

CHAPTER 5

Guessing the Digits Numbers: Guessing and Praying For Numbers

Digit gambling in Myanmar started from the betting of digits from the state lottery and when it was being banned by changing the government lottery system, the dealers used Thai Stock Index numbers as the winning numbers in Hna Lone Htee gambling. By using the transnational media satellite channel, the winning number is consumed and played. The Thai Stock Index (SET) was established in April 30, 1975 by the National Economic and Social Development Plan (1969) with the purpose of supporting the promotion of economic growth and stability as well as to develop the kingdom's standard of living with the name "The Securities Exchange of Thailand". And on January 1, 1991, its name was formally changed to "The Stock Exchange of Thailand" (SET) with the vision; "Empowering business and investors through stock market strengths to match the right financial opportunities". And it supports a market or centre for the trading of listed securities and promoting financial planning, as well as, providing related services connected to such activities, without distributing any profit to its members in the Thai national economy. The SET market index is transmitted via Thai satellite channel 9.

When the dealers started to use this stock index as the winning number in Hna Lone Htee gambling in Myanmar, people tried to guess the winning numbers not based on the stock market, but rather on their ability to calculate in mathematical ways, use various kinds of digits charts, and interpret their dreams and life events based on their beliefs and their social practices, both in traditional and modern ways. The daily life of digits players is related to these social practices and their ideology, their religious background, and their beliefs in interpreting the Hna Lone Htee winning number itself. This betting system is a well-structured social practice and will be explained in this chapter.

5.1 Digits Charts, Signs and Symbols for Hna Lone Htee Gambling

When playing Hna Lone Htee in Myanmar, people used different methods: both by traditional and modern means, based on different kinds of Hna Lone Htee digits charts spread amongst the gamblers. And each digit chart has its own different style and ideology to guess the winning numbers. Some are simply based on scientific or mathematical ways while others are a mixture of traditional and religious practices, signs and symbols. And there are a number of different charts that gamblers used to get the winning numbers. All of these are a blend of modernity and tradition in the real practice of Hna Lone Htee gambling in Myanmar.

5.1.1 “Golden TRIANGLE Thai Four Digits Number” Digit Chart

Friday night at a photocopy shop in Pyay city, the staff was busy typing the digits charts and copying thousands of these charts so that they could be distributed to the market on time. On the computer screen, there was a chart of Microsoft Excel and in the top left corner was written “Date” and vertically were four spaces filled with “9:30, 12:05, 2:00, and 4:30” in series eight times. Horizontally were five week days: “MON, TUE, WED, THU, FRI” in series written down four times. And there were altogether “640” chart spaces in which the winning numbers of past Hna Lone Htee were written down. Some spaces were filled with the sign “©” which represented the time the Hna Lone Htee winning number was not out on the satellite channel, maybe because there were some SEA Games being broadcasted (during my research period). The top of the digit chart had the title “*Golden TRIANGLE THAI FOUR DIGITS NUMBER*” in bold letters and two doves. At the end of the paper was a big box, in which some special two digits numbers were written down as “A Htoo Key” (အထူးဗန်ကယ့်) in Myanmar language, which means “Special Key Numbers”. There was also the digit number “5” in the triangle. The opposite side of the paper also had the date and time digits charts. On that side, there were clock pictures of the four digits winning time. And in the boxes, it was written, “*if u want to be a rich man, bet on 5, 1, 5, and 4*” at 9:30 a.m. and 12:05 a.m., during 30/1/2012 and 3/2/2012. This kind of chart was published for each week and there were similar charts for Hna Lone Htee gambling with different names like, “*Super*

(*Special*) THAI FOUR DIGIT NUMBER”. According to the copy shop owner, they got these digits charts from the formal capital Yangon, and also from an expert who came to the shop and gave them the charts to type and print for each week. These digits charts were sold in specific shops and some market places in the city, mostly being sold in a secret way, but the digits gamblers knew where to buy these charts. The digits players chose their favourite digit charts preferring the charts which could give the right numbers most and bet upon those digits, signs and symbols. For those who were really interested in Hna Lone Htee gambling, these digits charts were worth enough to buy and calculate the winning number based on the number given. The cost for these digit charts was fifty kyats (US \$0.16). During my research, I also talked with the photocopy shop owner and some other people, who did not play Hna Lone Htee, about their views on these charts and digits gambling. The photocopy shop owner was a young man in his 30s and he said they had to look carefully at filling in the digits on the chart, and there so many digits that sometimes, the number given to them to fill in was not so clear. So sometimes they filled in the unclear digits with the one they wished to fill the gap. And according to one man, who was well educated and who never played Hna Lone Htee gambling, his view upon these charts and the gambling was a bit pessimistic. He pointed out that all of the one hundred numbers of two digits were put together on the chart and none of these one hundred numbers was missing, so no matter what the winning number was, it would be the right number on the chart. On the other hand, players used their own methods based on the past winning numbers, choosing their favourite numbers from the chart to bet on Hna Lone Htee gambling. This digits chart was favoured more by Hna Lone Htee players who based their deductions on the mathematical method. And they also used the methods “*Power*” and “*Nakhat*” that I described in the previous chapter. And if we compare this chart with other kinds of digit charts, this kind of chart has less signs and symbols of religious or traditional things.

