

CHAPTER 3

Emergence and Popularity of Digits Gambling in Urban Pyay

In this chapter, the historical background of my research site “Pyay” is briefly described. Also, the socioeconomic changes, the effects of policy changes of the central administration and the changes of media consumption are described. After that, the popularity of digits gambling in Myanmar is briefly explained and in the last section, the social structure and the operation of Hna Lone Htee gambling in Pyay is explored.

3.1 Pyay and Its Historical Background

Whenever we talk about Myanmar and its people, the country itself is uniquely composed of a majority of Burmans and different ethnic minorities. Similar to the different main regions and fourteen states, which are the central regions where most of the Burmans live, and the hilly regions are also typically occupied by different ethnic groups. Before the colonial period, most of the ethnic regions had their own autonomy and the central regions were ruled by central kingdoms. During the colonial time, the modern administration or what we should call the modern state has been established. After World War II, the administrative and social structure of central mainland in Burma was directly affected by the new administration and changes of central government, led by Burmese leaders through the past decades after Burma gained independence from the British.

My research site, Pyay, formally being called “Prome” in the British colonial period, is situated in the main territory of Central Burma.¹ Pyay is situated between the northern latitudes (18 degrees-44 degrees) and the eastern Longitudes (95 degrees-29 degrees) in the western part of the Bago Region in Myanmar. The Bago region is

¹ The historical background of Pyay is recorded as “ရှုပညာချစ်မြတ်နိုး” (Pyay History) by the local administration. I got that record from the “Shwe Phone Pwint” Library in Pyay.

divided into two parts by the *Bago Yoma* (Bago Mountains). Pyay is one hundred and seventy nine miles away from Yangon (the former national capital of Myanmar) by car and one hundred and sixty one miles by train and two hundred and sixty three miles away by water. It is one hundred and eighty feet above sea level. In the east is the Pauk Khaung Township, the west, the Ayeyarwaddy River; in the northern part is the Aung Lan Township of the Magway Region; in the southwest the Shwe Taung Township, and in the southeast the Thae Kone Township surrounding Pyay. It is the northernmost city in the Bago Division, which is the border to the central dry zone, Magwae Division, also bordering with the Aung Lan Township. It is four hundred square meters in area. And the town is nearly two hundred miles away from the sea. Being on the eastern bank of the Ayaeyarwaddy River, the town is on the way to the western region Rakhine State. In the former period, to travel to the western part of Pyay people had to cross the Ayeyarwaddy River by boat, but in January 4, 1999, when the Nawadday Bridge, which joined the eastern bank of Pyay and the western bank of the Ayaeyarwaddy River, was built, the Padaung Township was opened. This was a remarkable sign for Pyay as a junction trading centre because trading and communication to the western part of Myanmar was more convenient.

Historically, Pyay is a region where the ancient “*Pyu*” (ပွဲ) settled down. According to Burmese chronicle, the “*Pyu*” people stayed in the Pyay region before the king “*Duddabaung*” established “*Thayakhittaya Pyay*”. The old city of *Thayakhittaya* (*Srikstera*) (သေရေခေတီရာ) can be seen in *Hmaw Zar Village* (မွှေးဘုရားရွာ), which is five miles away in the south eastern part of Pyay. The old acropolis was eight miles and five furlongs long and it was nearly five miles in width. The main business of the “*Pyu*” City was agriculture, architecture, sculpture, weaving, and goldsmithing. According to Myanmar history, in the *Tharthanna Thakariz*² (သာသနာသက္ကရာဇ်) (636), while the *King*

² According to the Buddhist traditional calendar, there are five kinds of calendars: *Mahar Thakariz* (မဟာသက္ကရာဇ်), *Tharthanna Thakariz* (သာသနာသက္ကရာဇ်), *Kawza Thakariz* (ကောဇာသက္ကရာဇ်) or *Myanmar Thakariz* (ဗုဒ္ဓသက္ကရာဇ်), *Christ Thakariz* (ခရစ်တက္ကရာဇ်) before Christ and *Christ Thakariz* (ခရစ်တက္ကရာဇ်) after Christ. *Tharthanna Thakariz* can be calculated by adding 554 years to the current

Thut Pyinnyar Nara Nandi was the ruler, “*Srikstera*” was destroyed. In 832 AD, the people of *Nan Kyaung* came and attacked “*Sirkstera*”. After “*Sirkstera*” was destroyed, people moved their residences near the Ayeyarwaddy River as it was more convenient for trading being alongside the river. The town was named “Pyay” as a landmark of the ancient “*Pyu*” people who once lived there: “*Pyu*” became “Pyay”. In the year 602, the son of Bagan King *Narapatae* (ပုဂံ နရပတုမင်း), Prince Thiha Thu, (သီဟသူ မင်းသား) established Pyay. And in the year 603, Pyay was built up with three walls: a wooden wall, earthwork wall, and cement wall as a battering-ram. As landmarks of “*Pyu*” ancient city, ancient pagodas like *Hpya Gyi stupa* (ဘုရားဖူးကီးဘုရား), *Bawbaw Gyi stupa* (ဘေဘေဘေဘေကီးဘုရား) and some other famous pagodas can still be seen in the surrounding area of the town. As ancient Pyay was once the “*Pyu*” city, in the museum of the “*Pyu*” dynasty in *Hmaw Zar Village*, its ancient pots, jewellery and other historical records are kept.

The town was governed by *Thamain Hlaing*’s dynastic family from the year 604 to 1117. In the year 1824, during the time of first Anglo Burma war, Pyay was occupied by English General King Bell’s troops. In the same year, Pyay was under the control of the Burmese Kingdom according to the Yandabo treaty (ရခိုင်ပို စာခံပို့). In 1875, the first railway of the colonial period of Myanmar, the Pyay- Yangon railway was opened.

