

Hui Yunnanese Migratory History in Relation to the Han Yunnanese and Ethnic Resurgence in Northern Thailand

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Abstract

The Yunnanese of Northern Thailand either came from Yunnan Province in Southwest China or have ancestors originating there. However, despite the heterogeneity of Yunnanese society, people are categorized under one broad ethnic term and labeled as “*Ho*” or “*Chin Ho*” in Thai. To understand the specific situation and ethnic identity of one group of Yunnanese today, the Hui Yunnanese, we must first appreciate the historical influences on their migration and interethnic relations during their migration to and settlement in Thailand. This paper outlines the history of first-generation Yunnanese migration since the end of the nineteenth century. Differing sociocultural and political backgrounds of the Han and Hui Yunnanese have led to different migratory patterns and expressions of ethnicity in Thailand.

Keywords: Hui and Han Yunnanese interethnic relations, Hui ethnicity, KMT, migratory history, Northern Thailand

I Introduction

Throughout History, Yunnan Province has served as a gateway to the outside world and has played an important role in the sociopolitical and economic relations within Southeast Asia. In Thailand, Yunnanese Chinese are considered to be people who were born in or whose ancestors were originating from Yunnan Province. As Yunnanese commonly migrated by land, they are often categorized as “overland Chinese” and are thus differentiated from those Chinese migrants who came to Thailand by sea.

Yunnanese Chinese in Thailand are composed of two subgroups, the Han and the Hui. The Han are the largest ethnic group in China and generally adhere to a mixture of Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism. In contrast, the Hui are Muslims and were officially listed as one of 55 minority groups by China’s Communist government in the 1950s.¹⁾ Among Yunnanese Chinese, these ethnic beliefs are differentiated colloquially as Han jiao (漢教) and Hui jiao (回教), or Yisilan (Islam) jiao (伊斯蘭教). In addition, a small portion of Han are Christians. Despite religious differences, both Han and Hui speak Chinese in a Yunnanese dialect. In Thailand, most of their villages are located along the

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1) For a discussion of the changing ethnicity of the Hui in China, see Fan [2004].

national borders of Northern Thailand near Burma, and more than 80 villages are composed of Han and Hui Yunnanese.

In Thai society, Yunnanese Chinese are considered to be an ambiguous “ethnic group,” and details of their sociocultural diversity and history are often disregarded. They have been labeled as “*Ho*” or “*Chin Ho*,” terms of still uncertain etymology, and are differentiated from Chinese (*Chaek*) who came to Thailand by sea from coastal areas such as Fujian and Guangdong. Previous studies on Chinese migration have paid less attention to Chinese who migrated overland as opposed to those who took sea routes. One reason may be because southwestern China is far from the political center of Chinese history and thus has been seen as a less civilized and developed area in contrast to the coastal areas where Chinese migrants have expanded commercial networks for many centuries.

The Yunnanese Chinese are also excluded from the Thai category of “hill people” (*Chao Khao*), which describes a minority group in hilly Northern Thailand. Yunnanese Chinese who live in these mountainous areas have played key roles in trade, commonly serving as intermediaries in trades of opium and daily items with the hill people.²⁾ The Yunnanese Chinese and hill people share socioeconomic and cultural ties, and interactions through language, dwelling, intermarriage, and commerce. The Yunnanese language functions as the lingua franca among Yunnanese and hill people. Yunnanese villages are also often closely distributed among those of the hill people, and thus intermarriage is not rare. However, the Yunnanese are not considered to be “hill people” by the Thai government. The Thai term “*Chao Khao*” was formalized by the end of the 1950s, with the aim of controlling the borderland and guarding against communist guerrillas. In general, the Thais have different views and policies toward hill people and Yunnanese Chinese [Kataoka 2004].

The implications of the label “*Ho*” or “*Chin Ho*” have changed along with the sociopolitical and cultural contexts in Thai society. Local Thais tend to think of Ho as Hui Yunnanese who came to Thailand at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century and used horses and mules to trade goods between China and the rest of Southeast Asia. Descendants of those Hui traders now live in the northern cities of Chiang Mai and Chiang Rai. In contrast, local Thais tend to consider Ho who have lived on the Thai-Burmese border since the mid-twentieth century to be Han Yunnanese. Those who migrated later are particularly perceived as ex-soldiers of the Chinese Nationalist Army (Kuomintang; KMT) who escaped from Yunnan through Burma and into Thailand after the communist takeover of China in 1949. These KMT soldiers were often also mistakenly called Komphom 93, in reference to the 93rd division of the KMT, expeditionary troops who fought with the Japanese army during the Second World War. In actuality, the ex-KMT soldiers who live on the Thai border were not these

2) Grandstaff [1979].

World War II soldiers. Also, as many Yunnanese were KMT soldiers, in the mid-twentieth century, they have often been considered by Thais as creating “political and social problems,” particularly in regard to border issues and opium smuggling [cf., McCoy 1972].

Because of such generalizations, less attention has been paid to the sociocultural backgrounds of the Yunnanese, despite the heterogeneity and multilayered history of their migration. Previous studies on Yunnanese society have tended to focus on either the Hui or the Han, and historical or anthropological studies have generally described the process of migration within the scope of only one ethnic group.

For example, British historian Andrew Forbes, one of the leading authorities studying the Yunnanese, described the Hui Yunnanese migration in the context of caravan traders from the nineteenth century to the mid-twentieth century based on historical materials written in English and compiled by various Western travelers and missionaries [Forbes 1987; Forbes and Henley 1997]. Although his studies on Yunnanese migration contain many details and explanations, his account of the Yunnanese migration is written from the perspective of outsiders. We cannot hear the voices of the migrants themselves describing their social interactions and their perceptions.

Within anthropology, three main works have examined Yunnanese society. Suthep, a Thai anthropologist, conducted fieldwork in a Hui Yunnanese community in the 1970s, and Hill, an American researcher, completed field research on the general situation of the Yunnanese community. Both works focused on the Hui Yunnanese as traders, focusing on their commercial roles and use of horses and mules prior to transportation modernization and the emergence of sovereign nation-state influences in Southeast Asia and China [Suthep 1977; Hill 1982; 1998]. However, these works contain little information on the migratory situations of the Yunnanese, either from intensive fieldwork or interviews.

In contrast, Chang [1999], a Taiwanese anthropologist, emphasized the migratory history of the Han Yunnanese, particularly the influence of KMT troop movements to Thailand after the Chinese Communists assumed power in 1949. Although Chang’s report provides many details about the migratory history of KMT troops, or Han Yunnanese, she does not describe the sociopolitical interactions between the Hui and Han during the migration process. Further research was thus needed to clarify how Han and Hui Yunnanese communities were established historically and why and how these two groups have lived side by side in Northern Thailand until the present.