DATE		9:30	12:05	2:00	4:30	9:30	12:05	2:00	4:30	9:30	12:05	2:00	4:30	9:30	12:05	2:00	4:30	9:30	12:05	2:00	4:30											
MON	94	08	84	19	14	64	36	92	44	64	58	74	11	24	48	92	12	88	80	35	40	17	45	71	18	25	67	64	16	86	89	80
TUE	12	06	95	96	12	37	61	43	33	47	70	95	67	86	79	01	18	29	77	10	41	30	75	67	73	92	89	53	86	41	20	93
WED	24	48	39	41	39	70	46	00	80	70	53	74	20	18	60	35	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙
THU	32	93	17	77	33	27	73	68	27	63	76	74	93	84	04	55	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙
FRI	41	49	40	98	92	40	43	76	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙
MON	92	56	09	60	78	96	21	82	63	53	97	70	30	09	83	39	37	71	82	75	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙
TUE	25	92	30	38	39	03	66	73	50	68	57	14	52	84	39	45	70	60	40	83	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙
WED	30	50	02	93	36	15	05	74	69	07	24	14	69	22	03	44	94	35	92	66	35	18	72	10	75	98	88	10	31	74	69	04
THU	80	58	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙
FRI	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙
MON	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙
TUE	37	56	83	16	89	62	65	98	84	60	55	85	97	62	89	63	48	02	52	59	31	76	82	46	54	60	17	27	15	57	47	74
WED	04	63	61	85	89	65	20	44	79	52	81	98	03	20	47	78	43	16	87	52	33	34	34	49	16	32	15	67	77	89	55	77
THU	07	30	91	89	85	46	58	⊙	99	73	62	88	37	08	09	83	59	97	73	10	68	34	56	54	96	96	03	33	65	27	54	54
FRI	67	48	58	52	16	50	52	86	95	47	93	11	89	91	99	58	48	73	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙
MON	55	87	94	31	36	62	76	37	08	18	49	43	18	21	39	88	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙
TUE	69	35	89	96	60	17	73	30	48	11	09	79	10	20	43	30	27	34	36	31	60	45	06	35	13	78	83	05	40	18	20	39
WED	13	30	42	12	14	96	82	92	49	56	50	11	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙
THU	79	79	21	85	24	18	20	99	92	06	39	26	97	35	59	17	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙
FRI	80	47	62	67	78	46	77	74	01	61	73	69	90	70	63	93	66	82	46	55	73	68	41	64	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙	⊙

Figure 5.1 Golden TRIANGLE Digits Chart (Source: Mi Mi Cho)

5.1.2 “D-Poe” Digit Chart

Other kinds of digits charts were colourful charts in which signs and symbols portrayed were more likely hand written and with pictures of monks, “Nat Thar” or angels and there was also Buddha preaching in *Pali* (Middle Indo-Aryan Language) language. On the digits chart “D-Poe”, “Aung Su Htoo Pan Twae Myar” (အောင်သူထူးပန်နှစ်မား), was written which means “the winning digits pairs”. And each chart described from date to date, normally for one week of Hna Lone Htee playing days. And the word “KEY”, “special numbers to bet continuously”, “present digits numbers”, “active numbers”, and “break numbers” were written together with days, like for Monday, Tuesday and so on. On the back of the chart, “The praising of A Ba Aung Min Khaung” was described as a title, in which “A Ba Aung Min Khaung” (အဘေအာဠာဠာဝေခါဠာ) was one of the traditional spirits in Myanmar. And two digits numbers and each day were described in pairs, numbers to be aware of and not to be skipped. They used the words “Tha Ti Pyu” (ထာတီပျီ) which means take care of numbers like 51 and 97 during three days. And they also said to use numbers given from “A Ba” (အဘ) or from a high spiritual person. This chart was more like receiving numbers from some powerful person. And interestingly, it also described specific numbers like “58 ★ 10” and if these

two digits were the winning numbers, the winner should make a donation during the three days.

