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Redefining “Otherness” from Northern Thailand

Introduction: Notes Towards Debating Multiculturalism in Thailand and Beyond

HAYAMI Yoko*

Multiculturalism has not been on Thailand's official agenda. Thailand has been known as a homogeneous country, or rather, homogeneity had been incessantly stressed in official and other discourse while repressing differences, in the process of nation-building throughout the twentieth century. Those who do not fit into the narrowly defined “Thai-ness” have therefore been deemed “others” and outsiders, threats to the unity of the homogeneously conceived nation. For most of the twentieth century, approach to difference had been fundamentally assimilationist. As Renard points out in his paper in this issue, Thailand's stress on homogeneity or non-recognition of its own diversity stands out among countries in the region. The socialist regimes on Mainland Southeast Asia all officially recognize their diversity numerically. Vietnam counts 54, Myanmar 135, and Laos in between 47 to 236 [Vatthana 2005: 81] nationalities or ethnic groups. Thailand too has always been culturally and ethnically diverse. While diversity itself is unquestionable, the question is how the diversity and differences have been managed. In the recent relationship between the state and minorities in the North, we seem to find increasing recognition towards diversity. The evolving process over more than a century, the nature of the recent recognition of differences, and the varied responses from those “others” towards the process in “negotiating identities” is what we will address in this special issue.

This collection of papers is the outcome of a panel session at the 9th International Thai Studies Meeting held at Northern Illinois University in April 2005.¹⁾ The papers are by scholars who have conducted long-term fieldwork in Northern Thailand, one historian and four anthropologists. The paper by historian Renard looks at the definition of Thai and Thainess from the center from early twentieth century, seeking how Thailand launched into this homogeneous discourse. Looking at how the self becomes defined

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1) I am most grateful to Nikki Tannenbaum with whom I co-organized this panel, and who was an indispensable part of the process. I also thank all members of the audience at the session for participating in lively discussion. Leif Jonsson and Jojo Abinales gave valuable comments to the final draft of this introduction. Earlier versions of Kwanchewan, and Hayami's papers are on the conference proceedings CD-Rom.

allows us to pursue how the “others” were defined. The paper by Kwanchewan discusses the Tribal Research Institute, the instrument of assimilationist policy towards the hill minorities. The remaining three papers deal with specific groups of “others” as defined by the hegemonic “self”: the elderly in Tai Lue society (Baba); the over-land Chinese *Chiin Haw* (Wang); and Karen (Hayami). All in one way or another deal with how “Others” versus Self have been defined and are now being re-defined in Thai society.

As an introduction to these papers, I will discuss the recent trends in Thailand from the point of view of the institutional changes, and try to lay out the present orientation towards difference and diversity in Northern Thailand. In doing so, I find it useful to take up “multiculturalism” as the key concept. It may seem contrived to talk about multiculturalism in a country where it has never been professed in official discourse, yet, much of what is happening in Thailand, especially the North seems to be most pertinent to the debates critiquing western liberal multiculturalism. These arguments might therefore give us some clues towards thinking about the issue in Thailand. The process taking place in Thailand is relevant in contexts in other parts of Southeast Asia. If there is increasing recognition of diversity and difference, in what contexts is that taking place? What does it mean for the “Others” to be thus “recognized”? And ultimately, how can we talk about multiculturalism in Thailand in a way satisfactory to all parties involved?

* * *

The process of nation-building in Thailand has been one of delineating and defining Thainess versus Otherness both within and across its boundaries. “Others” here might include not only the more obvious national and ethnic others, but also those whose various loci of identity (religious, sexual, or occupational, etc.) are marginalized in the normative social order. Such delineation and redefinition have undergone changes at different points in the nation-building, especially in the past decade.

The original impetus for organizing the panel at the Thai Studies Meetings was the dissolution of the Tribal Research Institute in 2002. Established in 1962 as the Tribal Research Centre during the times of communist insurgency and opium production in the hills, TRI had been the center for implementing various development projects towards the “hill tribes” to deal with these problems. The hill tribes (*chaw khaw*) were problems to be dealt with and ultimately to be either assimilated or expelled outside the Thai territory. In the Administrative Reform Act of 2002, however, the Tribal Research Institute of the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare was dissolved. The questions raised were: does TRI’s dissolution mean that the government no longer considered the “hill tribes” as problematic, and/or, did they evaluate their assimilationist policies as having been completed successfully? What is actually happening in the hills today seems to be, in some ways, contradictory. On the one hand the hill-dwellers have come to show far

more readiness to adopt state-initiated projects including agricultural innovations, education, health-related programs, etc. Yet in many cases they have been prompted by those very government agents to also maintain ethnic representations and displays. Even if it seems that they no longer pose serious threats and problems to the state, from their perspective, they have yet many problems they want the state to solve, such as citizenship and land rights, and they at times resort to conscious self-representation of difference as a strategic way to claim them. State magnanimity admitting their benign differences could simply be a way to appease them in the face of such problems.

The fact that the museum, now placed under the Tourist Authority is left as a legacy of the TRI seems to be quite telling of the kinds of difference the state is ready to promote. What used to be a small one-room display in the building of the TRI was moved in 1997 to occupy a four-story building beside a scenic lake on the outskirts of Chiang Mai. Jonsson analyses the narrative behind the layout. On the lowest floor is a display of the hill-tribe traditional material cultures, and the successful development efforts by the government, bringing “occupational, social, educational, and moral development” to the backwards and ecologically destructive peoples, commemorating Thai society’s commitment to progress. Then there is the second floor which introduces hill tribes and Buddhism, and the top floor, demonstrating the King’s benevolence and the hill people’s trust towards him [Jonsson 2005: 64–67]. The museum today also sponsors language and culture classes for the minorities to learn their own languages. Thus it is a juxtaposition of preservation of cultural difference (as demonstrated in the display of objects) on the one hand, and state’s self-congratulating itself on attaining development and modernization among them in the face of their backwardness. Here we find a similar process as those that have been discussed in other parts of Southeast Asia such as Indonesia. State promotion of local arts and performances, and misrecognition of “culture” have had the effect of reducing local culture into performance and display [Acciaioli 1985]. I come back to this below.

In place of the overall disinterest in the cultures of the others, and the eagerness to assimilate and incorporate them into the national developmental effort, now there is this attempt to define their culture as part of a benign recognition of difference. Meanwhile, up in the hills, former “tribal” villages are now putting up public displays of their own cultures in juxtaposition with displays of themselves as proper Thai citizens, such as in sports festivals [Jonsson 2005], rituals and performances (Baba this issue), or eco-tourism (Hayami this issue), by their own initiative or in response to administrative prompting.

The TRI dissolution was only a very small part of an overall administrative reshuffle in 2002 under Thaksin. Another small part was the founding of the Ministry of Culture. The Ministry’s foundation can be traced back more than half a century. The institutional basis for promoting Thai culture as the basis of a civilized nation against the threat of foreign powers had been founded earlier in the twentieth century, with emphasis on the three national pillars of nation, religion and monarchy. It was in 1942

under Phibun, that the National Culture Council was established under the Culture Act, to consolidate the policies that began with the various decrees (*rathaniyom*) since 1939, most of which had to do with civilizing the appearance of the Thai nation such as dress and manners of the people. Also under Phibun, the Ministry of Culture was founded in 1952, but together with the NCC, both were abolished when Sarit took over in 1958 [Connors 2005].²⁾ Subsequently under the threat of communist insurgency, Buddhism and the kingship was further stressed as the linchpin of Thai culture and citizenship. In 1979, the National Cultural Commission was founded in the Ministry of Education, to promote unity of Thai culture in this vein. With the end of cold war and struggle in Indochina, from the 1980s into the 1990s, power shifted from the military to business and politics. “Thainess” became open to contestation, and the various waves of recognizing Thainess in varied locations and stress on local cultures began. Culture seems to have been handed to the people and their localities.

The Ministry of Culture was founded in 2002 within the same Administrative Reform as that which brought the dissolution of TRI. Upon the foundation of the ministry, a seminar of administrators and academics was held titled “Vision of Thai Culture,” an official in charge of drawing up a master plan noted that “culture is plural in Thailand” [*ibid.*: 538]. The resulting plan of 2003 endorsed the politics of diversity, acknowledging more than 30 ethnic groups each one having its own characteristics and culture. With a change in the minister, after 2004 there was further emphasis on culture as “capital” for economic and social development, facilitating both the commercial uses of culture as well as regional and provincial demands for promoting local cultures. As Connors points out, since the 1980s, the issue of “Thai-ness” has changed its nature. “The question now is how culture and identity forms can be used to articulate local cultures, multiple ethnic identities and national identity into a Thai-ness for the global age” [*ibid.*: 544].

Section 30 of the 1997 Constitution³⁾ states that “all persons are equal before the law and shall enjoy equal protection under the law.... Men and women shall enjoy equal rights.... Unjust discrimination against a person on the grounds of the difference in origin, race, language, sex, age, physical or health condition, personal status, economic or social standing, religious belief, education or constitutionally political view, shall not be permitted.” Under this Constitution, it would seem possible that Thailand might declare itself a multicultural society, by guaranteeing that its people will not face discrimination based on such differences as noted.

The King’s first royal address to the newly inaugurated Prime Minister Thaksin’s

2) Much of the information on the Ministry of Culture in this and the next paragraph were drawn from Connors [2005].

3) Just as I am writing this introduction, on the night of September 19th 2006, a Coup d’Etat by military personnel has overthrown the Thaksin government. The 1997 Constitution has been abrogated. In this early stage, it is impossible to know what will come in its place.

cabinet on Feb. 21, 2001 stated that the Thai nation “comprises people from various parts of the country. They differ in thoughts and ways of life. Their home topographies are different. So are their standings. . . . One of the problems that the government will face concerns the people who have long been living in our country but are not yet considered Thai. . . . They were born in Thailand. They have been living in Thailand. But they haven’t received the benefits of being Thai citizens. This matter must be handled without discrimination.”⁴⁾ All of this suggests that Thailand has become more accepting of cultural differences. Is it the maturity of the nation state that now Thailand’s constitution could admit its internal differences, or is it a change in the nature of the difference thus acknowledged? As according to Appadurai, “the mobilization of markers of group difference may itself be part of a contestation of values about difference” [Appadurai 1996: 14]. Difference has itself come to mean something else.

Indeed, there has been significant interest in cultural diversity on multiple levels in the past two decades. The interest in regional cultures such as in Isaan or Lanna cultures can be seen, for example, in recent cultural revival of the North since the celebration of the 700th Lanna year. There is much interest in these regions also in pop cultures including food and music [Jory 2000]. Chinese cultural elements have also appeared in the media, especially TV dramas. Another wave was the interest in local cultures of rural communities. Since the 1980s, and the community culture movement, the true Thai tradition and wisdom were to be located in the local communities. There was also expansion of interest into areas adjacent to the Thai national borders as those hitherto inaccessible regions in Laos, Vietnam, Myanmar and Southern China were opened up to visitors since the latter 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s. In these regions many Tai-speaking peoples resided, and interest in Thainess/Tainess spurred explorations into these areas from Thailand, commercial, academic, tourist etc. Finally, with the expansion of the domestic tourist market, state interest in tourism has expanded not only to the regional and provincial cultures, but also to the hills and other minorities. The diversity of cultures has become a cultural resource, yet, the difference as presented as cultural resource is often a standardized and homogenized version acceptable to the state. Thai Culture and History as viewed from the center have been reviewed and interest in local histories and cultures was advocated. With the alleviated pressure on security especially in the border areas, there has been more space for the display of differences. Administrative decentralization also opened paths for local initiatives. Plus, against the background of economic development, difference has become an economic resource and the move has been towards commercialization. Is the Thai state then ready to recognize diversity within?

4) Cited in Norman Vasu [2005].

Multiculturalism has claimed the plurality of cultures as a way to counter the assimilationist tendencies of majority society and culture, but at the same time most often its effectiveness has been recognized and encouraged in terms of managerial policy or administrative norm. By multiculturalism we generally refer to the attitude of welcoming diversification of culture and society positively, and arguments pertaining to multiculturalism emerge as a discourse concerning the state and the formal aspects of state and society. It has also come to represent the magnanimous attitude towards minorities by those majority civilians whose own authenticity is unquestionable. From the point of view of the status quo, multiculturalism replaces the counter-narratives of oppositional politics deemed destructive to its maintenance. By calling all kinds of cultural strategy etc. “multiculturalism,” or by recognizing differences on display, it could tame and domesticate the critical sharpness of certain counter-narratives of identity politics, glossing over outcries from minorities demanding their rights as citizens. We need, then, to question the nature of the difference claimed in the diversity allowed to coexist in the claim.

In their discussion of multiculturalism in Asia, Baogang He and Will Kymlicka point out that Asian countries are now in intense search of new alternative ways of conceptualizing state-minority relations. These draw upon a variety of traditions such as pre-colonial centre-periphery relations, European colonial practices of legal pluralism and indirect rule, and socialist theories of national liberation and self-determination, etc. On top of these today what many countries have come to draw upon as model for the democratic negotiation of diversity is the emerging models of multicultural citizenship, and human and minority rights in the international discourse: a way to manage ethnic diversity within the bounds of peaceful and democratic politics without jeopardizing the basic security and prosperities of the society [He and Kymlicka 2005: 5–6].

In Laos, Vietnam and Myanmar, ethnic/national differences are abundantly used in the state propaganda. The diversity is portrayed in posters, billboards, various media, postage stamps, and currencies. As Jonsson and Taylor point out for Vietnam, “particular ways of imagining and experiencing diversity” are thus sanctioned [2002: 176]. Signifiers of local identity is appropriated by the nation state for its hegemonic process of modernity and progress [*ibid.*: 180]. In these settings it is not so much that cultural diversity is accommodated, but rather, the state’s project of national integration is celebrated and propagandized by demonstrating the diversity. Vatthana, arguing for Laos where difference is equally emphasized in propaganda, denies the possibility of liberal multiculturalism in Laos, and at the same time cogently critiques this brand of multiculturalism [2005].

More widely, the western brand of liberal multiculturalism has been critiqued over the years for its own contradictions. The contradiction is that encouraging multiculturalism enhances the generality and normativeness of the common culture. State recognition of ethnic groups is itself a form of state control of its marginal peoples, and furthermore, culture becomes an economic resource such as in the tourist industry. Thus, multiculturalism is not only management by state and administration, but also by business and the market. When marginalized minority culture becomes visible in dominant society, it does not merely mean that the cultural minorities have gained increased opportunity for self-representation. It also meets the demands of the market, as their culture becomes a resource. The marginalized might gain audience only by capitalizing on and commercializing one's own difference strategically.

Multiculturalism of this brand is management of diversity where difference is domesticated and enclosed. However, to simply give up on multiculturalism for such contradictions, would mean also throwing away its strategic effectiveness. Such things as cultural strategy of social minorities called identity politics, also is founded on liberal multiculturalist stance to difference. "Identity politics" is taken up by those who are excluded from institutional processes and historical representations so far, who are marginalized and who align themselves under the banner of diverse cultural, social and historical differences. By giving themselves a name, or by taking up a name given to them, they are constructing their selves not as mere objects of others' representation and narrative.

This may be true of the "indigenous peoples" discourse, and the identity politics used in debating land rights among some of the hill-dwellers in Thailand. Karen for example, have labeled themselves indigenous people who have long lived sustainably in the forests. The labeling of some uplanders by the lowland powers as "forest people" is now taken up by the uplanders themselves in claiming their rights. By taking up the standardization of culture that is imposed on them, they are able to create some space to negotiate their rights [Yos 2004]. Kymlicka points out that among the varied forms of multiculturalism, the "indigenous peoples" were the more successful in such debates. For those who can take up this label without controversy, it does become a locus for claiming rights to land and resource. However, this has been a problematic term to use in Thailand, since as Toyota points out, some (such as the Karen) might more easily take on the label than others (such as the Hmong). The more serious question as Toyota points out, however, lies in the way a cultural community might become institutionalized [2005: 133]. Acciaoli analyses how the Indonesian state's sanctioning of local cultures has brought the aestheticization of daily cultural practices through the hands of the state which prescribes and domesticates diversity [1985: 153]. Local culture can thus be standardized and appropriated through emphasis on performance and display, a misrecognition of culture as an object, which will allow the institutionalization of cultures.

In addition to culture being institutionalized, difference is de-politicized. Diversity as

recognized in Thailand today is one that standardizes and homogenizes each “culture” as an entity. State recognition of diversity could be just as much a way to impose a discourse of de-politicized difference. It might even be said that the way diverse cultures are recognized in the North today in some ways resembles how Thainess and Thai culture was institutionalized towards national integration in the early twentieth century. Just as the process of defining “Thainess” in the nineteenth century was concerned with civilizing the appearance of the state and its populations, emphasizing public displays such as dress, comportment and manners, as exemplified in the *ratthaniyom* (1938–44) and the subsequent culture policy [Connors 2005] so in the multiculturalist age of the twenty-first century, standardization of various cultures can be found in recognizing certain benign aspects of each “Culture” as representation or display, including costumes, certain ritual practices which do not contradict Buddhism, indigenous knowledge, etc. However, by taking up some of the elements of de-politicized “culture,” “others” can also re-adopt their culture as defined by those in power, towards strategic identity negotiation [Adams 1998]. De-politicization of differences may have allowed “others” to take them up for identity negotiation.

Both from the point of view of those managing the diversity, as well as by those who strategically take it up for identity negotiation, difference is stabilized by defining the boundaries and institutionalizing and standardizing its contents. It may operate towards de-historicizing or de-contextualizing culture in order to offer standardization as the instrument for organizing differences. Multiculturalism is therefore highly contradictory [Gordon and Newfield 1996: 6–7]. At the same time the recognition of difference can be the marking of hierarchies of value and power [Adams 1998: 328]. While emphasis on sameness can exclude “others” who are different, emphasis on difference can be merely confirmation of difference between those in power and those without, center and periphery, or those of more or less value. At least, however, emphasis on difference made possible varied forms of identity negotiation by those “others.” The intolerance in the South does not refute but highlights the nature of the de-politicized recognition of diversity in the North. In the South, culture has not been separated from politics, and therefore difference remains un-tolerated.

