

CHAPTER 4

Housewives, Social Life and Hna Lone Htee Gambling in Pyay

In the previous chapter, I have described and discussed about the popularity of Hna Lone Htee gambling in Myanmar, and how it is structured, operated, and its popularity among the female gamblers in the daily life of Pyay dwellers. In this chapter, the daily life of the female gamblers, their routine practices, involvement in Hna Lone Htee gambling, negotiation with the social system or powerful local administrations, and their attainment of numbers will be explored. The social setting of the female gamblers, their background and family life history will also be described.

4.1 Housewife in Urban Pyay

In Myanmar society today, the present roles of women have still not significantly changed from the traditional cultural practices; taking care of household chores, taking care of children, in addition to working for family income. Especially for the housewife, both rural and urban, the income of a family is mainly managed by the mother. Pyay is a city where Myanmar traditions and social practices mix together with modernization and the global flow of information. In other words, the city itself is not too outdated, but also not too fashionably cosmopolitan. With the downfall of economic conditions and inflation, trying to make do for a family is not an easy task. Most of the housewives in my research site are just purely housewives and only some work as government staff. But all of them are trying to manage family income as best as they can. As they perform these more traditional duties, modern products, materials and technologies are now streaming into their lives and environment.

The role of women in Myanmar society is shaped according to the religious and traditional social context of Buddhist society. Even though the husband or the head of the family is honored as “Ain-Oo-Nat” or the spirit of the house, women take on a share of the family responsibilities in some ways, and most of the domestic tasks are done by

the housewife. And according to tradition, the Myanmar family is an extended family unit composed of the grandparents and siblings of husband and wife, who help around the house and take care of the children. Only in the well-to-do income families is a part time or full time maid hired, generally. But in my research place, most of the female gamblers are not from well off families and thus, many of the family responsibilities are fully on the shoulders of the women.

4.2 Old Age Female Gamblers and *Hna Lone Htee*

Among the fifteen key informants, five women are above sixty years of age, and one is retired from her work and surviving with a pension provided by the government (literally the amount of money is not much, which is around 20,000 kyats (US \$23) per month). This woman's home town is Mawlamyine, in the Mon State, and she used to work as a teacher. When she got married, she moved to Pyay together with her husband, but after she had three children, two daughters and one son, her husband passed away when the children were still young. She said that raising the three children on a government salary was not an easy job because the salary for a teacher was quite low. When she retired, she started to work as a tour guide, mostly based in Pyay, and although this work was not a full time job, it could support her survival in some ways. But in the current situation, because of her health and her age, she cannot work as a tour guide anymore, and she only teaches one or two young students in English speaking. Her two daughters are already married, one is staying near her home, but ten years ago, her only son suddenly disappeared and has not contacted the family, and she has no clue of his whereabouts, or whether or not he is still alive. It made her very depressed and sad, and according to her was a reason to start playing *Hna Lone Htee* gambling at that time. She said that playing digits gambling made her escape from stress and sadness maybe for a short period, and it was a moment when she could choose her luck and her life; it gave her excitement. However, her daughters fault her for playing digits gambling and being a Christian, playing digits gambling made her feel like a sinner.

According to Richard Epstein, the essence of the gambling phenomenon is ***decision making***. The act of making a decision consists of selecting one course of action or strategy from among the set of admissible strategies (Epsten, Richard A.

2009). For the retired teacher playing Hna Lone Htee gambling, in order to guess the winning number she used her own mathematical way based on the old winning number. And she said there were lots of ways to calculate the winning number, but she preferred to calculate it based on the old winning numbers and also played on the popular numbers spoken about among the gamblers. Her calculating cannot be true every time, but when she won, it made her happy and she spent up to 1,500 to 2,000 kyats (around US \$2.3) per day gambling on the two digits. And she said she did not play much, especially during the beginning period, because her daughters found fault with this and because of the religious moral contradictions. However, she still played Hna Lone Htee gambling if she was in the mood.

