had to respond to the demands coming from society, meaning the government has had to recruit personnel with the knowledge and ability who will be provided with salaries, social welfare and other benefits in return.

Working for state enterprises is also popular at the present time because the wages are quite similar to those of government jobs, though the benefits in terms of social welfare, accommodation and so on are not as good. However, staff at state enterprises can earn bonuses over three months of the year, with the amount of the bonus depending on the state enterprise's performance. The more profit an enterprise makes, the more the staff get. Also, staff at state enterprises can earn overtime, providing them with a higher income.

People like to work for private companies for a number of reasons; for example, their owners are not so bothered about the age of workers, as long as they have the experience and ability. Also, workers like to switch jobs often when working for private companies; for example, work for three months at a hotel, then move to a travel agency and then on to a company, and this means the owners cannot restrict staff movements. However, working for a private company attracts a lower salary than the government and state enterprise jobs, plus workers do not have many days off or receive a bonus or overtime. From my observations and interviews in Pattana village, I found out that most people who work for private companies do not have a high level of education; mostly up to secondary or upper-secondary. They then went to train at a company for three or six months before starting work.

I asked one employee Miss Pay about her jobs and people relocating from Phonkoun village. She said:

*"I have worked for three organizations since I finished studying at the accounting training center in Saypattana College. The first place I worked was Poudoy travel agency, then I worked at a Pakse hotel and finally I got a job at the Champa Grand Hotel. The reason I have moved often is because the salary at each company was different, plus in some places the boss was very strict; for example, cutting my wages when I did not appear at work for two or three days. The place I work now is ok but I am not sure; maybe I will move again depending on my economic situation, or if the hotel owner does not adjust wages to the economic conditions or cost of living.*

(Miss Pay, 25 years-old, April 2013)

Working for the government seems to be more stable than other occupations; the people are poor and do not have money to run businesses and invest. As a result, most people want to work for the government, for a state enterprise and a private company – to earn a stable income and be able to support their families.

#### **5.2.1.2 Consumption adaptations and family expenses**

Prior to their resettlement, villagers used nature in the form of the Mekong River and other streams, and the riverbanks, to find food; whether fish in the rivers or vegetables along the river banks, consuming mostly fish, vegetables, shrimp and shellfish. As well as consuming these items, the villagers also sold them at the local markets in Pakse to earn an income and support their livelihoods.

However, since moving to Pattana, the villagers no longer rely on nature, because there are no streams and the Mekong River does not flow through the area. Also, the new area location does not have productive land; it is dry and quite elevated when compared to the other areas of Pakse District. As a result, villagers cannot plant vegetables to sell and consume. In fact, although the new area is larger than the old one, several factors have impacted on the ability of villagers to subsist in the new area.

As a result, villagers have had to adjust their consumption patterns and living conditions in order to adapt. As their income has decreased, so the cost of living has also risen, meaning villagers have to be careful with their daily consumption patterns. Most villagers have to buy their consumption items from the markets in the community and the big markets in the center of town, because they can no longer rely on the Mekong River. For instance, Mrs. Wai (58 years-old), who works for the village authorities, said she had to adapt to a new livelihood system in Pattana. Unlike in her old village (Pakse village) where most of her food came from local vegetables and fish caught in the Mekong River, in Pattana she had to become dependent on whatever was available in the market. She told me, "Before the building of Champasak University, we used to collect different kinds of mushroom as well as bamboo shoots from the forests; this was no longer possible as the forests were cleared during the building of the university" (interview, December 2012).

Pattana villagers' livelihood patterns and expenses are different now from what were before. For example, they can no longer generate an income from the same activities; and they have to spend more money on necessities such as education, electricity, water and food than they did in the past. I interviewed Mr. Keo, who originally came from Pakse village, and he said:

*"Our expenses are different now and our level of income has decreased; the cost of living has increased to cover education, electricity, water, social welfare and health care costs; therefore, I have to be very careful when spending money for the family on a daily basis. For example, we usually buy cheap ingredients to cook at home, and only buy necessities for the home, things that will allow us to save money in the future."*

(Mr. Keo, 56 years-old, March 2013)

Another participant mentioned:

*"I used to consume more expensive food than I do now and I did not cook food myself, which I do now because the cost of living has increased, for education, electricity, water, social welfare and health care. In addition, other things have become more expensive and yet the quality has fallen. Due*

*to this, I have had to adjust my consumption levels and expenditure to solve my subsistence problems."*

(Mrs. Nida, 49 years-old, May 2013)

According to my interview of one of the heads of Pattana village, I have learned that there has been the decline in villagers' income (see Table 4 below) after the resettlement. Several factors led to the villagers having higher incomes before the move, the main one being their location in the center of town, while the business people also earn less now as the village is far from the center of town and has a low population density; also the houses are far apart from each other. Added to this, the roads are not in a very good condition, which makes it difficult for people to run businesses or to trade - clients from other areas do not want to visit the area. However, the incomes of the government officials are now higher than before, because of government policies in relation to staff; their salaries are raised each year in line with the cost of living and economic conditions. Furthermore, the government provides social welfare, health care and other services to its staff, which has improved their living conditions. It is clear that for most people the living conditions prior to the move were better than they are now, as can be seen by the incomes earned before and since the move.

Table 4: Villagers' income

No	Households type	Number	Percentage	Income (Kip)	
				Past	Present
1	Villagers	12	40	600,000 - 700,000	450,000 - 600,000
2	Business operators	11	36.66	700,000 - 800,000	550,000 - 700,000
3	Government officials	7	23.33	400,000 - 600,000	1,800,000 - 2,000,000
Total		30	100		

Source: Field data collection in April 2013



### 5.2.1.3 Livelihood adaptations of the different households

Villagers have faced fewer difficulties than the business people, as they were better able to adapt to changes in livelihoods, plus have had more job opportunities due to increased business activities. Some villagers decided to become employees of Chinese mobile companies, and others of companies selling motorcycles. Some now receive a salary and get commission from selling furniture. Overall, their daily livelihood activities have improved.