In March 1942, Liftnen General Salin set up the Number One Army in Pyay. After Pyay was occupied by the *Burma Independence Army (BIA)* and Japanese troops, the modern administration of Pyay began to be organized. During the Japanese occupation period, during World War II, Pyay was busy and crowded as a junction for traders from the upper and lower parts of Myanmar. But in June 1943, Pyay was occupied again by English troops, so people had to go and hide in nearby villages because of the war. In 1946, they came back to Pyay. On January 4, 1948, Pyay citizens celebrated together the independence of Burma from colonial rule for seven days with

Christ Thakariz, from “*Myanmar Yarzawin A Chay Pyu Kyan*” (ဗမာ့အလင်းစာပေ အေချစ်ချစ်ပီကီး) pg. 26, written by U Kyi.

festivities and also with various kinds of gambling. In addition, they built a statue to mark their independence. On August 11, 1948, the Burmese revolutionary army conquered Pyay and on September 9, 1948, Pyay was occupied again by the Karen Armed group 2, which were government troops. On May 19, 1950 at 11 a.m. Pyay was again under the control of government troops. In 1954, *Shwe Hin Thar Myo Thit* (ရွှေဟင်သာကျွန်းမိဇာတိ), where I conducted my research, had been established in the northern quarter of *Muyar Bin*, where apartments were allowed to hire for government staff. During the General Ne Win administration in 1959, the new extended area of the town, “*Khittaya Myothit*” (ခေတ္တိယာကျွန်းမိဇာတိ), was built. The general’s native town, *Pauk Khaung* (ပေါက်ခေါင်းငုံ), was only 30 miles away from Pyay, and he spent some of his student life in Pyay. One of the important landmarks in downtown Pyay is the statue of General Aung San. This statue was built in July 1978 with the purpose of remembering the national hero and was constructed at the junction of the town’s traffic point.

Through the colonial period Pyay played an important role being a junction of the western part of the Rakhine State and central Myanmar. According to the historical events, it is quite clear that Pyay is a place where location is vital enough for administration, trade and communication. Along with the political changes in Myanmar, the administrative system of Pyay was directly affected by the central administration.

3.2 Socioeconomic Changes of Pyay City

At present time, being under the administration of central Myanmar, the Burman, being the majority of the population, most commonly reside in the city of Pyay while there is a small percentage of Chin, Karen, Chinese, and Indian people settled in the city also. The main business of Pyay is trading the seasonal crops and rice produced from nearby towns and villages to other regions and some people work as government staff in various departments cited as the branch offices of Western Bago Region. The former administrative system of Pyay was run by local military authorities in the past decades, same as most of the other region’s administrative systems in Myanmar. With the political changes occurring in the country, particularly since the late 1990s, the administrative systems have begun to play a vital role at the national level. As an

example, there is an airport which was built for local use only and was quite busy in the previous decades, especially during the time of former General Khin Nyunt, who frequently visited the city. Note that in that time Myanmar already became a member of ASEAN. Every year, on *Tawthalin Full Moon Day* (တော်သလင်း လပြည့်နေ့) (the seventh month of the Myanmar calendar) usually in September, there is a ceremony of offering of rice packs to the monasteries of Pyay Township, which was mainly offered by and participated in by General Khin Nyunt, the former leader of Myanmar military. At the time he visited Pyay, all the administrative staff, local authorities, responsible persons of high ranks, business men and the town itself were very busy for the VIP trip. Thus, the security of the city was on high alert and his visit was transmitted on the national television channel. But later, when he was under house arrest, the airport was totally isolated and the role of the city was not as bright as the previous time.

The changes in the national plan on higher education have affected education development in Pyay city. After the 1988 student demonstrations, the military government tried to move all the universities out of the main city, especially in the formal capital Yangon, and they established a number of universities in most cities across the country. In the previous time, students studied at Yangon University and enjoyed university life in the national capital of Myanmar. After 1988, Pyay Regional College was upgraded to Pyay University and the city later established Pyay Technological University. Together with that national plan of higher education, most of the students nearby towns thus came and attended Pyay University for both the regular university period open the whole year and also for “Distance Education” open ten days for lecture classes and examination days. As a result, the city is inundated with students throughout the year, not only at Pyay University, but also at Pyay Technological University, Pyay Nursing College, Pyay Educational College, and the most recently established Pyay Computer University.

For the health sector, there are two hospitals. One is a general hospital with 100 beds and the other one is a military hospital near the outskirts of the city. But most people from the nearby towns and villages come and have treatment in the general hospital, which provides health services at an affordable price, and also in the private

hospitals. In the city there are five private hospitals, which are mainly used by well-being patients. And the number of private hospitals is increasing year by year.

Being in central Myanmar, the main religion of the people in the region is Buddhism, while there is a small percentage of Christians and Muslims. The city is covered with ancient pagodas and is also a place for local religious tourists. Moreover, Pyay is famous for its ancient myths. Particularly, the one of the regional spirit “*Nat*” (နတ်), for which there is a pagoda festival at *Shawe Bone Tha Pagoda* (ရှေးဘုံသာဘုရား), situated on the western bank of the Ayeyarwaddy River. Here there is a statue of the female spirit “*Ma Mya Sein*”³ (မျာမိမိုး) or The Green Goddess, who is famous in the region and pilgrims in central Myanmar come and worship her during the festival with the belief that the Goddess will take care of their fortune and their guidance. According to the belief of local people, there is a custom that visitors coming to Pyay should go and pray at the “*Win Cha Taung*” Pagoda (ဝဋ်တောင်တော်), which is situated on “*Min Gyi*” Hill (မင်းဆုန်းတောင်) in the city and ask for forgiveness of their sins and say a prayer at the Pagoda before they leave Pyay.