The choice of words used in these digit charts was inspired by people's dreams, imaginations, and hopes to become realized because it was written like such: *let the digit number "05" make you own a new house and new car, let your debts be paid back with the number "69" Nat Khat Numbers, you can be a rich one with the number "81", "42" = "Dine Pyae" , which means the number can make digits dealers run away because of high rates of winning, bet with all of your property or bet as much as you can on specific numbers.*

All this usage of words to express the dreams and hopes of the people: *"to win a high amount on betting, to pay back their debts, to be a rich man, to make donations, to possess a house and cars"*.

These kinds of phrases gave "incentives" to the Hna Lone Htee gamblers. According to the economic conditions and family income of Hna Lone Htee players, the possibility of earning "real money" by normal work was greatly restricted in their real life situation. On the other hand, people who made fortunes quickly through gambling, gamble by using these charts because they had needs that could not be met through their earned income. They barely made ends meet, and gambling was their "**opportunity**" to acquire material comforts. According to Robert M. Herman, a relative view is that gambling represents a "**safety valve**". Instead of turning against the original source of their deprivations and unfulfilled aspirations, bettors are relieved of some their frustrations through gambling. Even though the chance to win is not much, people still think that they can win and gambling can fulfil their wishes. This drives the **motivation** for people to continue playing (Berger, Edmund, 1957).

The difference between the first kind of mathematical digits chart and the "**D-Poe**" is that the latter chart is more likely to be mixed with a given number from some powerful spiritual person. The first digit chart only had the previous winning numbers written down and digits players calculated based on those numbers. Here we can see that Hna Lone Htee gambling involves people's background knowledge, beliefs and religious and social practices.

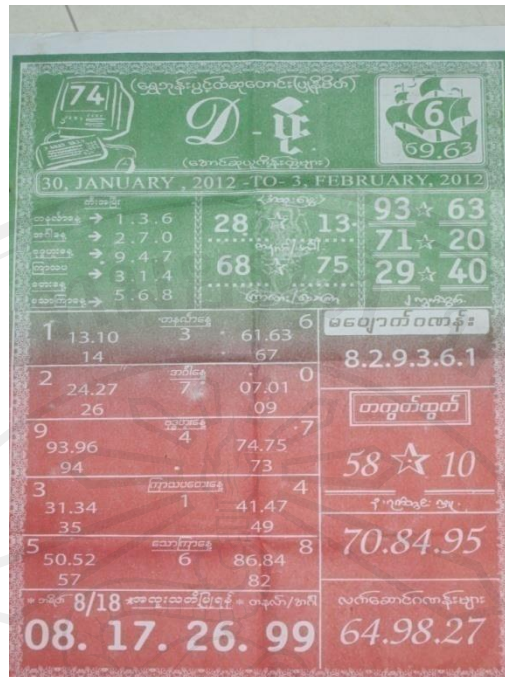


Figure 5.2 “D- Poe” Digits Chart

(Source: Mi Mi Cho)

5.1.3 Sayardaw (Great Monk) U War Khain Na’s Digit Chart

Another interesting colourful digit chart was related to a famous Buddhist monk. On this digit chart was written, “*Special Publication of 63rd Birthday of Sayardaw U War Khain Na*” with a picture of the monk meditating at a cemetery. It also explained that Sayardaw (Myanmar pronunciation used to call great monks) U War Khain Na was from the remote area of the “Taung Thone Lone” (တောင်တန်းလှိုင်) a region far away from Pyay, in the Mon state.

In the book *Renunciation and Power: The Quest for Sainthood in Contemporary Burma*, written by the scholar Guillaume Rozenberg, the ideology of sainthood in Myanmar is described in two expressions. The first one is “*Taw Htwet*” (တောကြာ) or “to go into the forest” and “*Weikza*” (ဝေ ကေ), which could be somewhat awkwardly translated as a “superman” (Rozenberg, 2010). And sainthood, according to Rozenberg, implies a certain number of practices (residing in the forest, fasting, meditation, and

alchemy, and so on). The purpose of going into the forest is to stay in an isolated place far from worldly affairs. Similar to this ideology of sainthood, in the *Sayarsaw U War Khain Na's digit chart*, they describe *Sayardaw* as a saint or super powerful person, who possesses the power to know future things and events. Another interesting thing they described in the chart is that there are fake similar digits charts in the market, and so please make sure to get the real digit charts by inquiring about the digit chart from the selling representative. According to this notification, *Sayardaw U War Khain Na's* digits charts are very famous, trustworthy and popular in the Hna Lone Htee digit chart market.