In this paper, I describe the social relationships between the Han and Hui during the migratory process to Thailand and discuss how these relations have influenced the Yunnanese community in Thailand. I also examine Thai government policy toward Yunnanese Chinese since the mid-twentieth century, and then analyze the resurgence of Hui consciousness and Islamic identification among Hui Yunnanese following settlement in Thailand.

II General Situation of the Yunnanese before the Mid-twentieth Century

The migratory histories of the Han and Hui Yunnanese are extremely complicated and intertwined. Situations before and after 1950 differed in particular, as migration responded to political, economic, and military events in China, Burma, and Thailand.

Yunnanese migration occurred in two major waves. Before the mid-twentieth century, a relatively small number of Yunnanese migrants entered Northern Thailand. However, the migrant population greatly expanded following the political upheaval in China around 1949.

Before the mid-twentieth century, only a small number of Yunnanese lived in Northern Thailand. Historical sources compiled by Western travelers and missionaries indicate that early pioneers to Northern Thailand were mainly Hui traders. These early traders normally came to Thailand from Yunnan by passing through Burma once or twice a year during the dry season. The pioneers carried hand-woven cottons, felts, silks, medicines, and household goods from Yunnan and returned home with ivory and traditional medicines, such as pilose antlers and bear gall bladders [cf. Forbes 1987; 1997; Hill 1982; 1998]. However, most researchers believe that relatively few Han Yunnanese migrated to live in this area, and no known written sources from this period describe them.

As Han Yunnanese probably did not settle in Thailand until the mid-twentieth century, the Yunnanese, or “*Ho*,” in Thai must have designated the Hui rather than the Han. Although little information exists, at least two mosques in Chiang Mai Province and one mosque in Chiang Rai Province were established by Yunnanese Hui traders before the 1950s.

Two mosques in Chiang Mai City – Chang Phuak mosque and Ban Ho mosque – were established before the migration of Han Chinese in the mid-twentieth century. Chang Phuak mosque was established first by both Yunnanese and Indo-Pakistani Muslim traders in 1877. At that time, Chang Phuak was surrounded by a desirable natural environment with ample water and grasslands. This place thus became the gathering spot where traders rested and grazed their horses and mules. Both Hui and Indo-Pakistani Muslim traders gradually started to settle in Chang Phuak. Before the establishment of the Chang Phuak mosque, the nearest mosque was in the Chang Khlan area, where Indo-Pakistani Muslim traders lived. A Yunnanese man named Na played an important role in building the mosque in Chang Phuak, and although information on Mr. Na is limited, he was born in Najiaying in the Tonghai District of Yunnan and moved to Chiang Mai as a trader. Na was very active in constructing the mosque and assisting in religious affairs, and was selected as Imam (religious leader) of the Chang Phuak mosque.

However, after his death in Chiang Mai, Indo-Pakistani Muslims gained much power and changed the religious composition. Since that time, Chang Phuak mosque has been managed and used mostly by Indo-Pakistani Muslims.

The Ban Ho mosque is another example of Yunnanese influence in Northern Thailand. A man named Zheng became a key leader of the Muslim community after Na's death. Zheng was born in Yuxi in Yunnan Province and later traded goods by horses and mules, passing through Kyaingtong in Burma and Lampang, Tak (where he married a local Thai woman), Lamphun, and Mae Sai along the Thai-Burmese border. He and his family moved to Chiang Mai City in 1905, around the area where Ban Ho is now situated. At that time, no mosque existed for communal use. Therefore, he used his house as a place for Hui to pray and gather. It was not until 1917 that he started to collect funds from his peer Hui Yunnanese and also supplied his own land to build the mosque.

To this day, the stories of early pioneers in this period have been handed down through the generations. For example, a Hui Yunnanese informant told me that his father had traded in Yunnan and visited Chiang Mai in this period; his father died in Chiang Mai and was buried at Chang Phuak mosque in 1920/21. Hui Yunnanese at that time also had strong links with Thai society. For example, in 1920, Hui Yunnanese were contracted to transport materials by horse for the construction of a railroad from Lampang to Chiang Mai. The Hui also helped run the postal service. Furthermore, the founder of the Ban Ho mosque provided a camp of approximately 100 *rai* (1 *rai* = 1,600 m²) to be used for grazing horses during the construction of Chiang Mai's airport. For these contributions to Thai society, Mr. Zheng received the title of "*khun*" from the Thai government and was awarded a Thai surname.

III Yunnanese Migration after the 1950s: The KMT Impact and Hui Migrants

Political turmoil in China led to a surge in the Yunnanese population in Thailand. When the Chinese Communists took control in 1949, the defeated Nationalist Army, or KMT, fled to Taiwan. Most Yunnanese people of the KMT were Han; thus, the population ratio of the Yunnanese in Thailand since the 1950s also changed accordingly. While prior to the 1950s Hui made up the majority of Yunnanese in Thai society, the influx of KMT troops and supporters to Thailand meant an increase in the Han population. According to interviews with Yunnanese in 1998, more than 80,000 Han Yunnanese and 10,000 Hui Yunnanese were living in Northern Thailand.

Chang [1999] also described the migration of KMT from Yunnan to Thailand. However, key questions related to the Hui Yunnanese were not addressed. For example, under what circumstances have the Hui migrated to Thailand since the 1950s? Has their migration differed from that of Han, who were mainly KMT soldiers? What kinds of

social relationships did the Hui have with Han Yunnanese throughout their migrations? In the following section, I will briefly outline the KMT migration to Burma and its impact on Hui migrants during the same period.

III-1. *KMT Impacts in Burma and on the Hui Yunnanese*

In Yunnan Province, fighting between KMT and communist troops continued until 1950, when the KMT was finally defeated in the Yuanjiang area and many supporters escaped to Burma. Deng [1961: 24, 28] estimated that only about 1,000 soldiers left when the KMT fled Yunnan. Fig. 1 shows the route of KMT movements from Yunnan, through Burma on the way to Thailand.

Even after KMT troops escaped to Burma, many continued to fight the communists in China. In expanding military forces in Burma, the KMT advocated “anticommunist” ideology and encouraged Yunnanese refugees to become involved in military activities under the leadership of the KMT regular army. The KMT actively recruited civilian refugees who had escaped from Yunnan, mostly in the same period. In 1951, the Academy of Anti-Communist and Anti-Soviet Russia Resistance, Yunnan Province, was established at Mong Hsat in Shan State.

The academy trained civilian refugee recruits from Yunnan to combat the communists. As a result, KMT troop numbers in Burma gradually increased. According to estimates by the government of the Union of Burma, the number of such soldiers had risen to 4,000 by April 1951 and to 12,000 in 1952 [Government of the Union of Burma, Ministry of Information 1953: 3, 16].