However, the changing living conditions of the villagers have resulted in a lack of that makes their income and occupational stability, meaning they have had to adjust their livelihoods to the economic changes and expansion that has taken place of society. In particular, the villagers have developed subsistence plans which mean they have changed to new occupations, to make more income than before and improve their families' economic situation. For instance, in one household I spoke to, the members all have many different occupations. One participant I interviewed said:

*“Before the migration, the family of five worked together planting vegetables and this was our main income source. Since the migration to Pattana village, we have diversified, so as well as me selling fruit at the market, my husband works as a worker at a company and our three children have different jobs as a shop assistant, selling motorbikes, and as a goods promoter.”*

(Mr. Paylat, 52 years-old, April 2013)

However, business people seem to have faced greater difficulties earning a living in the new settlement, since it is located in a remote area where there are few potential clients for their business. In addition, they have to compete with other traders or business operators.

From my interviews and observations, I found that the businessmen in Pattana village community have suffered a lot from the economic changes resulting from the urban development project. There are now many obstacles to them making a livelihood and running businesses. The new area is not suitable for running a business, as there is little to induce clients to leave the urban area and consume or use a service there, plus there are not so many people in the new community as there were in the old one. Therefore, the businessmen in Pattana village have also had to adjust

their plans, by running businesses back on the old community, which is in the center of town, and in other places more appropriate for selling goods. They also advertise their goods and services in public areas such as markets, the port, at transportation hubs and in other locations - to persuade customers to buy from them.

During my fieldwork, I interviewed Mr. Pong, a businessman in Pattana village, and he said:

*“I have been running my business for 32 years. Before the migration, it went well and I earned more each year. Since the migration I have faced several obstacles. My sales have decreased, reducing my profits, meaning sometimes I do not make enough. As a result, I have decided to rent a house in the center of town, where the population is denser and I can sell more goods.”*

(Mr. Pong, 63 years-old, April 2013)

For villagers who work as government officials – in the first few years after the move they faced difficulties because of their meager salaries, meaning had to have their family members help them to sell goods alongside the road or at the market. However, they are now doing better, as the government increased the salaries plus now gives them additional money for fuel (from 150,000 to - two million kip). For example, in 2002, the government officials’ starting salary was 400,000 kip (about US\$50), but over the past three years this has been increased to about two million kip. Also, the relatives of dead government officials get about 45 to - 46 million kip from the government to cover funeral costs. In Laos, all government officials have 8 percent of their monthly salary deducted but this will be given back to the families when the workers die.

According to my interviews and observations, staffs who work for the state are one group which migrated from the old community to live in the new area, where the government provided housing in Pattana village. Therefore, at the beginning, immediately after the migration, they struggled for their livelihoods like the villagers and businessmen because they only had their salaries; any extra income they earned previously they could no longer earn, such as from agriculture or selling items. Since that time, they have had to adapt to new environment by adapting their livelihoods, such as after work (around 4 p.m.) they drive tuk-tuk to the center of town to run people back from the markets to their houses in Pattana, plus taking them to other

areas, especially the men. Some women go to sell fruit at the evening market after their day job, or sell food alongside the road, some until as late as mid-night. During an interview with one participant, she told me:

*“At the beginning, after migrating to live in Pattana, village community, I had difficulty earning a livelihood, as my salary was less and I could not control my family’s expenses. Therefore, I adjusted by trading after work; at 4 p.m. I now go to sell ready-cooked food (such as chicken and duck soup, papaya salad and other items) alongside the road in the evening until mid-night, to earn more income and support my daily expenses.”*

(Mrs. Onkeo, 49 years-old, April 2013)

Another participant said:

*“Doing an additional job is not easy for me, as I run tuk-tuk service in the center of town to earn extra income. After the move, people from outside or from different districts and different provinces did not travel like they do nowadays - to visit Pakse. In addition, there were not many tourist spots like now so it was difficult to persuade people to use my services. Therefore, it was difficult to run a tuk-tuk service for extra income. Even though my income was less, I still had to cover my daily expenses.”*

(Mr. Ta, 42 years-old, March 2013)

These households (villagers, businessmen and the government officials) have adapted in different ways to survive under the recent economic conditions. After the migration, the households that had the most problems were those of the government officials, as their salaries were quite low; not enough to cover their daily expenses, and this meant they had a problem subsisting. However, they continued to work as government staff, and still do today. In addition, the businessmen faced a number of obstacles due to the trading and selling situation in the new area, which was not as good as in the old community which was in the center of town – meaning it was the center of trade and investment in Champasak Province, to where many people traveled from different districts to provide services and consume goods. Added to these groups, the villager households also faced livelihood problems as they had to adjust quickly to the new environment and take on a variety of occupations, with

some working outside to spread the income and be able to support their families, plus achieve economic stability.

#### **5.2.1.4 Social adaptation**

##### **Accommodation**

According to data I collected from the UDAA officials, when they surveyed the communities prior to the move (1999/2000), the population was 1,469 in Pakse village (794 females and 675 males), and out of 233 households, 44 migrated. Pakhueylue village had a population of 930 (501 female and 429 male), and out of 147 households, 35 migrated. Phonkoun village had a population of 1,639 (834 female and 805 male), and 297 households, 62 migrated.

The government provided land to those moving, and the new resettlement was split into four zones: the schools' zone, the market zone, the bus station and the residential zone – for those being resettled. Each household received 800 square meters of land and three zones were created for the three villages: Pakse, Phonkoun and Pakhueylue, those moved from the urban development project area. A representative from each of the three villages helped draw the zones and then household representative drew lots to establish their new address. The government paid compensation for the land lost (with the new land) and also for demolishing the old houses – with money. The compensation was split into two; for the demolition, transportation and new house costs and then for the relocation expenses incurred.