In the *Sayardaw's* digit chart, the Hna Lone Htee digits given were not directly as numbers, but given words to interpret. As an example, it was written; “*Deer which is swimming in the water*” (ဝေရ်ကူးဝေန်တဲ ဝေရ်သမဗု), in which the word “*swimming*” and “*deer*” are underlined. In Myanmar language, there are thirty three letters in the alphabet. According to Myanmar astrology, the alphabet is divided into seven groups in accordance with the seven days of the week:

for Monday “*Ka, Kha, Ga, Ga, and Nga*”,

for Tuesday “Sa, Sa, Za, Za and Nya”,

for Wednesday “ Ya, Ya, La, and Wa,”,

for Thursday “Pa, Pha, Ba, Ba, and Ma”,

for Friday “ Tha”,

for Saturday “Ta, Hta ,Da , Da and Na”,

and for Sunday “Rt, Ei, and Oot”,

These terms are especially used as the first word in a person's given name. So, when a boy is born on Monday, his given name could be “*Taninlar Num*” or “Monday words” as “*Kyaw Min*” or “*Nyein Chan*”, where the first sound is “*Ka* and *Nga*”. For those born from Sunday to Saturday, whether they are Buddhist or from another religious sect this kind of naming is used, especially in Myanmar, In addition, people change objects

to symbols and signs in the same way. If a snake or “*Mwe*” (မဝေ) is in a dream, they will exchange this snake into a digit such as “5” and bet on this number.

In the *Sayardaw U War Khain Na*'s digits chart, most of the words are in hand writing and the usages of the terms are more likely used by a saint, astrologer or high spiritual person. For example, these expressions were written on the chart: “*having the sense*”, “*Saturday Dream*”, “*Sunday Dream*”, and “*words from the dream*”. Long word phrases were also given: “*Nae Khin Inlay Ko Lar Phoe Phate Khaw Tae*” (*being invited to Inlay Lake in the afternoon*), “*Yae Bawe Myo Cha Thwar Tae Ngar Thay Thay Lay*” (*small fishes swallowed by star fish*), “*Rakhine Chat Chat Htar Tae Taw Wat Htar Hinn*” (*pork curry being cooked in Rakhine; one of the ethnic groups in Myanmar*), and “*Myin Chan Myoe Hma Myae Pae Se Sit Sit*” (*peanut oil from Myin Chan (the name of the town)*)). From these phrases, the digit gamblers took “*peanut oil*” or “*Myin Chan*”, and changed the words into the number “52” and bet on this number.

Rozenberg, in “*The Cheaters: Journey to the land of Lottery*” described that, “Burmese people themselves favour such interpretation and frequently explain their all consuming passion...”, and “One peculiar aspect of the phenomenon requires immediate attention: lottery practices penetrate even into the one domain of Theravada Buddhism that constitutes the dominant site of symbolic production for Burmese society.” He studied three digits gambling and referred to a forest monk who gave numbers via preaching. Once again, in the *Sayardaw U War Khain Na*'s digits chart on two digits gambling, the similar expressions and practices can be found. Being a social practice of Myanmar society based on Theravada Buddhism, Hna Lone Htee gambling also incorporates this symbolic production of digits numbers. In the process of gamblers trying to obtain the winning numbers there has emerged an economic production of digits charts and the selling and consuming of these charts has become a social practice in a specific gambling society. Similar to the other charts, the incentive phrases “*to be a rich man*”, “*to make big donation*”, “*special digit numbers*”, “*only one direct number*”, and so on are used.

According to this digit chart, although Hna Lone Htee gambling was based on Thai Stock Exchange Index, the gamblers in Myanmar society were trying to obtain

winning numbers by changing Myanmar words from traditional astrological practices, symbolic production of things, maybe from a dream or from their daily life into digits numbers Moreover, the words given from saints or super powerful persons changed into digit numbers. In this sense, the Hna Lone Htee gambling practice in the society reflects the influence of beliefs on the gamblers, and the way they took risks in the best conditions as possible, in the setting of daily life.