As Myanmar is also famous as the land of festivals, each month has its own traditional religious festival. For the town Pyay, especially on the day of religious festivals, usually on full moon days on the Myanmar traditional calendar, people from the nearby towns and villages come and visit *Shwe San Daw Pagoda* (ရှေးဆံတောဘုရား), where Buddha’s tooth has been put on display to be worshiped. Being one of the more famous pagodas in Myanmar, the town is crowded with people during the festival times. Especially in the *Tasaungdine* (according to the Myanmar Traditional Calendar, around the eighth month of the year, which is normally the end of October or beginning of November), the *Shwe San Daw Pagoda* festival is held and every fourth year, and the Buddha’s tooth is paraded around the town, again attracting many Buddhist pilgrims from nearby towns and villages to attend in order to pay homage to the tooth, named as “*Swe Taw*” in Myanmar (ရွှေတော့). For the Christian community in the city, a Chin

³ The folk legend of “*Ma Mya Sein*” is described in Chapter 5.

(one of the ethnic groups) Bible College was recently established, and there are twelve churches, both of Baptist and Catholic denominations in the city. And also there are a few mosques for Muslim and Hindu religions.

When we look at the socioeconomic conditions of the Pyay city, it can be said that this boom town has gradually developed into the modern world, together with the changes in the political and economic conditions of Myanmar; primarily because all the central changes and administrative systems directly affect the development of the town. It was recorded in the book “Pyay History” that, for example, on April 1, 1965, all the schools in Pyay, including the missionary schools had been transferred under government control by force. This record provides an evidence that what occurs in the central administration directly affects Pyay and its peoples. Moreover, being easy to connect with Yangon, the socioeconomic development and policy changes of Pyay are also directly related to this city. In 1997, once becoming a member of ASEAN, Myanmar has been integrated into economic development of the neighbouring countries. Since that time, the general knowledge and cultural awareness about ASEAN has been transmitted from the state owned media, MRTV (see also Mya Than, 2000).

Like most of the cities in Myanmar, because of the benefits of border trade (especially at the Chinese border) and cease fire agreements, the trading and economic conditions in Pyay has also developed. A vivid sign of modern development can be seen by the cheap, fair, and affordable priced motorcycles which are increasingly crowding the roads of Pyay within recent years. The economic condition of Pyay and its people has also steadily improved as Myanmar opens more to the global market. Especially with the economic policy changes, the increase in private banks in the town can be seen. Being a trade based city, banks and money flow and transfer is important and most banks have opened new branches in Pyay. In the previous decades, there was only one central government bank in the city, but now, seven privately co-operated banks are running their services in the city. For the trade of local crops and rice, it can be seen that people from nearby towns and villages come to the town in the morning conveyed by their own transportation such as trucks or motorbikes. They descend on the central market “*Zay Gyi*”, which literally means “Big Market”, to sell their products not only to the shops in the market, but also to the trading shops, “*Pwae Yone*” (ပွဲရံ့), buying and

selling the specific products from other regions. They purchase necessary things which cannot be produced in their villages or town for their daily use and also for some people, items to resell in their villages. It is not only the flow of trading local products, information, and modern products, but the flows of people and that these people gradually change their lifestyle with the visit to the city.

Media is also another factor that has changed the people's way of life. Through the commercial advertisements transmitted by local medias, people have more information and chances to choose new products, clothes, cosmetics and foods. Especially for the young generation not only from the city, but also from nearby villages and remote areas, who fashionably consume modern fashions and products from the stores and markets as much as they can so as to catch up on the latest trends. This phenomenon is largely due to the influence of advertising and media presently flowing through televisions into people's daily life.



Figure 3.1 People from nearby town and villages coming to Pyay “Zay Gyi” in the morning by local transportation (Source: Mi Mi Cho)

3.3 Media Consumption in Urban Pyay

Media consumption in the city of Pyay is also directly related to the policy and changes of the central government. In the media spheres, since Myanmar has become an ASEAN member, the people in this country have been more engaged in various kinds of media and information technology consumption. Since 2010, they have also more rights to access news and information particularly from the outside world than in former decades. The investment in telecommunication significantly began since Myanmar became an ASEAN member, in particular, during the now ousted Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra's regime in Thailand. The state control on mass media and news reporting in the country has also been more flexible though the dissemination of political news and situations of the minorities are still seriously monitored by the intelligence. Satellite TV channels can now be broadcast in the country via the state-run media channels or a co-operated media company. In the previous time, there was only one state owned broadcasting media, MRTV, and most of people in Myanmar had fewer choices for alternative media channels.

Myawaddy Television, which is run by the military, was launched on March 27, 1995. In 2012, Myawaddy Television started to launch paid channels with Myawaddy Set top box receivers. And in 2004, MRTV-4 owned by Forever Group Ltd., which is jointly produced by Myanmar Radio and Television, the Ministry of Information, was launched⁴. This is the first private co-operated television channel in Myanmar. And later on, in May, 2005, they (Forever Group) introduced the DVB-T Receiver with 5-Movies and 5-Cartoons Paid-TV channels with a secured smartcard system which was jointly provided by MRTV and Forever Group and formed Family Entertainment Group for content buying, post-production, supply DVB-T Receiver and subscribers' management. Again in September 2006, they extended the existing seven digital TV channels with 12 international channels providing a total of 19 Channels. MRTV-4 and related channels are now broadcasting and re-transmitting from the stations in 29 cities all over the country by the Forever Group. Presently, the Group have already extended the international channels (ESPN, ESPN News, Star Sports, Euro Sports, Discovery

⁴ Data from Forever Media Group.

Channel, Discovery Travel & Living, Animal Planet, Star Movies, Star World, Channel [V], National Geographic Channel, Net Geo Wild, MTV Taiwan, etc) and are transmitting these to the public. So via Forever Group media business, there are 18 local (including 1 x HD) channels and 30 international (including 2 x HD) channels that make a total of 48 channels in the country. And recently, they launched Channel-7, a very famous entertainment channel aired free to the public.