Various kinds of people were recruited as soldiers and/or forced to work under the influence and control of the KMT. Han Yunnanese constituted the majority of the KMT and controlled power. KMT military affairs in Burma greatly influenced the civilian refugees, as well as the ordinary people who lived in and outside Burma. Not only Han, but also members of other ethnic groups, such as the Hui Yunnanese, and minorities, such as the Wa, Shan, Lahu, and Palaung, joined KMT military forces in Burma. Moreover, Chinese in Laos and Thailand were also recruited as soldiers and engaged in military ac-

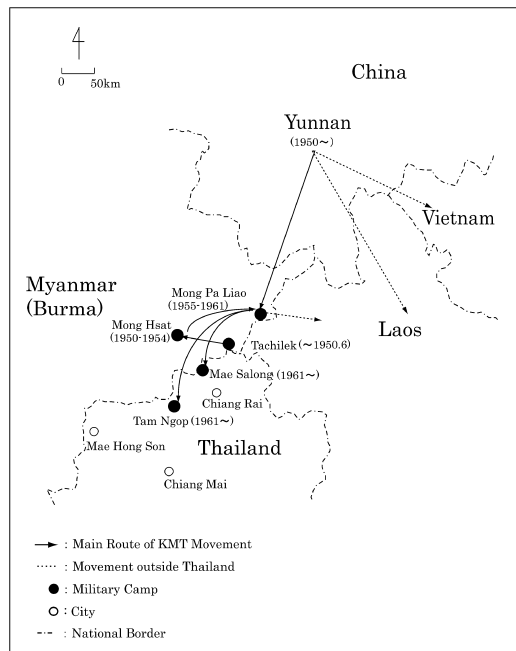


Fig. 1 Migration Route of KMT to Thailand

Table 1 Civilian Porters Recruited by KMT

| No. | Place of Origin | Age | Number of People | Number of Horses and Mules | Reason of Migration |
|-----|-------------------|-----|------------------|----------------------------|--|
| 1 | Xinping (Yunnan) | 39 | 3 | 7 mules | Fought with Communist and migrated to Kyaing Tong after Liberation. |
| 2 | Weishan (Yunnan) | 34 | 3 | 2 mules | Headman of the committee in the village. His father was killed by Communist. |
| 3 | Xinping (Yunnan) | 29 | 4 | 13 mules, 1 horse | Engaged in caravan trade. Migrated in 1950. |
| 4 | Xinping (Yunnan) | 40 | 5 | 14 mules | Headman in the village called <i>baozhang</i> . |
| 5 | Jingdong (Yunnan) | 34 | 2 | 4 mules | Merchant and landowner. |

Source : Modified from Wang [2004].

tivities [Deng 1961: 143–144; Government of the Union of Burma, Ministry of Information 1953: 12–13].

What, then, was the situation among Hui Yunnanese? As stated previously, the Hui often engaged in trading, using horses and mules to transport their goods. The KMT tried to utilize Hui social resources and commercial networks. Within the KMT, a Hui Yunnanese named Ma played an important role. Ma devoted himself to KMT military activities in Burma and was selected to lead and command troops. Ma also recruited Hui Yunnanese refugees from China who had escaped before and after 1949. Through his connections, he had civilian Hui Yunnanese traders use their mules and horses to convey military goods and relief to KMT troops [Deng 1961: 78].

Table 1 shows the traders who were recruited as porters to assist the KMT. The table lists the place of origin, age, number of people, number of horses and mules, and reason for migration. While these data do not provide a clear picture of the porters' ethnic backgrounds, it is estimated that more than 40,000–50,000 Hui Yunnanese traders worked as porters in support of KMT activities in Burma [*loc. cit.*].

A small number of Han Yunnanese traders also supported the KMT. For example, I met an about 70-year-old Han Yunnanese man in Chiang Mai who was formerly a trader in Yunnan and Burma. He was born in the Xinping District of Yunnan and had engaged in trade until he escaped from Yunnan in 1950. He told me that he had encountered the KMT in Burma and was forced to assemble at Mong Hang when KMT troops were attacked by Burmese troops in the early 1950s. Because of this battle, he started to make his way to the Thai border in Doi Ang Khang.

III-2. *Life Histories of Hui Yunnanese Traders*

In this subsection, I describe the Hui migration to Thailand during this period, as well as their experiences. Interviews of elderly Hui suggest that their migration pattern was

similar to that of Han Yunnanese in this period. In other words, escaping from Burma was difficult for both KMT soldiers and civilian refugees, but the latter were also randomly attacked by Burmese troops trying to push them out of Burma. However, at the individual level, Hui migrants differ in their experiences and perceptions of migration.

Below, I provide three migratory histories of Hui Yunnanese. These examples illustrate how economic activities were conducted before the presence of the KMT in Burma and how the KMT influenced the lives of Hui migrants thereafter. Mr. Ma's case (Case 1) shows how the KMT forced Hui Yunnanese to become involved with KMT military activities as porters.

Case 1. *Mr. Ma, who worked as a trader, was temporarily caught up with the KMT in Burma* (Fig. 2)

Mr. Ma was born in 1919 in Najiaying Village in the Tonghai District of Yunnan Province. The Tonghai District is located southeast of Kunming, the capital of Yunnan. Najiaying Village is known as a Hui village and has more than 1,000 households. In the past, Najiaying villagers were renowned as long-distance traders who used horses and mules to carry goods throughout Southeast Asia.

Since his grandfather's generation, Mr. Ma's family had included merchants who traded using horses and mules. When Mr. Ma was 12 years old, he accompanied his brother, who was 7 years older, on a trading trip to Kyaing Tong, Shan State, Burma. During that time, his brother taught him how to feed and care for the horses and mules. For the next 8 years, Mr. Ma lived in Kyaing Tong without returning even once to his home in Najiaying. He continued to trade, traveling from Kyaing Tong to Menghai in Xishuangbanna, taking the following trade route: Menghai (Yunnan)—Menghun (Yunnan)—Mengban (Yunnan)—Daluo (Yunnan)—Mongma (Burma)—Xiaohaijiang (unidentified, Burma)—Kyaing Tong (Burma).

Mr. Ma was not willing to explain what he had traded between

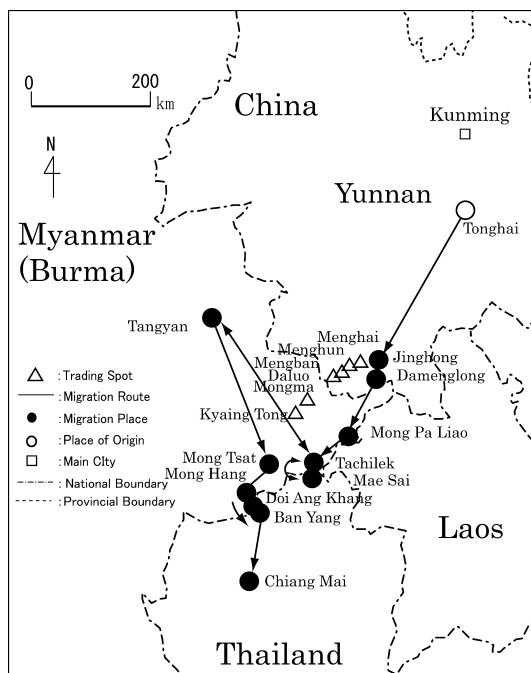


Fig. 2 Mr. Ma's Migration Route

the regions, but he told me that he had brought forest goods such as pilose antlers and rhinoceros skins from Burma to Yunnan. He did not provide details on the kinds of goods he took from Yunnan to Burma.