The second key informant was also in her 60s, and she was born in Pyay and got married and has spent her whole life in this place. She has five children and her husband was a business man who is not doing business anymore. All of her children are already married and have set up their own businesses in the city. And currently, she is living with two of her children's families and grandchildren, and her husband who spends most of his time in religious activities. They used to work a business together with their sons that provided a decent income, and the family business was in very good condition until their only daughter created debt problems. She had over spent her funds on lots of the family properties and her parents had to solve the social and financial problems, which drove them into financial trouble. She said her daughter created their problems, both financial and social, and even though the other siblings (her sons) and the relatives blamed her daughter's actions, they could not neglect her because she is their daughter. All of her children are married and not much to worry about except her daughter, sometimes. She and her husband handed their business over to their sons, and now their monthly income is money generated by their children. They have a shelter to live in, enough food to survive, but they have to survive from their children's support, so they cannot spend as much as they wish as in the past without their own personal income. Thus, this deprivation and reliance on their children made them feel a sense of identity loss, she said.

Even though her husband actively participated in religious activities, he was addicted to “Chae” or three digits gambling and spent a lot of his money on this gambling habit. Generally, he was busy with the monks, “*Boe Daw*” (ဘိုးဝေတာဝ) and digits charts calculating the three digits numbers. His wife used to manage the family income, work together with her husband in the business and was a rich housewife, but now, she has no chance to participate in those activities and her financial situation is not as luxurious as it once was. She stated that she did not want to ask for money from her children because they had their own family and children to support, and she appreciates them supporting her, but she did not want to be a burden on them. The monthly support that she got from her children was enough for surviving, but if she wanted to spend more on donations or social activities, she did not want to ask for more. So, playing Hna Lone Htee could fulfil her wish in some ways. Unlike the past, she does not need to do household chores and family business, so she has more free time, and one of the ways she spends her time is playing Hna Lone Htee gambling. The negative side is her addiction to digits gambling which sometimes absences her from social activities and family matters. Starting from the early morning, she is quite busy thinking about and calculating the winning number, so sometimes she totally forgot to cook food demanded by her husband. Although her children do not blame her much for using money on digits gambling, she still felt it was not a good way to spend the money. And she always replied to her children that she is not playing Hna Lone Htee gambling much, it is “*A Pyin Pyae Kasar Tar Par*” (အပ်ငှားဝေဂျာ ကစားတာ). She also said she has never been absent from religious activities although she played digits gambling. She spent around 10,000 kyats (around US \$12) per week on two digits gambling.

The third key informant played Hna Lone Htee for commercial purposes and she spent a certain amount of money on this gambling. The way she played digits gambling was in the secretive form as she herself never showed up at the digit selling places, instead she used the phone to contact the dealer or send someone to play two digits gambling for her. Her technique was to calculate the betting amount and the winning amount and based on the balance, she adjusted the betting amount on the digits. Her husband is a high ranking officer and the family is quite well off. In the current

situation, she does not need to worry about her children and stays together with her husband and grandchild. Even when she placed a large amount on her bet in digits, it was in credit form, and the dealers *trusted* her and made a financial settlement at the end of the final round of the day or the last Friday of the week. In the dealer's opinion, she was well *trusted* financially and even if she did lose, she eventually paid all she needed to settle up. The dealers also say this kind of business is basically based on a "*trust relationship*" because being an illegal business, if the players run away without paying debt, the dealers could not take any action and vice versa for the players. This informant said that playing Hna Lone Htee gambling for her was partially for business purposes by always calculating the profits and betting on that. When staying at home during this process, she had a chance to get more income on her own, she said.

A relative viewpoint is that gambling represents a "*safety valve*". Instead of turning against the original source of their deprivations and unfulfilled aspirations, gamblers are relieved through gambling of some of their frustrations. Some people may play gambling for fun, some maybe for a certain purpose and some maybe for a better future or financial reason. The possibility of earning "real money" by normal work is greatly restricted, if not impossible. On the other hand, there are people who make fortunes quickly through gambling. Many people gamble because they have needs that cannot be met through earned income. They barely make ends meet, and gambling is their "opportunity" to acquire material comforts.