In Myanmar, another broadcasting channel was introduced recently from the Shwe Than Lwin Media Group, which is called Sky Net DTH (Direct to Home) on December 5, 2010 (Htun, Yanadar 2010). But this Sky Net, which includes about 40 local and international channels broadcast through the Thaicom satellite, is only available outside Myanmar's major cities. And Sky Net is more popular in both rural and urban areas than other television channels because of its easy to access from a satellite dish. In the previous decades, most people had to rely on the small movie theatre with a television and a video player which showed movies by sharing payments. But now, almost every household, except very low-income families, own a television set and can enjoy new TV programs like Korean and Chinese drama series' launched by most free televisions channels of Myanmar, which are very popular among the Myanmar society. Like most countries, the influence of media industry and media consumption has changed the daily life of the people. At night, in some of the main cities in Myanmar, there are a lot of tea shops and bars and restaurants which show the soccer matches, broadcasting from England and Europe via the satellite dish, where the male audiences both young and old spend their night life by drinking and chatting while watching the soccer matches. Being easy to access different kinds of media at a fair price and purchase advanced technology and electronic devices at affordable prices in Pyay, the role of standalone movie theatres has faded. There used to be two movie theatres in the city in the past, but with the popularity of broadcasting media, television specially, citizens rarely rely on those movie theatres and so now, both of the cinemas are usually sparsely occupied.

Besides this, many of the young people have more of a chance to keep in touch with others on the Internet and explore more on updated news and popular culture. This also influences on changes in the Pyay city people's lifestyle. The migrant workers'

families are now more conveniently in contact with their family members who are working abroad. They use internet phone calls (VOIP) and this can be vividly evidenced in the increasing internet shops around the city. As printed media is also increasing, up to around 200 weekly journals are published; thus, news consumption is much more accessible to the people in Pyay than in previous decades. Weekly published journals can generally be consumed in the city one day later than the published date, due to the distance from Yangon. Among the readers, most of the male audiences buy the sports magazines to get the information about soccer matches around the world.

With all of these changes in the broadcasting media in Myanmar, especially in the country's central region where the majority of people are the Burman, the ways of life of these peoples and their consuming activities in media and material culture have changed gradually. The daily life of the Burman, in the cities in particular, has increasingly been integrated with their neighbors and the global community. This change in global and regional integration in Myanmar is manifested and can be observed through the emergence and the popularity of modern gambling such as soccer game betting and lotteries, both run by the government and the underground. The uses of information or media consuming activities and modern gambling, which is operated through various kinds of transnational media have become part of people's ways of life.

3.4 Popularity of Digits Gambling in Urban Pyay

Digits gambling is a popular phenomenon in Myanmar today, especially in the central region; where no casinos are allowed to open as in the border areas which have some agreements with local authorities. But during the traditional pagoda festival, what we call "*Our Day*" (အဝါ့နေ့), a combination of various kinds of gambling and betting is organized with the hidden permission of the local authorities, in most places in Myanmar. But this kind of organized gambling is seasonal gambling. Among the traditional and modern gambling in Myanmar, digits gambling is very popular and there are mainly three types of digits gambling: football gambling or "*One Digits*" called by local people, two digits gambling or "Hna Lone Htee" gambling, and three digits gambling or "*Chae*" (ခဲလော့ဒုံးကစား).

Soccer game gambling is popular among the public due to the influence and easy access of the media; the free air transmission of football matches via national media channels and from satellite media channels. According to the series of football matches, like European football matches, World Cup, and other seasonal football series', the gambling on soccer has become more and more frequent and the gamblers have more choices to bet on in the matches. This soccer gambling is mostly played by male gamblers. As I have mentioned above, most of the leisure time of males both young and old is spent at tea shops or beer shops by chatting and discussing business with friends while watching soccer matches. It gradually has become a cultural trait in most of the cities in Myanmar, as in Pyay.

Hna Lone Htee gambling or two digits gambling is quite different from soccer game gambling, though what is common between these two forms of gambling is to consume media and information, through the betting. The gambling on Han Lone Htee gambling is based on the Thai Stock Exchange Index and the last two digits of the index number and is played four times per day, except on weekends in the current situation. But the origin of Hna Lone Htee gambling stemmed from the Myanmar government official lottery. Here I would like to describe a short history of the government official lottery “*Aung Bar Lay Htee*” (အော့ဗာလဲထီ) (Kyaw, Htin Linn 2009).

On June 1, 1938, the Myanmar Government Lottery Administration Office (ပျမနွာပျပည အစိုးရထီ အပွဲပိုင်းရး အရာရှိရုံး) had been established for the very first time in Burma. In August 1945, it was named as the Government Lottery Department (အစိုးရသိန်းထီဌာန). After the independent period, the name had been changed again into “*Aung Bar Lay Thein Su Htar Na Khwe*” (အော့ဗာလဲထီသိန်းဆုဌာန). When the lottery started, the lottery ticket was selling for 2 kyats per ticket and the highest reward was 100,000 kyats at that time. Since then, the lottery ticket price has changed to 5 kyats, 10 kyats, 50 kyats, 100 kyats and finally to 200 kyats per ticket through time. In the current

situation, the highest reward for the Government Lottery is 150,000,000 kyats which is equal to 1,764,705 US\$⁵.



Figure 3.2 Lottery Ticket Selling Shop in the Past Time

(Source: Unknown)

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⁵ This amount of US\$ has been calculated with the current exchange rate of US\$ to Myanmar Kyat (1US\$ = 850 Kyats).