Around 1945, when he was about 20 years old, he returned to Najiaying and married a Muslim woman; he then began trading separately from his brother. During this time, he continued to trade in the market towns of Yunnan Province. He traded such goods as salt, cotton, white silver, and tobacco. He bought salt in Mohei in the Simao District and brought it back to Tonghai, and he traded cotton and white silver with the hill peoples in Xishuangbanna. When asked about opium trading, Mr. Ma did not answer directly but explained that he had been to Lancang, where the Lahu lived. It is possible that he traded opium with the Lahu during that time.

In the latter half of the 1940s, China plunged into civil war, and the land was desolate. Mr. Ma was unable to pursue his commercial activities and felt he had lost all prospects for a good future. He left China in August 1949 at the age of 30, just ahead of the establishment of the communist regime. Leaving his wife and three daughters behind, he escaped to Burma. His elder brother left their village a year later but did not go to Burma. Instead, he moved to Menghai in Xishuangbanna, where he lived for the rest of his life. Fig. 2 shows the migration route of Mr. Ma from Yunnan to Thailand.

Mr. Ma took five horses with him when he left China and went to Tachilek, near the Thai border. There, he traded between Tangyan and the Burmese–Thai border such as Tachilek and Mae Sai. While he was living in Burma, the KMT was defeated, and its armies moved south. Mr. Ma said he encountered KMT troops in Tangyan. Once the presence of the KMT was established, the situation in Burma drastically changed and turmoil ensued. Mr. Ma could no longer continue to trade as he had in the past. Moreover, Mr. Ma said that he was not recruited as a KMT soldier, but helped for a while by supplying food to the KMT.

Starting in the early 1950s, the Burmese army attacked not only the KMT but also the traders who had moved to Burma from Yunnan. Therefore, with his safety in mind, Mr. Ma fled to Northern Thailand in the early 1950s. At the time, Mr. Ma was deeply pained by the realization that he could never return to China. In Northern Thailand, he first moved to Doi Ang Khang, just across the border from Burma. He spent the next three or four years in a village of temporary construction where Han and Hui Yunnanese lived together. This village, called Ban Yang, is located in Amphoe Fang, Chiang Mai Province. He later moved south to Chiang Mai City.

The following example of Mr. Na shows a different version of Hui migration. Mr. Na's case is more complicated than Mr. Ma's because his migration was influenced not only by KMT affairs but also by domestic instability in Burma.

Case 2. *Mr. Na, who migrated to Thailand after the 1960s* (Fig. 3)

Mr. Na was born in 1922 in Xishan Village, Shidian, Baoshan District, Yunnan Province.

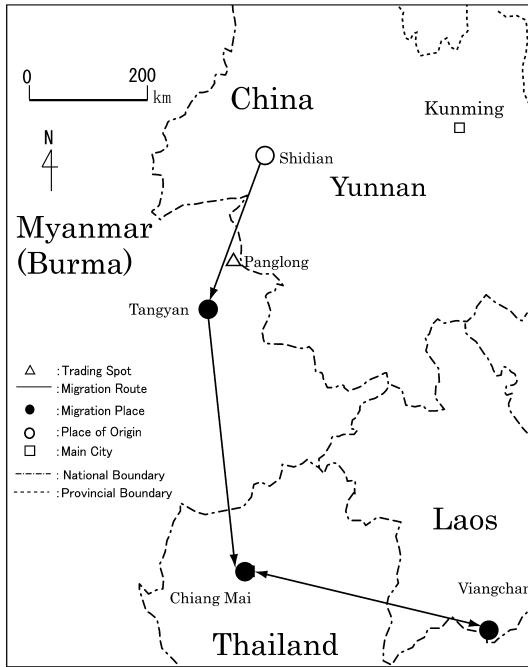


Fig. 3 Mr. Na's Migration Route

His family included generations of merchants, and he had seven brothers and sisters. In 1934/35, the second-eldest brother went to Chiang Mai to trade. When Mr. Na was 15 or 16 years old, he also started trading, using horses and mules. He engaged in trade between the Yunnan-Burmese border and Burmese-Thai border. For example, in 1944/45, he left Baoshan and entered the Panglong District of Wa State, where a Hui Yunnanese community had been established since the late nineteenth century [Forbes 1988; Yoshimatsu 2003]. He brought goods such as rice, cotton, tobacco, and pans from Yunnan and sold them in Panglong. After staying in Panglong, he went south toward Chiang Mai. In Chiang Mai, he

bought foreign goods such as dyed cloth made in Germany, which had been transported from Bangkok, and returned again to Panglong. In Panglong, he bought opium and brought it back to Yunnan. In this way, Mr. Na could freely cross the Yunnan, Burmese, and Thai borders for trading.

However, while he was trading in Burma, the situation in China became unstable due to the civil war. Mr. Na decided not to return to Yunnan and instead started to earn a living in Burma. In the early 1950s, Mr. Na moved to Tangyan and married a Panglong woman who was of Yunnanese Hui descent but born in Burma. They lived in Tangyan until 1968. During that period, he traded across the border of Burma and Thailand. According to Mr. Na, when he temporarily lived in Chiang Mai, he was asked by KMT soldiers to supply horses and muleteers. He also supplied food to the KMT.

In 1968, Mr. Na escaped from Burma because his business was not going well under Ne Win's socialist policies. He went to Viangchan in Laos and lived there for seven years. In 1974, Mr. Na returned to Thailand to earn a living.

Of course, not all Hui Yunnanese were caught up in KMT activities as they migrated to Thailand. Some people escaped to Thailand without becoming involved, as illustrated in the following example.