Apart from the above three key informants, the fourth key informant had very different reasons for getting involved in Hna Lone Htee gambling. While I was conducting the research at the digits dealers' work place in the morning, she arrived with a small piece of paper and some money in her hand to bet on the digits. She seemed tired from walking. And she told the digit selling staff the series numbers, but when the betting was done and she received the voucher, she started another digits bet for a different player. In fact, she came to the betting house not to play for herself, but as a representative for different digit players who could not come to the dealer's working place. When the first round's winning number was out, she came again to collect the winning amount and bet again for other players, according to their

instructions. And for herself, she played only a small amount by choosing the popular number she was instructed to bet. She was nearly seventy and looked poor wearing an old slipper and a hat to protect herself from the heat of the sun. She did this for other rounds of digits gambling for the whole day going back and forth to the dealer's place.

When I got a chance to talk to the fourth key informant, she explained her conditions and why she came to the dealers' house often as a representative. She was living with her husband, who was working as a security staff at a purified water factory, close to my research site. She and her husband were living in that factory compound. The salary as a security staff at the factory was not much, and her children stayed away from them. Her husband could not work another heavy job because of his age. When people asked her to go and bet Hna Lone Htee, she got some pocket money from them, and also from some of the dealers. If the players won Hna Lone Htee, they gave her more money for being a runner. Although the pocket money she got from each player was not much, when she helped three or four people, with the total pocket money she could buy some vegetables and meat for her husband. And she also played two digits gambling if the number was really popular and if she thought she could make some more money on that number, but everything was based on *luck*, she said. This is quite similar to what Thomas Veblen states, gambling in another aspect is *belief in luck*. A chief factor in the gambling habit is the belief in luck and this belief is apparently traceable, at least in its elements, to a stage in human evolution antedating the predatory culture (Veblen, Thomas. 1899).

The fifth key informant is from a village around thirty miles away from Pyay. But she is currently staying with her daughter's family. She is a 'hard core' Hna Lone Htee player because she always came and enjoyed betting on digits gambling. Every morning when the dealer started the business, she came with a piece of paper in which her best digits numbers were written down, and she bet on these numbers. And if she won the bet, instead of keeping the rewards, she normally would bet again on the next round. While I was conducting the research, the Thai MCOT channel 9 was broadcasting ASEAN sport competitions and sometimes the stock market was not on the channel, so Hna Lone Htee gambling had to stop for a short period. At that time, the

dealer had to give back all the money bet by the players. But for the fifth key informant, instead of taking the money back, she bet all of it on the next round saying, “To play Hna Lone Htee is our work, whether the winning number is on the television channel is their work”. Being a ‘hard core’ Hna Lone Htee gambler, her family members, especially her daughter did not favour her playing. Her daughter felt that her mother should focus more on religion rather than digits gambling.

In this section, the life history, the family conditions and the different reasons for gambling of my key female informants of an elderly age was described. Understanding these factors can help one to comprehend their attitude and mind set. Gambling itself is not only a matter of winning or losing or a matter of money, but springs from a mixture of a variety of elements: incentive, motivation, societal influences, and traditional and religious beliefs. In addition, gambling is a kind of “*escape hatch*”, for a short moment for those who cannot control their life, their family matters and even their own desire. And for these people gambling in their life is taking risk with their own money and at the same time, challenging their luck.

4.3 Young Female Gamblers, Social Life and Hna Lone Htee Gambling

Hna Lone Htee gambling is a social activity and collective activity among gamblers and so; in this section the meaning of playing Hna Lone Htee as a collective activity in their daily life activities, and how they interpret this gambling will be explored.

4.3.1 Hna Lone Htee Gambling as Social Activity

As I have mentioned in the previous chapter, my research is based on two digits dealers, one is home based digit selling and the other is a mobile type. The dealer who worked as the mobile type was usually a young lady in her 30s, and generally, she based digits selling in the small café shops. The tea shop is, in fact, very small and busy mostly only in the morning time. The owner of this shop was an old lady and the shop was also her home. Near the café shop was the “*Shwe Hin Thar Myo Thi*” or Shwe Hin Thar New Quarter, which was established in 1954, where apartments were allowed to

hire for government staff. But in the current situation, this quarter is in the centre of the town because the town itself has expanded more and more through time. And the rental prices for these apartments are really cheap, and all the people living there are working as government staff in different departments. Behind the tea shop is a church compound, where Chin ethnic groups live and worship at the church. The tea shop is also close to the Pyay industrial zone, where most of the small factories operate. Around the Shwe Hin Thar quarter, there are about ten monasteries, a monastery school, and a government primary school. Although the tea shop is not on the main road, it is on the short cut to the market, which is around fifteen minutes walking distance from the apartments.