Figure 3.3 Lottery Ticket Selling Shop in the Current Time

(Source: www.myanmartharakaung.net)

The Hna Lone Htee gambling in central Myanmar was originated from the government lottery which was open seven days per month, and people bet on that lottery through the underground two digits lottery. But this two digits lottery gambling has quickly become widespread and the betting time increased to four times a day, when dealers based it on the Thai Stock Exchange market. In the market, at the tea shops, at some houses, at offices, and in the public places people discussing, guessing and betting upon two digits gambling can be witnessed. Instead of the greeting, “How are you?” when people meet each other on the way, they changed their greeting to, “Which number do you bet?” or “Which number is popular?”. Similarly to other towns of central Myanmar, in urban Pyay, the influence of “*Chae*”, “Hna Lone Htee” and football gambling is widespread and popular. In the market places, at tea shops, beer shops and in the offices, people are chatting about digit gambling. It is really popular among the housewives who spend afternoon time together. At night time, soccer matches from Europe are shown at tea shops and beer shops for male audiences.

According to some sources, Three Digits gambling or “*Chae*” has been popular in Myanmar, in the last three decades. It starts from the border area of Thailand, Myawaddy to Mawlamyine and spread throughout the whole country. This 3 digits lottery gambling development is based on the Thai government lottery, by taking the first three numbers of the winning number; “*Chae*” is thus played only two times per

month. But compared to Hna Lone Htee gambling, the amount of the winning price is much higher. When a gambler bets 100 kyats (around 1.2 US\$) on a number, he can get 50,000 kyats (around 63 US\$) as a prize if he bets on the correct winning numbers.

These digits gambling games are popular among the Burman, both in rural and urban areas, and it has become a modern phenomenon in Myanmar. But gambling does not stand alone by itself, as people mix and practice the winning numbers with traditional beliefs and norms. In my research site, Pyay city, digits gambling is very common as dealers, gamblers and the society itself accept it as a daily practice.

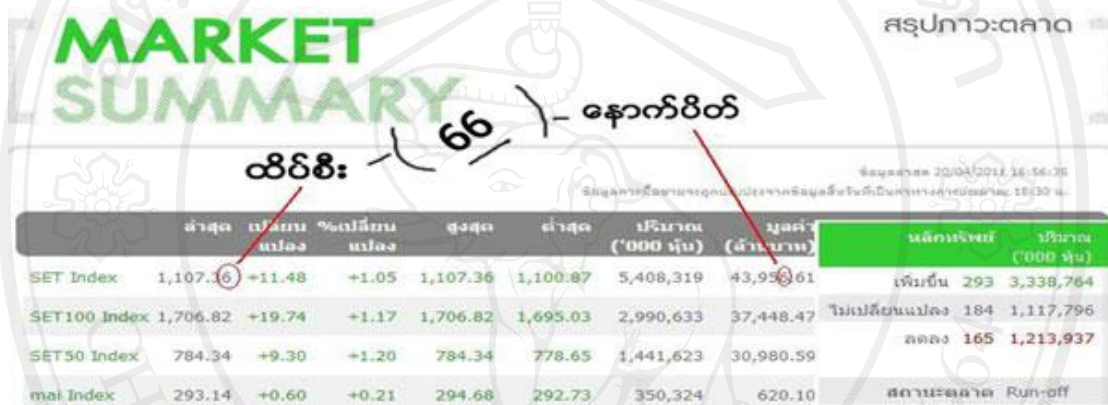


Figure 3.4 Two Digits Number from Thai Stock Exchange Market Index

(Source: Mizzima Media)

3.5 The Operation of Hna Lone Htee in Urban Pyay

When we learn about the social structure between the authorities and the ordinary local people, it can be categorized into two different sections, like the power and tactic, in which the power holders, especially government and local authorities, try to control and run the society according to the rules and laws of regulation, while the ordinary people survive with negotiating and sometimes betraying the laws under hidden circumstances.

In regard to the social structure of Hna Lone Htee, in Pyay, although the network and the structure is concealed and not obvious to an outsider, when we become absorbed in the society, we can see that it is well organized and quite strong throughout

the society. Two different types of Hna Lone dealers are located in Pyay. One is a mobile type digit selling in the quarter, while another dealer operates his digits selling business in a small house, which is being hired for the purpose of operating this business alone. The owners of the Hna Lone digits business live close to the operation house, but they never show themselves in the business. But they have a number of other operation places for football, two digits and three digits gamblings. The house is two stories high with zinc roofs and wooden covers, but the house looks rarely maintained for living from the inside. Only two staff members run the digit business with normal facilities, some A-4 papers, voucher books, a small box to put money in and an ink pad. And they sit behind the bamboo-made walls, as if a counter and behind them is a long wooden bench for a sitting place. When people want to bet numbers, they come to this small house and give the numbers that they want to bet on to the digits selling staff and get the voucher and pay their money. For this particular dealer, the acceptable betting amount starts from 30 kyats (around 1 Thai baht) to an unlimited amount of money.

They usually start their business in the morning around 8 a.m. when one of the digits selling staff goes to the owner's house, which is attached with a tea shop of their own, to get the things needed for work: papers, calculator, ink parts, voucher books and money box. As the first time of opening for two digits is at 9:30 a.m., people come and bet their favourite digits starting from around 8 a.m. until 9 o'clock or 9:15 before the digits betting is closed. There is also a primary school close to the betting house, and so some women come and bet while they send their children off to school, or some come in before they go to the market. On some days, the betting house is a bit crowded with players, especially from Tuesday to Friday, while on Monday, there are not many players, because it is just the start of the betting time of the week, according to the digits selling staff.

People mostly come to the betting house with a small piece of paper in which they write down the numbers that they want to play. Some people come to play on their own, and some come at another person's request, like one of their family members or close friends nearby. When they bet, the way they choose two digits from a total of one hundred betting numbers, from 00 to 99, is quite different from each other. As an example, some people bet only their favourite numbers like 53, 93, 45, etc. But for

some players, they play with a series of numbers based on a number like 9, all numbers with 9 from the total of one hundred betting numbers. So, it is like (09, 19, 29, 39, 49, 59, 69, 79, 89, 99, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, and 98) totalling nineteen digits numbers to bet. And in their terms, it is called number 9 based betting. Another way of betting is the combination of two numbers equals “nine”, which means (18, 27, 36, 45, 54, 63, 72, 81, 90, and 09), in which ($1+8 = 9$, $2+7 = 9$), and they called this kind of betting “*Brade Nine*” (ကိုးဆရီတု) in Myanmar terms.