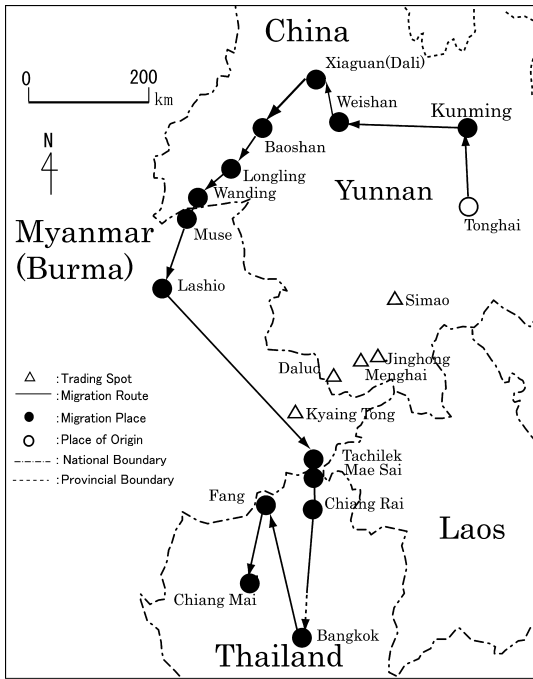


Fig. 4 Mr. Ye's Migration Route

Case 3. *Mr. Ye, who arrived earlier than the KMT in Thailand (Fig. 4)*

Mr. Ye was born in Najiaying Village in the Tonghai District. However, when he was only 1 year old, his village was attacked by bandits, and his family moved to Kunming. At the age of 20, Mr. Ye started to engage in trade. Although he was unwilling to talk about this trade, he said he had been to Xishuangbanna and had used mules. In 1947, he went south to Northern Thailand for trade, using horses and a car. First he used horses from Kunming to Kyaing Tong via Simao, Jinghong, Menghai, and Daluo. After arriving at Kyaing Tong, he drove by car through Tachilek and entered Mae Sai, Chiang Rai, and Chiang Mai. It was not clear from the interview what he traded during this time, but

he then returned to Yunnan.

However, in 1950, Ye left China because of fear and turmoil following the establishment of the communist regime. He escaped from Yunnan by car, passing through Kunming, Weishan, Xiaguan (Dali), Baoshan, Longling, and Wanding (all in Yunnan), and then entering Burma via Muse, Lashio, and Tachilek before finally arriving at Mae Sai in Chiang Rai. In Mae Sai, he married a daughter of a Cantonese Chinese woman. In 1953/54, he moved to Bangkok for business and went back and forth between Bangkok and the Fang District of Chiang Mai for more than 10 years. After 10 years, he settled in Fang to engage in tea production. Mr. Ye became wealthy from his success in the tea business, and about 10 years ago, moved to live in the city of Chiang Mai.

The above three life histories demonstrate the differing experiences and perceptions of Hui and Han migrants toward KMT activities in Burma. For the Han, KMT activities in Burma represented a challenge that could unite Yunnanese, both Han and Hui, under the ideology of "anticommunism." However, for the Hui, who had been civilian merchants, KMT fighting had a negative impact on their life and economy. In interviews, the Hui Yunnanese I spoke with expressed common negative feelings toward the majority of Han Yunnanese because of KMT activities in Burma. During the war times, anti-communist political ideology both strongly impacted the KMT and civilian migrant life.

Hui Yunnanese often had no choice in cooperating with KMT military affairs. Ignoring the KMT presence was also impossible. One elderly Hui informant told me that “What we did in Burma was just to convey bullets.” Another Hui informant recalled constant attacks by Burmese troops; people had no time to rest and instead had to fight or flee the military attacks. Therefore, in Burma, sociocultural factors among the Han or Hui did not function as a key element to unite Yunnanese; rather, anticommunist ideology was considered the top priority.

IV Double Marginalization

IV-1. *Distribution of Yunnanese Villages in Thailand*

Yunnanese, including both KMT members and civilian refugees, were twice officially driven out of Burma. The Burmese government appealed to the United Nations that KMT activities had impinged on Burmese sovereignty and disturbed the territory of Burma. United Nations’ resolutions in 1953 and 1961 forced KMT troops to withdraw from Burma. After entering Thailand, all Yunnanese migrants, both Han and Hui, became stateless refugees living in “*nan min cun*” (meaning “refugee villages” in Chinese).

From 1995 to 2000, I conducted extensive field surveys to obtain an overall view of the distribution of Yunnanese villages. When I started fieldwork, little had been written about the distribution of Yunnanese communities including both Han and Hui in this area.³⁾

Through my fieldwork, I examined 36 Yunnanese villages (Fig. 5). Yunnanese villages built after the 1950s reflected multiple social factors. Socioculturally, Yunnanese migrants since the mid-twentieth century are also quite diverse and represent different layers of history. My field research showed four general types of villages established after the 1950s: villages with a mixture of KMT soldiers and civilian Yunnanese refugees, villages mainly composed of KMT soldiers, villages formed to combat communist guerillas in Thailand, and villages built by antigovernment Burmese military units. The first two types were established in the 1950s and early 1960s, and the second two types were constructed after the 1960s [Wang 2004].

Overall, my research indicated that the major influence in the making of Yunnanese communities in Thailand was the movement of the KMT to Thailand. Because the KMT army was mainly composed of Han Yunnanese, most of the villagers who live there today are Han. For example, among the 36 villages I studied, I visited more than 20 with Han Yunnanese and only 14 Hui villages. Among the 14 Hui villages, 11 were established after the 1950s, and 7 were a mixture of Hui and Han residents.

For example, Ban Yang, situated in the Fang District, Chiang Mai Province, is a

3) For the distribution of the Hui Yunnanese in Northern Thailand, please see Imanaga [1990].