Every morning starting from around 8 a.m., the tea shop was busy with customers for breakfast, coffee and some snacks. Around the tea shop were also some shops selling breakfast foods. And the mobile dealer sat in the tea shop and the players came and had breakfast and discussed among themselves about digits gambling. They also asked about the popular numbers to passerbyers returning from the market, “Do you hear of any nice or hot digits number from the market?” It was a common greeting phrase that people used in the current situation in Pyay because Hna Lone Htee gambling is very popular in the society. Even in the market place while they were selling things, the shopkeepers and street vendors chatted with each other and played this digits gambling as they sold their products. Even if a monk was coming back from collecting donations of food from the houses, the players queried the monk in the same manner.

At the tea shop, there was also a man among the players who was well known as an expert of calculating digits winning numbers. They usually asked him to calculate the winning number for them. In fact, there were a lot of different methods in calculating the winning number for the players. But for him, he based his predictions upon the previous winning numbers mixed with different interpretation methods to calculate. As an example: the gamblers used “*Power Number*” (ပေါ်ဝင်ကန့်), according to their term, in which five digits are based and the other five digits are used as a power number:

0 power 5

1 power 6

2 power 7

3 power 8

4 power 9

5 power 0

and vice versa. Based on this power digit pair, they changed the numbers and calculated the winning number. If a digit number was 43, they may change the first number to a “power number” (4 to 9) and so it would be 93.

Another way that Hna Lone Htee players chose their numbers was called “*Nakhat*” or “*Nakhat Number*” (နက္ခတ် ဂဏန်း), in Myanmar Language, which used astrological signs of the seasons or meanings related to the galaxy. For this method of calculating, the digits are changed in the following way:

0 nakhat 7

1 nakhat 8

2 nakhat 4

3 nakhat 5

4 nakhat 2

5 nakhat 3

6 nakhat 9

and vice versa. These two methods of “*Power Number*” (ပါဝါ ဂဏန်း) and “*Nakhat Number*” (နက္ခတ် ဂဏန်း) are popular and commonly used by most of the players

although they themselves do not know exactly who invented this digit calculating system.

Even though the digit calculating man could not calculate correctly in every round, he could demonstrate his particular technique in guessing the winning numbers by a series of winning digits and so, the players paid respect to him as an expert on Hna Lone Htee gambling. This expert explained his understanding about Hna Lone Htee gambling by saying his calculations were based on a mathematic way based on his own trust. He trusted in this method to get the winning number, and calculating for the winning number for other people was enjoyable to him and a form of voluntary work. When people won according to his calculations, he was very pleased and sometimes received pocket money as sign of respect from the winners. Although people knew that Hna Lone Htee gambling was based on the Thai Stock Exchange index and not related to these calculating methods, most people wanted to try to guess the winning number. And believing upon luck and the feeling of excitement before the winning number is out are some of the reasons that made people continue to play it. The expert also confided in me by saying that people could not play as much as the previous period because of police taking actions upon this gambling, due to people's betting greedily without control, and sometimes betting everything they own on the numbers. For him, every morning, he sat at the tea shop with a cup of tea, using a pen and a book, writing down the previous winning numbers and thinking with a serious face, and players lingered around waiting for his guess at the winning number. This was one of the maybe typical social scenes of Hna Lone Htee gambling among the dealers and the digits calculating expert at the tea shop.

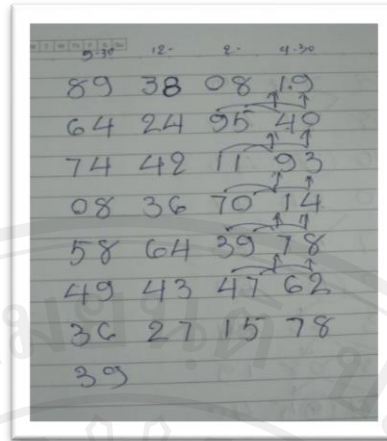


Figure 4.1 Sample of calculating the winning number in a mathematical way (Source: Mi Mi Cho)