The above two examples are some of the ways of how people bet their numbers based on the *number based method*. There are also a variety of methods that they try to guess the winning numbers which I will discuss in the next chapter.

The duty of the digits selling staff is to write down what the players have bet on the vouchers and calculate the total betting amount and give the voucher to the players and take their money. Also, on the voucher is written the specific time and date the digits are sold and the player’s number. After that, they write down all the selling numbers on A-4 paper, on which the numbers from 00 to 99 are already written down horizontally. They add the selling amount of money beside each betting number like 99 – 100 kyats + 50 kyats + 200 kyats + etc. and when the betting is closed they calculate the total amount of digits betting. And after that, with this A-4 paper and total money received, the staff person goes to the owner ten or fifteen minutes before the winning number is announced, and waits for the winning number to be transmitted from the Thai Stock market exchange channel. If someone wants to play digits after their chart is closed, the staff will not accept any more bets and so, the player needs to go to other dealers in a hurry, to find out if they can still bet on time. For this small house based digits selling, the winning number is given from the owner, who has a tea shop which displays the winning digits number in the shop. But in reality, I came across the circumstances that some of the players are in very poor condition financially and cannot even afford to buy a cup of tea to drink and sit at the teashop to wait for the winning number. So, some of them sit around the digits selling house, alongside the street, waiting for the winning number with big hopes and excitement. During the break time, the digits selling staff also prepare for another time for selling digits. When the winning number is out, the staff and the owner calculate the total amount of the winning number

and come back to the small house again. And the players who win the two digits numbers come and pick up the money that they have won and play some new digits numbers for the next digits betting session. In this way, the digits selling business is operated four times a day, five week days from Monday to Friday. This is how home based digits selling is operated until 4:30 p.m. in the late afternoon of the fourth and final time of digits playing.

In this home based digits selling, they also accept other kinds of betting: three digits gambling and football gambling. For three digits gambling, it opens only twice, the first and sixteenth of each month, in which the winning numbers are from the first three winning numbers of Thai Official Lottery, and people come and play three digits when the opening day approaches. People also get this information from the Thai Satellite Channel. Another interesting betting operation is football gambling. This gambling has become quite popular among the public now that international sports media is widespread and easy to assess in Myanmar. And for the commercial television channels like Sky Net and MRTV-4, a percentage of their channel selling is partly up to the football match series' like the European Championship or English Premiere League, which they get contracts from other international broadcasting channels to transmit via their own national media. If they cannot get these football matches for each season, it affects the purchasing rate of television channels being sold. Media consumers, particularly those who use it for commercial purposes such as beer shop or tea shop owners count on the media channel, so they can show the football matches, which is one of the ways of persuading customers to come and enjoy their services of food and beverages in the shop. In Pyay city, there also are some small movie theatres which show football matches for a fee, like 200 kyats for each person. Especially on the weekends, these kinds of theatres are filled with football audiences.

For football betting, the way this gambling is operated is quite different from the other two kinds of gambling. Because there are a number of football matches in a day or in a week, the gamblers get the football match series, which is created and printed out by the dealers from the road side beetle shops, tea shops and from the dealers for free. Actually it is a small piece of paper with a series of matches for each day, and the gamblers can choose on which team they want to bet. But the method of betting is a bit

different from other digits gambling. In this research, I will not be able to describe this in details. As I have mentioned above, one of my research places, home based digits dealers also runs football gambling and so, in front of the owner's teashop, there is a beetle shop close to their cement fence. On the wall of this fence, the football match series papers are hung out, and the gamblers come and pick up these papers for their betting. Actually, if we don't look carefully, and if we don't know these papers are hanging out there, for a normal person, it is hard to know about them. But it is well known among the gamblers, which is an example of the hidden structure of how people run the football match gambling.

Hna Lone Htee gambling, three digits and football gambling are all illegal; thus, the dealers are always alert and prepared to hide their evidence and operating tools as much as they can. For this home based operation, they always destroyed all the evidence; the vouchers, ink papers, and all of the other things, by burning them all as soon as the operation is finished. And the owners are always listening to whether the police are taking action in the other places, and come and warn others if another place has police arresting the gambling operators, and subsequently, sometimes tell the staff to stop selling, and move out. But for most of the cases, they obtain the information from the police, who they have previously paid in bribes (*Line Kyae*) (လိငံးဝးဝးဖုးကး), if they are taking action, so the owners can stop and hide their work.

Besides media sports gambling and home based digits selling, another type of digits selling business operates in a different form; the mobile dealer. In fact, this second dealer is what they call the "commissioner", who gets a commission percentage upon the amount of digits sold. Normally, she gets 10% of the amount of digits selling as a commission. And sometimes, she also pockets money from the winners. Moreover, she does not need to invest her own money in this type of work; in other words; she is a second hand digits dealer. Normally, she may sit in a tea shop, while digit gamblers come and gather and discuss about the winning number and bet on her digits charts. And also, she moves from home to home to the gamblers, to bet the numbers when most do not wish to go outside and play this gambling. She also closes the selling charts around fifteen or twenty minutes before the winning number is out. After that, she goes to the main dealer's house to make the financial settlement. After the winning number is