When the road construction project started along the banks of the Mekong River, the villagers had to move out to live in the government provided area. Therefore, finding new accommodation was a key priority for the villagers impacted. Some people decided to live in the area provided by the government, while some received full compensation but then decided to rent houses in the center of town, to run their businesses. Therefore, the villagers changed their accommodation in the following ways:





Figure 25 A new road along the Mekong River

1) Stayed in the city centre but built temporary, small cabins in urban development project area while implementation of urban development project do not use/conduct to that area to trade along the Mekong River in the evening and trade in the markets using land the government has given out previously. Although the authorities let people live in the old accommodation, they were not given official documents granting them control of the land, because of state had already paid them land compensation.

2) Received land compensation and then migrated from the old area but did not migrate to live in the area allocated by the government; they found new accommodation in town. Some people used their compensation to buy land near town and run businesses or trade. Some did not sell the land that the government had given them but did not move there either, as it was too far from town for them. These people moved in with their relatives in the center of town; to run businesses or trade at the markets or in the densely populated communities they moved to Pattana village when it has more people, better roads and more facilities.

3) Moved to the government provided land because they could not find any other places to live after they were moved. In the end only 141 households from a total of 186 affected households moved from the three villages; 44 from Pakse, 35

from Pakhueylue and 62 from Phonkoun. The people who resettled were not happy with the new location for the reasons stated previously, but the villagers had to accept it, as it was part of a wider plan to help improve and develop the country. Some people who moved disliked the new area so much they moved to live in other location; however, after Champasak University was established near the village, people who have own land actually decided to migrate there themselves, with more arriving each year to run businesses or trade. Some people even built dormitories for the students to rent, and started other services. As a result of this, people are now quite interested in living in Pattana village, due to the potential for trade and the services there, plus a new road which the government has built running via the village to the center of town - making it easy for people to travel to work in offices and workplaces in town.

Mrs. kay, who migrated from Pakse village, said:

*"In the old village there was a narrow piece of land and the houses were crowded and not so suitable for living, but the people who lived on the road did well because they could trade or run small businesses all day; selling food, vegetables, fruit and other items. In the wet season the area flooded every year and this caused problems and impact on their livelihoods. In the new area there are more facilities in support of peoples' livelihoods, and it is not crowded and does not flood like the old village."*

*(Mrs. kay, 53 years-old, March 2013)*

### **Education and learning**

When I interviewed with one of the heads of the Pattana village, he mentioned that in former times the villagers sent their children to study at the village kindergarten for three years before going to study at Pakse, Phonkoun or Banthong primary schools near the communities. For their secondary and upper secondary school learning, those students who had studied at Pakse and Banthong primary schools went to Phonsay secondary school, while those who went to Phonkoun primary school went on to Pakse secondary school. For those who finished studying at upper secondary school, their parents sometimes did not encourage them to continue on to college or university, but instead drop out and help with their parents'

businesses or trade. There were several reasons why people did not go on to college and university, firstly because these institutions were located in Vientiane at that time, so parents would not encourage their children to study there due to the high costs, except for those students who got a scholarship from the government or who had wealthier parents. I interviewed Mrs. Noy who migrated from Pakse village. She answered:

*“When I had lived in Pakse, I sent my daughter and son to study at kindergarten in the village for three years, then I sent them to study at Pakse primary school, at Phonsay secondary school and at Pakse upper secondary school. At the end, they drop out and helped me running trade because I had not had enough money to support them to continue to study at college and university degree in Vientiane at that time”*

(Mrs. Noy, 43 years old, April 2013)

The village head mentioned that after moving to Pattana, at first most villagers felt it was too difficult to send their children to study, because there were no schools in the community; they had to go to Bankang school about four kilometres away. Because of this some students dropped out - only a few continued, and most studied instead at the school where they studied before relocating to Pattana, such as Phonsay and Pakse secondary schools, and this incurred travel and food expenses every day.

Many villagers in Pattana village answered similarly that the village has better roads now; the children there are able to gain a higher education because it is easier to travel. In addition, a primary and secondary schools have been established in the village, in response to demands from the community. Added to this, Champasak University is now located in Chatsan village, about 600 meters from Pattana, and the number of colleges in Pakse district is increasing – both state and private colleges and the villagers also mention that this has given students a lot of choice in terms of the subjects they wish to study. When they finish studying at colleges, they are then much more qualified to find jobs at hotels, companies and travel agencies. As a result, nowadays most of Pattana villagers see the benefits of education which can bring better opportunities and good jobs for their children; hence supporting their higher education. Moreover, the villagers I spoke to believe a good education can make

people well known in the society and achieve a better economic outcome, so they are interested in education more and more.

This change in attitude towards education among Pattana villagers has occurred because they now believe education can bring greater opportunities; through learning new things. The children from Pattana are now travelling to learn in the centre of town, as well as in different provinces including Vientiane. They are adopting and bringing new styles back to the village, causing their parents to adjust in the way they dress and talk. These students gain experiences from outside, such as making new friends and media connections, and adopting a new, modern culture.

#### **5.2.1.5 Cultural adaptation**

Before resettlement, villagers lived in the centre of town, and trading and doing agriculture to be their main occupation, meaning they did not have time for many traditions and festivals. But since moving to live in Pattana village, their occupations have changed due to the condition of the new area is different from the old area and it is also the outskirts of town, therefore they now have more time to join in and support these activities. However, some festival had been dropped due to changes in their livelihoods. For example, they have stopped celebrating the rocket festival because it is related to agriculture, but the Pattana villagers no longer farm, and as a result, they no longer hold this festival.

However, having moved to Pattana, the villagers practice many of the same traditions as in the past, though they place less emphasis on them because the physical characteristics of the new community is a large area; the roads are not standard, red land; and the houses are far from each other; no facility to support their travelling to join other traditional activities held in the community or in the temple. Moreover, people in the community come from many different places therefore it make villagers place less emphasis on them.