4.3.2 Hna Lone Htee Gambling and Young Female Gamblers

As Clifford Geertz described in “Deep Play: Notes on the Balinese Cockfight”, betting on cockfighting among the Balinese villagers had its deeper meanings. It was more than just money. It became a social activity, ritual, and self-presentation in that locality. Cockfight playing in Bali was relevant to kinship, self-identity, and Balinese masculinity. Through this gambling, the village gamblers, almost all who were men, established close relationships with each other, a social unity amongst themselves and individual self-identity. From my observation, I would argue that, similarly to Balinese cockfight, Hna Lone Htee gambling is not just simply an economic activity, but a social act that reflects people’s networks and the way they make sense of the world and the digits gambling society. According to Herman’s work “*Gambling as work*” (1963), commercialized horse racing in the United States was a social phenomenon that different status groups participated in for different reasons. He pointed out that the structure of this gambling and the way it was played among different groups, who came from different class and background, were related to a form of participation and gamblers created their own space or a specific membership or society at the horse race track. By analyzing how the horse race gamblers used their money to win at betting, Herman proposed that the gamblers might not be taking risks on their bet but used the gambling to “*beat the system.*” According to him horse race gambling occasionally allows the bettors to beat the system through rational means and thus permits them to

demonstrate to themselves and their associates a certain accomplishment. This led to another interpretation of the gambling which focused on the gambler's self-esteem and social gratification through consumption (playing horse race as such) rather than production.

Inside the tea shop the mobile type dealer was selling digits. Every morning, a woman sat inside the tea shop with a voucher book, A4 papers, and a small purse which held the betting money. If a stranger came and sat at down in the tea shop, he might not notice that she was a digits dealer, but for the Hna Lone Htee players, she was well known. Her life story goes like this. She moved to Pyay city from another township around the Pyay area, and got married with her husband and eventually had two children. But because of the economic hardships, her husband went to Malaysia as a migrant worker two years ago. He sent money back during the first period, but after one year, she lost connection with him, and no more remittances were sent to her; thus, the family's economic condition was getting tough. Her two children were still students, so she started to take part in digits gambling as a digits dealer. However, she had no money to run this business, so she worked as a digit seller for the big digit dealers for a commission percentage based on how many digits bets she could sell. She said that her family had been surviving on this work for over one year, but in the current situation, the Hna Lone Htee business was not as lucrative as it was previously. In the past, people played more. Because the government had begun taking action on this gambling, sometimes she had to stop her business, but she did not pay any bribes to the police as she sold only a small amount of digits. Consequently, she was very careful due to government action upon this gambling. If she heard there was a police raid on the gambling establishments, she stopped her digits selling immediately. As a commission, she got around 4,000 to 5,000 kyats (around US \$6) per day. She said this digits selling was risky and if she got caught, she could be put in prison, but she had no money to invest and worked in another business and did not need to go to other places for work and could take care of her children. Even though the income was not much, her family could survive. She also said that she did not intend to work digits selling her whole life. When her children grew up, she wanted to change to another job. Usually, just ten or fifteen minutes before the two digits winning number was about to be announced from

the Thai Satellite channel, she stopped her business, collected the money and went to the big dealer's house to make the financial settlement. She also went house to house to the digits players who could not come and play at the tea shop. Actually, the tea shop was only a small one and it did not have a television or satellite dish to show the Thai Stock Exchange Index channel; therefore, she needed to find out the winning number from the big dealer's house and return to the cafe shop again.

Some key informants among the digits players had a formal education, but two of my key informants did not have this state schooling. When I was conducting the research at the tea shop, a young lady was sitting and waiting for the winning number. She had a basket in her hand and she was stopping in on the way to the market. But she was spending all of her money at Hna Lone Htee gambling instead of buying fruit. She was a street vender who walked around and sold seasonal fruits in the city. When the winning number was released, she did not win, and all of her money was gone from betting on the morning round. So, she went back to her house again to get kitchen accessories or any valuable thing that could be exchanged for money to use to bet with.