A critical brand of multiculturalism, on the other hand, would be grounded in grassroots alliance rather than diversity management, away from assimilation or exclusion towards recognizing and accommodating diversity. Rather than standardizing of cultures in order to accommodate them to the majority culture, which would, in effect, be another path to assimilation, there might be multiculturalism which not only aligns the various recognized groups, but also recognizes how intermixed and unbounded each group is. In talking about multiculturalism in arts, education and politics, Trinh Minh-Ha notes, “multiculturalism does not lead us very far if it remains a question of difference only between one culture and another. Differences should also be understood within the same culture, just as multiculturalism as an explicit condition of our times exists within

every self. Intercultural, intersubjective, interdisciplinary.... To cut across boundaries and borderlines is to live aloud the malaise of categories and labels; it is to resist simplistic attempts at classifying, to resist the comfort of belonging to a classification, and of producing classifiable works" [1991: 107–108].

The experience in Thailand is that at the same time that participation in international discourse has brought a liberal democratic mode of multiculturalist approach to the minorities, the attitude remains at the same time as one of "civilizing the margins." One half of the purpose of this special issue is to point out this process. Thus state power attempts to make use of the cultures of the marginalized by standardizing them, de-politicizing them and dressing them up, and making a display of them just as had been done to the Thai self earlier in the twentieth century. Recognition of such diversity has not necessarily led to recognition of the rights of the people of diverse culture, but rather to gloss over the issue. The other half of our purpose is to follow the response of the "other." Not only in the sense of how they are negatively affected, but also in the positive and creative practices by which such "standardization of diversity" by the authorities could open up paths for "others" to claim their own differences and negotiate. Because those in power have de-politicized difference, difference can be taken up without threatening the status quo. How are the "others" playing, improvising and re-defining themselves on the stage and script that are now open for them.

* * *

Renard's paper gives us a good start. In order to create its "self," it was necessary for the Thai nation-state to define its "others" and vice versa, and therefore the two were mutually constructed one against the other. As Thongchai points out, Thai-ness is "a claim to legitimacy of more often than not, the official or hegemonic discourse operating in its own particular cosmos over the subordinated or marginalized ones [1994: 9]." Renard begins by mentioning pre-modern times of diversity, perhaps akin to what Hinton (cited in Hayami's paper) refers to as the times of "tacit understanding" from the culturally diverse Ayutthaya. Subsequently in the late Rattanakosin period, especially under the 6th reign, such understanding was taken over by a regime of "Thainess." Drawing upon policies especially on language and education, and making comparisons with European nationalism and the influence of the parallel notions of "sameness" in the administration of the period, Renard in effect argues how difference, and others, were constituted concomitant to these policies.

Baba's paper deals with a cross-section of local cultural revival and a formation of a standardized culture of the "elderly" (defined by this officially designated term *puu suung ayu*) through efforts of the National Culture Council and the Public Welfare Department. The paper is also a precious piece that examines ethnographically what aging is bringing

to local Thai society. The Tai Lue in Nan Province perform rituals for the memory of their ancestral land across the border in China. Within the trend of local cultural revivals mentioned above, the Tai Lue communities in Nan have modified and elaborated their ritual, as documented in Baba's previous works. However, now with changing role of the elderly and state's recognition of the problems of aging, added to this is what might be called "the culture of the elderly" which is in many ways imposed and standardized. There is some space, however, for cross-overs between the Tai-Lue self-representation and this standardized culture of the elderly. Formation of the "culture of the elderly" is at once a standardized representation of a state-formed category, and yet, in the context of local community and ritual, it provides an arena for performing as Tai-Lue. On the one hand there is standardization of "Thai" cultures in the North in general, and a formation of a homogenized "elderly culture," yet, specific Tai-Lue performances over-write these.

Wang's paper addresses a trans-national community of the Yunnanese Chinese known in Thailand as *chiin haw*. The term actually covers both the Han Chinese who are associated with the Kuomintang army, most of whom migrated after the 1950s, as well as the Muslim Yunnanese who have been known locally as caravan traders and who had formed some settlements on Thai territory by the end of the nineteenth century. In the context of the Communist threat in the hills in the 1950s, and the Thai government's special treatment of the Kuomintang Han Yunnanese, the Muslims were almost rendered invisible, even as they had increased in numbers as transborder refugees, settled and made living on Thai terrain. In this context, the Muslim Yunnanese have gradually found new ways of re-defining themselves as Thailand's more visible "other" by building mosques and religious networks to form Muslim communities that extend over the border. Based on recent extensive fieldwork across the border, Wang discusses the migratory processes of the Muslim Yunnanese, and their changing relationships towards the KMT and the Thai government. Their self/other definitions have evolved through changing political and social contexts on Thai territory.

The Tribal Research Center (later Institute) was instituted by the state in response to the same socio-political conditions as that which were behind the special treatment of the KMT Yunnanese in the same hill areas as inhabited by the "hill tribes." Kwanchewan follows the fate of the TRC, inaugurated with fanfare in 1965, and closed inconspicuously in 2002, and looks at its role in the research and policy formation towards the hill tribes during those years. While there were many contradictory aspects within the TRC/TRI which initially had its role in research defined by an academic with interest in applied work (i. e. Geddes), and yet was under the government agency (Ministry of Interior in the beginning). Throughout this process, the TRI's activities have been primarily defined by the relationship between the state, foreign funding agencies, and foreign advisors. This tripartite relationship was effective from TRI's foundation and the designation of "hill tribes" and the "hill tribe problems." Amid increasing interest in the hills as reflected in academic interests and NGO activities, the TRI was quietly closed. In the state perspec-

tive, the “hill tribe problems” as they had defined, have successfully been solved, and therefore the TRI had lost its *raison d'être*. Yet, Kwanchewan points out, this does not mean there are no longer problems for those who had been designated as “hill tribes” by the state.

The Karen were also counted among the hill tribes and were the targets of the policies initiated at the same time as the founding of the TRC/TRI. Hayami takes up the evolving discourse regarding the Karen over a century, since the earlier recognition as forest peoples (*chaw paa*), to being included among the trouble-making hill tribes (*chaw khaw*), then towards making their own claim as Karen (*pga k'nyau*). Rather than being an exercise in discourse analysis, the purpose of this first half of the paper is to see how elements of those very discourse that was constructed among administrators, academics, NGOs, etc. have then been taken up by the Karen themselves in claiming their rights, which is demonstrated in the case of an eco-tourism venture in the latter half of the paper. In the past two decades, Karen have found ways to voice their own demands, by strategically drawing upon existing discourse on themselves. Through analysis of a particular case of an eco-tourism endeavor, Hayami demonstrates that it is not merely Karen taking up elements of a standardized culture and thereby seeking voice within the hegemonic discourse upon themselves. Rather Karen in diverse positions and locations are drawing upon multiple levels of “self/other” definitions to seek legitimate position in the politically ridden landscape in Northern Thailand in which they are marginalized as the benevolent forest-dweller.

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Creating the Other Requires Defining Thainess against Which the Other Can Exist: Early-Twentieth Century Definitions

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Abstract

This paper discusses “Thainess,” prior to the 1900s. Before then, people in what is now Thailand and also nearby, distinguished socially between *tai* and *kha*. Whereas *tai* were literate members of lowland kingdoms that had law codes, professed (local forms of) Buddhism, and sometimes built large architectural structures, the *kha* were illiterate forest people, had oral codes, mostly were animists, and lived in wooden structures beyond the pale of what the *tai* considered civilization. Ayutthaya and similar centers were multi-ethnic in nature, with a literate “civilized” elite. These centers only became “Thai” (a kind of back-formation from *tai* intended to mean “free”) when King Rama VI (r. 1910–24) and other rulers adopted and adapted Western ethnicity-based definitions of nationalism. Applied socially, Thainess negatively impacted the newly defined “Other,” people not ethnically Thai, in forestry, citizenship, and other areas. Thai was not *tai* at all.

Keywords: Citizenship, ethnicity, *kha*, King Rama VI, nationalism, Thainess, *tai*, The Other

Introduction

Gruff and condescending on a clammy March 1995 Hanoi morning, this big man, Vice Minister of CEMMA (Committee for Ethnic Minorities and Mountainous Areas Affairs), Phan Than Xuyen, told me, a very new manager of the UNDP Subregional Highland Peoples Programme, that he would not visit the highland development projects in Chiang Mai that I had recommended. Why not? Because, he said, “the Thais have confused ethnicity with nationality!”

This paper examines why, among the six Greater Mekong Region countries, Thailand alone has no clear policy defining minority groups as citizens. To do so, this paper explores what it means to be Thai. Much scholarly work has been devoted to examining “the other” in Thai life while implicitly accepting the official definition of Thainess that those very scholars know is a fabrication.

This is not the first attempt in recent years to compare and relate changes in Southeast Asian life with transformations in Europe. Victor Lieberman [2003], comprehensively surveyed and compared historical shifts in the two regions. Although discussing political, military, agricultural and other changes, he did not analyze ethnicity or social structure, which are examined in this paper.

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It is clear, that from at least the early-nineteenth century, changes in European society affected life in Thailand, sometimes, as shall be shown, negatively. Although this could be said for all the other countries in the region, Western impact in Thailand, despite it never having been overtly colonized, changed the social structure in ways so differently from its neighbors that the people from those countries now find Thailand's ethnic policies extraordinary.

These historical differences in Thailand led to citizenship being defined as part of being "Thai," and thus innately different from how it is defined in the other Mekong countries, where all ethnic groups are recognized as citizens. In each country, all the ethnic groups jointly comprise the nation's citizenry. In Laos, the many peoples,¹⁾ were divided into three groups in 1975: Lao Soung, Lao Theung, and Lao Loum (highland, midland, and lowland Lao).²⁾ Ethnic Lao almost entirely comprise the Lao Loum while Mon-Khmer and other groups such as Hmong comprise Lao Theung and Lao Soung. In China, the majority ethnic Chinese are called Han, while in Vietnam the majority ethnic Vietnamese are referred to as Kinh. Together with the other ethnic groups, they all hold Chinese or Vietnamese citizenship, respectively. Cambodia is much the same. Burma, routinely maligned for its minority policy, officially calls itself the Union of Myanmar, comprising the major ethnic groups, Burman (Bamar), Chin, Kachin, Karen, Kayah, Mon, Rakhine, and Shan. All are Myanmar citizens.

Working in regional United Nations and related projects often dealing with these minorities found in several of the region's countries, I have often had to explain the policies of certain countries. I know now that to astonish Chinese officials, you only need to review the variously colored identity cards for persons of different residence status among Thailand's border groups, the process they must follow to gain Thai citizenship, and the fact that, as a result of this confused policy, many minority people living in Thailand cannot (at least without considerable trouble) enroll their children in Thai schools or gain access to government-supported health care. For many Chinese, Lao, and Vietnamese, whose governments were much influenced by the Bolshevik ethnic policy in the 1920s that created national territories, trained ethnic leaders, and established many national languages in what historian Terry Martin calls "the world's first mass affirmative action" programs, Thailand's policy seems bizarre.³⁾

1) According to ILO [2000: 7, appendix 1], based primarily on linguistic grounds there are 236. The Lao census enumerates 48 of them. This threefold distinction seems not to be official anymore but the concept that all the ethnic groups are Lao citizens remains strong.

2) However, the 1991 Lao Constitution did not use these three terms indicating this division may be out of favor. Article 8 does state: "The State pursues the policy of promoting unity and equality among all ethnic groups." The 1992 Resolution of the Party Central Organization, the "cornerstone of current ethnic minority policy," makes it the policy to "realize equality between ethnic minorities" [ILO 2000: 21, 23].

3) Of course, there are many problems regarding minorities in each of these countries that would require in-depth review. What is examined here is why Thai nationalism plays such

This response would confuse most Thais, to whom possessing the “Thai” traits taught in Thai schools seems natural and logical for members of the Thai state. Perhaps it is because Thailand was never formally colonized by a Western power, that nationalism plays so dominant a role in its cultural and political life. Perhaps too, because this Thai nationalism was created to avoid Western colonization in the late-1800s and early-1900s it became so vigorous a force. So much in Thailand have been done in the name of Thai nationalism, from the revolution in 1932 to the recent government actions against “Muslim separatists” in the south, that Thai nationalism has become sacrosanct and integral to Thai life.

All the country’s diverse peoples are expected to practice cultural traits that the state has identified as “Thai” but sometimes the general population’s views go beyond the letter of the law. The great majority of people in Thailand believe strongly that Thais must be Buddhist. In fact, however, all the Thai constitutions allow (under the assumption that Thais ought to be religious) Thai citizens to chose their own faith. There are many Thais who do not know this and if presented with the fact, would not accept it. Nevertheless, according to the most recent constitution, only the king must be Buddhist.

This paper assesses how and why Thai leaders in the early-twentieth century adopted nationalism so quickly and implemented it so enthusiastically. This is done to help explain Thailand’s policies towards ethnic groups arose and, also, to indicate some related problems.

The Pervasiveness and Origins of Thainess

Children in the Thai primary and secondary school are immersed in Thainess. Besides Thai language, they are taught Thai history, Thai manners, Thai etiquette, and quite a bit more about being Thai. The creators of the modern system of Thai education, during the height of the threat of colonization a century ago, made inculcation in Thainess one of their foremost objectives.

So comprehensively did Thai leaders succeed that there is now a major effort by the Thai government to reform Thai education in order to make students more creative. Although the rote teaching used at the turn of the twentieth century was the international norm, and although many countries have liberalized their educational systems, Thai nationalistic conservativeness maintained the traditional top-down approach. Regardless of their cultural background, if students stay in a Thai school for several years they will acquire many Thai cultural attributes.

Although educational leaders are now conservative, the process of making this

↘ a big role in Thailand, especially in minority relations and what impedes other ethnic groups from being overtly identified as citizens of the state.

country a Thai state and creating a supportive educational system was very innovative. Education in the pre-modern era was top-down but decentralized and localized. A multitude of schools under individual teachers and masters taught all aspects of life, from music to handicrafts and even religion. However, with the introduction of modern mass education in Thailand beginning around the turn of the twentieth century and a system by which all the schools in the country use the same curriculum, students everywhere started to be trained in the same way, thus impeding creativity, local initiative, and diversity. One new aspect of this educational system was inculcation in the values of the modern Thai state.

The introduction of an educational system to facilitate assimilation was adopted because of the exceptional ethnic diversity in the country at the time. The effectiveness of the approach is shown by this ethnic diversity in Thailand that existed into the early-twentieth century now being much reduced. From hundreds of distinct groups, most in the lowlands but many in the uplands, populating the country a century ago, there are far more cultural similarities between these regions at present. The top-down educational approach used by the Thai government overcame the uneven terrain and difficult travelling conditions, particularly during the rainy season, that had allowed small groups to survive in isolated niches with distinctive lifestyles, languages, and cultures. Lacking such a comprehensive and effective educational system (and also because of their different political and educational philosophies), the other Mekong countries today possess much the same cultural diversity that Thailand did a century ago.

At that time, Tai speakers predominated in the lowlands.⁴⁾ What are now called Central Thai dialects were spoken in the Chao Phraya Delta from Bangkok north to Nakhon Sawan, as well as along the Eastern Seaboard to Chanthaburi and south along the Malay Peninsula. On the Korat Plateau, on which the rivers drain into the Mekong, dialects of Lao were the most common. In the northern valleys, from Chiang Mai in the west to Nan in the east, northern Thai dialects were popular.

Between and beyond these Tai speakers, except in the south, were Mon-Khmer groups. When Tai groups began to enter the region, over a millennium ago they met, mingled with, and sometimes displaced the Mon-Khmer. Some stayed on in lowland areas, such as those known locally as Khmer as well as Kui and related groups in and around Si Saket, Surin, and Buriram, and also some isolated groups on the edges of the central plains. Certain groups retreated to the edges of the plains and lowlands and

4) Speakers of related languages in the Tai branch of the Tai-Kadai “superstock” include Lao, Shan, Thai and other languages. The term, “Thai” refers to persons or citizens of Thailand. This is to be distinguished in this paper from the word *tai* which means free, as distinct from being slaves, as explained in the text below. As used here, *tai* refers to a class of people, not to the language. Thai refers to citizens (of all ethnic groups) of the modern state of Thailand.

survived as independent groups such as the Chao Bon ("Upper People" who also call themselves Nyah Ker) in Chaiphaphum and Lua groups in the northern valleys. Often too, Mon-Khmer blended with Tai speakers to produce groups speaking creoles and pidgins such as the so-called Korat talk. Besides these, there were Mon speakers, some descendants of pre-Thai contact dating back centuries but others prisoners-of-war from conflicts with kingdoms in the Irrawaddy Delta over the last few centuries. Many settled in areas of Ratchaburi and Phetchaburi, but other communities were in and around Bangkok such as in Phraphadaeng, across the river and Ko Kret on an island in Pathum Thani, just north of the city. There were also a few Mon settlements scattered northwards to Lamphun and Chiang Mai.

Other Mon-Khmer speakers included the Vietnamese who began reaching the area in the late-seventeenth century (many who do not believe they are Mon-Khmer speakers at all) in Trat and Chanthaburi. Wars with Vietnam and religious regulations by Vietnamese emperors, such as Minh Mang, led to a history of Vietnamese settling in Thailand's east but also in Bangkok as the approximately two dozen Vietnamese temples there attest. Later movement took others to areas in the east of the Korat Plateau, mostly on or near the Mekong such as in Sakon Nakhon, Nakhon Phanom, and Nong Khai. There still are several Vietnamese neighborhoods in Bangkok.

In the far south were Malay speakers. Although culturally similar to the Malays further south, many in sultanates such as Pattani were politically linked with the kings of Bangkok. On the edges were smaller groups of seafaring people such as the Chao-Le, that is, sea people (also called Orang Laut in Malay). Quite a few Malay Muslim neighborhoods exist in Bangkok, including a ring to the west of the town in districts such as Prawet. In the heart of the city, close to the National Stadium, is an old Cham community, the strength of which was sufficient to keep an expressway from displacing the local mosque.

Also in the south but in other areas as well, such as between Nan and Phrae, were Negrito groups. Small in numbers and reclusive they did come to the attention of ruling groups. King Chulalongkorn adopted a boy from the Orang Asli about whom he wrote a play, *Ngo Pa* (Forest Negritos).

By the mid-nineteenth century, various small groups of Tibeto-Burman speakers, largely new to the area, were coming from the north and west. Although Burman-led kingdoms had controlled Chiang Mai and other northern cities (as well as having twice conquered Ayutthaya and leaving behind small Burmese-speaking communities that were mostly absorbed into local populations), the small groups such as Akha, Lahu, and Lisu who settled first in the hills around Chiang Rai were newcomers and maintained their identity. Moving out of politically troubled Yunnan and the Shan States and into the north, they began a migration stream that continues at present. Also entering Thailand in the last 150 years were Hmong and Mien (Yao), more often coming from Yunnan and through the Lao states.