out, she returns to the tea shop, together with the money won by the player. One of my research site was a small teashop where there was no television to show the digits winning numbers, and the players just wait and sit to hear the winning number from the second hand dealer, or sometimes from the people who pass by, coming back from the market or from the place which shows the Thai Stock Exchange market channel. It is a very informal way of playing Hna Lone Htee gambling. More interestingly, the gamblers ask the monks or ladies, or anyone who is familiar with them coming back from the market, about the popular or lucky numbers, and if they like, play these numbers. According to the second mobile dealer, she had less concern with the local authorities because she was running only a small amount of betting and with no specific place of operation. But similar to the other dealers, sometimes, she needed to stop her work when the authorities were investigating this gambling. And she is a purely digits mobile dealer, and does not work the football gambling. The relationship between her and the big dealers is that she is only one of the second hand dealers, and the big owners do not open and operate this gambling in the place. However, they do give digits betting charts to the second hand dealers, so these kind of big digits dealers are called, according to their terms, “*Chart Sar*” in Myanmar, which means they run the business by sharing charts with second hand dealers. For those who can invest a very large amount of money and accept the unlimited betting price, they run their business via the phone, and this kind of betting is mainly based upon the trust relationship. And the difference from other types of gamblers is that they bet in the form of commercial purposes, in which they can invest large amounts money on their favourite numbers systematically calculating the profits and bet. Even though the gamblers do not show up themselves on the scene by communicating by phone to the big dealers, they are playing two digits gambling. In this case, the winning amount and the betting amount, and the financial settlement between the dealer and gambler are made on the final day of the week, on Friday. As I have mentioned earlier, these gamblers are playing for commercial purpose, and sometimes they bet on specific favourite numbers every time gradually increasing the amount of betting, by calculating that they will not lose if the number is out as a winning number, which is called “*Za Toe Lite*” (ဆတိုးငိုတု), in Myanmar. It means increase the betting amount so that they can cover all the investments upon their favourite number. When the gambler bets a large amount of

money on some numbers and if the dealer cannot handle it, he can transfer this betting to the bigger dealers, who may be from their region or from other regions by phone or fax, and the financial settlement is made via bank transfer. For this kind of operation of digits gambling, the most important thing is “Trust”, but there are cases when the dealer or gamblers run away without paying the money that they owe the bettors, especially when they are not financially capable. But nobody can take actions in these cases, for this business itself is illegal.

If we conduct an interpretation of the structure of Hna Lone Htee gambling, it is not possible to leave out the relationship between the dealers and the local authorities. In Pyay city, there are around thirty dealers in various forms operating these three kinds of gambling. And they have to pay bribes, or what they called “*Line Kyae*” in different forms to the local authorities, especially to the police officers. The amount of money taken in by the dealers, determines the amount of the bribe, the higher the take, the higher the bribe and vice versa, and also, depending on the rank of the police officers, the bribe is varied. According to the dealers, there are two kinds of “*Line Kyae*” that they have to deal with. The first one is called *regular “Line Kyae”*, in which they have to pay low ranking officers to higher ranking officers of each quarter from small amounts of bribery to a higher rate, and this can be weekly and monthly. And the number of bribes also varies according to each quarter. Another kind of “*Line Kyae*” is for *special occasions*, like the New Year festival, *Thingyan* festival and so on, in which dealers are asked for donations for the celebration and ceremony, but the amount of money for that donation is already determined by the authorities. Sometimes, the amount is so high the dealers have to try to negotiate with the authorities for a bargain. And if the dealers do not negotiate with the local authorities properly, they said there may be negative repercussions for the business.

According to the Gambling Acts which was approved by the senate in 1986 in Myanmar, in Chapter 2, the authorities can arrest and take action upon gamblers and dealers who play gambling in public areas. In Chapter 3, the authorities can take action upon the place or house where gambling activities are carried out if they have specific information, and they have the full right to search the area. As stated in Chapter 5, those who take part in any kind of gambling will be punished with imprisonment from three

to six months or/and together with this imprisonment a fine of 500 kyats will be charged, and all the evidence and money will be confiscated as common public goods. And if someone commits the same crime again, he will be punished with imprisonment from six months to one year or/and together with this punishment a fine of 1,000 kyats will be charged. According to these gambling acts, the highest punishment is up to five years of imprisonment for gambling. In Chapter 4, it is prohibited for anyone to receive benefits, especially financially, upon any kind of gambling, and it is also not allowed to support and manage a gambling system like a lottery or something similar. Although there are strong acts upon any kind of gambling in Myanmar, two digits, three digits and football gambling is widespread in the public arena and the dealers can run this business by negotiating with the local authorities in various ways.

In this thesis I propose that we can interpret this digits gambling society as a consumer society, of which the conceptualization on the concept of the daily practice of this specific society, into two aspects: strategy and tactic. Michel de Certeau (1984) states that strategy is a practice that is operated by the powerful, the state, social institutions and those who own or command a scientific discourse as such. “Strategy” is a calculus of force relationships which becomes possible when a subject has will and power. A strategy assumes a place that can be circumscribed as proper and thus serve as the generating relations with an exterior distinct from it. On the opposite, tactic is the practice, an everyday practice that is operated by the powerless or marginal people or just ordinary people who live and struggle in the system, here a consumer society. Tactic is not proper, and it depends on time and according to the circumstances and opportunities. In other words, these powerless groups do not have the specific rules and thus, they are created within their own society.

The dealers and gamblers (the powerful and the powerless) have a strong social capital, system of networking and operating this business and try to operate this business in any form, formally and informally; in other words, any effort to beat the system. Through these strategic and tactical aspects we can observe the daily practice of Hna Lone Htee operations, as a field of power, in the setting of Pyay and their will to survive; by negotiating, strong networking, and operating both in secretive and overt forms.