In order to encourage participation in events, the villagers have divided-up responsibility for the events that take place at the temple. For instance, people take food to present to the monks and novices twice a day (in the morning and at noon). In the new community, the people take it in turns to take food to the temple, with each household taking food once a fortnight. Before the migration, villagers in the three



villages had a different method for dividing-up responsibility. For example, in Pakse and Pakhueylue, villagers paid for the food to be taken to the monks and the novices at the temple nearby - Thalouang, because neither of the two villages had a temple. Moreover, the people in Thalouang coordinated responsibility by collecting money from each household, then buying the food needed to present to the monks and novices. In Phonkoun village; meanwhile, the villagers took responsibility using a rotation system – once a week for each household, because Phonkoun has had a temple for a long time, and the villagers felt that to help the temple was the community's duty. Although people worked as traders in the markets at the time, they also visited the temple.

Since moving to Pattana, the people have to adapt their occupations and practices. For example, some villagers earn subsistence like they did in the city; others work as traders or run a business at the market, while others have jobs working for organizations, in offices and at companies. None of the villagers have land to practice agriculture any more, such as rice fields or vegetable plots. Therefore, the practices of the villagers have changed a lot, including their traditions and rules such as festivals. However, these traditions are still respected by the villagers in the new location, though they had to have them fit conditions in the new community.

## **5.2.2 Social Relations in the community and between communities**

### **5.2.2.1 Social relations**

Social relations among the villagers have changed since they moved. For example, before resettlement, social relations were informal; everybody helped each other as groups within the village, particularly during important events, such as weddings, house warming ceremonies and others that required the use of labor. However, after the relocation, the villagers do not have the opportunity to meet and talk as they did before, meaning they do not relate to and communicate with each other as much. When people were moved to the village, the government provided land for them, and so some relatives were separated from each other; those who moved and those who did not. This means some families have less opportunity to see their relatives since moving. In the previous location, people used to get together for dinner in the evening and discuss current issues, and sometimes they used to travel together

around their village. However, nowadays they do not interact as closely as before due to their new living arrangements. I interviewed Mr. Set, who moved from Phonkoun village to Pattana, and he told me:

*"Before moving to Pattana village, my house was located near to my grandparents' house. When I migrated my grandparents did not, so we became separated. My eldest daughter was left to take care of my grandparents as they are old. Since then they have moved to join us in Pattana, as this makes it easier for us to take care of them."*

(Mr. Set, 54 years-old, April 2013)

The villagers who migrated from three villages have joined for subsistence in the community; they have set up the structure of Pattana village governing. For instance, the village administration consists of the heads of the village, the village committee and the *salavat-naewhome ban* (security guards) group; and the village social organization group involves the funeral association, the women's union, the village development fund group and the healthcare fund group. The aims of these groups are to establish the village's rules and regulations, security and support system in the community.

#### **Village administration**

Pattana village administration consists of the heads of the village; the village committee; and the village social organization (see Figure 26 below).

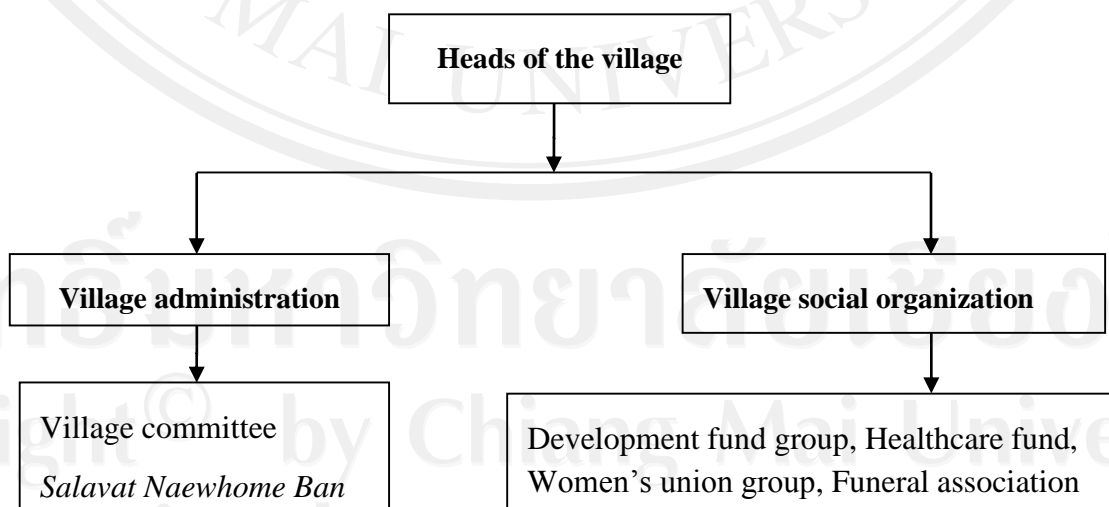


Figure 26 Pattana village's structure of governance

### **1. Heads of the village**

They have the duty to give general guidance about the management, the administration and the security within the village.

### **2. Village administration**

#### *The village committee*

The village committee represents the villagers; working to the advantage of the majority and implementing district policies – ensuring villagers understand the impacts. In addition, the committee brings the villagers together to discuss community issues, such as developing the temple, developing the village spirit house and holding traditional events. This is an official group and is concerned with political and administrative issues.

#### *Salavat-naewhomeban (advisory and security)*

This group is made-up of elders and acts as an advisory group to the committee, its aim being to ensure solidarity within the village. The village police is an official group designed to ensure the safety of the village. Every day members of this group patrol the villages and ensure security.