These Tibeto-Burmans moved into areas in and around Chiang Mai where Karennic groups had already been living. Some were living here for centuries, with one reference to “Yang Biang” (almost certainly referring to Karennic speakers) in Lamphun dating to the fourteenth century. Karens in the nineteenth century (including many recent immigrants) were settled along the mountains west of the Chao Phraya Delta reaching into the western plains from Phetchaburi north through Kanchanaburi, Nakhon Pathom, Uthai Thani and into Chiang Mai and Chiang Rai. Isolated groups were also found in Saraburi and Nakhon Nayok. Included among these people were a range of groups sometimes speaking mutually unintelligible dialects. Their language family is not yet definitely established as being Tibeto-Burman, as many linguists contend.

Also arriving before Tibeto-Burman groups such as the Akha, Lahu, and Lisu, were Chinese, mainly from the southern areas such as Kwangtung, coming initially as merchants. Later migrants, usually also southern groups such as Hakka, Chaocho (Swatoese), and Hainanese, came after the mid-eighteenth century to work in tin mines in southern areas such as Phuket. By this time also Yunnanese mule caravans were trading with Chiang Mai and nearby areas. Although many first entertained the idea of making some money with which to return to China, thousands stayed. From Bangkok they moved to inland centers where they congregated and contributed to urban growth, expanding with it over time.

La Loubère, a French envoy to Ayutthaya in the late-1600s, remarked on this diversity, writing that “it is certain that the *Siamese* blood is very much mixed with foreign.” Besides “Peguins” [Mon] and Laos, whom La Loubère seems to recognize as indigenous, he observes that “’tis not to be doubted that there formerly fled to *Siam* a great number of Strangers from different Countries, upon the account of a free Liberty of Trade and by reason of the Wars...” [1693 I: 10].

Conception of Thainess in the Ayutthayan and Early-Bangkok Periods

Prior to the Bangkok Era, local and regional rulers governed *muang*, an amorphous and multi-ethnic city-state that expanded and contracted according to its power. Only in the mid-nineteenth century did King Rama IV (r. 1851–68), because of contacts with Western powers, define the country as a state named Siam with its own tutelary deity: Phra Sayam Thewathirat [Sulak 2002: 35].

When the kingdom became a nation-state, after the European model, and in which Thai culture became the national norm, Buddhism came to be seen as a major characteristic of Thainess. As many observers, such as Thongchai Winichakul in *Siam Mapped*, have noted, in the process of remaking the country as a nation-state, Thai culture itself was redefined. At the same time, non-Thai ethnic minorities, were defined as “The Other.”

However, the scholarly community, Thongchai included, has not analyzed what Thai

culture and the “Other” were before this process started, leaving many misunderstandings about the change process, the nature of society in Ayutthaya, the characteristics of the inner or elite groups of society, as well as the Other. The basis for the present-day definition of minority groups in Thailand cannot be understood unless the conception of the Other in Ayutthaya is also apprehended.

Understanding the Other can only begin with a study of the “Ins” of Ayutthayan social order, this elite group that has sometimes imperfectly been called the majority. Identifying the key features of Ayutthayan social structure has been impeded by a lack of primary source material as well as misconceptions by contemporary observers from other countries.

One place to begin this study is in the instructions King Narai gave his envoys going to Portugal in 1684. In these instructions, the king posed and then answered all the questions he thought Europeans might ask. In so doing, he provided a comprehensive overview of his kingdom.

The instructions strongly suggest that the king of Ayutthaya did not consider ethnicity an important factor. King Narai makes no reference in these instructions to any ethnic group in the population of Siam; he only notes that it was populous and that many foreigners from numerous kingdoms had settled there [Smithies and Dhiravat 2002: 128]. This is confirmed in many seventeenth century foreign accounts, such as by one French observer who wrote that over half the residents of the capital were Mon [Halliday 1954: 75].

Although the king did distinguish between members of the kingdom and foreigners, this distinction was not simply between those who spoke Thai as their native language and others. European writers at the time generally assumed that ethnicity in Ayutthaya was defined in the same way that it was in Europe, and that, for example, Mon and Khmer were foreigners. However, the situation was not so simple and misconceptions regarding Thainess and ethnicity, the Majority and the Other, have continued until the present.

Unravelling the misconceptions should begin by understanding that the kingdom was not called Tailand or Thailand or by the name of any other particular group. Nor was the kingdom called Siam, at least by its residents—this was a term used by people from elsewhere.⁵⁾ Being a subject of a kingdom like Ayutthaya did not imply that the subjects shared the same ethnicity, the same culture, and the same language.

Ethnicity, thus, was not the primary distinction between the Ayutthayan “Ins” and the Other. Such a distinction now has a different basis than it did then.

The people of the kingdom traced their roots to a multi-ethnic ancestry, including Mon, Khmer and Thai (*tai*) roots. King Narai instructed his envoys that “If you are asked of what royal race is the reigning king... reply that... [he] descends from the great king Sommedethia Ppra Pattarma Souria Naaranissavoorra Boppitra Seangae” in the Khmer

5) Not until the nineteenth century would King Mongkut make Siam the kingdom's name.

kingdom of Angkor [Smithies and Dhiravat 2002: 127].

Although the editors doubted that King Narai was a biological descendant of this Angkorean king, King Narai must have thought it advantageous to link Ayutthaya with Angkor and that he and his kingdom were the political heirs of Angkor. This may have at least partly resulted from a nine-year sojourn spent in Cambodia by the founder of Ayutthaya, U Thong, in the mid-1300s. The king was not alone in seeing this connection between Angkor and Ayutthaya. The Dutch merchant, Jeremias van Vliet's history of Siam, that was compiled in 1640 stated that "many Siamese also say that" U Thong himself built Angkor⁶⁾ [Wyatt 1975b: 60]. Writing in the twentieth century, Erik Seidenfaden referred to these people as *Thai Khôm* (that is, Thai-Khmer), "because of the heavy mixture of Môn-Khmer blood in their veins" [Seidenfaden 1967: 97].

In such a polyglot and multi-ethnic situation, and although Thai was the language the rulers wrote in (aside from religious texts in Pali), the "Thai" language of Ayutthaya was far from the standardized national Thai language of the present day. The predecessor of modern Thai borrowed words from several lexicons, most frequently Pali, Khmer, and Mon. However, the observation by Ayumongkol Sonakul that there were Thai scholars among whom it appears to be the "compulsory belief that no words in the Thai language—except swear words—could possibly be native Thai" should be an exaggeration [Ayumongkol 1972: 11]. Approximately 30 per cent of standardized modern Thai has Mon-Khmer antecedents, a trend that started at least as early as during the kingdom of Ayutthaya. Quite likely too, many people in the city spoke several languages.

Most of the elite called themselves *tai* or *phrai*. Besides *tai* referring to the language they spoke (Thai), *tai* (and *phrai*) also referred to a social class of people. This is recognized in a substantial body of historical literature, such as the classical account written in 1962 by Kachon Sukhaphanit, *Thanandon Phrai* (The Condition of the *Phrai*).

Although the word, *tai* (ไท), spelled differently than Thai (ไทย) refers to people in the Tai linguistic family, including Shan and Lao, and Thai refers to people (citizens) of Thailand, they may be cognates. There is another meaning for *tai* that is also quite old which means a person of a *muang*. This is still preserved in regional languages, such as northern Thai [Udom 1990 I: 551] and Tai Lu in Sipsong Panna. These words might also be cognate with another word pronounced *thai* (ไท) and which has as one of its meanings, "redeem," as to redeem from slavery. In one of the earliest Thai dictionaries, by the American missionary, Bradley, *tai* (ไท) is defined as "Siamese," as "redeemed from slavery, name of the people of Siam, and as "of the Bangkokian race" (ที่เป็นคนดีเชื้อชากรงเทพนั้น) [Bradley 1873: 287]

Those who were *tai* were Buddhist (sometimes with Brahmanic, Saivite, or animist overtones), were literate, and practiced other cultural traits, such as following law codes, astrological practices, and adopting architectural styles inherited from India. The *tai* had

6) A belief still held by some in Thailand.

access to a literature in several Indic-based scripts that included a wide range of religious writings and other texts. In a world with a diversity of languages and dialects, many mutually unintelligible, as well a plethora of differing if not divergent cultural practices, being civilized and *tai* offered one the chance to rise above worldly matters to a more spiritual and sanctified sphere. Buddhism as practiced in Ayutthaya was, as Seni Pramoj described it, a “most individualistic faith.” Quoting from Buddhist scripture, Seni cited the phrase *pacattam veditabbo viññu hi*, “Each person according to his/her realization,” appropriate for *tai* society.⁷⁾

The *tai* also included persons who came to Ayutthaya as prisoners-of-war from neighboring kingdoms. Although these people might have entered the kingdom as members of a captive or lower class of people, many among them were not considered foreigners because they practiced some kind of Buddhism and followed “civilized” lifestyles similar to many *tai*.

For those who were foreigners in the kingdom at the time, many were in what David Wyatt and Nidhi Aeusrivongse have called “professional” or “skilled classes,” as opposed to those holding administrative posts [Wyatt 1994: 102, citing Nidhi 1980]. These included the powerful Bunnag family, which is descended from a Persian nobleman who came to Ayutthaya as a Muslim in the seventeenth century and with which the family still identifies. At that time also, Constance Phaulkon, a runaway Greek who came to Ayutthaya as a cabin boy, later taking a Japanese wife, managed to usurp, while still professing the Catholic faith, the role of the Persians at court to become one of the most powerful persons in the kingdom. Such people could and often did enter *tai* society, as the Bunnags (and Phaulkon’s descendants), who, in the assimilative process mentioned above, later became Buddhist. One of the other descendants of perhaps the same medieval Persian, Seni Pramoj, notes that he was part Thai and also part Chinese, while adding that “my maternal great-great umpteenth grandfather 300 years back in Ayutthaya being a Persian, I am a kind of mongrel Thai.” Besides this being an example of the commonness of ethnic diversity in Ayutthaya, it also shows how fully the European conception of ethnicity has been accepted in modern Thai society [Seni 1972: 22].

Royal edicts of the eighteenth century denote the importance of religion as a marker of being *tai*. In about 1730, for example, King Thai Sra told the leading Catholic clerics in Ayutthaya that he would prohibit Catholics from preaching to Siamese, Mon and Lao, from writing books with Siamese or Pali letters, and from attacking Buddhism [Tabraca 1762: 525–526; Pallegoix 1854 II: 199–204]. All these languages seem, from the context of the edict, to have been integral to being a member of the elite of Ayutthaya.

Being *tai* was a flexible condition, allowing people to enter or depart. When people

7) When census takers in British Burma asked Buddhist Karen their ethnicity, they often answered, “Buddha ba-tha,” that is, Buddhist [Morrison 1946: 14].

reached sufficient status, such as through wealth, connections with and services for *tai* royalty, non-*tai* could become *tai*. Others who left for various reasons, such as to live with forest groups or to escape slavery, could stop being *tai*. La Loubère mentions “fugitives” who tried to, “seek a Sanctuary in the Weeds against the Government” [1693 I: 11].

These were the *kha* who lived on the fringes of society, sometimes in alliance with lowland rulers. As typical for members of the “Other” very little is mentioned about them in the written accounts of the time, either in local language accounts or in foreign books.

Not once for example is the word *kariang*—Karen people and a *kha* group—mentioned in the royal chronicles of Ayutthaya even though Karens were living west of the capital at the time. *Tai* writings were devoted to the high end of the social hierarchy of the time and the activities of the elite. Despite the *kha* having sustainable agricultural practices, rich oral literatures, and other advanced lore, the *tai* saw many of them, especially those living in the forests, as uncultured, irreligious, and uncivilized. The two main types of *phrai* were: *phrai luang*, subject to the king and *phrai som*, subject to members of nobility [Akin 1969]. *Tai* chronicles told the stories of kings, their acts of religious piety, triumphs in war, and the royal succession. The chronicles overlooked all measure of common life from agriculture to household work to the doings of the *kha* and, for that matter, most of the *phrai* as well. Despite the fact that *kha* regarded their settlements as centers of culture as opposed to the truly wild forest beyond, to the *tai* the *kha* were simple and ungentle.

There was a third group of *phrai*, generally settled in more remote areas. They provided tribute (*suai*) to their ruler, most often in the form of forest produce or other local goods [*ibid.*: 30–37]. They included many ethnic Thai but also members of Mon-Khmer groups. The Kui in the lower northeastern areas around Surin and Si Saket, for example, were such prominent providers of tribute, that the Thai called members of that group *suai*.⁸⁾

Many *kha* groups are now identified as different ethnic groups and language families. According to Doré [1998] the word *kha* is etymologically derived from the same root as “Khmer,” an indication that the term originally may well have referred to Mon-Khmer speakers who constituted the most commonly encountered ethnic groups around the early Tai states.

The above shows that Ayutthaya and other such centers were hierarchical *muang* in which one's social status (i. e. being *tai* or *phrai*) was of major importance. Members of different ethnic groups, certainly those indigenous to the region but also sometimes including people from the Middle East or Europe, could and did enter local society, and aspire to higher rank, which they sometimes did reach. At the center of power in the

8) Similarly, in Laos, Kui in the south insist they are to be called *suai* by outsiders and not Kui, which is how they often refer to themselves when speaking to each other.

court was much ritual and official language carried there by members of Angkor's elite, following two sackings by armies from Ayutthaya.

This *tai-kha* and multi-ethnic system endured into the fourth reign of the Bangkok Era when for the first time, and only after ample exposure to the growing conception of nationalism in Europe, the kingdom was officially called Siam. According to King Rama IV (r. 1851–67), the Kingdom of Siam comprised Siam Nua, Siam Tai, and the areas where such groups as the Lao Chiang, Lao Kao, Cambodians, Malays, and Karens lived.⁹⁾ This area covers all the territory of the northern Malay Peninsula (Siam Tai—southern Siam), the Chao Phraya Plains (Northern Siam), Lao Chiang (Chiang Mai and nearby areas well into the Shan States), the Korat Plateau and areas well into present-day Laos and perhaps Tai areas of northern Vietnam around Dien Bien Phu (Lao Kao), the provinces east of Bangkok through to Angkor and Phnom Penh, and the sultanates of the northern portion of Malaysia. He probably was the first Bangkok king to call himself “King of the Karens,” in recognition of royally-titled Karens on the Burmese border who paid tribute to him. Although King Rama IV sought to operate as a *dhammarājā*, a righteous king of the Buddhist law, he allowed for members of all ethnic groups to be subjects as had been the practice of the kingdom of Ayutthaya.

Much the same conditions existed in surrounding areas. People from Ayutthaya captured by Burmese invaders were taken back to Burma where they assimilated completely into Burmese life. Professor Than Tun observed that they “could not be adjudged unpatriotic for completely severing their links with Ayut’ia (or Thailand) because they could not understand patriotism as we know it today” [Than 1984: 400–408]. The British historian H. G. Quaritch Wales in writing that these captives “lacked of any pride of nationality” [1934: 64], confirmed this ethnic malleability in a condescending European way.

Some years later, towards the end of the reign of King Chulalongkorn, one of his half-brothers, Minister of Interior, Prince Damrong provided a definition of being Thai that reflected the non-ethnic traditions described above. He identified the following three characteristics:

1. the love of freedom or independence, nationally, socially and individually,
2. the dislike of violence, i. e. if they have a choice the Siamese would prefer peaceful means or a nonviolent way of settling disputes, and
3. the Siamese skill at assimilation, or compromise (which he referred to as *prasan prayot*).

[Sulak 2002: 36]

This definition reflects both traditions inherited from Ayutthaya and the political changes beginning to occur in the nineteenth century. The love of independence

9) King Mongkut [1978: 601–603].

nationally, for example, shows his concern over colonial expansion in Burma and Vietnam that threatened Thailand while the love of social or personal independence reflects *tai* traditions from time of Ayutthaya. As a part of the epochal transformations Thailand underwent during this time, a new historical consciousness emerged that replaced the traditional conception, rooted in Indian Buddhist cosmology whereby time was expressed through the four Buddhas, each with an era lasting 5,000 years. Since, during each era, society would deteriorate until society collapses, most people saw history in stasis, fluctuating between good and evil while slowly declining. In this condition, most people tried to avoid suffering [Attachak 2000: 76–78]. When Western teleological influences began to be accepted the conception that history was progressing towards a goal which then implied that the lot of humankind could improve, there developed the belief that each ethnic group should have its own nation.

King Chulalongkorn seems also to have expanded a tradition of Bangkok kings serving as the upholder of Buddhism to other faiths. Following royal traditions embracing Buddhist tolerance and kings of righteousness, the Bangkok monarchs were supposed to encourage any moral code that would benefit his subjects. In this regard, King Chulalongkorn observed that “You must be conscious... that we regard Mohammadinism as a religion for those people in that part of the country” [cited in Surin 1985: 12].

Besides accepting all indigenous ethnic groups in Thailand as subjects, King Chulalongkorn accepted other groups that seemed to have been considered foreigners in the time of Ayutthaya, such as the Chinese, perhaps as a way to integrate this rapidly growing population into the mainstream of the country. In 1907, King Chulalongkorn observed, “I regard the Chinese not as if they were foreigners but as a part of our country and equally entitled to share in the fruits of the country’s prosperity” [quoted in Vella 1978: 191].

Certainly up to the early years of the Fifth Reign, but then for years later, the traditional non-racial, non-ethnic form of social organization was maintained at the higher and the lower levels of society both in the Bangkok era. For example, there were many Chinese local rulers in Thailand, such as the Na Ranong family, descended from Khaw Soo Cheang who King Chulalongkorn gave the title Phraya Damrongsucharit Mahinsornphakdi [Cushman 1991: xxv]. Other examples were Karens along the Western border of the country who were given the royal title *phra* and Akha, Yao, and other hill people headmen who were given royal titles in the north.

Thongchai Winichakul’s important book, *Siam Mapped*, describes how the process of mapping the boundaries of the country led to a reconstruction of the country’s history (while nevertheless not discussing what national identity was before that). He refers to a talk given by King Chulalongkorn in 1907 at the inauguration of the Antiquarian Society of Siam, which “clearly represented the new discourse of Siam’s past” [Thongchai 1994: 162], such as by using the new word for nation, *prathetchat* and talked about the need

for a history of “every city, every race, every dynasty” of Siam¹⁰ Chulalongkorn, [tr. by Baker 2001: 97]. Forward looking it might have been, King Chulalongkorn still recognized that Siam was a multi-ethnic kingdom of considerable diversity.