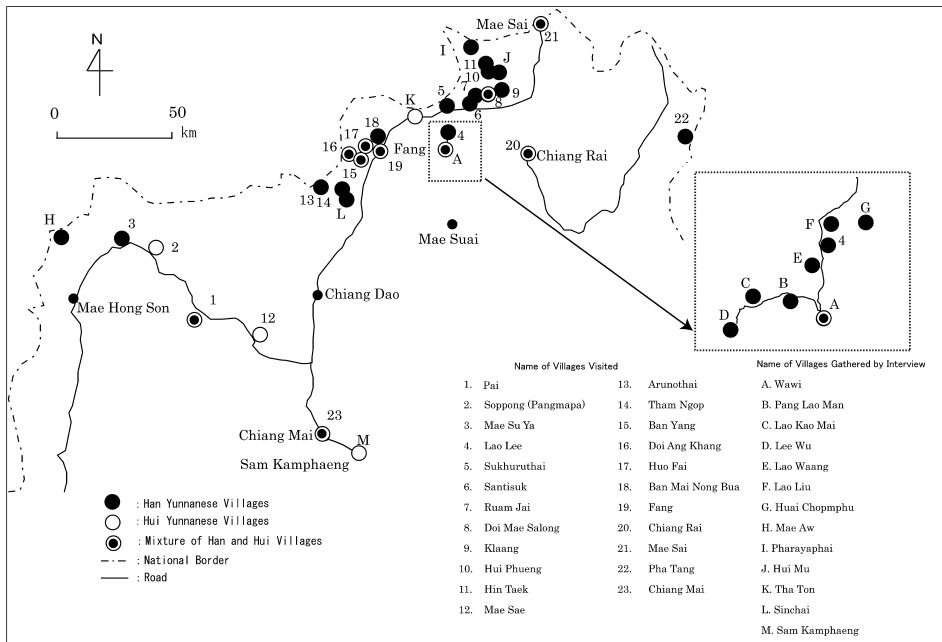


Fig. 5 Distribution of Yunnanese Villages in Northern Thailand

Yunnanese village; it was established around 1953 on the Thai/Burmese border after the KMT movement to Thailand. In 1998, during my fieldwork, Ban Yang contained approximately 250 households, among which more than 180 were Han Yunnanese and 60–70 were Hui Yunnanese. According to elderly informants, the Karen, one of the hill-dwelling minorities in Northern Thailand, had lived there previously but the Yunnanese migrants pushed them out. The Yunnanese village was established with 30 to 40 households, which were a mixture of KMT and civilian refugees at that time. In the early 1950s, villages were in poor condition; residents made houses from bamboo that could be abandoned if they had to escape from attacking Burmese troops on the Thai–Burmese borderland. According to informants in other refugee villages in Chiang Rai, Yunnanese migrants, especially KMT troops in Ban Tham, went back and forth along the Thai–Burmese border to fight in Burma or to obtain relief from fellow soldiers [Kanchana n. d.: 30–31].

With the changes in military circumstances between the early 1950s and 1960s, the number of illegal refugee villages gradually increased along the Thai–Burmese border. These refugee villages were mainly constructed in three provinces in Northern Thailand: Chiang Mai, Chiang Rai, and Mae Hong Son (particularly the former two). It is estimated that approximately 4,570 refugees lived in Chiang Mai and about 3,564 lived in Chiang Rai [*ibid.*: 51].

The KMT movement to Thailand terrified Thai border security. The Thai govern-

ment began to negotiate with Taiwan regarding the treatment of KMT and civilian refugees in Thailand; four negotiations took place from the 1960s to the early 1970s [*ibid.*: 52–59]. The Thai government wanted to push out the KMT and Yunnanese refugees to Taiwan, but KMT leaders in Thailand refused to retreat. The reason for their refusal is still uncertain, although some KMT leaders may have wanted to preserve their military and economic interests and networks, which were fostered through the warfare in Burma. The KMT's refusal to retreat to Taiwan presented the Thai government with a great challenge as to how to deal with KMT and civilian Yunnanese refugees who had started to settle along the Thai–Burmese border.

IV-2. *Thai Government Policy*

What should be noted is that Thai government policy did not try to control the Yunnanese in terms of an “ethnic problem” based on ethnic differences between Hui or Han but from a national security point of view. For the Thai government, the biggest problem at that time was to control KMT military affairs for security reasons. Economic activities of the KMT related to drug trafficking both in Burma and Thailand also became a serious issue for the Thai government. Therefore, the Yunnanese were separately controlled as either KMT soldiers or as civilian refugees.

That is, the Yunnanese were categorized into two groups. KMT soldiers were classified as “*adit thahan chin khanachat*” (ex-KMT soldiers), and civilian refugees as “*chin ho oppayop*” (Yunnanese refugees). To control the Yunnanese, the Thai government tried to establish official policies toward the KMT and civilian Yunnanese refugees along the Thai border following the second stage of KMT settlement to Taiwan in 1961. In May 1961, the Thai government developed a policy to defend their national territory from KMT illegal occupation and ordered the military to control the KMT. At the same time, the Thai government ordered the Ministry of Interior to control Yunnanese civilian refugees and began negotiations with provincial officers in Chiang Mai and Chiang Rai, seeking a solution on Yunnanese settlement in Thailand [*ibid.*: 50–51].

Moreover, the Thai and Taiwanese governments started official negotiations regarding the resettlement of the KMT to Taiwan in 1967. Four meetings were held by military officials from Thailand and Taiwan in both countries, with two meetings in 1968, one in 1969, and one in 1970. Although little is known of the 1968 meetings, in July 1969, military leaders from Taiwan visited Northern Thailand to inspect KMT villages; they also met with two former KMT commanders: General Li and General Duan. In January 1970, representatives of the Thai military visited Taiwan to again negotiate the possibility of KMT resettlement in Taiwan. Taiwan and Thailand agreed on a resolution on KMT issues; however, in the end, the two former KMT leaders did not accept the agreement on resettlement in Taiwan. Until 1970, the Thai government had no special solution to control either the KMT or Yunnanese civilian refugees [Kritsana 1990: 19].

During the Thai government's internal and international policy efforts, border

dangers increased as communist guerillas in neighboring Laos tried to invade Thai territory, threatening government security. The attempted invasions caused the Thai government to reconsider the nation's border security and relationship with the KMT, whose ideology was anticommunist. The Thai government thus decided to utilize KMT military power to combat communist guerillas along the borders of Laos and Burma. More than 700 people were conscripted to fight against communist guerillas in the early 1970s.⁴⁾ Because of KMT cooperation and willingness to combat communist guerillas in border areas, ex-KMT soldiers were authorized to settle in Thailand. Moreover, as a result of their contributions, the government granted Thai citizenship to KMT soldiers in 1978. At least 2,904 people were granted Thai citizenship from 1978 to 1980. Furthermore, about 10,000 people were awarded legal resident status around the same time [Kanchana n. d.: 203]. In contrast, Yunnanese civilian refugees, the group to which most Hui Yunnanese belonged, were treated as illegal refugees. It was not until 1984 that the Thai government changed their policy and started to give both KMT soldiers and civilian refugees equal legal status. Civilian refugees were also considered to be granted legal status as foreign residents in the next stage.

During this period, KMT soldiers were given preference in becoming Thai or legal residents. In the Thai context, Yunnanese living in Northern Thailand became refugees, and the political status of most Hui became lower than that of former KMT soldiers or Han Yunnanese, who were given Thai citizenship.

IV-3. *Han and Hui Relationships in "Refugee" Villages*

The first generation of Yunnanese migrants (both Han and Hui), with few exceptions, faced difficulties living as foreigners in Thailand. Illegal residents were forbidden from traveling freely within Thailand and were only conditionally authorized to travel outside the administrative region in which they lived if they submitted a written request. Similar discrimination toward the Yunnanese was also applied to second-generation Yunnanese. The Thai government has long touted the principle that all persons born in Thailand are automatically considered Thai. However, this principle was not applied to the Yunnanese. In 1972, Han and Hui Yunnanese born in Thailand were denied Thai citizenship.

Yunnanese commercial activities were also limited. Although informants divulged few details, many had few economic options other than trading with opium farmers among the mountain hill-dwellers. I gathered little direct information about commercial opium activity from Han or Hui Yunnanese informants; however, I did acquire information from some hill-dwelling people in the Mae Hong Son District who cultivated opium until the 1970s and exchanged opium with "*Ho*" merchants, who often came to their village and brought them to the market. In one of the Lisu villages in Mae Hong Son, I

4) The first stage in 1970 involved more than 721 KMT soldiers [Kanchana n. d.: 67].

heard that in the past, some Han Yunnanese households had lived together with Lisu to earn their livings.⁵⁾

Because Han and Hui Yunnanese were confined in refugee villages under the control of the Thai government, the two ethnic groups often had to live in the same villages along the Thai–Burmese border. As noted above, among the 36 villages I visited, 14 were Hui villages and within these, 7 were a mixture of Hui and Han.