When I asked her about her family and her work, she said she had a very low education and had only attended up to the third grade and she could not write very well. But she could still write Myanmar language to some extent and she could calculate numbers very well. Her husband passed away one year ago, and she has four children. At the time that we spoke, the eldest daughter was seventeen years old but left school after fourth grade. Her second son was a monk at the monastery. The third child was working as construction worker earning 800 kyats (around US \$1) per day, and the youngest one was still in primary school. Her mother also stayed with her and she also enjoyed playing Hna Lone Htee gambling. But her mother was not in good health. She said that the expenses for the family were around 3,000 kyats (around US \$4) per day. Even with the daily salary from her son and her by working as street vendors, they were still struggling. When I asked her about Hna Lone Htee gambling and her experience, she said she could not play as much as she did in the previous time. When her husband was still alive, she could play more. She used to bet around 20,000 kyats (US \$24) per day in Hna Lone Htee gambling. Sometimes she gained a profit when she played on

many numbers at a time. But now, she does not have much money and so, she could only bet small amounts. Even though she could not calculate the digits numbers systematically like other people, she mostly used a method like “Power” or “Nakhat” to bet on her favourite numbers. She also said that she waited and listened to the winning numbers and based on the winning number series, she calculated her number. When she lost the digits betting, she said it was up to our luck or “Kan” or fortune. She also said in the past days, her street vending work was much better than the current situation. Now all living costs are getting higher and higher and it is hard to make ends meet. But playing Hna Lone Htee could help support her family in some ways, if she won. Like her, her mother played Hna Lone Htee gambling, but sometimes, if she had no money to bet, she came to the tea shop and listened to what others were talking about in regard to Hna Lone Htee. When I asked her mother to talk about Hna Lone Htee, she immediately accepted and she said that she likes tea, which she cannot buy and drink regularly.

According to the mobile digits dealer, the lower educated digits player and her mother, their life and external factors like the higher price of living, economic hardships and family problems created a vicious cycle. Being a housewife and a mother, they had to work in any way as much as they could for the survival of their family. Their life was at risk enough with these factors. But on the other hand, Hna Lone Htee gambling was an “escape hatch”, an “escape from the routine and boredom of modern industrial life in which the sense of creation and the instinct of workmanship has been lost”. The possibility of earning “real money” by normal work was greatly restricted, if not impossible. Hna Lone Htee gambling gave them excitement and the hope, that they could make a fortune quickly through gambling. Many people gambled because they had needs that could not be met through regularly earned income. They could barely make ends meet, and gambling was their “opportunity” to acquire material comforts.

Different from the above low income Hna Lone Htee gamblers and dealers, another key informant had a different situation in enjoying this digits gambling. She was around twenty six years old, and she had two children. She had been married since she was young. Her husband was from a rich family, and at this time, her husband was working together with his parents. They did not need to worry about the family

expenses and her children could attend good schools. She started to play Hna Lone Htee gambling in her university student life, before she had married. Being the youngest daughter in the family, she was favoured and her parents used to pay her debts for playing gambling, not only Hna Lone Htee gambling but also football gambling. When she married, her husband was also betting a lot on football gambling. They would bet huge amounts of money every day on digits and football gambling. Both of their parents did not know that they were addicted to gambling like this. She said she wanted to get her own income from this digits gambling and sometimes she also worked as a dealer.

In Gerda Reith's work of "The Experience of Play", the gamblers experience excitement while awaiting the outcome of their stake, which is called "the thrill of the play". In other words, the gamblers are conducting a world of adventure in a hidden form, escaping from the real world, maybe for a moment. Reith also described that people face *boredom* between the pause or break time of plays, which makes them repeat playing the game again and again. This is the same condition for the above young female gambler. She started to play Hna Lone Htee gambling to get her own income and to escape boredom and experience excitement, but later on, she could not control herself and could not stop betting because she used a method called "**Za Toe**" (ဆတိုးလိုက်) or increasing the betting amount of specific numbers by calculating the profit. According to that method, a person gambles based on a number like 9 and the total betting number is nineteen starting from **09, 19, 29, 39, 49, 59, 69, 79, 89, 99, 98, 97, 96, 95, 94, 93, 92, 91, 90**. She continuously bet on these 9 based numbers by increasing the betting amounts time to time so that she could cover the whole betting amount, until one of these number was out as the winning number. But when the winning number was not out and when she had to invest a lot, it turned into financial difficulties. She would not only play Hna Lone Htee, but also football gambling together with her husband and so, when they needed money, they started to borrow money on interest from other friends. Through time, the amount of money that they had borrowed from each friend was not much, but when combined with all the borrowed money, they could not pay it back, and finally she and her husband ran away without paying their debt. Their friends said they did not know that the couple played this much, and they trusted them to return the money.