Changes in this system were to occur increasingly in the late-nineteenth century and after that, following the adoption of Western ways of thinking. Starting with new definitions of race, these changes grew more comprehensive.

Similarities with European Conceptions of Race

There appear to be quite a few similarities between the system of *tai-kha* social organization and that of Europe a millennium previous. One of the first to recognize the similarity of the word *tai* with the word, *frank* was the La Loubère. He wrote, “The *Siamese* give to themselves the Name of *Tai*, or *Free*. . . bearing the Name of *Francs*, which our Ancestors affirm’d when they resolved to deliver the *Gauls* from the *Roman* Power [1693 I: 6–7]. Just as a Frank is free in the sense of not being a Slav or a slave, *tai* is free and not a *kha* or *phrai*. Although the scope of this paper does not allow for a deep analysis of these similarities, there is sufficient evidence to show that over a millennium ago in Europe, race or ethnicity was not nearly as important in defining social groups as it became later.

This was so around the Mediterranean centuries earlier than La Loubère. This is seen, for example, in the writings of St. Augustine, who grew up in North Africa where Arabs mingled with persons from south of the Sahara, as well as Europeans, and descendants of Phoenicians from Carthage. At that time, race was not an issue, as seen in his *City of God*, written from 413–426 while he was Bishop of Hippo. When he wrote, “Mankind is divided into two sorts: such as live according to man and such as live according to God. . . [who] we mystically call the ‘two cities’ or societies. . .” [Saint Augustine 1958 XV 1: 323–325], he showed that the conception of racial distinctions (assuming they existed at the time) were not the most important way to distinguish between people. St. Augustine stated that Cain, the son of Adam and Eve, who killed his brother, Abel, was of the city of man because the physical came first for him. Abel, by contrast was of the city of God because for him the spiritual came first. Augustine’s assessment of humanity in such terms resembles the distinction between *tai* and *kha*.

The concept of race, which was to allow for the identification of the other developed in Europe only in the seventeenth century. Among the first to discuss race was a French author, François Bernier, in his work, *Nouvelle division de la terre par les different espèces ou races qui l’habitent* [Hannaford 1992: 191]. Gradually, in studies paralleling zoological and botanical research at the time to establish the taxonomy of the animal world, social scientists examined the relationship of humans to climate and other factors. Some

10) Including perhaps Khmer dynasties from the time of Angkor.

scientists pursued these studies distinguish superior and inferior races.

Out of these pursuits emerged the study of anthropology, a pioneer of which was Johann Friedrich Blumenbach (1752–1840). Examining skulls to identify features by which humans could be divided, Blumenbach identified five varieties of humankind that he contended were “consonant to nature” [*ibid.*: 202–207]. These included 1) Europeans, including Eskimos, 2) other Asians, 3) Africans, 4) those from the rest of the Americas, and 5) the southern world including Polynesians and some Micronesians. He mentioned characteristics of these groups, such as for “other Asians,” that is those from China, Korea, Tonkin, Siam, and Pegu, including “monosyllabic languages, depravity, and perfidiousness of spirit and manners.”

A German scholar, Johann Gottfried von Herder (1744–1803) introduced the idea of *kultur* as a basic means for organizing civilization and race [*ibid.*: 231]. He identified a relationship between the individual and the *volk*, that is a people or folk linked by shared language, religion, and traditions. He claimed that the state as traditionally viewed in Europe and as expressed by writers such as St. Augustine, oppressed indigenous culture. From such reasoning came conceptions of nationalism and race. Each culture was seen as having its own genius that flourished best when it could express itself in its own nation state populated by one race. The basis for the French and Germans culture (and to some extent the English through their Teutonic connection) were the ancient forest-dwelling Germanic tribes of Europe who had been oppressed by the Roman Empire. This fit it easily with the teleological conceptions of history being adopted at this time, because it looked to future progress.

New trends in scholarship began to rank cultures as advanced or backwards. When some authors came to believe that the “advanced” groups were destined to dominate those who were “backwards,” racism developed. So too did ethnologists who began studying the Other against which dominant societies defined their own identity. Structuralist interpretations of Freudian theory were prominent in France during the 1960s. One leading writer, Anwar Abdel-Malek, studied how an individual’s conception of self develops as it recognizes that it is different from others. Abdel-Malek applied this to society as a whole, writing that, “One sees how much, from the eighteenth to the twentieth century, the hegemonism of possessing minorities, unveiled by Marx and Engels, and the anthropocentrism dismantled by Freud are accompanied by europocentrism in the area of human and social sciences, and more particularly in those in direct relationship with non-European peoples” [Abdel-Malek 1963: 107–108].

Changes of Thai Conception of Thainess and the Confusion of Ethnicity with Nationality

Thai attitudes began to change markedly when Chulalongkorn’s son, Vajiravudh, took

the throne. He had spent about a decade studying in Europe where he had come to accept the new conception of race and ethnic groups.¹¹⁾ Going to England at the early age of 14, this impressionable, bright, and elitist youth was so profoundly affected by European life that his value system changed to accept much that was not traditionally Thai. He studied at major educational institutions in the country such as Sandhurst and Oxford where he met the best English society had to offer, making these new attitudes easier for his notable self to accept. Thus even when he expressed concern over what it meant to be Thai, he did so with English undertones, evincing such themes as progress and modernity. He later distinguished between accepting useful technological advances and slavishly mimicking the European way of life [Loos 2002: 151].¹²⁾

He also came to appreciate bully nationalism. Noted Vajiravudh, in the first year of his reign:

The most important thing is that Thais must not forget that all the Thai people must do their duty to our forbearers and our progenitors. . . . At present we are content to brag that we are better than the Thais of the past, isn't that right?... But if the new class of Thais do not voluntarily perform their duties, how can they say they are better? One problem with the modern Thai is that they disregard completely anything that is old. . . . Even if they only hear what a foreigner says imperfectly, they take it to heart. . . . Our race is collapsing so that we cannot love it anymore. Please believe me. I studied in European countries for almost ten years. . . . Thai people who do not love their race should not mistakenly start to think highly of Europeans. They will only look down on you. [Vajiravudh [1911] 1950: 29–30]

He came to believe that England was strong because English nationalism was vibrant. In doing so, he seems to have overlooked the fact that England was a part of the United Kingdom and that other groups, such as the Welsh, Scots, and Irish belonged to it. He also seems to have overlooked the growth of Irish nationalism that would lead to Irish independence with the signing of the Anglo-Irish Treaty in 1922 (which was in fact during his reign). Perhaps because he was at the center of the English world and because the English were the most politically powerful people in the United Kingdom he disregarded the role of other groups there. Whatever the reason, this led him to confuse

11) Further study is required to know whether changes that may well have been occurring inside Thailand also contributed to the changes in King Vajiravudh's thinking. Nevertheless, King Vajiravudh contributed significantly to a new conception of Thainess which was based on European conceptions of race.

12) Very little is known or has been written about the formative years Prince Vajiravudh spent in the United Kingdom. Scholars who have examined his life and work, such as Vella and Loos, have mainly used his prolific output of writings while on the throne. However, his education and the process by which he adopted the modernist attitudes expressed in his writings and expressed through his policies, have been overlooked by scholars.

English ethnicity with citizenship in the United Kingdom.

King Vajiravudh used the word, *chat* which formerly meant “clan” or “class of people.” For example, the *chat* of Brahmins has been the clan [caste] of priests for many generations. The *chat* of Kashatriyas has been the clan [caste] of warriors. Derived from the Indic word for birth, people in the Brahmin *chat* are born as Brahmins and the Kashatriya *chat* are born as Kashatriyas. “Later, after we Thais started calling the group of people living together as *chat* it would be true and not false thus that the ‘*chat* Thai’ are those born as Thai, born in the group of people who call themselves ‘Thai’” [*ibid.*: 46].

And in marked difference from his uncle, Prince Damrong, King Vajiravudh defined Thainess as “Thai history, Thai art, Thai language, Thai literature, Thai Buddhism, Thai love of the royal leader, and an essential Thai spirit, a fierce devotion to *thai* in the sense of ‘free,’ warrior spirit¹³⁾...” [quoted in Vella 1978: 178]. By using the word, *thai*, and not *tai*, Vajiravudh shows that he has adopted nationalism, an ethnic-based consciousness, and abandoned the *tai-kha* basis of ordering society.

In a discussion on dangers to the *chat*, Vajiravudh exhibits attitudes on foreigners, almost surely picked up from the local bias against the Jews while he was in England, that were quite different than those his father had. Whereas King Chulalongkorn wanted to incorporate the Chinese fully into the country’s polity, Vajiravudh saw them more as a threat, such as in the following passage.

Unrest will occur within the country when the citizens are oppressed by injustice. This can occur because foreigners who have come to live in the country cause trouble in order to take advantage of the people.... Those who cause strife or troubles in a country should be considered enemies of the *chat*... must be suppressed.... If they persist, it is like a passenger on a boat. If it is in danger of leaking... [and] everyone must help to bail the water out. If they end up arguing and the sailors are the only ones bailing, these hired-hands who are only on the boat as workers may... not be able to keep pace... With regards to the country... if there is strife... and [suppression is left to]... the soldiers... a disaster might occur. [Vajiravudh [1911] 1950: 47–48]

King Vajiravudh wrote an essay entitled “The Jews of the Orient” in 1914. Writing in English, apparently for a foreign audience, he compared Chinese to Jews, noting that the Jews followed a religion different than the majority of Europeans, remained outside the general social life of each country where they settled, and were convinced of their racial superiority. Similarly, he noted that Chinese were much the same. Since they sent most of their earnings back to China, the Chinese “were like so many vampires who steadily suck dry an unfortunate victim’s life-blood” [quoted in Vella 1978: 194]. Such sentiments agreed with those of Westerners, such as Warrington Smyth, a British surveyor who had worked in the country, who wrote that “The Chinese... are the Jews of Siam” [1898 Vol.

13) Thus not completely abandoning the identity of *tai* as not being *kha*.

1: 285–286] and Campbell who compared Jews to Chinese who were employed as a “necessary evil” [Campbell 1902: 270–274].

As in Europe where the antecedents of the conception of race were rooted in anti-Semitism, in Thailand King Vajiravudh began to define what it was to be Thai with the Chinese in mind. Even before the first Nationality Act the government had enacted laws regarding Chinese. The first, in 1914, regulated Chinese associations while the second, in 1918, dealt with Chinese schools. In this regard (and almost as Loos [2002: 151] points out), Vajiravudh eliminated the use of ethnic terms used in names, such as *chin* and *khaek* so that they could be all considered as Thai [Vella 1978: 199].¹⁴⁾

This new definition of Thainess was promoted through the modern educational system, the roots of which can be traced to 1885 when King Chulalongkorn placed modern education under the control of Prince Damrong. Out of this emerged the Education Department (Krom Suksathikan) and then the Ministry of Public Instruction in 1889–90, covering primary education, the Royal Pages Bodyguard Corps, and the Royal Survey Department [Wyatt 1969: 114–115, 125–126].

The king and his associates wanted to promote a modern education which they believed would take advantage of the new learning entering Thailand and make the country more secure. Prince Damrong observed that “real security can be achieved only when most of the population is educated and believes in the value of buttressing loyally the independence of their own land” [quoted in *ibid.*: 329–330]. Building on King Chulalongkorn’s belief that a “general improvement in the educational standards worked to the benefit of society as a whole” [Wyatt 1975a: 134], this conception grew so that by the end of the reign, modern education had become a force for social change. When in 1906 Prince Wachirayan stated that education was an “instrument of social mobility,” it showed that even this future Supreme Patriarch seems to have accepted the conception of progress [quoted in Wyatt 1969: 326].

Thai leaders pondered for years how to design an appropriate curriculum. They worried how to establish a modern education that would not damage the country’s culture and character. Although some feared it would be impossible to balance modern science and Thai traditions, at the end of the fifth reign, Thai leaders agreed that public instruction would provide the means for instilling correct behavior and a knowledge of the arts and sciences in the students while the parents would be responsible for moral and physical welfare [*ibid.*: 366].

Attention was given to defining the Thai as an ethnic group. Policymakers agreed that Thai-speakers in the Chao Phraya Delta, the Eastern Seaboard, and southwards on the Malay Peninsula were Thai. This was extended gradually to others. Although Prince Vajiravudh had in 1906 pessimistically observed that the northern Thais had to be *chuang*

14) *Chin* refers to Chinese while *khaek* refers to a range of people from Insular Southeast Asia to the Middle East.

(broken, as an animal is trained) before they could join the Thai citizenry [Vachara 1988: 96–97], when he became king they were called Thai. Prince Chakrabongs, a full brother of Vajiravudh, wrote in reports in 1915 and 1916 that all the “Lao” in the north and the northeast of the country should be considered as Thai [Vella 1978: 199–200]. Regarding the Tai-speakers of the far south, King Chulalongkorn had already said in his address at the Antiquarian Society, “As for Nakhon Si Thammarat which exists to this day and is of true Thai race, its people are misrepresented as outsiders. . . . [tr. by Baker 2001: 96].¹⁵⁾

Cultural Adaptations

Together with adopting the new conception of ethnic identity, and with it a new way to define the “Ins” and the Other in society, the king and his country began acquiring new practices in a wide range of fields that were believed to be a part of the modern progressive way of life. In the process, the country received a comprehensive makeover, from language and education to forestry, agriculture, as well as the police, railroads, and local administration. Often these practices and techniques were adopted without the administrators examining thoroughly how appropriate they were for the country. The political authority, economic advances, and military strength of the European imperial powers often convinced rulers in Bangkok that they ought to adopt given practices.

The enthusiasm for adopting many of these new practices was infectious. The young king and his courtiers and advisors, many who were as young as him, took to the ways of the West, its technology, medical advances, and intellectual traits, with exuberance. Among the leaders, Western practices were seen to be a new set of elitist tendencies that could be made into Thai ways. The young ruling group pursued new ways in technology, administration, the arts, and political philosophy.

However, such drastic changes were sure to make a profound impact on the way of life of the people, especially on the poor and those living in remote areas who were rarely consulted as the innovations were introduced. The impact could be severe on the non-Thai groups who were suddenly alienated in the adoption of new citizenship laws and procedures.

These Other groups, from having a sustainable way of life and access to valuable produce or information (as spies from their border vantage points) in the nineteenth century when these groups were recognized as valued Thai subjects, these political and other innovations served to dismantle their social support structure in the early 1900s. So strongly did King Vajiravudh and his successors prod “Thainess,” and thus confuse ethnicity and nationality and so severely did they make the consequences felt for not

15) Notes Baker [2001: 98 n], “The ‘twelve languages’ is a conventional phrase meaning, roughly, all foreign languages.”

becoming Thai, that almost all the people in the country rapidly complied. Those who did not were branded as non-Thai, a term that became an epithet and a basis for expelling them from Thailand. There were, to be sure, benefits in the new ways being promoted. However, the speed with which the innovations were introduced caused that negative consequences to be felt emphatically by groups relegated to Other status.

Disorienting the Promotion of a National Language

While wishing to introduce nationalism as practiced by the English to Thailand, Vajiravudh also found practices in France to adopt for his country. Unlike Britain, where at the beginning of the twentieth century, the people spoke a multiplicity of dialects that were sometimes mutually unintelligible, the French government had for over a century been actively encouraging its people to speak a common national language. Efforts at standardizing in all aspects of life beginning with the French Revolution brought both the metric system and the promotion of a single French language. In the 1800s, only about half of the French population spoke or understood French, using instead minority languages such as Occitan dialects in the south, Franco-Provençal in Savoie, as well as Flemish, Basque, and Corsican in outlying areas. In 1794, in an address to the powerful Committee of Public Safety, the influential official, Barère, called for all French citizens to be educated in French, the language of Paris and the areas close to it, in order to reduce what he saw as threats to the state. Among the threats he saw were fanaticism by Basque speakers and superstition by Bretons [De Certeau *et al.* 1975]. Attention was concentrated on areas with distinctive regional languages so that they would be more readily integrated into the French state. The policy succeeded so thoroughly that by 1910, approximately 90 per cent of the population understood French although regional dialects were still sometimes used.

The leaders of the revolution believed that threats to the state could emerge most easily were in areas with distinct local languages, such as Alsace-Lorraine, Brittany, Corsica, and Basses-Pyrénées. After decades of delays due to political and military upheavals, Jules Ferry introduced free and compulsory education in French in which the national language would be the medium of instruction. Universal military service also contributed to the spread of the national language.

In Thailand, the government promoted a national language based on the Thai spoken by the upper classes of central Thailand. This nonetheless required considerable innovative work. Although grammars of Thai were being prepared in the late-nineteenth century, these were Thai versions of grammars prepared by foreigners such as the missionaries who wanted their brethren to be able to learn the language rapidly. And although King Rama IV had issued language edicts, these did not aim primarily to standardize the language.

The actual standardization of Thai was thought through and promulgated most properly during the reign of King Chulalongkorn through the work of Phaya Upakit Silapasan, particularly in his *Lak Phasa Thai* (Principles of the Thai Language), which was reprinted many times and followed a Western approach. As described by Anthony Diller, “every page reflects the style of contemporary Western school grammars. . . [but] using Indic terminology” [Diller 2002: 86].

Based on this approach came the preparation of Thai dictionaries that built on the earlier dictionaries written by non-Thai missionaries, such as Dan Beach Bradley and Bishop Pallegoix in the second half of the nineteenth century. According to Diller, Phraya Upakit codified the “language associated with traditional literacy and with the older elites” and what Prince Wan called “*sayam-phak*” [*ibid.*: 92].

Unlike in France, however, the strategy called for introducing the language in Bangkok as well as other urban centers from where they worked outwards. Although many minorities lived in and around Bangkok, only in the rarest of circumstances did government officials make an effort to reach remote or minority groups living in out-of-the-way places. Since those living closest to the urban centers often knew the Thai way-of-life well, they were relatively easy to assimilate into the new standardized Thai culture. Those on the fringes of these centers, who were already more likely to diverge culturally from the Thai, grew even further apart as the process proceeded.

This was to have negative consequences on the groups living in remote areas by creating divisions between them and those who were coming to be seen as the citizens of the Thai nation. Using language as an important ethnic indicator, the latter often chose not to recognize border area groups as Thai at all, thus alienating them from the Thai state.