For the Han Yunnanese, the majority of whom were ex-KMT soldiers and their families, the KMT still controlled and organized village life at least until the early 1980s [Bo 1987: 155–159]. To feed soldiers and their families, the KMT is thought to have engaged in opium trading across the border of Burma and Thailand even after their settlement in Thailand. Furthermore, many ex-KMT soldiers still took military orders between the late 1960s and 1970s, particularly when the Thai government recruited and reorganized ex-KMT soldiers to fight and evict communist guerillas near the Thai–Laotian border in Chiang Rai Province.

The sociopolitical situation of the Hui Yunnanese is more complicated. The Hui had more diverse choices than the Han, who were predominantly soldiers. For example, in the Yunnanese village Ban Yang (Fang District, Chiang Mai Province) mentioned above, of 250 households, about 180–190 were Han households and 60–70 were Hui households in 1998. The Hui residents included ex-KMT soldiers and civilian refugees. Although Hui Yunnanese living in Ban Yang divulged few details, responses suggest that these two groups earned different types of livings. One elderly informant who had been a civilian refugee living in Ban Yang told me, “We lived separately from KMT. Sometimes, we paid a toll tax to the KMT so that we could pass a certain way.” Another second-generation Hui civilian recalled, “When I was a child, I saw many villagers here who made up small trade groups using horses and brought goods from the lowlands to the uplands. My father also joined trading groups to earn money. Making a living depended on each household.”

According to several informants who had lived in a refugee village, they considered these villages a transition stage in their migration rather than a permanent home. From the Thai perspective, political prejudice and government pressure over the opium trade caused many Thais to view Yunnanese in the early stages of settlement as frightening aliens. Therefore, some Yunnanese migrants, both Han and Hui, feared that the police would mistake them as being opium traders or arrest them as scapegoats; because of these fears, they could not live a stable life. Therefore, the early Hui and Han settlers took no collective action based on religious cultural factors to express their identity. One Hui informant noted that “we did follow the teaching of Islam throughout the migration process on the individual level; however, we had difficulty in doing so collectively

5) Opium production became illegal and was officially banned in Thailand in 1958 [Mannorff 1967].

because we had to survive and earn a living in the mountainous area, moving back and forth, being wary of the Thai government.”

V Revival of Hui Ethnic Consciousness

V-1. *Remigration of the Hui*

Social relationships between the Hui and Han have changed gradually during their processes of settling in Thailand. Interestingly, Hui living in refugee villages along the Thai–Burmese border began a kind of movement to remigrate to other places and to build Muslim communities by themselves. Generally, however, this remigration was undertaken for practical business reasons rather than purely religious motives. For example, one second-generation Hui Yunnanese who lived in Mae Hong Son described her father who migrated from Yunnan around 1949 to Chiang Mai City. After staying there for several years, her father married a local Indo-Pakistani woman and they had children. While their family was living in Chiang Mai, her father often visited the Mae Hong Son District for commercial activities. According to the informant, in the early 1950s, few Yunnanese merchants lived permanently there. Her father saw this as a good business opportunity and decided to move his household to Mae Hong Son. Initially, only two Hui Yunnanese households were there, but more Hui newcomers arrived after several years. Most of these migrants were “remigrants” coming from refugee villages or other cities in Northern Thailand. As the Hui population gradually increased, the informant’s father started to build a mosque for communal use.

Another example of Hui community building involves the Ban Ho community in Chiang Mai City. The Ban Ho community, as noted above, was established by Hui Yunnanese traders in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. A Hui Yunnanese named Zheng Chong Lin played a major role and offered his land for the mosque in 1917.

Prior to the 1950s, the Hui population was relatively small because most Hui were traders and lived impermanently in Thailand for commerce. However, after the 1950s, more and more Hui Yunnanese migrants who had settled as refugees in the border areas began to remigrate and gather around the Ban Ho mosque area near other Hui settlers. These newcomers from refugee villages requested assistance (e. g., food, housing, and trading) from Mr. Zheng and his relatives living near the Ban Ho mosque. One of the newcomers told me that when he first arrived in Chiang Mai, he borrowed a house near the mosque for several years from Mr. Zheng’s son. Another informant told me that he sometimes slept at Mr. Zheng’s house when he came to Chiang Mai for commercial activities. In 1998, I interviewed one of Mr. Zheng’s daughters who was over 70 years old at the time and was living at her father’s house. She described her father as a generous man who served food and supplied rooms for Hui newcomers. When she was a child, her

house was used as a resting place for Hui merchants who came from refugee villages or other places; her family gave these visitors free food. Because the Hui merchants often used horses and mules at that time, her house was also used as a place to keep these animals.

As the population of Hui Yunnanese gradually increased, the Hui population in Ban Ho had great impact on social life. Hui Yunnanese intermarriage is one example. In the past, most of the migrants who settled in Northern Thailand were single men not accompanied by family or relatives from China. Many had family, including wives and children, in China but had left them behind in their homeland because of the hardships of caravan trade at that time. Because few Yunnanese Hui women lived in Northern Thailand prior to the 1950s, many Hui merchants who settled there married local Thai women or Indo-Pakistani Muslim women. Indeed, many mixed-ethnicity descendents of Hui traders still exist. However, with the influx of Hui Yunnanese migrants to Thailand since the 1950s, intermarriage among Hui gradually increased. During my fieldwork, I encountered several cases in which Hui second-generation women whose fathers were traders prior to the 1950s married new Hui migrants who had escaped from China around 1949. For example, Mr. Ma, whose migratory history I described earlier, married a second-generation Hui woman whose father was a trader from Yunnan and settled in Chiang Mai in the early 1900s.

V-2. *The Making of the Hui Community*

The resurgence of Islam has also had a great socioreligious impact on the Hui communities in Northern Thailand. As noted above, before the arrival of new Hui migrants in the 1950s and afterward, only two mosques served Hui Yunnanese in Northern Thailand. The influx of new Hui Yunnanese settlers after the 1950s revitalized the older community. Existing mosques were refurbished and new mosques were constructed by the initiative of Hui Yunnanese. One Hui Yunnanese who had established a mosque in the 1970s in the Fang District of Chiang Mai Province said, “The Thai government didn’t support us at that time. Even worse, the Thai government viewed us with suspicion, wondering why Hui Yunnanese needed to establish mosques on the border of Thailand. The Thai government was afraid that Yunnanese would cause trouble in the border area and lead to instability there.”