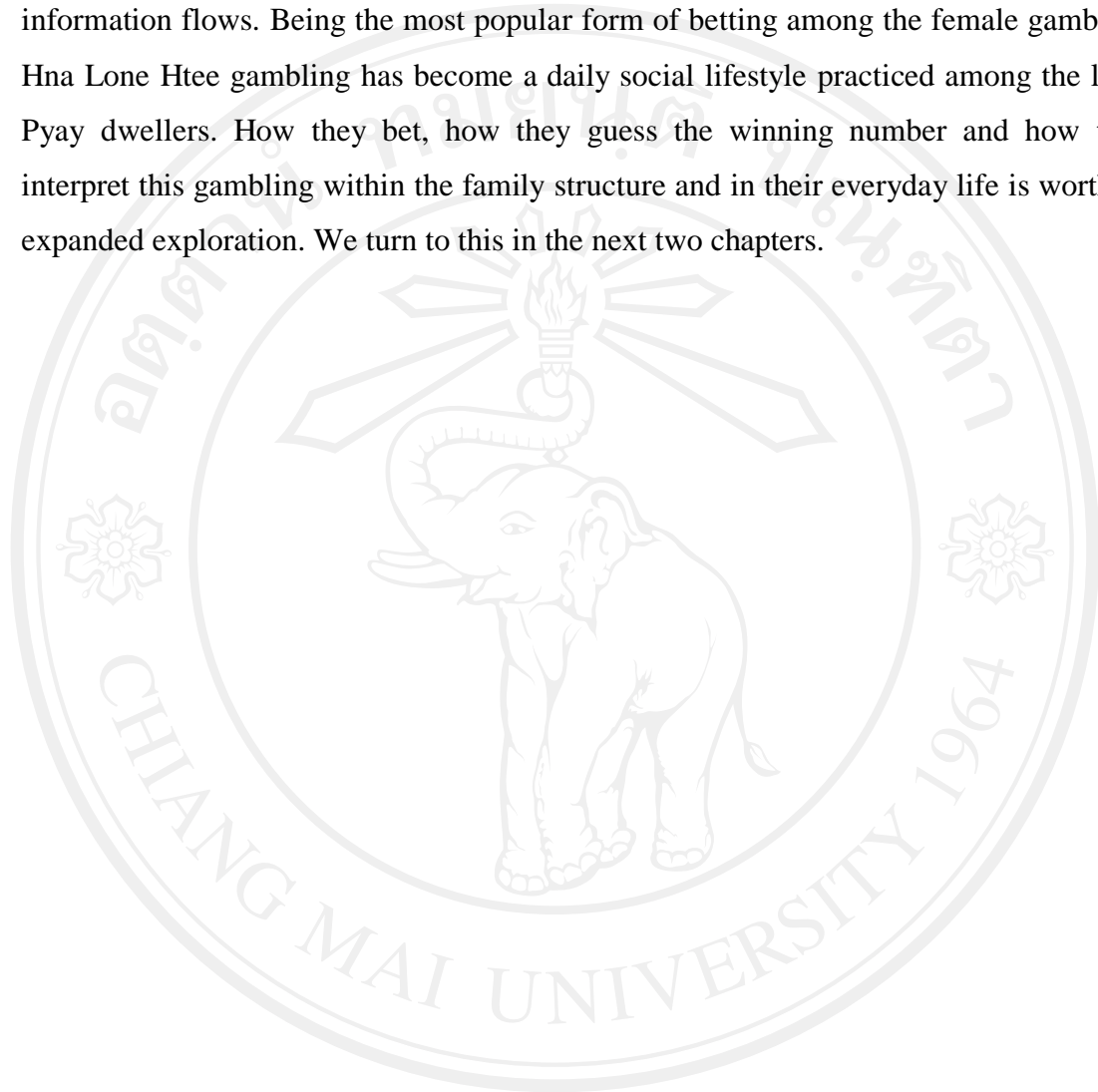
As mentioned earlier, among the three types of popular gambling; football, two digits and three digits gambling, women more often bet on two digits gambling, especially in Pyay. The percentage of people betting on football is largely influenced by the males, both younger and older men, and three digits is also mostly an interest participated in by men. Because two digits gambling is operated five week days and frequently four times per day, people need more time to focus on this betting and the winning numbers, and the amount of the jackpot is lower than three digits gambling. For three digits gambling, if the gambler bets 100 kyats for a number and wins, he can get 50,000 kyats as a reward, which is a big incentive for gamblers, but for two digits gambling, betting of 100 kyats can return only 8,000 or 7,500 kyats to the winner, varying according to the dealers and different places.

One of the reasons women are addicted to two digits gambling is that most of them have to spend their time doing domestic chores such as taking care of their family the entire day, and as a result, they have less chance to go out like men who work outside. Even for some women who work outside, after they finish their work, usually, they come back home and help with the familial duties. So, while they are working at home or going to the market, they have a chance to pursue their luck, a chance to find excitement, and a chance to get more money in their own way by playing two digits gambling. Unlike football gambling, they do not need to go and sit in front of a screen in the tea shop, beer shop or in the small movie theatre to watch football matches. To play Hna Lone Htee takes only five or ten minutes to go make a bet with the dealer. So time consumption is quite low and it is more convenient for housewives in normal conditions. These are some of the factors that drive female gamblers to consider Hna Lone Htee gambling more suitable to their situation.

3.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, the historical background of Pyay has been traced so the people of this city and their way of living and particular socioeconomic conditions can be understood. By examining the social structure in the urban Pyay setting, various kinds of media consumption and changes in daily life activities can be clearly seen. Within this structure, Hna Lone Htee gambling in Pyay exists and grows. Being well structured

through time in hidden forms and dealing with local authorities, the gamblers bet digits by using various methods; traditionally, mathematically and every way they can use and think of with a combination of regional and traditional beliefs, norms, and practices. At the same time taking advantage of and consuming modern technologies, media and information flows. Being the most popular form of betting among the female gamblers, Hna Lone Htee gambling has become a daily social lifestyle practiced among the local Pyay dwellers. How they bet, how they guess the winning number and how they interpret this gambling within the family structure and in their everyday life is worth an expanded exploration. We turn to this in the next two chapters.



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