### **3. Village social organization**

The village social organization is established to help each other in the society especially when there is need to mobilize labor and social welfare for community's events. The village social organization is comprised of the following:

#### *The village development fund group*

This group has been in place since September 2006. It is set up to develop the village, and to address poverty with the funds contribute by the members and also from the district and the province. Early each month, group members (about 178 persons) meet at the village office to deposit their money and once a year a meeting is held to divide-up the income and open loans for those who need to borrow. According to my interview with the head of this group in March 2013, there were about 93 million Kip in capital (US\$ 12,400). Members can borrow from the fund to do small businesses or to cover medical expenses provided they observe the group's rules. These rules being: 1) each member can borrow up to three times the amount deposited, 2) the monthly interest rate is 5 percent for those borrow to set up a trade or business; and 3 percent for doing agricultural activities, 3) no interest rate for the

borrow to cover health care or hospital cost (within a month), but if over one month - 3 percent. Some villagers have not joined this group because they do not need to borrow money in order to work or pay for their healthcare.

*The healthcare fund group*

The healthcare fund group was set up officially under the auspices of the Office of Provincial Public Health and Champasak Provincial Hospital. The president of this group is responsible for disseminating information to its members. The purpose of this group is to maintain the health of its members, who have their hospital fees covered when they get sick and require hospital treatment. The hospital is about nine kilometers from the community. Every month, members pay money into the fund in accordance with the number of household members. For instance, if a family has one member it pays 20,000 Kip per month (US\$ 2.6), if it has two to five people it has to pay 35,000 Kip per month (US\$ 4.6), if it has five to eight members it pays 50,000 Kip per month (US\$ 6.6), and if a family has more than eight members, it has to pay 55,000 Kip per month (US\$ 7.3).

*The women's union group*

The women's union is set up to take care of the interests of women in the village, or to provide guidance in cases where women are considered as acting "against" the Laotian culture and traditions. These groups also ensure that the village is kept clean and tidy in order to impress outside visitors and villagers alike.

*The funeral association*

The funeral association has a responsibility to take care of those whose relatives have died, such as raising money for its members. Every household in the village has to be a member of the funeral association. The donations are divided into two amounts. If an adult has died, people donate 10,000 Kip (US\$ 1.30) per household, whereas if a child has died they donate 5,000 Kip (US\$ 0.66) per household to help with the funeral expenses.

#### **5.2.2.2 Relations with the old communities**

According to my interview with Mrs. Kong, 54 years old, a villager in Pattana village community and the head of urban development and administration authority office, she said that Pattana village residents comprise of people who were moved



from the communities around the Mekong River due to a road construction project. The relocation caused the separation of relatives and friends who had lived together for a long time but had to move to live in different areas a long way from each other. Studies on resettlement projects in both Laos and elsewhere in Southeast Asia have documented both the positive and negative impacts of such resettlements. The villagers involved can no longer travel to see each other as easily as before the project was implemented, though they do have the opportunity to see each other on important days, such as during the boat racing festival, Lao New Year, on wedding days, during funerals and other festivals such as national day and international New Year. At these times, people in different villages take the opportunity to meet and communicate with each other, and to lay-on entertainment activities.

I interviewed Mrs. Malin who is a party-secretary of Pattana village and the president of village development group. She said:

*"Most villagers in Pattana do not go back to the old villages, except on important occasions when the villagers contact each other and visit. The move to Pattana has cut ties and separated people, as well as organizations, and villagers do not see it as necessary to go back to the old villages, because they have organizations in Pattana, and informal relations still continue."*

(Mrs. Malin, 57 years-old, March 2013)

The people who migrated from Phonkoun village have a tradition called 'feeding the ghost', which is held every year and is considered an important event. When these villagers first moved to Pattana, they went back to their old village to join in with this ceremony. Those villagers who could not go to join the ceremony gave white alcohol, rice and cone-shaped containers filled with flowers, candle, money to their relatives, friends or neighbors – to donate at the ceremony, as they thought it was important to feed the village ghosts, as an act of respect towards people who showed them kindness in the past.

### 5.2.3 Religious tradition and culture in Pattana village

#### 5.2.3.1 Religious and tradition practices

One tradition all Lao people follow, as Buddhists, is to go to the temple to pay their respects to the monks and Buddha on a regular basis, as well as pay their respects at home, as every house has an altar set up to which they can worship and pray to Buddha each day. According to my interviews, the villagers mention that these altars make any ghosts outside nervous, meaning they cannot enter the house to attack people. In addition, these altars help the owners of the houses meditate leaving them less stressed and problem-free. For example, if one's business is doing badly or you have lost your job, such meditation can help. Moreover, the villagers believe that having a Buddha altar in the house will ensure the lord Buddha to take care of their lives and living conditions, and allows them to make a vow to do good deeds, hoping for luck in return, such as having good health, a successful trade or business, gaining a promotion, or generally having a better lifestyle.

Furthermore, having the altar in the house keeps the villagers active in terms of worshipping and praying to Buddha in the evening around 6.30 to 7:30 p.m. each day, the aim being to respect the religion that one's parents passed down. However, some households only worship and pray to Buddha on fasting days such as during a full moon or at the end of the waning moon, because these households believe fasting days are the most important days in the Buddhist calendar. For example, every temple across the country holds a ceremony to give alms on such days - at the same time in the evening, during which monks and novices worship and pray to Buddha in the temple. As one villager said:

*"I have had a Buddha altar in my house for a long time, as my parents and grandparents had one also. This means my family has continued to practice Buddhism, though this is sometimes quite difficult because I have opened a restaurant in the center of town and do not have enough time to worship. However, I can continue this activity by dividing-up my time properly. For example, when it is time to worship, I go home and leave my daughter and her husband in charge of the restaurant, then when I have finished, I can return to my work duties."*

(Mrs. Say, 52 years-old, April 2013)

In addition, festivals are important for Laotians who are Buddhists, as they reflect the religion that Lao people have been practicing over many centuries. However, the styles of these festivals have changed over time, but for the important events, those in Pattana village have continued with these activities, as they see them as important for their livelihoods within the society in which they live.