Household Registration

The Thai practice of *thabian ban* (household registration) by which the names of all members of a household are listed on a document issued by the local district office seems to have been influenced by French and British colonial practices. The French *livret de famille* (family book) is a civil document issued by local administrative officials to a couple upon marriage as well as to all single women who declare that they have given birth. Listed on this document are the parents and all their children.

The French family book was created by the 1884 municipal law, although such a document had been used in 1872 when, after the burning of the Hôtel de Ville de Paris, many Parisians had lost all means of proving their civil status. This was expanded to national use in the following decade.

Not long afterwards, British officials in Burma introduced the same approach in the British India Village Act of 1909. This arose as the British were extending their hold over

the Shan State and Upper Burma, taken over in 1886.

In both the French and the British Indian format, all members of a household are listed on the document, which is in the name of the household head who normally owns the land where the family lives. As adopted in Thailand in 1913, early in the reign of King Vajiravudh, this document is proof that one is a citizen of the country. It is required to be presented in order that household members obtain such government services as education, health care, and various documents such as identification cards and passports.

However, there are problems when household members grow estranged or distant from the household heads. In these cases, such as occurs in slums or in various highland or otherwise remote areas, persons entitled to Thai citizenship may be denied their rights. Not only were people on the fringes the least likely to become members of the Thai state but the new “modern” regulations being formulated served to alienate them further, putting them at a double disadvantage.

Adoption of Forestry from a Country that Had Fenced Off the Commons

For centuries, farmers in what is now Thailand made their living out of the area's generally poor soils. Two methods proved sustainable for centuries when certain conditions, such as having ample available land, were met. One popular approach has been to grow rice in either lowland or terraced paddy fields in which the plants thrived on nutrients that are replenished efficiently. Basic cations and silica are brought by irrigation works while biological fixation provides nitrogen and the amount of phosphorus is enhanced under anaerobic conditions. The result, together with high resistance to soil erosion, provides high productivity and sustainability [Kyuma 2005.] Another common approach was shifting cultivation or swiddening which was practiced not only by hill people in the past but many in the lowlands (among whom the system has gradually been replaced by paddy cultivation). Recent studies of swiddening among groups such as Lua or Karen in Northern Thailand show that for reasons including, minimum tillage and allowing big trees to remain uncut in the fields, as well as protecting watersheds and natural vegetation around the fields, forest regrowth is rapid [Nakano 1978: 424–427]. Researchers such as Zinke and Kunstadter, who studied shifting cultivation in depth, concluded that the practices have endured in some swidden areas for 150 years [various articles in Kunstadter *et al.* 1978]. Besides this, there are Lua villages nearby, such as Bo Luang, which are documented as existing about 400 years ago and where shifting cultivation was quite likely practiced continually. Both paddy and swidden cultivation have been conducted for centuries.

During the late-1800s, radically new ways to use the forest were introduced to Thailand by foreign teak logging concerns. Coming to Thailand mainly from British Burma where the great stands of *tectona grandis* attracted the attention of those supply-

ing shipbuilders in the increasingly deforested British Isles, these companies wanted the wood, which because of its high resinous oil and rubber content, is almost impervious to termites.¹⁶⁾ As prices for the wood soared, northern Thai princes used various and sometimes dishonest tactics to increase their income. There were cases, for example, of northern rulers leasing the same forest to more than one logging company, collecting two lease fees, and then letting the loggers settle the issue on their own. Alarmed by the prospect of conflicts with the British imperialists, Thailand signed treaties with the British in 1874 and 1883 to reduce tensions between British concerns such as the Bombay-Burmah and the Borneo Companies and the northern rulers.

In 1896, three years after the French seized what is now Laos over a political disagreement, and with disputes over teak still occurring, King Chulalongkorn decided to establish a forest department to control the northern Thai rulers in another way. The first Conservator of the Forests of Thailand was the British forester, H. A. Slade, formerly of the forestry service in British India. Soon after arriving in Thailand in January of 1896, he traveled by river to Uttaradit and then by elephant to Phrae and Chiang Mai. After his return he helped organize the Royal Forest Department which was established on the 18th of September. Besides Slade there were other Europeans: 16 in all, who together with 9 Thai comprised the original staff of 25 [Thailand Royal Forest Department 1996: 45–46]. From the beginning, the department was based completely on Western conceptions of forest management.

Besides implementing controls on how the northern rulers issued leaseholds and enforced them, the RFD promoted a new kind of forest use. Slade and his compatriots promoted a “scientific” methodology that sought to optimize the extraction of teak and to maximize the income derived therefrom. At the same time, “scientific” forestry encouraged (at least some) replanting so as to ensure the future of the trade. Growing tree crops was promoted, starting in 1906, by the use of what was called the *taungya*¹⁷⁾ system in Phrae.

Although understandable because of the threat posed to forests under King Chulalongkorn’s control by British logging concerns, it is ironic that the foresters, professing sustainable use of the woods, came from “one of the least wooded places in all of Europe” [Daniels 1988]. Although there was a tradition in the United Kingdom, dating to the time of William the Conqueror a thousand years ago, that allowed ordinary people to use the woodlands, while preserving forests and parks for royalty, this had changed by the early-1800s. Starting in the fifteenth century, a series of acts gradually fenced off the commons, including woodlands, made them subject to private ownership or otherwise

16) Teak was also popular because it saved lives. Unlike the hardwoods of the British Isles used to make warships at the time, teak did not splinter when hit by cannon fire, which was a common cause of death for sailors.

17) Ironically the Burmese word for swidden.

restricted them from public use. Partly because this process concentrated economic power, industrial development sanctioned by government authorities was encouraged and considerable forest clearing resulted.

Although there was an old system of agriculture used in the British Isles that resembled shifting cultivation (and from which the word, “swidden,” is derived), this had been abandoned by the middle ages and was all but unknown in the nineteenth century. Foresters at that time who supported exploitation of the woodlands for commercial purposes saw all forms of shifting cultivation as wasteful and something that should be replaced. Despite the fact that the shifting cultivation traditionally was practiced in Northern Thailand was sustainable, foresters from the British Isles did not recognize it as such, were uninterested in studying it, and condemned it without review. Little actually was done initially, however, because when the RFD was founded, it did not have any legal basis for suppressing swiddening. Later, after acquiring the means to do so by mid-century, the RFD began to restrict it.

Therefore, the introduction of “scientific” forestry, including the banning of swiddening, which was meant to strengthen the country’s economy (and control the northern rulers), also alienated highlanders and criminalized their livelihood. As with the adoption of a national language and the introduction of household registration, the way these European methods introduced in Thailand were adopted so comprehensively that little evaluation was given to their impact on small groups in remote areas.

The impact on the hill people who for centuries depended on swiddening has been severe. As their traditional means for making a livelihood was outlawed, the peoples of the hills became even more alienated from lowland life. Together with the fact that they did not often speak the national language and were not educated in the formal Thai school system, the outlawing of swiddening made the various hill people all the more the Other, all the more alienated, in a way similar to household registration despite shifting cultivation having long been conventional in the area.

From *Tai* to Thai

Thus it is that many hill people of Thailand have been institutionally excluded from membership in the nation-state. Many hill people born in the country as well as those who migrated here do not have Thai citizenship. Nor do many others on the edges of the Thai nation-state as well as within its interior.

At the same time, a sizeable number of people living in the hills became full members of Thai society. However, they lost much of their culture in the process.

The same procedures also affected how lowland Tai speakers entered society in the new state of Siam/Thailand. Indicators of what it meant to be Thai were identified, developed, and inculcated through nationwide universal education (although not fully

implemented until decades later). The process was so effective that the disparate small groups populating the country took on more and more this artificially-defined Thai appearance.

The acquiring of this new Thainess by over-enthusiastic national leaders in Thailand was accompanied by the adoption of European practices and ways of thinking by Thai governments. Even though many of these ways, such as household registration and the bans on swiddening disrupted many people's lives, so powerful was the European aura that the nation's leaders readily adopted them. In the case of swiddening, although local rulers were surely aware that it was appropriate technology, political considerations and modern proclivities outweighed everything else.

Although European methods of forestry, household registration, and other introductions may well have contributed to the way of life in Europe, their rapid introduction into Thailand often resulted in negative impacts. This process has made the traditional, non-ethnic and diverse *tai* way of life irrelevant in Thailand. The majority culture of Thai society that has emerged in its place is more rigid, less varied, and less creative than the older way of life it replaced. So comprehensive has this remaking been that few people in the country now know that *tai/phrai* ever referred to a class of society in Ayutthaya and other kingdoms of that time. This *tai* way of life in the Ayutthayan and Early-Bangkok kingdoms differed so profoundly from national Thai life at present that most Thai citizens today would regard these early *tai* as aliens.

Given the educational reforms now underway in Thailand aimed at enhancing the creativity and self-reliance of school students, it can be hoped that this will result a populace more analytical and more aware of the *tai* and *kha* in Thai history. Understanding the role played by all the small groups in the area in centuries past can only improve the lot of today's minorities, welcome them into the Thai polity, and bring national policy on minorities in line with that of its neighbors. Only when it is realized that Thai policy is unique in the region for the problems it causes these groups and that the diversity of these groups strengthens the country, will there be a way for their cultures to be openly integrated into the greater Thai way of life and contribute what it should to national growth.

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Changing Meaning of the Elderly in Nan Province, Northern Thailand : From “Khon Thao Khon Kae” to “Phu Sung Ayu”

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Abstract

In this paper, I deal with the group named “the elderly” in the guardian spirit ritual in the Tai-Lue villages in Nan province, Northern Thailand. These groups appeared after the decline of the traditional role of the elderly in the ritual, and are connected with the recent social situation including the national policies towards local cultures and the elderly.

Village elderly carry out newly invented performances in the ritual as a new culture of the elderly, not transmitted from their ancestors. One can say that the role of the elderly in the ritual has changed from that of “Khon Thao Khon Kae” (an older person who has traditional knowledge) to that of “Phu Sung Ayu” (a person over 60 years of age, who can receive welfare services).

However these newly invented activities of the elderly in the ritual are voluntarily initiated by them. They have tried to find their own world of activities even in the stream of “welfarization.” They are given a new arena of self-representation and activities, i.e. performing as the Tai-Lue “elderly.” So they are in a sense defined by the state, but they adapt those definitions for their own purposes.

Keywords: the elderly, Tai-Lue, local culture, cultural policy, welfare policy, guardian spirit ritual

I Introduction

Recently the average life span in Thailand has become longer because of much improved nutrition, medical services and standards of living. Therefore the proportion of the population over 60 has increased: in 1970, the proportion of the population over 60 was 4.66%, but in 1990, it has risen to 5.98% [Khochakor Sangkhachad 1993].

In 1982, at the World Assembly on Aging held in Australia, “the elderly” was defined as people over 60 years old.¹⁾ In Thailand, the elderly are called “Khon Thao Khon Kae,” which implies an older person who possesses the traditional knowledge. Since the Assembly, the Thai government has used the word “Phu Sung Ayu” as the official word to refer to a person over 60. It did so as part of its medical and welfare programs for the

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1) The definition of “the elderly” by W.H.O. is people over 65, but in Thailand, it is the definition of this Assembly.

“Phu Sung Ayu” [Samakhom Sapha Phu Sung Ayu Haeng Prathet Thai 1999: 5–7]. This new definition of the elderly is different from the traditional folk usage of “Khon Thao Khon Kae.”

In the late 1980s, there was a move to rethink local wisdom as the rapid economic growth brought about profound social change that disrupted communities and families. This was regarded by many as reflecting a “the crisis of modern Thai society.”

In the 1990s, the government promoted cultural decentralization as part of its broader policy of democratization, and declared that local wisdom was now a significant part of “National Culture.”²⁾ Government officials and intellectuals claimed that the disruption of traditional communities had led to a loss of their function of transmitting tradition. Hence to prevent this further decline, the government began the attempt to reformulate the role of the elderly towards regaining their function of transmitting knowledge to the next generation.

How is this movement of revival of local cultures as part of the National Culture related to the new definition of the elderly “Phu Sung Ayu”? This is the main question to be addressed in this paper.

Although many ethnographic studies described family life in Northern Thailand, especially in the 1960s–70s [cf. Davis 1984; Potter 1977; Kingshill 1974], there has been no description about the changing role of the elderly, except Suri’s study about the case study in Chiang Mai [Suri 1991: Section 3]. Suri’s study referred to the changing role of the elderly in the changing family in modern Thai society. However Suri did not examine the change within the context of the above-mentioned new top-down definition of the elderly “Phu Sung Ayu.” In this paper, I will focus on this new definition of the elderly in the context of rural development and local cultural revivalism through a case study of Tai-Lue villages in Thawanpa district, Nan province, Northern Thailand.³⁾

In the 1990s, the disruption of community and family was also recognized to be taking place in the Tai-Lue villages in Thawanpa, and the role of the elderly was also undergoing significant change.

Tai-Lue is one branch of the Tai speaking group, which is dispersed across mainland Southeast Asia. It is well known that it formed the Sipsong Panna chiefdoms in Southwestern China, now in Yunnan province. Most of the Tai-Lue in Northern Thailand migrated from Sipsong Panna, their original place, in the nineteenth century. Since migration, they have assimilated with their neighboring Tai-groups who shared linguistic and cultural similarities with the Tai-Lue. However, in the late 1980s, a Tai-Lue cultural revival movement emerged and the Tai-Lue in Thawanpha particularly began to

2) This is the point noted in the 1997 constitution.

3) I have conducted research in Thailand since 1990 till now, including the term I studied at Chiang Mai University, from 1990 to 1991, with permission from the National Research Council of Thailand. This paper is based on this research.

promote their own identity, especially through their guardian spirit ritual which has been enlarged for reasons connected with rural development and local tourism.⁴⁾

In the process of enlarging the ritual, the traditional role of the elderly has declined. A new group of villagers named “Phu Sung Ayu” appeared in the ritual. It seems that the role of “Khon Thao Khon Kae” in the ritual has been transferred to the “Phu Sung Ayu.” I begin by briefly describing the changing role of the elderly in the changing guardian spirit ritual. Then, to understand the social background to this changing role in the ritual, I will explore the changing role of the elderly in village life and focus on the appearance of the new activities of “Phu Sung Ayu,” the newly defined elderly. Finally I will return to focus on the new groups named “Phu Sung Ayu” which appeared in the guardian spirit ritual, in the context of reconstruction of the Tai-Lue identity in their cultural revivalism. In this way, I will examine the changing meaning of the elderly in the Tai-Lue society in Nan.

II The Role of the Elderly in the Changing Ritual

In the three Tai-Lue villages (N, D and T villages) in Thawanpha, the guardian spirit ritual, named Chao Luang Muang La ritual, has been conducted since they migrated from their original place, Muang La in Sipsong Panna. In the ritual, they celebrate several guardian spirits who constitute the pantheon of the main spirit, Chao Luang Muang La. The ritual is held for three days every three years. A buffalo, a cow, a black pig and a white pig as sacrificial animals are offered to the spirits.

The ritual has changed drastically, especially in the 1990s because of rural development in this area. The following is the changing process.

In 1990, the ritual was enlarged to promote it among outsiders including tourists, by new leaders of rural development including schoolteachers, but only N village who led the enlargement of the ritual benefited from this move. For example, the Tai-Lue textile in N village was more attractive to the tourists. Therefore a psychological conflict occurred between N village and D village. In D village are found the descendants of the chief of their home place, Muang La, and many of the spirits comprising the pantheon of the main spirit, Chao Luang Muang La, so D village had always played an important role in the ritual. However it could not gain any benefit from the enlargement of the ritual led by villagers of N. In 1996, the ritual began to be performed in two places rather than one, both N village and D village. It was then that T village joined the ritual held in N village.

During this period, the main practitioners of the ritual had changed from traditional ritual specialists such as spirit priests, to leaders of development referred to as “the group for village development” which included the schoolteachers.

4) I presented several papers on this topic [Baba 1993; 1996; 1998; 1999; 2002; 2004].



Fig. 1 Chomron Dontri Phunmuan Phu Sung Ayu
(The Elderly Traditional Northern Music Group)

Performance in the ritual had also undergone significant changes. Traditionally in the ritual, Chang Khap, a traditional folk singer, used to sing Khap Lue (Tai-Lue traditional folk song). Until 1990, on the first day of the ritual, two male singers from N village and two female singers from D village used to sing with each other in question-answer style to celebrate Chao Muang in D village. Until 1987, on the second day, one male singer likewise sang to invite spirits after a sacrificial ceremony.

In the early 1990s, there were four Chang Khaps, 65 to 70 years old, in N and D villages, none of whom had any disciples because there were very few young people who were interested in Khap Lue. In place of the Chang Khap, in 1990, the Khap Lue of a village women's group appeared. In the 1990, 1993 and 1996 rituals, the group sang a song not only praying for the spirit like a traditional singer, Chang Khap, but also referring to individual well-being.

In the 1999 ritual, the Khap Lue disappeared altogether, and in its stead Chomrom Dontri Phunmuan Phu Sung Ayu (an elderly traditional northern music group) appeared in the rituals of N and T villages. As I will explain later, they played Northern Thai traditional music, not Tai-Lue music. Tai-Lue people in Northern Thailand can also play Northern Thai traditional music. In N village, they sang the song of Tai-Lue migration, praying for Chao Luang Muang La in So style (Northern Thai style singing), rather than Khap Lue. In N village, they played music in several ceremonies such as house building ceremony, wedding ceremony and funeral ceremony, besides the guardian spirit ritual. This was the role of the Chang Khap before their role in the village declined.

In the 2002 ritual, Klum Phu Sung Ayu phua Patthana Sukhaparp (The Elderly Group for Improving Health) was established and they performed aerobic dance in front of the statue of Chao Luang Muang La in N village. When they exercised, they counted "one, two, three..." with Tai-Lue pronunciation to express Tai-Lue identity in front of their guardian spirit.⁵⁾ Besides this, in the 2002 ritual, a dance party for the elderly was held led

5) Villagers usually speak Tai-Lue language, a Tai dialect, in their everyday life.



Fig. 2 Klum Phu Sung Ayu phua Patthana Sukhaparp (The Elderly Group for Improving Health)



Fig. 3 Sao Wai Thong (Girls of Golden Age)

by members of the old women's dancing group, named "Sao Wai Thong" (Girls of Golden Age). They sold tickets to the people who joined the party, and allotted the benefit to the village elderly fund.