Figure 5.3 Sayardaw U War Khain Na's Digit Chart

(Source: Mi Mi Cho)

5.1.4 Shwe Pasat (Golden Mouth) Digit Chart

The last digit chart that I procured from the Hna Lone Htee digit charts shop was the most expensive, which cost two hundred kyats (US \$0.4) and the quality of this chart was the best because they used photographic paper, and the size was quite small and more colourful compared to other digit charts. And the title was “*A Hman Pyaw Tae Shwe Pasat Boe Daw,*” in which “*Boe Daw*” means the man who has super powers, typically wearing a white dress, and “*Shwe Pasat*” means “*Golden Mouth*”, and the whole meaning is, “*Boe Daw with the golden mouth who tells the truth*”. The word “*Shwe*” or “*Gold*” is also the most favourite type of jewellery in Myanmar

society. In this chart, the incentive words “grantee”, “special”, “bet repeatedly”, “surely to be rich”, and “let’s make donation” were used. Besides this, there was a notification to make sure not to buy a similar fake digit chart.



Figure 5.4 Shwe Pasat Digits Chart

(Source: Mi Mi Cho)

All of the above digit charts are widespread and popularly consumed by Hna Lone Htee digits players. Although some digit charts like “*Golden TRIANGLE THAI FOUR DIGITS NUMBER*” could be traced from where it was created, other kinds of digits charts were from unknown publishing sources. During my research, I had gotten a chance to talk a digit charts distributor in Pyay, who distributed a large amount of charts, not only in the city, but also to the nearby towns and villages. When I was talking with her at her home and work place, she said that generally, digits charts came from Yangon and they were sent by bus. But she seemed to be afraid to talk openly about the business, wondering whether I was an authority or something, even though I already explained about my research and showed my student ID card. For the Hna Lone

Htee gamblers in my research place, most of the female gamblers relied on these digits charts, scanned the charts carefully, discussed them among themselves, and bet on their favourite numbers. Sometimes, the winning numbers were correctly guessed and identical as the words they had chosen, but sometimes, the outcome was totally different. Although the prices of the charts were not too expensive, some female players could not buy their own chart and consequently, shared with other players. These kinds of social practices among the gamblers can be viewed as a collective activity; creating space among themselves and sharing the same ideology and practice. And the female gamblers always used the word “*Kan*” or “*Luck*” meaning it was up to their luck to choose the right numbers and to have the right interpretations of their dreams, sign and symbols they came across. The newly emerging business of digit charts itself, which is operated as a hidden form of illegal business, can be understood as a side effect of the popularity of Hna Lone Htee gambling in Myanmar. Although Hna Lone Htee gambling is primarily from the Thai Stock Index, the way people took risks was not from scientific market calculations, but mostly their beliefs, traditional and religious ideologies and mathematical ways, in other words, a mixture of traditional and modern practices.

5.2 Praying for the Numbers: Goddess, Spirit Medium and the Game

In Pyay, people’s predicting the winning number of Hna Lone Htee was not only by methods of mathematics and popular digits charts, but also from asking the regional spirit mediums about their fortune, their future, and their work and also for the winning numbers. This kind of social practice was very common in Myanmar because apart from the main religions of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism and Islam, worshipping of the traditional spirits or what we call in Myanmar “*Nat*”, is quite influential in this society. Thus, I also explored how people’s traditional practices of spirit worshipping were related to Hna Lone Htee gambling.

5.2.1 Religious Life in Urban Pyay

Pyay is famous for local tourists as a religious site. Visitors come and worship at the “*Shwe San Daw Pagoda*” which is one of the famous pagodas in Myanmar. The

festival at this pagoda is held on “*Tasaung Dine*” (eighth month of Myanmar traditional calendar) and every fourth year there is a special celebration of the worshipping of Buddha’s Tooth. Another traditional religious ceremony is “*Nyan Yoe Puzaw Pwae*” (ညာဏိယုပုဇော်ပွဲ). It is held on “*Ta Bo Twae*” (tenth month of Myanmar traditional calendar) and in the early morning of the full moon day, people go to the “*Shwe San Daw Pagoda*” to offer “*Nyan Yoe*”¹ (a kind of small tree stem) with the belief that by offering this “*Nyan Yoe*”², a person will become smarter and their intelligence will improve, especially popular among students. Being a place of the ancient “*Pyu Kingdom*”, historical pagodas can still be seen around the city. On the western bank of the Ayeyarwaddy River alongside the mountains, historical pagodas can be seen and each pagoda has its own interesting story³.