The people from Pakse, Pakhueylue and Phonkoun village, who migrated to Pattana, are Lao lowlanders who believe in Buddhism. These lowlanders follow a lifestyle which is called *Heetsipsong* (12 customary practices). According to my interviews with the oldest person in Pattana village 94 years-old, he said that Heetsipsong means the tradition that Lao people have practiced in twelve months of every year, the details of which are as follows.

#### **The first lunar month (December)**

During the first lunar month of the year, the *Khaokam* festival or ‘first lunar month’ festival is held; during which monks and nuns go to live in seclusion, to rejuvenate their bodies and minds, and for their minds to become clear. This ceremony takes place over nine nights. This ceremony has been practiced since their ancestor to young generation. While the monks and nuns undertaking Khaokam, the villagers provide them with food, drinks and other consumption items, and on the ninth day, when the ceremony has ended, the villagers hold a festival to celebrate, and this celebration is held on the full moon of December.

#### **The second lunar month (January)**

During the second lunar month (January) the *Kongkao* festival is held, after the rice harvest has finished. Before carrying the harvested rice to their houses, the hosts will ask relatives and friends to come and place cotton around the Kongkao, and will then invite monks to pray at home. The hosts and relatives then listen to the monks pray in the evening, and the next morning the hosts take food and other items to the monks and nuns who participate in that ceremony.

#### **The Khaochee festival (March)**

The Khaochee festival celebrates the teachings of Buddha and is held in March every year before presenting the *punkhaochee* (sticky rice mixed with egg and salt, and roast). The villagers donate wood for roasting the khaochee, and then on Khaochee festival day in the early morning, they start a fire and make the

punkhaochee, after which they present it to the monks of the temple. The roasting of the rice can take place at the temple or at the village head office in the village.

The festival celebrating the teachings of Buddha; meanwhile, is held on the full moon day in March. In the morning the villagers go to the temple and hold a alms giving ceremony, before presenting the monks with gifts. In the evening, the villagers go to the temple to worship and listen to the monks pray, and then walk around the temple holding a candle three times. After the third time, the ceremony ends.

#### **The Phavet festival (April)**

The Phavet festival is held in April of every year, and is the biggest festival in the calendar. During this festival the villagers consume a lot and invite monks and people from other villages to join the festival, especially friends, relatives and important, respected people. People refer to this as the ‘annual festival’ and it lasts three days and two nights. On the first day, villagers go to the temple to decorate it and each household has to make a special cake, prepare Lao noodles, food and beer - to give to their guests, those who visit the house. At night everyone gathers together for entertainments, which include Lao dance and singing. On the second day in the morning, villagers take the cake they have made and other food to the monks at the temple. Then, at 3 p.m., everyone gathers at the temple again before going to Phavet parade in jungle near the village. From there they hold a procession as if to invite Phavet back to the village. On the third day people listen to the monks pray all day, and every household provides consumption items and money to present to the monks.

#### **Lao New Year festival (April)**

This festival is normally held on the 13th, 14th, and 15th of April every year, and is the Lao New Year or *Bounsonggan* festival. This festival involves a lot of water, for Buddha, the monks and the novices at the temple, as well as the older people at home. The villagers take flowers to the temple to worship Buddha in the evening, and during this festival villagers stop working for three days; some stop for a whole week. The details of what happens on each day of this festival are as follows.

The first day of the Lao New Year festival is called in the Lao language *Sanggatlouang* (the first day of Lao New Year festival in three days after the end of the last old year), during which villagers believe Buddha wants the temple to be made clean, so villagers take perfumed water to clean Buddha at the temple.





Figure 27 Lao New Year Festival - villagers taking water to Buddha at the temple

The second day is referred to as *Vannout* and on this day villagers make merit for the mothers, fathers, grandparents and relatives who died in the past and some people go to call at their relatives in each village and also go to travel in the important places.

The third day is called *Vansanggatkhou*n (means the last day of Lao New Year festival) or ‘the celebration day’, and on this day villagers hold a festival to give alms (*tamboun takbat*) and to ask for the blessing of their parents, grandparents and elderly people and the monks, pay their respects and hold the *Basysoukhwan* ceremony, to wish each other luck.



Figure 28 Lao New Year Festival - villagers ask for blessings from the monks

From the Vansangatkhoum or ‘celebration’ day until the full moon in June, every evening the villagers take flowers to the temple to worship Buddha, and at night young and old people light candles and walk three times around the main building – to do the same.

**The June- rocket festival and ‘feed the ghost’ ceremony (*Liangpheetouta*)**

1) The rocket festival is an important event to which people from other villages are invited. The host villagers build a *pham* (temporary structure for rocket festival), decorate it for the ceremony and provide food before receiving guests from other, nearby villages. The rocket festival is held to worship *phayathan* (believed to be the deity in the sky who give rain to human) and to ask for plentiful rain in the oncoming agricultural production season. On festival day, villagers bring rockets, and after adding their own decorations, fire the rockets into the sky. If a rocket fails to rise into the sky, it is thrown into a pond full of mud, one the villagers have used for this purpose for a long time. But this rocket festival is usually held once every three years.

2) For the ‘feeding the ghost’ (*Liangpheetouta*) ceremony, Phonkoun is an old village that the villagers always make this ceremony. Therefore when they had moved to live in Pattana village, they have to do the ceremony as same as they used to do in the former time but when they make this ceremony, there are people who migrate from the Pakse and Phonkoun villages who come to join in the ceremony

too. Villagers take clear alcohol and chicken soup to their spirit houses – one bowl of chicken soup and one bottle of white alcohol per household. The chair of the ceremony, who feeds the ghosts, is called the *lakban*, and he or she is the person who liaises between the villagers and the ghosts. In this ceremony, villagers pay their respects to people who were kind while still alive especially people who moved from the Phonkoun village. Having the ceremony for the feeding of the village ghosts in June each year, the villagers have appointment before feeding of the village each year to prepare the things that are important and necessary for having the ceremony.