These kinds of social problems can be seen often in the Hna Lone Htee gambling society. Some players do not run away, but they have to sell all of their property to pay the debt, and there are also cases when the whole family commits suicide because they cannot pay back the interest and the money borrowed from others. Even though the chance to win is not much, people still think that they can win and gambling can fulfil their wishes. That drives the *motivation* for people to continue playing (Berger, Edmund, 1957).

Another key informant was in her 40s, working as government staff and she had two children. Her husband also worked in the same office with her. Their family migrated to Pyay for their work duty eighteen years ago. Now, their elder daughter is also working at the same office and their family income mostly relied on their salary. She said most of her colleagues also enjoyed both two digits and three digits gambling in the work place and at home. She used digit charts to calculate winning numbers, and her betting amounts were not so large according to their income. She used around 5,000- 10,000 kyats (6- 12 US\$) per week for Hna Lone Htee gambling. And she said the reason that she played this gambling was to get extra income. And her family members did not judge her for playing this. Sometimes, for digits numbers, if she heard some monks or religious persons could give the right numbers, she went and asked for the number. Similar to other key informants, she said whether she won the Hna Lone Htee gambling was based upon luck, and if she did win, she could spend more money on her family. And she said she had limits in playing digits gambling so that she did not overuse the family income.

Similar to the above key informant, another young lady had her own reasons for playing Hna Lone Htee gambling. She was 38 years old and had three daughters. Her husband worked at the ice factory and that work provided them with a home to live in. With her husband's salary, their expenses were not completely covered, and all of her daughters were still students and so, she had to work too. She sometimes bought vegetables and meat from the market and sold them back as a street vendor. If she could not do this work, she opened a small shop in front of her house to sell some snacks with the permission of the factory owner. She said to make ends meet was very difficult and

she wished her daughters were educated. So, she and her husband tried their best to provide for them. As their children grew older, their educational expenses became higher and higher. Not being educated, she and her husband had to survive as work to mouth workers, and she did not want her daughter to be like them. She said by playing digits gambling, she could get some extra money easily and it gave her hope. She mostly played on the popular numbers and did not know much about calculating methods. She also fully trusted in “Luck” (๓).

Another key informant said that she had to visit the Green Goddess and offer a green scarf because she prayed to win the digits gambling and promised that if she won, she would offer the scarf back to the Goddess. If her wish was fulfilled, it was because of the care of the Green Goddess, she said. She was around thirty years old and did not have a chance to have a formal education. She worked as a part time maid and her husband also opened a small motorcycle repair shop. With two children, her family also survived hand to mouth. But she played digit gambling occasionally upon popular numbers.