5.2.2 Spirit Medium

The ritual practices of worshipping “*Nat*” or Goddess, guardians and spirits has been a very common phenomenon in Myanmar since ancient times. There are 37 very famous Nats in Myanmar cosmology and each Nat has a different personal history and rule over different places. Apart from the 37 Nats, there are also other traditional Nats and traditional ethnic Nats who are recorded. Worshipping of these Nats with a special ceremony called “*Nat Kanar Pwae*” is performed by Nat believers and we can see the “*Nat Koon*”, a place where Nats have been put and worshipping of these spirits can be seen around the country (Myine, Sithu 2010).

My research place Pyay is mainly a Buddhist society and pagodas can be seen throughout the city. And each pagoda has not only the Buddha statues, but also the statues of “*Nat*”. And in some pagodas, the local guardian “*Nat*” can be found. Out of among the fifteen key informants I interviewed and observed, only one female Hna Lone Htee player was Christian and the rest were Buddhists who also worshiped the

¹ “*Nyan Yoe*”, in Myanmar language, *Nyan* means memory or intelligent and *Yoe* means the stem of the tree.

² “*Nyan Yoe*”, in Myanmar language, *Nyan* means memory or intelligent and *Yoe* means the stem of the tree.

³ The story of this pagoda is described in the next section.

spirit guardians. When they were trying to guess the winning numbers playing Hna Lone Htee gambling, this spirit worshipping practice also became involved in this activity.

During my research, the female gamblers said they also went and asked “Nat Gadaw”, a lady who acts as a medium, about their family issues, their future predictions and also about the digits gambling. The *Nat Gadaw* resided in the *Hmaw Zar* village, which is three miles southeast of Pyay. When I got to *Nat Gadaw*’s house for the first time, her house was a one story building in a small compound where some seasonal vegetables were grown. To get there, we needed to drive through the villages and paddy fields. In the entrance of her house, a series of pictures were put on the wall; all of these pictures showed her participating in Nat worshipping at the ceremonies. And she was wearing a green Nat dress in these pictures. While I was there four men, who were in their 30’s, asked her about their family, business and their fortune. And according to their conversations, these men were from the Shan State, who had migrated and were working in Pyay at that time. At the end of her fortune telling to each person, she gave some specific numbers of two digits and three digits numbers to bet, with the instructions of who should bet on which date.

The Nat Gadaw was sitting in front of the Buddha shrine. There was a wooden bench in front of her, and she was sitting on the wooden carpet on the floor. The wooden bench was covered with a green cloth and on that was a book, pen, a cup of popcorn, a flower port, candles, and two metal cups on each side; those metal cups are used to offer things to the “*Nats*” or spirits. And the cups were filled with rice and frankincense, and some money was also put there as an offering. On the right side of the bench was a small swing, which was also decorated in green with pieces of green cloth. And on the swing was another metal cup with bananas and frankincense, and candles were put together. All of the curtains in the house were also of green. On the right side of the entrance, there was a small wooden bed, with green bed sheets and a pillow as if it was prepared for someone to sleep.



Figure 5.5 Nat Gadaw Preaching to a Woman

(Source: Mi Mi Cho)



Figure 5.6 Small Wooden Bed decorated

in Green Colour for the Green Goddess

(Source: Mi Mi Cho)

Nat Gadaw was 38 years old. According to her life story, she was blind when she was young and her family was very poor. When she turned 18 years old, one night, she had a dream in which a beautiful lady was telling her that someone will come and ask her about their fortune and their family case, and that pretty lady instructed her to

reply to their request. The next morning, a man came to visit her and asked about his fortune. She told him as if she had known everything beforehand, like a fortune teller, and surprisingly, her preaching was totally correct for him. And the most amazing event happened to her, her blindness had totally disappeared and she suddenly got her eye sight back. Since then, she has become famous in fortune telling, but she is more like a “*Nat Gadaw*”, who worships and serves the beautiful lady, the Green Goddess.

Whenever someone came and asked about their family issues or their fortune, she said that someone behind her was telling her what to preach about that person’s past events, their current problems and even for the future; what to do, what to avoid and that someone divine or a supernatural person was influencing her. She said that she was working according to the instructions of the Green Goddess and is now building a new house with the permission of her master. She had been staying in the old house and could not build a new one because she was not instructed to do so. In the book “Performing the Divine: Mediums, Markets and Modernity in Urban Vietnam”, by Kirsten W. Endres, it describes that “Spirits engage the senses and bodies of humans in more direct ways, e.g. through spirit possession” (Kirsten W., 2011). The influence of the Green Goddess on Nat Gadaw had similar characteristics and she also felt possessed by the Green Goddess.