#### **The Samla festival (July)**

This festival is usually held in July each year, either on the new moon or waning moon day, and its purpose is to clear people's minds by giving alms. During this festival, villagers work together to build a small house in the centre of the village, bringing sand and eight sticks of bamboo to the ceremony, after which monks and novices attend for prayer in the evening. The next day, at 8 a.m. people gather to give alms and present food to the monks and novices; marking the end of the ceremony. At this time, older people also take bamboo to the corners of the village, in eight locations, to protect the village from evil spirits and bad luck.

#### **The Khaopunsa festival (August)**

This festival is always held on the full moon day in August each year. The day before the festival day, monks and novices have to clean the temple, decorate it and install a loudspeaker in preparation, plus villagers have to find candles, woollen cloth, towels and *tounngeun* (hang money on the branch of small trees), to present to the monks and novices the next morning. Moreover, the villagers have to prepare food for the monks and novices. On the morning of the festival, the villagers take the food and other items to the temple; to present to the monks and novices. After the monks and novices have finished breakfast, an alms-giving ceremony is held and then the villagers go back home.

#### **The Bounhorkhaopadabdin (September)**

On the waning moon day in September (*Khounseephakham*, *duankhao*) this festival is held for people who have died but do not have relatives (to make merits for them). For this festival, the villagers prepare food such as bananas; sugarcane and sugar, then divided them into four. The first portion is eaten in the household, the



second is divided among cousins and neighbours, the third is given to dead relatives, parents and grandparents, and the fourth part is presented to monks and novices at the temple. At night (3 a.m.), the villagers take the third part of the offering and to hang it on the fence or wall of the temple, after which it is believed that the dead will come eat or take it to their place.

#### **The ancestor worship festival (October)**

The ancestor worship festival is held on the full moon day in October every year, and is held in honour of family members who have died. For this festival, the villagers prepare food such as bananas, sugarcane and sugar – essentially the same food as for the September festival. On the full moon day in October, the villagers write their names on a tray and then take it to the temple, and then pay their respects to Buddha and hear a speech by the monks and novices, then give their presents and then bring the tray and present it in front of the monks and novices. When a monk or novice draws the names of a family, he receives that family's tray, and then a member of that family presents the tray to him.

#### **The *Okphansa* ceremony - November**

This ceremony is held on the full moon day in November, and on this day villagers arrange a tray with food and money on it, then attend an alms-giving ceremony at the temple. At night, the villagers listen to prayers and then flow the *huafay* (light-boat) that is made by wood to put the foods, money and candle in it to offer to *Payanak* (a mythical creature in the form of a big serpent) in water and then leave it to flow along a nearby river or stream. Villagers who do not live near a river or stream make 'false' *huafay* at the temple. The following day, a boat race is held along the river, which the government supports, and a big party is held.

#### **The *Bounkantheen* tradition - December**

The Bounkantheen is held in December every year, with the day decided upon by the villagers within a limited timeframe. To make the Bounkantheen, people have to build *Kongbun* (a pile of stuff consists of bed sheets, pillows, mats, food items, money, shoes) at the temple, then those who have faith will come to join and make merit themselves, bringing a pile of *kantheen* to present to other villages and other temples, which is call the *pay thout kantheen*. In addition, when villages present kantheen to other villages, the head of the receiving village has to meet the visitors and



provide food for the guests, once the kantheen have been accepted. He/She also collects money from each household and allows some people to cook food at the temple and receive guests from both inside and outside the village who have come to join the party.

### **5.2.3.2 Cultural practices**

People in Pattana have continued with certain cultural practices, because they display the villagers' way of life, in particular with regard to marriage ceremonies and death, dress and consumption patterns. These practices are an essential element of Lao identity; helping to show what it means to be a Laotian.

#### **1. Wedding ceremony**

During my fieldwork, I attended some wedding held at Pattana village. As I interviewed some villagers at a wedding, I found that the marriage ceremony was in line with those of other Lao people. When a bride and groom get married, both sets of parents join-in and invite guests and relatives to join. After getting married, a groom always goes to live with the bride's family, in accordance with Lao culture. But in cases where there is not a child to take care of the groom's parents, a bride has to go to live with the groom's family to take care of a groom's parents forever.

In addition, the groom's parents have to give money to the bride's parents during the wedding party (*Basysoukhwan* ceremony), which is referred to as 'the bride's price'. Moreover, during the *Basysoukhwan* ceremony, the bride wears a bun in her hair to show her cultural identity, a traditional practice. During the ceremony, guests and relatives tie the hands of the groom and the bride together using cotton hung with money. After this ceremony has finished, the bride and groom receive the guests by standing at the 'gate' set up for the party and toasting them with alcohol, after which everyone sits down for a meal (*seelimongkhon*). The wedding ceremony reflects a very traditional and long-practiced cultural practice within the community.



Figure 29 Wedding ceremony in the community

## 2. Patterns of dress: Lao dressing

Dress is one way of displaying a native culture and the traditions of a community and in Pattana, people have continued to observe the traditional dressing patterns inherited from their ancestors in accordance with different occasions. For example, when going to festivals at the temples, or at houses, for wedding ceremonies and other parties, the women usually wear a new *sinh* (a sarong) and Lao style shirt, while the men wear a western style shirt and trousers. These dress codes reflect Lao culture and the way in which people wish to maintain good appearance.

At home, the women always wear a *sinh* or long skirt with a t-shirt, but there are also a few people who wear short pants. Though the women may wear a *sinh* or modern cloth when visiting friends or relatives, the same one relax in at home. It is not necessary for them to wear a new modern cloth when they are at home or not attending a festival such as alms giving ceremony and others.



Figure 30 Traditional and new-style Lao women dress

### 3. Consumption pattern

Consumption styles in Pattana vary as the village is suburban, with both city and countryside elements. As a result, the people practice two livelihood styles; for example they eat food at home, but also eat out at parties and in the temple as a sign of community unity and solidarity.