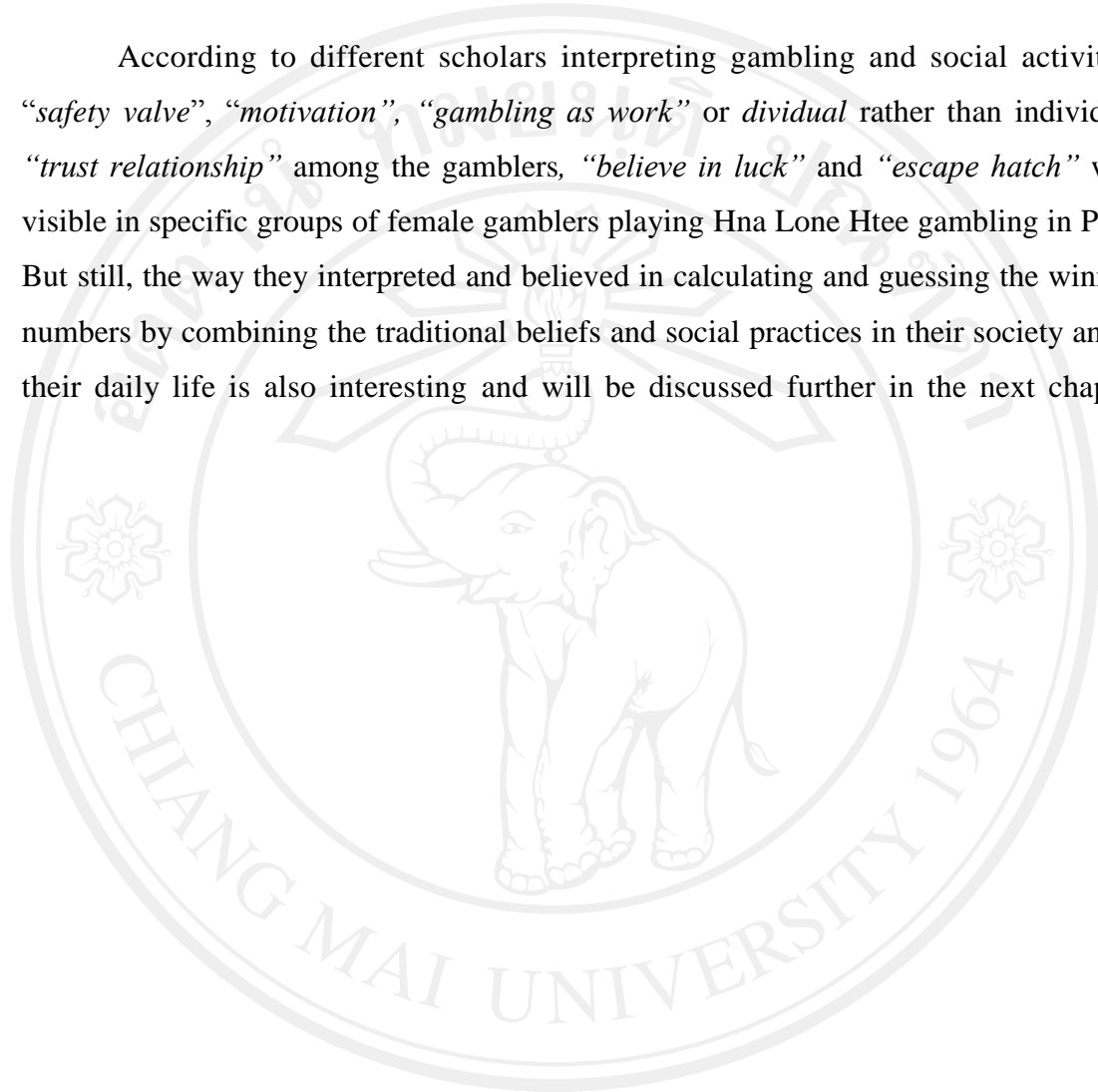
All the above key informants had a few things in common; they believed in “Luck” when they played Hna Lone Htee gambling, they felt positive that they would never jeopardize the family income because of this gambling, and they never thought of digit playing as “risk taking”. Instead, they were trying to grab best luck in their own way, according to them. Their daily life was filled with bad financial difficulties and even if they had some problems like bad health, most of them were ready to go into debt if need be. In this situation, playing Han Lone Htee gambling gave them hope to get extra income and motivated them to keep on playing. And their traditional beliefs were also mixed with their social practices of trying to guess winning number.

4.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, the life history and different social backgrounds of local female gamblers and their reasons for participating in Hna Lone Htee gambling were described. Together with their beliefs, cognitive processes and some calculating techniques for guessing the winning number of Hna Lone Htee gambling were discussed. On the one

hand, all these gamblers faced economic hardships and social conditions which they could not change or resist, but on the other hand, via Hna Lone Htee gambling, they tried to resist and create their own way to survive, which can be understood as “strategy” and “tactic”, according to Michel de Certeau.

According to different scholars interpreting gambling and social activities, “safety valve”, “motivation”, “gambling as work” or *dividual* rather than individual, “trust relationship” among the gamblers, “believe in luck” and “escape hatch” were visible in specific groups of female gamblers playing Hna Lone Htee gambling in Pyay. But still, the way they interpreted and believed in calculating and guessing the winning numbers by combining the traditional beliefs and social practices in their society and in their daily life is also interesting and will be discussed further in the next chapter.



ลิขสิทธิ์มหาวิทยาลัยเชียงใหม่
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