In the 2005 ritual, though a dance party was not held, the aerobic dancing in front of the statue of Chao Luang Muang La in N village was performed by "Klum Phu Sung Ayu phua Patthana Sukhaparp" (The Elderly Group for Improving Health). In their procession to the ritual place, the Khap Lue referred to their aerobic dance in a song. Khap Lue was revived in the ritual of this year. It was sung by some ordinary elderly who like to sing, instead of Chang Khap (traditional folk singer).

In this process of ritual change, the role of traditional specialists has declined, but various groups formed and named as "the elderly" (Phu Sung Ayu) have appeared in the recent rituals. To understand this, I will explore the changing role of the elderly in the village life and new activities of the elderly in the following sections.

III Changing Traditional Role of the Elderly

Traditionally, in Northern Thailand, the basic family role of the elderly is to look after grandchildren. However, this role of the elderly has declined in recent years, because of the change of family structure and the popularization of school education. After the rapid economic growth of the late 1980s, and the cost of living increase, the number of children per family had inevitably decreased. And with every child attending elementary school for six years as part of the Thai state's compulsory education and with many going to kindergarten for two years, the role of the elderly in the family has been taken over by the school education systems. Given this situation, the elderly now need to find alternative activities to make use of their own time [Suri 1991: 4]. Such was the case in the Tai-Lue villages of Thawanpha. In the case of N village, for example, the establish-

ment of the village nursery center (Sung Dek Lek) in early 1990, whose responsibilities included looking after pre-kindergarten children (one to three years old) had reduced the time the elderly spend with their grandchildren.

In a report by Kriksak, Suri and Somsak on the situation of the elderly in the rural and urban areas of Chiang Mai province, they noted that the activity sphere of the elderly had diminished considerably, when compared to that of young people. They also noted that elderly visiting of neighboring people and time spent for religious activities had gone up [Kriksak, Suri and Somsak 1990: 4]. This pattern is evident in N village, where the elderly, realizing their declining role in the family, have begun spending more time with neighboring friends and in religious activities. One old woman over 80 says she used to enjoy going to the temple to pray and to meet friends. But because of pain in her legs, she has shifted to other similar activities, praying at the Buddhist altar in her house and visiting neighboring friends. They have kept these traditional customs, while on the other hand, the vigorous old women around 60–65 years join the aerobic dance for the elderly (see next section). Nowadays many of the elderly under 70 years old have begun to join these new activities.⁶⁾

Traditionally, in Northern Thailand, the elderly have a role in temple activities. In N village, for example, the elderly men and women live and work in the Viharn (assembly hall) of the temple before and during Wan Phra (Buddhist day). There the men sit in the front and women sit in the rear. Then an old man, who is called Acan Wat, leads laymen and laywomen in recitation. Yet now even in the temples, the elderly role has changed. In 1996, a high school for novices (Ronrien Phra Pariyattham Saman Suksa) opened in T village situated across the river from N village. During daytime, monks of N temple would work in that school, and novices of N temple would go to study there. Thus, as nobody appeared to stay anymore in N temple, some male elderly have taken over guarding the temple. Also, on the occasion of Songkran Festival (New Year Festival), in a traditional event called Samma Kharawa (often held April 15), lay villagers make offerings to monks and the elderly. Under Prime Minister Thaksin, however, April 13 was designated as National Day of the Elderly and henceforth the elderly, who received offerings in the ritual, were to be formally designated as people over 60 (Phu Sung Ayu).

In March 2005, I had a chance to observe one funeral ceremony in N village. In the preparation for the ceremony, people worked following traditional roles allocated by

6) These data were collected as part of the research project, "Quantitative Research on the Self-care and Lifestyle of the Female Elderly, Compared Japanese and Thai" (The leader of the research project is Takami Tanaka), supported by the President's Fund of Mie Prefectural College of Nursing.

Many elderly in N village spoke about the difference in society between the past and the present. Most of them say that elder brothers and sisters used to look after their younger brothers and sisters in the temple in olden times, but now such customs cannot be seen.



Fig. 4 Funeral Ceremony

generation and sex. The male elderly made offerings of coconut and other things to the dead person while the female elderly decorated the offerings. Middle-aged men then prepared the cemetery while the middle-aged women prepared the dishes for the ceremony. During the three days of preparation for the funeral ceremony, the female elderly also performed aerobic dancing every morning. After these arrangements were made, the male elderly moved to the playground, established in 2000, and began to play *petank*, a French sport for the elderly, recommended by the King's Mother for the elderly in the first half of 1990s before her demise in 1996. Henceforth, to the religious activities of the elderly were added new activities like *petank*. In the next Section, I will examine the process of popularization of newly created activities and its social background.

IV New Activities of the Elderly

As the average lifespan in Thailand had risen, the percentage of Thais over 60 had increased. Yet, the role of the elderly had gone the opposite direction — declining in the family, and forcing them to find new activities in day-to-day life. This was the context in which Samakhom Sapha Phu Sung Ayu Haeng Phrathet Thai (Senior Citizens Council of

Thailand) was established as a national organization in 1989, under the tutelage of the King's Mother in 1991. Since then, the Council has cooperated with many organizations like the Social Welfare Division, under the Ministry of Public Health, that offer welfare services for the elderly. The elderly were now recognized as having the right to receive welfare services such as free medical service [Samakhom Sapha Phu Sung Ayu Haeng Prathet Thai 1999: 10], and such services were coursed through provincial branches of the Samakhom Sapha Phu Sung Ayu Haeng Phrathet Thai.⁷⁾

In Nan province, the elderly club at the provincial level was established in 1984, and became the Nan branch of the Senior Citizens Council of Thailand in 1992, unifying Chomrom Phu Sung Ayu (the elderly club) at district, sub-district and village levels [Sakha Samakhom Sapha Phu Sung Ayu Haeng Prathet Thai Pracam Canwat Nan 1999].⁸⁾ The aim of this group is mainly to maintain the health of the elderly and mutual aid, but also to preserve traditional culture and thereby contribute to the local society. The group projects are as follows:

1. Activities related to health (lectures on nutrition, regular health check, and sports such as *petank* and *taikaek*)
2. Mutual aid (funeral ceremony, looking after sick members)
3. Alternative occupations for the elderly (bamboo craft, artificial flower craft, blacksmith work, etc.)
4. Promoting traditional herbal medicine
5. Promoting the preservation and transmission of traditional culture (traditional music, dance, ceremony, etc.)

The leader of the Nan branch of the Council however admitted that implementation of these activities was uneven because transportation problems often made it difficult for people in the remote areas to access the places where the activities are held. The economic conditions of some areas are so bad that people do not have enough time to join the activities of the club.⁹⁾

The situation of the elderly is different in urban and rural areas. The most active

7) I conducted research on the elderly in Nan province from 1999 to 2000, in cooperation with Mr. Somchet Wimonkasaem, a teacher of Satri Si Nan High School, financially supported by the Japanese Society for the Promotion of Science, including the Core University Program of the same society. The title of the research project is "Modern Welfare-system and Traditional Mutual Aid: Comparative Study on the Case of Thailand and Japan." I compared the activities of the elderly in Nan province, Thailand with those in Mie prefecture, Japan. I published a research report in Japanese [Baba 2001] and for the part of the elderly activities in Nan province published in Thai [Baba and Somchet 2005].

8) Prachakom Nan (Nan Civic Society) was established in 1996 for networking several kinds of community groups. Chomrom Phu Sung Ayu (the elderly club) is networking with this [Prachakom Nan 1996].

9) Suri investigated three socio-economic levels of the elderly in Chiang Mai province. The way of spending time is different between each level [Suri 1991].

Fig. 5 *Petank*

Fig. 6 Aerobics of the Elderly

clubs can be found in the Nan City area, and their active members, mostly retired governmental officials have time to spare for club activities. In the rural areas, however, most people are farmers who do not experience a specified retirement, and who continue to work in the fields even after they turn 60. When the activities of the elderly club were introduced, these were not well received in rural areas. But in villages where economic conditions have comparatively improved, farmers welcomed these activities.

I will describe the activities of the elderly in the case of N village, Pakha sub-district where economic conditions were good and where able leaders were present, so that the sub-district has often been chosen as the model area for rural development.¹⁰⁾ In Pakha sub-district, workers of the Community Health Center (Sathani Anamai) in T village, have assisted the village elderly with programs such as health check, aerobic dancing, *petank* and *tai kaek* (Chinese martial arts). The Center also holds seminars on health twice a year. The response has been quite ambivalent, with one monk saying that “Health checking system and mutual aid among the elderly are useful, but some activities introduced by public health officers, for example aerobic dance and *petank*, are not so welcomed by the elderly in rural areas. Traditional music and dances should be promoted for the elderly.”

The activities that appeal the most are aerobic dance and *petank* which they can manage by themselves; *petank* being favored by male elderly while aerobic dancing, by female elderly. In 2000, a *petank* ground was established in the compound of the temple in N village. The compound of the temple used to be the traditional place where villagers gathered and talked with each other freely, and thus public acceptance of the *petank* ground was gradual. Aerobic dance was initially popular among 30–40 years old women thanks in part to the training of a village woman in a training center in Bangkok supported by the Ministry of Public Health. This form of exercise was eventually

10) For example, the first meeting of the project called Muang Na Yu Ban Na Yu (Healthy City Plan, one W. H. O project) was held in T temple in 1998.

introduced to the elderly and accepted gradually. Today more than half of the people between 60–69 have joined these activities.¹¹⁾

It is said that these new activities of the elderly are part of the new culture of the elderly of the village society and that behind all this is the separation between the elderly and young people in recent society. This is a frequent explanation heard among villagers of which the statement below is representative :

Recently the rural area has been connected with urban society by market economy influence, and people who go to work in the city have increased. So young people tend to be interested in the new culture from outside, not in the traditional culture. It has made the life styles different between the elderly and young people. It seems that the traditional knowledge of the elderly in day-to-day life has become useless.

In the 1990s, in Pakha sub-district, a number of villages, including N village, built their own museums to show the traditional way of life in each place. Their motivation was fairly straightforward, as attested by the following claim: “Young people do not know the traditional way of life, so traditional goods must be displayed for keeping them in their minds.”

These new activities of the elderly have also served to accomplish the above goals. A new relationship between them and the young people developed through the *petank*, which is also favored by young people. Thus the *petank* ground had become an arena where the elderly can communicate with young people. Some members of the traditional northern music group, as mentioned in Section II, are also trying to transmit the traditional music to young people.

In the next Section, I will focus on the group of the elderly in the changing ritual, considering the appearance of their new activities.

V The Group of the Elderly in the Changing Ritual and Its Social Background

Here, I will return to the subject of the guardian spirit ritual mentioned in Section II. The change in the guardian spirit ritual of Tai-Lue villages in the 1990s took place in the process of the cultural reformation in the Tai-Lue villages. This transformation consisted of two parts.

In the first phase, new leaders such as school teachers led the recently enlarged ritual and tried to make it an intrinsic and useful part of village development. They were not

11) According to 1999's data, the number of the elderly 60–69 years old was 73 (31 males, 42 females) in N village.

interested in the traditional ritual knowledge which had been transmitted by ritual specialists. They were more concerned with the cultural performances that accompanied the ritual as a means of potentially attracting outsiders. So from their perspective, it became unimportant to transmit this knowledge through the hand of the ritual specialist. New leaders seemed to be creating a new cultural tradition. In the second phase, groups named “the elderly,” such as the elderly traditional northern music group, aerobic dancing for the elderly and dance group of the women elderly appeared. These are connected not only with the movement of preserving local wisdom but also with the movement of improving health.

These groups which all include “the elderly” in their titles are not parts of the elderly club, Chomrom Phu Sung Ayu, of which most village elderly are members. Unlike the elderly club which was founded in the top-down style, these groups were voluntarily initiated by the village elderly. They were formed according to the recommendation of the cultural and welfare policy of local government, but the details of the activities came from the villagers. Except for the dance group of women elderly, their activities are not confined to the Chao Luang Muang La ritual (the dance group of women elderly is totally formed by the idea of villagers). The elderly traditional northern music group plays music on several ceremonial occasions, and aerobic dancing for the elderly is performed almost every day.

Chomrom Dontri Phunmuan Phu Sung Ayu (The elderly traditional northern music group), which appeared in the 1999 ritual, was encouraged to be formed by the National Cultural Council of the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Public Health. It is concerned with preserving traditional culture as well as in keeping the village elderly healthy. In T village, when they played music in the 1999 ritual, they wore uniforms provided by the Ministry of Public Health.

In Pakha sub-district — the model area for rural development as mentioned above — five villages established Chomrom Dontri Phunmuan Phu Sung Ayu. They formed a traditional northern Thai style musical band that used traditional instruments like the *salo* (bowing instrument), *pin* (plucking instrument) and *kui* (vertical bamboo flute). The members numbered around 6 to 10 depending on the village. In the neighboring sub-district, however, no such groups were formed because people always played together spontaneously without forming a fixed group. On the occasion of a festival or Sukhwan (calling soul) ritual, three elderly play traditional music together, two playing *pin* and one playing *salo*. These three are not fixed members, so any three elderly can play together. This, according to one villager, is the “real” traditional way of this area, something different from other places in Northern Thailand. Bands in Pakha sub-district, however, are formed in typical northern style although some use musical instruments of central Thailand such as *ranat* (Thai xylophone) and sometimes play songs of central Thailand. These may be formed as part of cultural policy, but the details of their activities derive from the villagers’ ideas.

In the late 1990s, in Nan province and Thawanpha district, the Cultural Council of Province and District (under control of the National Cultural Council), tried to reform the culture through the movement of preserving local wisdom, and decided there was a need to seek the advice of the elderly familiar with traditional culture. This, they claimed, was a way of constructing a role for some of the elderly in their changing rural society.

Actually this is inventing “true culture” in the name of preserving tradition: it is a standardization of culture. A member of the district’s Cultural Council claims that traditional funeral ceremonies are conducted without regulation and the way of conducting has become varied among villages. To avoid further modifications, they argued that there was a need to preserve the real traditional ways. What the council ignores is that for the villagers, such variations have always been there, dating as far back as the olden times.

The elderly traditional northern music groups were formed under this cultural policy. However only those selected elderly with musical skills could join the group: this despite the fact that the groups were also portrayed as useful instruments for health improvement. Another specific elderly group for improving health on the other hand could accept every elderly person, and was more connected with the public health improving movement. The dance group of the women elderly could accept every old woman, and all elderly could join its dance parties. This open-door policy is the product of the growing importance of the female elderly in the Chao Luang Muang La ritual. They have become important since 1993, when a newly constructed stage for village entertainment in N village held an “Elderly beauty contest” alongside the usual beauty contest of village girls. In the past, it is said that women were forbidden to enter the ceremonial place because they were considered to be easily possessed by spirits.¹²⁾ This view has weakened in the recent years as the departure of men to search for job outside the village and the province, and the increasing attraction of the local textiles (which women turned into beautiful clothes) to outsiders and tourists, has transformed women into important village actors. In the Khap Lue (Tai-Lue folk song), the declining presence of the Chang Khap (traditional singer) was replaced by village women singing the Khap Lue and dancing in their traditional clothes.

In the changing ritual process in Tai-Lue villages, the public perception is that they maintain a strong Tai-Lue identity. The truth of the matter however, is that the Lue people are collectively “performing as a Lue” through their movement of preserving local wisdom and cultural revivalism [Baba 1998]. New elderly groups that appeared in this process of changing ritual are also related with “performing as a Lue.”

12) In Northern Thailand, it is said that men have strong souls (*kwan kheng*) and women have weak souls (*kwan on*), so women are easily possessed by spirits. Most sorcerers who can drive the attack of spirits away are male and most spirit mediums are female. This does not mean that there is a status distinction between male and female.



Fig. 7 The Ritual of Chao Luang Muang La

The style of the elderly traditional northern music is totally northern music style, with the *salo*, the *pin* and the *kui*. The style of singing is So (Northern Thai style folk song), not Khap Lue (Tai-Lue folk song), so there is no special Tai-Lue musical character. However, during the ritual of Chao Luang Muang La, they do sing the song of the Tai-Lue history of migration, albeit in So style. When the elderly group for improving health exercises in front of Tai-Lue spirit, they likewise count in Tai-Lue pronunciation.

They act a role of performing as Lue in the ritual as a part of the new culture of the elderly separated from young people.

VI Conclusion

In this paper, I dealt with the group named “the elderly” in the guardian spirit ritual in the Tai-Lue villages in Thawanpha district, Nan province, Northern Thailand. Chomrom Dontri Phu Sung Ayu (The Elderly Traditional Northern Music Group), Klum Phu Sung Ayu phua Patthana Sukhaparp (The Elderly Group for Improving Health) and Klum Sao Wai Thong (Girls of Golden Age Group [Dance group of the women elderly]) appeared after the decline of the traditional role of the elderly in the ritual, and are connected with the recent changes in national policy towards local cultures and the elderly.

The elderly traditional northern music groups are formed under the rubric of the cultural policy of preserving local wisdom. The Thai state’s officials of public health also make the claim that such groups are useful for improving health. Such pronouncements, of course, are evidence of social change affecting the village communities. In particular, the traditional role of the elderly in the family has been transferred to the school education systems as the latter’s expansion and modernization reach down the village level. The chance of transmitting traditional knowledge to young people has decreased as school education systems dominate and as young people become less and less interested in the traditional culture. So the elderly now need to seek other roles and other

methods of spending time. This is the stereotyped general explanation, and the situation of Tai-Lue society can be explained likewise, but there is still need for more detail in order to fully appreciate the extent of the changes at the local level.

After the Senior Citizens Council of Thailand was established, new activities of the elderly were introduced all over the country, and in Nan province, they prevailed gradually by the latter half of the 1990s. At the same time, a parallel movement for preserving local wisdom via the elderly was also promoted by the National Culture Council. These activities became a new medium for the elderly who were feeling the pangs of separation from the culture of young people and irrelevance vis-à-vis their traditional roles in the community. The groups that were formed were named “elderly” and adopted the guardian spirit ritual as one of their forms of activities alongside more “modern ones” like aerobic dancing and the *petank*.

As all these activities were being played out, the elderly was able to re-establish ties with the young people and transmit the method of playing musical instruments to the latter.¹³⁾ The youth also became attracted to *petank*, so in the *petank* ground, prepared at the temple, the elderly could communicate with their proteges.