Eating food at a temple is a key part of Lao culture, and particularly in Pattana. This happens when there are festivals held at the temple and on some other days when villagers take food to present to the monks and novices in the mornings and before noon. During festivals at the temple, villagers will take food, cakes, candies and fruit to give to the monks and novices, especially in the morning, as that is when the alms-giving activities take place and the monks and novices eat breakfast and bless the people who have attended. After the monks and novices have finished breakfast and the religious ceremony has finished, those villagers who joined the festival eat a meal together at the temple. Any food left is divided among the villagers' houses.

On other days, the villagers may take food for the monks and novices in the morning and before noon, after which the monks and novices eat the food presented. When the monks and novices have finished eating, the villagers will go back home.



By eating food at the temple after the monks and novices have finished, the villagers believe it makes them healthier, brings them happiness, and also brings them success in terms of love and friendships, and bring unity and solidarity to the community.

Eating food at home involves household members go find wild animals, catch fish, or collect mushrooms and bamboo shoots from the rivers and forests, and take them home to divide between relatives and close friends nearby. If there is not much food, the host may invite the same relatives and close friends to eat food together at the host's house, to show their friendship.



Figure 31 Relatives and friends join dinner at host's house in Pattana village

During ceremonies and parties such as weddings, the host household will invite relatives and close friends around to help cook the food and receive the guests from different communities. At the end of the ceremony, the relatives and close friends will eat food together, and any food remaining will be divided up between the guests who came to help cook.





Figure 32 Relatives and friends join a meal after a wedding party in Pattana village

#### 4. Funeral rites

When a person in a house dies, the owner of the house invite monks to pray every evening, as a way to communicate with the deceased of their death. This ceremony lasts about three or four days whereby the dead body is kept at the house or at the temple. On the last day of the funeral ceremony, the hosts hold a ceremony in the morning; to give alms and send the deceased away, after which the monks hold a ceremony during which they drip water on to the ground. After that, the funeral moves to the fire stage, during which (a) male member(s) of the family of the deceased enter the priesthood. Monks from other temples will also be invited to join in with the ceremony.

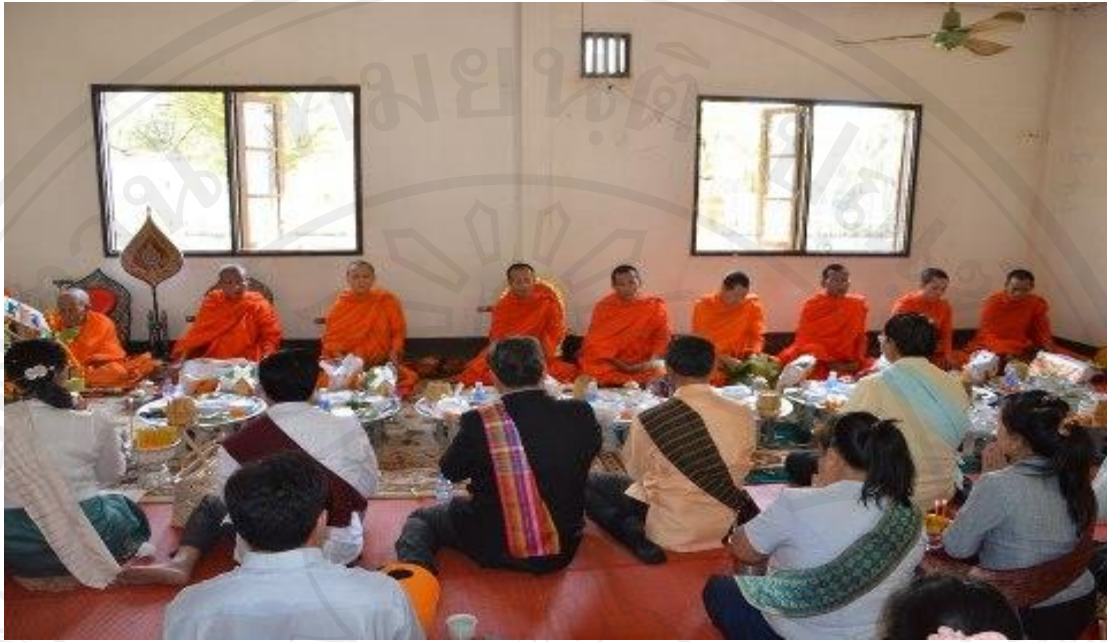


Figure 33 Making merits for the dead

### 5.3 Summary

Pattana community now is comprised of a wide variety of people, from businessmen, traders, university students and government officials, private staff and state enterprise employees, who have moved in from several different areas. For these people, the economic, social and cultural situation is quite different from before; therefore, they have had to adjust for their livelihoods to suit this situation, including their social relations, religious and cultural practices.

It's difficult and sometimes confusing for the villagers to adapt to their new environment, one not as suitable for making a living as the previous area due to the lack of water resources for agriculture, gardening and fishing. In addition, they were confronted with a number of challenges, in particular the economic, societal and culture situation in the new location, as well as other situation in terms of social relations, and religious and cultural practices. Moreover, the cost of living has been increased while income has been decreased. This meant the villagers had to adapt in order to earn enough to live.

Having to adapt socially and culturally was the main issue for the villagers moving to Pattana community. As a result, the villagers had to use a variety of strategies in order to adapt including the set up of social organizations to help people

in the village. When it comes to religious and cultural practices, villagers have maintained the practices they used to do before in the old communities. As their belief in Buddhism is a central part of their livelihoods, villagers have continued with their religious and cultural practices in Pattana, such as those related to their Buddhist beliefs particularly in making merits. In addition, the villagers have continued to practice other facets of their lives in the new location, such as marriage ceremonies, the way they dress and their consumption patterns. What all these livelihood trajectories means in terms of academic milieu, I provide the analysis and discussion in the next chapter.