However, despite government pressure and prejudice, the Yunnanese mutually supported their community and raised funds to build mosques. Mosques were built not only in Ban Ho, an early area of Hui Yunnanese settlement, but also eventually in newer refugee villages along the Thai-Burmese border. In 1970, not far from Ban Ho mosque, another Hui Yunnanese mosque called San Pa Khoi mosque was founded. During the 1970s and 1980s, new migrants built five mosques in refugee villages clustered in the northern Chiang Mai District.

During this period, the Yunnanese became aware of the importance of teaching Islam

and preserving their religious practices. In earlier decades, basic economic and personal survival consumed the time and energy of many Hui Yunnanese migrants, who although were Muslim by birth, did not have time for religious activities or fostering the Islamic heritage passed down from their ancestors.

Hui leaders who migrated in the late twentieth century, with the cooperation of the preceding Hui settlers and their descendents, were the main revitalizers of Islam. For example, in the case of Ban Ho, the original mosque founded by Mr. Zheng had only one floor made of wood and straw. In 1966, this mosque was refurbished into a two-story concrete mosque by the co-efforts of the pioneer settlers and newcomers. In 1970, San Pa Khoi mosque was founded by the Hui leader Mr. Hu, who had escaped from the political turmoil in China. Before Mr. Hu moved to San Pa Khoi to build mosque, he had lived in the Ban Ho area with the earlier Hui settlers.

Generally, Yunnanese leaders who played important roles in establishing the Hui communities since the 1950s were successful businessmen with a strong passion for preserving the Hui's Islamic heritage. However, these leaders commonly could not speak or write Arabic and did not have a deep knowledge of Islamic teachings because most had few educational opportunities growing up in rural China.

Mr. Hu was a large contributor to Islamic education in Northern Thailand. He founded the first Islamic school in Northern Thailand in 1972. The school was named Attaqwa School (in Chinese: 敬真 [Jingzhen] 学校). Mr. Hu was born in 1914 in the Mong Huo District, Yunnan. Although little information exists on his family background, he traded along the Burmese–Thai border and was chosen as a chairman of the Administration Committee of the district for two years.⁶⁾ He was not only successful in his career but had also been enthusiastic about Islamic education even in China before he escaped to Thailand. As a businessman, he established and headed the Mu Kwang School for Islamic education in Yunnan. However, his community was attacked by the communists in 1946 and fighting continued. As a result, he escaped China, leaving his wife and children behind. He lived in Burma until 1950 and then migrated to Chiang Mai in 1951.

When he came to Thailand, he focused on work in order to survive. He traveled between Chiang Mai and Bangkok and finally set up his house in Chiang Mai in 1957. While in Chiang Mai, he began to think about the importance of Islamic education for Muslims in Northern Thailand. He was pessimistic about the Islamic situation in the Muslim community at that time, saying “though all of the muslims [*sic*] in Chiengmai came from China, Pakistan, India, etc., most of them only knew that they were muslims; very few knew much about the teachings of Islam; the mosque was left with very small number of members. Since God had helped me escape from the communists and be successful in business, I decided to work for Islam, and to help the muslim society.”⁷⁾

6) The life history of Mr. Hu is based on TQYQ [1988: 175–179].

7) TQYQ [1988: 175].

Mr. Hu collected funds and donated his own money to establish the Islamic school. He bought a piece of land for private use and for building the San Pa Khoi mosque and Islamic school in 1966. He also asked for the help and cooperation of several Hui Yunnanese leaders who lived in the San Pa Khoi and Ban Ho areas to raise funds to complete his plan. The mosque was finished in 1969, and the Islamic school was completed, including a school building, dormitory, and cafeteria, in 1972. The facilities accepted not only Hui Yunnanese but also persons of other ethnicities, such as Indo-Pakistanis and Thais.

Due to Mr. Hu's effort, Islamic education began in 1973 and was registered under the Education Department in Thailand. The school initially accepted only male Muslims, and female students were not admitted until 1982. To enhance female education, a Saudi merchant family named Talha who had lived temporarily in Northern Thailand, contributed large donations and solicited help from Mr. Hu and other Hui Yunnanese members. The Talha family donated 9,775,371 baht over 11 years.⁸⁾ As noted by Mr. Hu:

After Mr. Talha spent some time with muslims in the northern region he had the idea that muslim-men in this area had a reasonable knowledge of Islamic teaching, but the muslim women still lacked knowledge. The women are closest to the children and therefore they have the most influence upon the children. Hence, the mother should have Islamic knowledge in order to mould the children's heart into having a strong faith.⁹⁾

Since 1982, both female and male students have studied at the Islamic school, and the number of students has gradually increased. At the school's 15th anniversary in 1987, 104 boys and 44 girls were enrolled.¹⁰⁾ Several of the graduates have received scholarships to study abroad in Arab countries and have returned to Thailand to serve as religious leaders in the community. For example, the present president of the Chiang Mai Islamic committee and Imam at Chang Phuak mosque studied abroad for graduate school. In addition, some of the teachers at Ban Ho mosque and other mosques in Chiang Mai are also the graduates of Attaqwa School. Thus, by creating mosques and the Islamic school, the Hui Yunnanese have raised consciousness and awareness of their religious background and symbolically differentiated themselves from the Han Yunnanese.

VI Conclusion

Although the Yunnanese have long been referred to by the generic name "*Ho*" in Thai society, their migration and interethnic relationships are diverse and have changed over

8) TQYQ [1988: 138].

9) TQYQ [1988: 177].

10) TQYQ [1988: 128, 179].

the years. The migration history and identity creation of Hui Yunnanese in Thailand have intertwined with those of the Han Yunnanese and been influenced by Thai government policies, especially since the mid-twentieth century.

Before the 1950s, Yunnanese living in Northern Thailand were considered to be Muslims. Most traded around Yunnan and into Burma, Laos, and Thailand. However, since the 1950s, sociopolitical situations have changed drastically because of political turmoil in China and KMT activities in Burma. Because Han comprised the majority of the Yunnanese population in Thailand at this time, Yunnanese villagers were generally perceived as ex-KMT soldiers and Han.

Thus, Yunnanese migratory history in the latter half of the twentieth century has largely been viewed from the perspective of KMT activities. This one-sided view, as well as accompanying prejudice, has also been held by the Thai government, which has affected policy making regarding national security and border control, especially in regard to communist guerilla threats inside and at the border of Thailand in the 1960s and 1970s. Therefore, little attention has been paid to Hui migrants, who built their livelihoods and communities in the face of KMT military pressures in Burma, pressures that impacted their migration, sociocultural activities, and relations with the Thai government.

In some ways, the Hui Yunnanese have been marginalized not only by the Thai government but also by Han Yunnanese who controlled the KMT military throughout migration. However, my field research and interviews also revealed that Hui Yunnanese have tried to manipulate their identity in accordance with their sociopolitical environments. While Hui ethnicity was downplayed during the beginning of their migratory process, its resurgence gradually emerged after their settlement in Thailand.

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