When I interviewed Nat Gadaw, she said she had been telling fortunes to people since the extraordinary event of being approached in a strange dream and that she was possessed by ‘*Ma Mya Sein*’ or the Green Goddess. Normally, people came and asked her about their work, family issues and some students and parents also came to enquire about their studying and exams. Each day, there were around twenty to forty people who came with their questions. She preached to them according to their divine person. Sometimes, she gave numbers to people who were interested in digits gambling. But she never told them how much to pay for her preaching and people offered as much as they could. She also managed “Yadayar” or “things that can prevent and guard from bad things” for people. Concerning the Green Goddess, she explained that she was chosen to serve ‘*Ma Mya Sein*.’ This guardian spirit had shown her supernatural powers to her and even returned her eye sight. *Ma Mya Sein* is the guardian of this region, Pyay, and a lot of local people worship her. Nat Gadaw said she was really influenced by the spirit

and worked according to the instructions given, not because of her own ability. And in this way, she could help other people.



Figure 5.7 Spiritual Mediumship (Nat Gadaw)

(Source: Mi Mi Cho)

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**Figure 5.8 Nat Gadaw in Her Spirit Medium Dress
and Normal Dress
(Source: Mi Mi Cho)**



**Figure 5.9 Metal Cup with Frankincense and Rice
for the purpose of Yadar (Source: Mi Mi Cho)**

5.2.3 The Green Goddess “Ma Mya Sein”

As I have mentioned above, in my research site female gamblers asking about their fortune and digit numbers to the spiritual medium of the Green Goddess was very popular. And the Green Goddess is, according to their traditional belief, a regional guardian of Pyay and like other “Nats” in Myanmar, the folk tale of the Green Goddess is also interesting to tell. The folk tale of the Green Goddess “*Ma Mya Sein*” has not been published in any books, but according to the local people, there was a movie presentation of it, and also an audio drama had been recorded by ancient singers. But I could not acquire any of these records during my research. The telling story of “*Ma Mya Sein*” was recalled by an old man named *Kat Pi Ya*, who served at the monastery and also from a local housewife. Although the two stories told by them are slightly different, the main story and life story is almost the same. The folk tale of the Green Goddess “*Ma Mya Sein*” goes as such.

There are two main characters in the story, Ma Mya Sein and Ko Phone Kywe. Ma Mya Sein was from “*Thike*” (a place where precious jewellery has been kept and guarded by the Goddess). And her “*Thike*” was on the other bank of the Ayeyarwaddy River of Pyay. Even now, the “*Ma Mya Sein Kyun*” or “*Ma Mya Sein Island*” can be seen in the Ayeyarwaddy River near Pyay. Ma Mya Sein, herself, was not a human at first, but a Goddess, and she had three siblings. Ma Mya Sein told her siblings that she wanted to go to the human world “*Lu Pye*”. But her siblings asked her to make a promise to return back to the goddess world if she had a child and let her go to the human world. So she transformed herself into a human and went to the human world, “*Lu Pye*”. When Ma Mya Sein stayed as human on the island of “*Mya Sein Kyun*” in the Ayeyarwaddy River, she met Ko Phone Kywe, who worked as a local trader. Ko Phone Kywe was from *Nawin*, the northern quarter of Pyay and they fell in love, got married, gave a son and stayed together with Ko Phone Kywe’s father at *Mya Sein Kyun*.

Ma Mya Sein and Ko Phone Kywe wanted to perform ordination for their son, and so Ko Phone Kywe went to Pyay by boat to buy monk robes and accessories for their son. On the way back to the island, he met Thike Sayar (who also had some spiritual

powers and was looking for *Thike* to find the jewellery by fighting with the Goddess). And when Thike Sayar knew about Ma Mya Sein, he asked Ko Phone Kywe to visit *Mya Sein Kyun*. At that time, Ma Mya Sein already knew that Thike Sayar was coming to see her. In addition, her siblings were asking her to come back to them, according to her promise. If Thike Sayar finds their “*Thike*” place, they would get into trouble, and so she was trying to prevent his visit. While Ko Phone Kywe and Thike Sayar were coming back to *Mya Sein Kyun*, on the way, the oar, in Myanmar we call it “*Tak*”, of the boat was broken and they could not continue rowing. So, Ko Phone Kywe had to stop at one of the islands to get a new oar or “*Tak*”. So, the name of that island was given as “*Tak Thit Kyun*” or new oar island, which can be seen now near the town “*Padaung*” on the western bank of the Ayeyarwaddy River.