The group named “elderly” is related to the act of “performing as a Lue” in the Tai-Lue guardian spirit ritual. The elderly traditional northern music group does not play Tai-Lue music but sings for Tai-Lue spirit. Aerobic dancing also introduced a new way of improving elderly health and they offer the dance to Tai-Lue spirit by counting in Tai-Lue pronunciation.

These are newly invented performances in the ritual as a new culture of the elderly, they are not transmitted from their ancestors. One can say, therefore that the role of the elderly in the ritual has changed from that of “Khon Thao Khon Kae” (a person who has traditional knowledge) to that of “Phu Sung Ayu” (a person over 60 years of age, who can receive welfare services). With the emergence of the age of “Phu Sung Ayu,” the role of the elderly has been reformed by cultural policy and welfare policy by a more active Nation-State.

On the day before the Chao Luang Muang La ritual day in 2002 (which coincided with the King’s birthday), a health festival was held in the space in front of the district office. Many village women groups gathered and performed aerobic dance and an exhibition of “One Tambol One Product” promoted by Prime Minister Thaksin’s policy was also held. In the 2002 and 2005 rituals, the members of Klum Phu Sung Ayu phua Patthana Sukhaparp (The Elderly Group for Improving Health) wore yellow, the color of the King, T-shirts. These social phenomena might be named “welfarization” led by the government and the Royal family.

13) Bamboo craft is also promoted as an activity of the elderly club. This is also useful for the elderly who have bamboo craft skill, and is easier than playing a musical instrument. It may become the most prevalent activity among male elderly.

In this paper, however, I focused on the newly invented activities of the elderly in the ritual which were voluntarily initiated by them not in the top-down style. They have tried to find their own world of activities even in the stream of “welfarization.” They are given a new arena of self-representation and activities, i. e. performing as the Tai-Lue “elderly.” So they are in a sense defined by the state, but they adapt those definitions for their own purposes.

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

WANG Liulan*

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. Descendents 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-

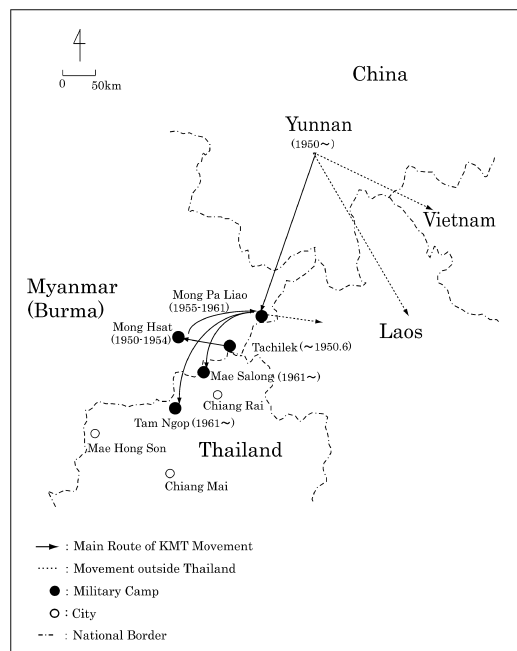


Fig. 1 Migration Route of KMT to Thailand

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

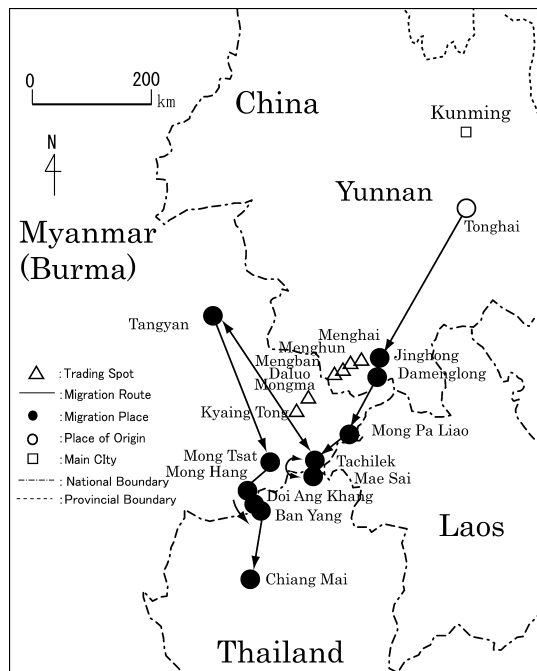


Fig. 2 Mr. Ma's Migration Route

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.

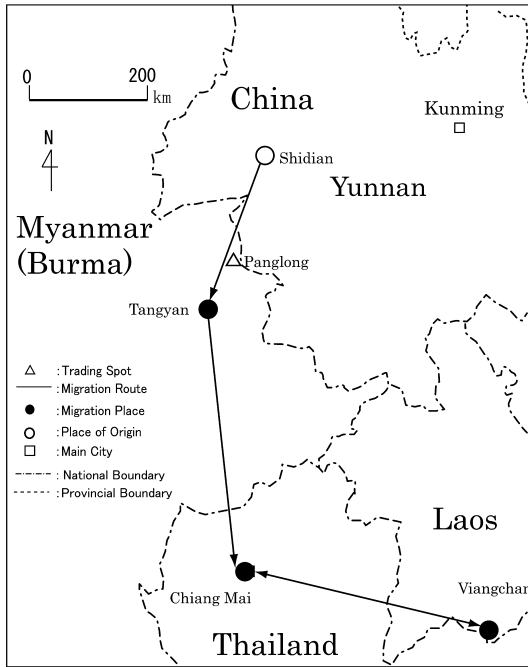


Fig. 3 Mr. Na's Migration Route

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.

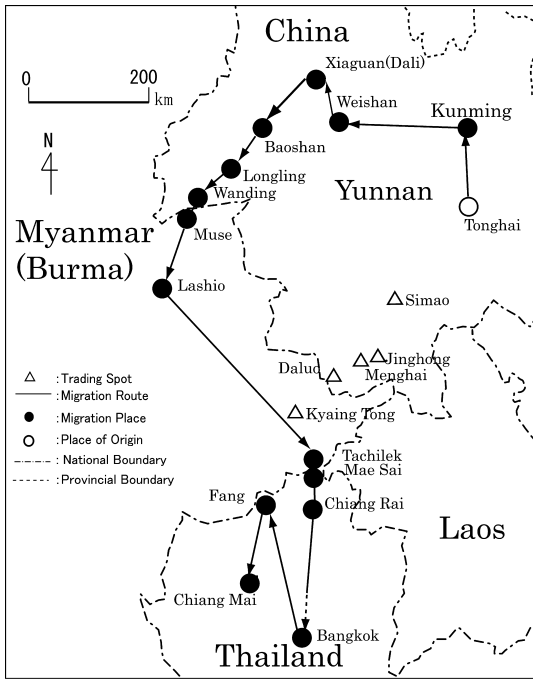


Fig. 4 Mr. Ye's Migration Route

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].

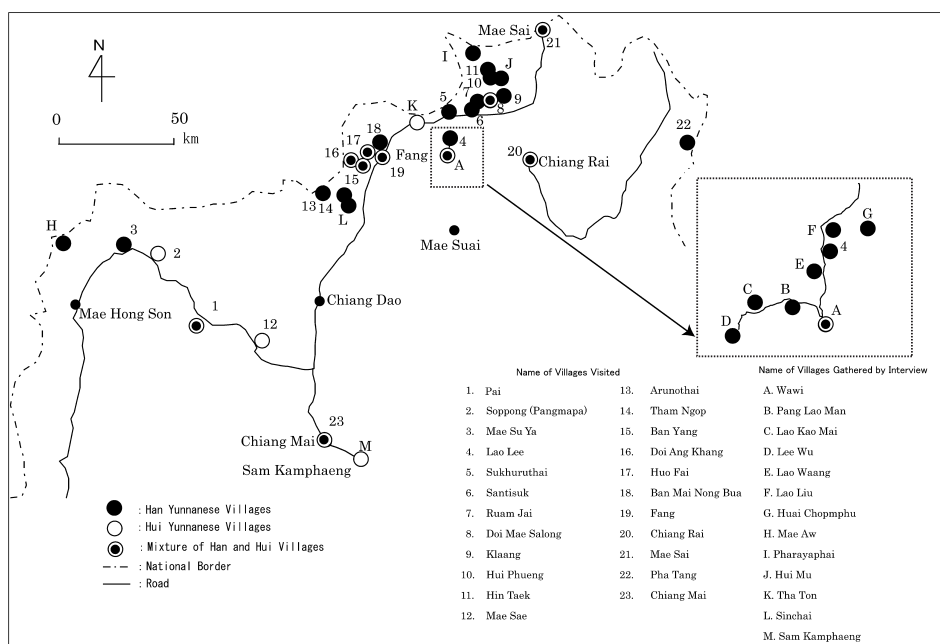


Fig. 5 Distribution of Yunnanese Villages in Northern Thailand

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 [Manndorff 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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The Rise and Fall of the Tribal Research Institute (TRI): “Hill Tribe” Policy and Studies in Thailand*

Kwanchewan BUADAENG**

Abstract

The Tribal Research Center/Institute (TRI) was inaugurated in 1965 and dissolved by the Thai government Bureaucratic Reform Act in 2002. This paper discusses the rise and fall of the TRI by showing that the TRI has come from the need of the Thai government, with the support from foreign agencies, to have an “advisory and training” center to deal with “hill tribe problems,” in the context where few ethnic studies institutes and researchers existed. TRI had actively served its mother organizations by providing them necessary information and recommendation for the monitoring, evaluation and improvement of the government and highland development projects, while its resource center and experts had served academic society for many decades. In 2000s, when “hill tribe problems” have diminished: communist operation stopped, opium cultivation reduced and hill tribes were seemingly well integrated into Thai society, the government no longer needed to maintain its focus on the hill tribes and related organizations. The TRI’s role was terminated without any proper handing over of its human and other resources to the right institute. Unlike 40 years ago, however, now ethnic studies institutes and especially ethnic own organizations and communities have grown up to take care of their problems, arising from government policy and modernization, by carrying out ethnic studies and development by their own.

Keywords: Tribal Research Institute (TRI), Thai government, Northern Thailand, “hill tribe problems,” hill tribes, highland development, ethnic studies

Researchers and students who have studied the “hill tribes” in Northern Thailand over the last four decades have usually known of the Tribal Research Institute (TRI). I still remember going there for the first time in 1987 to look for books and materials in the library. As my M. A. research was on the Karen, I also sought advice from the TRI researchers, each of whom was trained as a specialist of a “tribe.” I met the late Khun Prawit Phothiart, a Karen research specialist, who gave me a non-stop lecture on Karen socio-economic and cultural characteristics for almost three hours. I really admired his vast knowledge and deep understanding concerning Karen. I returned again to give my thesis to the TRI library, to acknowledge the support of the TRI and to enable my thesis

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to be of use to the many researchers who continued to visit. The TRI was located on the grounds of Chiang Mai University and this often led to the misunderstanding that it also belonged to the university. In fact, it came under the auspices of the Ministry of the Interior since it was set up as the Tribal Research Center (TRC) in 1965, and only upgraded to institute level in 1984. In 1993 it was moved into the Ministry for Labour and Social Welfare and then in 2002 it was dissolved, by the Bureaucratic Reform Act.¹⁾

The dissolution of the TRI was done with less notice from the public. Unlike the grand inauguration day on October 21, 1965, when the Deputy Minister of Interior with high-rank foreign and Thai guests joyfully joined the ceremony, the closing day was done quietly but in a hectic way. Chiang Mai University asked TRI officers to move out as quickly as possible so they could start demolishing the TRI buildings to give way to new school buildings. Researchers who still remained had difficulty moving more than 20,000 books, research papers, dissertations, journals, pamphlets and newsletters which were kept in the library. There are also valuable archives which included about 81 reels of 16 mm films, videos, 300 black-and-white photos and more than 2,000 colour photographs and slides [*The Nation* April 13, 2004]. Clearly, there were no plans after the TRI was dissolved for these resources, nor for the researchers with their vast knowledge and life-long experiences of “hill tribe” research. A few researchers asked to be allowed to further work at the Tribal Museum and to continue giving library service. Most researchers however had to be transferred elsewhere to a new job, irrelevant to their past experiences, under yet another ministry, the Ministry for Social Development and Human Security.

The TRI seems to be passé now. But how can it be that an institution of high standing over many decades, is now of no value? After studying conditions pertaining to the rise and fall of the TRC, I would explain that the TRC was created in the specific cold war situation when very few research institutions interested in conducting ethnic studies existed. It was actually the convergence of the need and interest of the three parties, namely the Thai state, foreign funding agencies and foreign academicians, who believed in the “applied research” paradigm. The Thai state with the support from the US had seen the “hill tribes” to be increasing threats or “problems” for Thai society because of their opium cultivation and susceptibility to communist mobilization, so they adopted the TRC as a research and development tool to deal with the “hill tribe problems.” Although the problems of communism and opium cultivation were essentially resolved in the 1980s, the Thai government has continued to make use of the TRI until it is basically sure that the “hill tribes” have been integrated well into Thai society, until the day when they no longer saw any need for research to be conducted specifically on the “hill tribes,” leading to the end of the TRI. Although the TRI had actively played an

1) The 2002 Bureaucratic Reform Act is another attempt to adjust the government structure to reduce the cost, reduce the work redundancy and increase the work efficiency.

academic role, serving as a resource center, giving advice on hill tribe research etc. for many years, this cannot be a strong argument for its continuation because the TRC/TRI was under implementing sectoral agencies, which have no academic mandate, while in the last two decades, ethnic research and development has been increasingly taken care of by many academic and non-governmental ethnic organizations.

This paper discusses conditions which contribute to the rise and fall of the TRC/TRI. By doing so, it will reveal the development of Thai government's evolving policy on the "hill tribes" and the state of ethnic studies in Thailand on which the TRC/TRI depended. I am aware of the negative connotation of the term "hill tribes" for it is often used in connection with the word "problems," thus "hill tribe problems," which blames the "hill tribes" for many large problems that occurred in Thailand in the last half a century. However, the term "hill tribes" is still used in this paper, henceforth without quotation, to refer to specific groups classified and targeted for research and development by the Thai government until the beginning of the 2000s. The paper will first describe the political, administrative and academic context before the emergence of the TRC, then TRC/TRI's subsequent role and its termination 37 years after its inauguration during which time the context of ethnic research and development has dramatically changed.

Hill Tribes Policy and Research before the Emergence of the TRC

In the 1950s, the political situation in Southeast Asia came to a turning point. China's change to a Socialist country and the support its Communist Party gave to many Communist Parties in Southeast Asia, such as Thailand, Vietnam and Myanmar, had caused alarm and concern to the Thai government and the United States. As explained in a 1965 USAID document cited by Wakin [1992: 118],

Thailand is currently of enormous strategic importance in terms of U. S. national interests:

1. Thailand is located in the midst of the all-out struggle between the Free World and Communist Forces in Southeast Asia.
2. Thailand is formally committed to the side of the Free World despite its perilous location.

Within this changing context and with financial support from the US, the Thai government started to pay attention and focus its operation on hill peoples.²⁾ It sets up a "Committee to Give Welfare to People far from Road Access" (*prachachon klai khamana-khom*) in 1951, to oversee hill peoples in remote areas around the frontiers of Northern Thailand [Thailand, Hill Tribe Welfare Division 2002]. The Border Patrol Police (BPP) was

2) It is also at the time that "aid for development" was provided to the "Third World" by US agencies on the assumption, widely accepted in the early 1950s, that "if poor countries were not rescued from their poverty, they would succumb to communism" [Escobar 1995: 34].

created by the CIA in the early 1950s and was later supported by the US Office of Public Safety (OPS) and US Agency for International Development (USAID) in paramilitary, intelligence gathering, development, and other operations [Wakin 1992: 120]. It started operating in the border areas in 1955 to establish schools and distribute some medical and agricultural equipment to the hill peoples. According to Wakin, the BPP carried out the “Remote Area Security” project, which was financially supported by the USAID, aiming at “involving the remote villager in his own development in order to consume his latent energies with constructive activities easily assisted by these tradition-oriented peoples and readily appreciated as evidence of RTG [the Royal Thai Government] concern for their well being” [*loc. cit.*].

The move to focus on hill peoples was also due to the changing policy on opium cultivation and consumption in Thailand. Although, on the international level, the United Nations organized the first meeting on drugs in an attempt to reduce opium cultivation since 1946, the opium ban in Thailand was only enforced in 1958 by General Sarit Thanarat, who came into power by a staged coup d'état. It was not easily banned before that because many high-ranking officials including military and police men had been involved and gained benefit from opium growing, trading and smoking den business.³⁾ The compliance of General Sarit to banning opium is understandable for his military government was receiving a considerable amount of financial and military support from the US.⁴⁾

Although opium was banned, opium poppies were still widely cultivated in remote hill areas by some of the hill peoples. The Ministry of Interior was entrusted with responsibility for abolishing opium cultivation. Thus they created an administrative body to deal directly with the hill peoples [Thailand, Hill Tribe Welfare Division 2002]. The term “hill tribe” would then officially emerge for the first time in 1959 when “Committee to Give Welfare to People far from Road Access” was renamed “Hill Tribe Welfare Committee,” with the Minister of the Interior, was designated its chairman. Then a program on “Settlement areas for Hill Tribe” (*nikhom chao khao*) was set up to contain hill peoples within demarcated areas thereby making it easy for officials to conduct the development and welfare projects to purportedly solve the problem of opium cultivation.⁵⁾ Three years later, in 1962, as this scheme was marching down to failure, a new “Hill

3) For background on opium business and its relation to politics, see McCoy [1972; 1992] and on the specific case of Thailand, see Pasuk and Baker [1995] and Chuphinit [1989: 65], to mention only a few.

4) Pasuk and Baker [1995: 277] report that from 1951 to 1972, total US military assistance amounted to US\$1,147 million. Another US\$92 million were provided in grants through USAID with much of this, after 1965, being funneled into the military effort.

5) Four land settlement pilot projects were established for hill peoples in 1960–63: in Tak Province (Doi Musser); Chiang Mai Province (Doi Chiengdao); Chiang Rai Province (Maechan); and Loei Province (Bhu Lom Low).

Tribe Welfare Division” was set up within the Department of Public Welfare (DPW). Its work was to coordinate other government agencies to work with the hill tribes in a proactive way.