Before they got to *Mya Sein Kyun*, Ma Mya Sein explained to her father-in-law that she was in fact a goddess and now she had to go back to the goddess world as promised. She also told him the place of her “*Thike*”, and her human life ended. When Ko Phone Kywe and Thike Sayar got to *Mya Sein Kyun*, Ma Mya Sein was no longer with them and Ko Phone Kywe’s father explained everything about her to them. So, when Thike Sayar knew where their “*Thike*” was, he went there with Ko Phone Kywe, but before he got the jewellery, he had to fight with the goddesses; Thike Sayar lost the fight and was killed. In the ordination ceremony of their son, Ma Mya Sein could not participate because she was already in a different world as a goddess, so she gave a pile of silver or “*Ngwe*” to Ko Phone Kywe for the ceremony. The place where she gave that pile of silver was called “*Ngwe Pone Thar*”, which means pile of silver. In that place, there is a pagoda called “*Ngwe Pone Thar Pagoda*”, which is on the west bank of the Ayeyarwaddy River near Pyay. Another pile of gold or “*Shwe*” was also given to Ko Phone Kywe, and that place was named “*Shwe Pone Thar*”, where “*Shwe Pone Thar Pagoda*” can be seen now. And the statue of the Green Goddess, Ma Mya Sein, was placed in the “*Shwe Pone Thar Pagoda*”. In *Dabaung*, the twelfth month of the Myanmar calendar, normally around March, a pagoda festival is held here and people who worship the “*Ma Mya Sein Goddess*” come and pay homage and make her offerings in return for her role as a guardian.



Figure 5.10 The Green Goddess or Ma Mya Sein's statue

At Shwe Pone Thar Pagoda

After the oral history about Ma Mya Sein's folk tale was told to me by the housewife and the man from the monastery, the woman also said that the Green Goddess is very powerful; she used the word "Nat Kyi Tae", and she felt chilled when talking about her. And *Kat Pi Ya* said that *Ma Mya Sein* is the guardian of this region. His monastery is on the hill, "Min Gyi Taung", where there is a statue of the Green Goddess. He explained that they could not move that statue to any other place. Whenever they tried to relocate it, they received a dream telling them not to move it, and so it has been there for years. On the other side of the Ayeyarwaddy River, at the Shwe Bone Thar Pagoda, the Green Goddess statue is placed in a very well structured house where her bed accessories and mirrors are arranged as if it was a room for a virgin. And everything is in the colour green: her clothes, her crown, napkins and her slippers. People came and offered her flowers, money and accessories. Like other famous goddesses in Myanmar, people in the region believe that the Green Goddess is guarding this region and by worshipping and paying respect to her, their family, their fortune and their fate will be secure.

5.3 Conclusion

In this chapter, how people trying to get the winning number by various methods in practice was described. Through the consumption of satellite media from Thai Stock Exchange Market, the winning number of Hna Lone Htee was determined. But in practice in Myanmar society, betting on the winning numbers was conducted in different ways by using mathematical calculation, digit charts, and information from spiritually powerful people. On the one hand, gamblers were taking risks by betting on certain numbers, but on the other hand, they were trying to take a chance at luck, which they could not resist in practical life, based on their faith regarding their future.

The traditional belief of interpreting dreams, signs and symbols from digit charts from unknown sources were important ways to shape their hopes. The incentives existed to motivate them to pursue continuous betting on Hna Lone Htee gambling. Similarly, the traditional worshipping of “*Nats*” was also involved in this Hna Lone Htee gambling through communication with the regional goddesses or spirit mediums. In this sense, the social practice of worshipping was related to the belief people had in hoping for the best in Hna Lone Htee betting. On the one hand, modernity precipitated the start of Hna Lone Htee gambling, but on the other hand, social practices of traditional worshipping shaped the practice of determining the Hna Lone Htee winning numbers. The traditional practices and beliefs illustrated on the digit charts had been applied to attract people to become more interested in Hna Lone Htee gambling. By consuming and practising these elements, the social practice of female gamblers could be interpreted as traditionalists partaking in modern digit gambling.