Indeed, in order to be successful in solving the problem of opium cultivation, the Department of Public Welfare, under the Ministry of the Interior, needed to learn more about the situation of the hill tribes. But at that time, only few research institutes and individual researchers conducted research on hill tribes, unlike in Burma where a lot of studies had been done on ethnic groups since the nineteenth century.⁶⁾ The Siam Society which focused its activities on art, science and literature in Thailand and neighbouring countries, established a Research Centre in 1959. One of its research projects during 1960–62 was on the hill tribes of Northern Thailand. Its more important activities included the procurement of dresses, clothing and other artefacts of the material culture of the hill tribes for exhibition purposes. Research was also done on the hunter-gatherer group in Nan Province called “*khon pa*,” or forest people or “*phi tong leung*” or the Spirits of Yellow Leaves. The result was an ethnographic and linguistic report published in the Journal of the Siam Society.⁷⁾

For individual works on hill tribes in Thailand, the first one was done in the 1930s by Prince Sanidh Rangsit, said to be the first Thai professional anthropologist, and by Hugo Bernatzik, whose work *Akha and Meau* was published in 1947 [Hanks *et al.* 1965: v]. Later well known studies on the hill tribes had been conducted by people of various backgrounds who had their own interest in the hill tribes. Examples are Boonchuay [1950; 1962] Young [1961] and Patya [1970]. The first two were not anthropologically trained. Boonchuay was a traveler, writer and a member of Parliament of Chiang Rai who admired the diversity of ethnic groups in Northern Thailand. He also wanted to educate people in other parts of Thailand about this. Young was born in 1927 in a Lahu community in Yunnan, China mission house [1961: I]. His grandfather, William M. Young, was a Baptist missionary who had been working in northeast Burma since 1898. His father was born in Kengtung, Burma and, with others, created the Lahu romanized script in 1925. Young supposedly spoke Lahu fluently and traveled through all mountain ranges of Northern Thailand. After finishing his degree in animal husbandry from the US, he returned to Thailand. With his own curiosity and with the support from the United States Operations Mission to Thailand (USOM)⁸⁾ and various Thai agencies, including the BPP, Young conducted a socio-economic survey of all hill tribes in North-

6) This was because colonial governments took an interest in the peoples under their jurisdiction, and also because foreign anthropologists were motivated to conduct studies in these countries. Examples of such colonial anthropological studies were of the Karen in Burma by Marshall [[1922] 1997], of the Kachin and Shan by Leach [1954], and of the Lamet by Izikowitz [1951].

7) Kraisri Nimmanahaeminda and Hartland-Swann [1964 L (2): 165–186].

8) It was the USAID's Thai office, established in 1954 [Wakin 1992: 118].

ern Thailand in 1960. Patya was an Associate Professor in Social Anthropology at Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok when he was awarded a South-East Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) Fellowship to conduct research on “The Hill Tribes of Northern Thailand” in 1962 [Patya 1970].

It is noted that in early 1960s, foreign funding agencies began to support research on the hill tribes. The Ford Foundation funded the establishment of the Research Centre of the Siam Society while the Asia Foundation supported the research project on the hill tribes of Northern Thailand. The Southeast Asia Treaty Organization’s (SEATO) fellowship programme was established in 1957 as part of SEATO’s cultural programme, and supported Patya Saihoo’s research on the hill tribes. The National Science Foundation of Washington, D. C., supported the Bennington-Cornell Survey of Hill Tribes in North Thailand, which resulted in, for example, Hanks’ work among the Akha [Hanks 1974: 114–127]. Young [1961] received support for his extensive survey from the USOM. His work was possibly in line with the interest of Christian missionaries, many of whom moved to Thailand from Burma, after its independence in 1948, and from China after the political change in 1949. These missionaries worked with the same hill tribes they had worked with in the two countries. For example, the American Baptist Mission moved from Burma and later started their work among the Karen in 1952, while the Overseas Missionary Fellowship began its work among the Hmong and other hill tribes in 1952 after moving in from China [see Patya 1970: 53–55].

There were few professional researchers conducting research which would lead to better understanding of the situation of the hill tribes and more importantly, to give recommendations for implementing additional measures regarding opium cultivation, highland farming systems, and the integration of hill tribes into Thai society. Therefore, the Department of Public Welfare under the Ministry of Interior had initiated a general socio-economic survey during 1961–62 on its own. Financial support for this survey was gained from the Asia Foundation for training the government officials and for the field survey itself; and from the United Nations, which sent an Austrian social anthropologist, Hans Manndorff as an expert to give technical assistance [1967: 533]. The survey covered 18 villages belonging to 4 groups which grew opium: the Hmong, Yao, Lisu and Lahu, in 3 provinces—Chiang Mai, Chiang Rai and Tak.

This was the first comprehensive and systematic survey of the economy and social structure of the hill tribes. It was based on the concepts and approaches of anthropology, a very young discipline in Thailand at that time. Manndorff described the methodology as follows:

The field-survey personnel were grouped into five teams, each consisting of one official from the Department of Public Welfare, one official from the Ministry of Agriculture, and an associate from the Border Patrol Police, who gave medical assistance and was dressed in civilian clothes. The survey teams were stationed in sample villages, usually for a period of from one

to three months, and were constantly advised and guided by the social anthropologist. Great pains were taken in the beginning to establish a friendly relationship with the tribesmen and to gather information in a casual way through “participant observation.” More systematic interviews were started only after a good amount of mutual confidence and amicability had been developed... [*ibid.*: 534]

The survey report was published in 1962 under the title, “Report on the Socio-Economic Survey of the Hill Tribes in Northern Thailand” [Thailand, Department of Public Welfare 1966]. According to Manndorff [1967: 534], “This report has become an authoritative source of information, and its recommendations are used as a basis of the present Hill Tribes Development and Welfare Program of the Ministry of the Interior.” The recommended action program includes (1) intensification and broadening of settlement project activities; (2) [set up] mobile development workers to approach the hill peoples outside the settlement project areas; (3) establishment of a Tribal Research Centre to serve as a permanent advisory institution [*ibid.*: 535]. As the program to relocate hill peoples in some designated settlement areas was not successful, Manndorff [*ibid.*: 536] suggested the use of the settlement areas as experiment and demonstration centers for the promotion of cash crops to replace opium. He also recommended that they should be turned into health, education, and welfare centers that would give services to hill peoples nearby, as well as training centers for mobile development workers assigned in the hill tribe villages. But all this would be successful only if the TRC was set up to serve as research and training center. The location of TRC was suggested to be “preferably in the town of Chiangmai on account of its central location. It could, perhaps, be associated with the University of Chiangmai, which is about to be inaugurated, but should cooperate also with other national universities as well as with the Siam Society in Bangkok.” [*ibid.*: 538]

The Emergence of the TRC

The recommendation to set up the TRC was taken up by the Ministry of Interior which initiated the socio-economic survey. In 1964, the TRC project proposal was approved by the National Economic Development Board and later by the cabinet. Prior to this, the Thai Government approached the South-East Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO), which had its headquarters in Bangkok, for support in setting up the TRC. William Geddes, Professor of the Anthropology Department at the University of Sydney, Australia, was asked by the Australian Government for advice on the organization of the TRC and the planning of research, on the grounds that he was an anthropologist who was knowledgeable about the Hmong. His interest in the Hmong (or “Miao” as he called them) was roused when he visited China in 1956. He subsequently had come to study a Hmong

village in Northern Thailand during 1957–59 [Geddes 1976]. Geddes recalls:

When the request did come before the SEATO Council, the Australian representative offered to consider it as part of the Australian civil aid programme. This may have been partly due to the fact that, when I returned from field-work amongst the Hmong both in 1958 and 1962, I gave addresses to the Siam Society in Bangkok, in which I stressed the need for an adequate understanding of the Hmong socio-economy before the introduction of any measures for social and economic development. [1983: 4]

The way the TRC was formed very much depended on the academic orientation and experiences of its founding advisors. Geddes believed in and had devoted himself to applied research. Hinton describes his background in these terms:

Geddes, a New Zealander... returning from extended fieldwork amongst the Hmong in Thailand, threw himself into the task of running the (Sydney) Department with considerable energy. Geddes was an anthropologist who prided himself on his ethnographic research and was scathing about the pretensions of self-styled theoreticians. He would not have been insulted to have been labeled an empiricist. He became intensely involved with the peoples he studied – the Hmong, the Dyaks and the Fijians. He was, additionally, of the conviction that anthropology should be a humanizing discipline and a vehicle for improving cross-cultural communication. This set him on two courses: first to encourage anthropologists' informants to themselves undertake anthropological training, so as to better convey understanding of their own people; and second, to the view that anthropology is a discipline which can and should be applied to help tackle concrete human problems... Previously, Geddes had been involved in the genesis of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies... [Hinton 2002: 163]

Geddes was responsible for refining Manndorff's plan and laying down the specific characteristics of the TRC. But because preparations for opening the TRC took longer than expected, Geddes's stint as advisor was cut short (October 1964–January 1966). He would return to Australia just after the TRC was officially opened and was succeeded by Peter Hinton, his student, who stayed for four years (1966–69).⁹⁾ Like his teacher, Hinton was also interested in issues of development and applied research. As Cohen put it:

[Hinton's] first major piece of field-based research (fifteen months in 1962 and 1963), for an MA thesis, was much closer to home – at Weipa in Cape York. The thesis is titled “The Prosperous Aborigines: The Industrialisation of a Mission Community in North Queensland” and is a study

9) Peter Hinton worked as full-time adviser for two years, then continued his field work among the Pwo Karen in Mae Sariang District of Mae Hong Son Province for another two years [Hinton 2002: 157].

of the impact of bauxite mining on an Aboriginal mission community. He spent the next two years as a Field Officer in northern Queensland for the Australian Institute for Aboriginal Studies.

.....
Peter's Weipa research, his role as TRC adviser and his research on Karen agriculture reflect his special interest in issues of development and applied anthropology. . . . His research on development issues spilled over to his teaching and he introduced a popular coursework Masters in Applied Anthropology Studies at Sydney University. . . . [2004: 329-330]¹⁰⁾

Although the TRC focuses on applied research, Geddes saw an opportunity to conduct basic research, for there was little done up to that time. He wrote: "There is . . . great scope in the hill tribe areas for research work of a more purely academic kind. I hope that the Thailand government, in the interests of international scholarship, will always be friendly to such work. . . . Indirectly, it will profit by the improvements to anthropological theory which the work should provide" [Geddes 1967: 558]. His plan for hill tribe research, at least in the first two years of the TRC, was to have anthropologists conduct detailed socio-economic studies of each tribe. This model was also derived from his own experience while working on a previous program in Sarawak. According to Hinton [2002: 156],

This program, drawn up by Edmund Leach for the British Colonial Office, was to carry out "intensive socio-economic studies" of the major minority groups of Sarawak to assist policy development in areas ranging from health to forestry. Like the TRC program, it was based on the idea that sound policy could only be devised on the basis of comprehensive ethnographic knowledge of the client peoples. Like the TRC program, various researchers were assigned to study each of the main ethnic groups as identified by Leach. These anthropologists included, amongst others, Derek Freeman (Iban) and Geddes himself (Land Dyaks).

Since there were only two Thai anthropologists in Thailand both of whom were teaching in Bangkok universities,¹¹⁾ Geddes pointed out that "it would be necessary for foreign anthropologists to conduct the studies, but each should be linked to a local national who should first act as field assistant and then be given the opportunity for postgraduate study in anthropology" [Geddes 1976: viii]. Therefore, in the beginning, the TRC staff consisted of five foreign anthropologists studying five tribes, assisted by five Thai research assistants.¹²⁾ The pairings were as follows:

10) Peter Hinton passed away in May 2004. Cohen published an obituary in the *Australian Journal of Anthropology* 15 (3): 329-330 [2004].

11) Dr. Patya Saihoo and Dr. Suthep Sunthornphesath.

12) Nusit Chindasri, Somphob Larchrojna and Sanit Wongprasert were supported to continue their Master's degrees in Anthropology at Sydney University, Australia, while Prasert ↗

- Hmong: William Geddes assisted by Nunit Chindasri
 Mien: Douglas Miles assisted by Chob Khachanan
 Karen: Peter Hinton assisted by Somphob Larchrojna
 Lahu: Anthony Walker assisted by Sanit Wongprasert and
 Lisu: Paul Durrenburger assisted by Prasert Chaiphikusit

The TRC was thus the first official center to coordinate socio-economic studies on each hill tribe. Its staff hoped that the knowledge thus gained would help the Thai Government implement appropriate hill tribe welfare and development programs. Its objectives, which were in place from the beginning of the TRC until the end, were as follows:

- To be a center for the consultation and exchange of ideas and technical knowledge among officers of various agencies working with hill tribes;
- To be a center for socio-economic research on various tribes in North Thailand, in a way which is useful for the government in its implementation of welfare and development activities among hill tribes;
- To be a resource center for the collection of books and materials in relation to the culture of hill tribes in Thailand and in other Southeast Asian countries;
- To be a center for coordination and cooperation between educational institutions and research institutions which are conducting studies on minority problems, both inside and outside Thailand; and
- To be a center for the promotion of understanding between hill tribes and Thai people in general. [TRI 1995: 11]

The funding support in cash and kind from the Thai and western governments through SEATO contributed to the realization of the TRC plan. The Thai government provided the budget for the construction of the TRC building and officials' houses. The Australian, British and United States governments contributed budget via SEATO to hire foreign advisors, buy cars, pick-up, books, tape recorders, and cassettes and equipments for movie production and film processing.¹³⁾

The TRC office was inaugurated on October 21, 1965 in a very grand way, with the

↪ Chaiphikusit received ethnological training in Austria and Chob Khachanan studied ethnology in France. Their theses were ethnographic studies of aspects of hill tribe culture, such as religion, for instance, or health.

13) As presented by Mr. Suwan Ruenyos, Director General of Department of Public Welfare in the TRC inauguration ceremony, TRC offices and houses were built by Thai government budget of 420,000 baht, books and tape recorders supported by the British government costed around 600 pounds, tape cassettes and movie production equipments from the US government costed around 240,000 baht [TRI 1995: 17-18].

Deputy Minister of the Interior acting as Chairman of the inauguration ceremony. Other honorable Thai guests included the Permanent Secretary of the National Development Ministry, the General Secretary of the National Security Council, the Governor of Chiang Mai, the Head of Provincial Government Agencies, and administrators of Chiang Mai University. Guests from foreign agencies ranged from the General Secretary of SEATO, to the ambassadors and representatives of New Zealand, England, the United States, France and Burma. After the opening ceremony came the training, lasting 22 days, of medium ranking regional officers from 13 agencies, on knowledge about hill tribes' livelihood, social structure, culture, problems and problem solving approaches as well as about government policy and hill tribe development and welfare projects, which were carried out by different agencies at that time.

The opening remarks by the Chairman confirmed the importance of the TRC in providing data and information urgently needed for planning the "development" of the hill tribes. He stated:

Because of problems with hill tribes with respect to economic, social, political and governmental matters, the government, concerned about their livelihood, has set up the Hill Tribe Welfare Committee to supervise activities for their welfare and development. Such activities will enable hill people to enjoy occupations, sanitation, education and social welfare, according to government policy. But this will only be achieved if research data is used as a basis for planning. In addition, officials must first be trained in their understanding of hill tribes, so they, in turn, will be able to help the hill tribes to understand the good will of the government. . . [TRI 1995: 21, my own translation]

The General Secretary of SEATO echoed similar observations when he stated:

The Royal Thai Government is to be commended for the efforts it is making to attend to the wants and needs of its minority peoples. . . it is a wise policy, particularly when one considers the bi-polar nature of political developments in the world today. I need not remind you. . . that it is among minority peoples that Communist propagandists and agitators find a fertile field for their subversive activities. Totalitarian Communism hesitates not one moment in seizing upon their legitimate problems and aspirations and twisting them to its own use. . . . It is thus a matter of the utmost importance that steps be taken to isolate and study these problems and aspirations. . . . [*ibid.*: 22]

To sum up, the TRC proposal was adopted by the Ministry of Interior and financially supported by many foreign governments and organizations. Although the TRC structure and research plans, which were suggested by the foreign founders were academically-oriented, and were therefore out of the Ministry's mandate, the TRC proposal was totally adopted. I believe that the Ministry did so for the advisors's ideas sounded

logical and fit with the situation where there was no other research institute to which they could turn to. It is also possible that in that particular period of time, the nature of TRC, which was rather academically-oriented—aiming to be a resource center and a center for coordination and cooperation between educational institutions not only in Thailand but worldwide, as well as to strengthen anthropological discipline in Thailand, was a compromised solution. For the Ministry in that situation, the nature of TRC may not have mattered so much so long as it could contribute to the Ministry's efforts to deal with the "hill tribe problems."

TRC's Role and Affiliation

The role and affiliation of the TRC was in fact questioned even by its own founder since the beginning. The first question is how the TRC, which was academically-oriented, linked with an academic institution like Chiang Mai University (CMU), on whose grounds TRC was located. The TRC is designed to be an advisory and training institution working for the Department of Public Welfare (DPW) but some of its objectives, including the development of a resource center and a center for socio-economic research on various tribes in North Thailand, are academically-oriented. Given this academically-oriented proposal, the cabinet asked the Public Welfare Department to "contact Chiang Mai University to conduct TRC project together since the beginning" [TRI 1995: 10] in its letter of approval. Later, in the Memorandum of Agreement between the Department of Public Welfare and the CMU, the latter agreed to provide space on its campus for the TRC.¹⁴⁾ The CMU also requested that anthropologists who worked with the Center teach in the university. It is noted that CMU was also opened in 1965, the same year when the TRC was inaugurated, so, as I understand, it had to attend to many other priorities in setting up a regional university. At the same time, the interest in the study of the hill tribes, which had only around 220,000 people living scatteredly in remote hill areas, was generally low.¹⁵⁾ Moreover, academic institutes in various parts of Thailand had just been developed after the application of the first National Social and Economic Development plan in 1961. Only a few anthropologists had graduated from abroad and started working with universities in Bangkok. However, there had been the controversial cooperation in a short period between the Faculty of Social Sciences, CMU, and the TRC in the activities

14) It is still not clear to me why the CMU offered the TRC the space inside its campus. It may be possible that this was the concrete way of the cooperation the CMU could give to the DPW. The CMU may also have seen that this would make the academic services of the TRC easily accessible to students and their academic staff.

15) Kunstadter [1967: 297–398] gave an estimated figure of each hill tribe in Thailand by referring to Young [1961], LeBar *et al.* [1964] and his own knowledge.

of the Tribal Data Center (TDC) in 1969, which I will describe below. After that there was no other institutional cooperation between the two organizations in conducting research on hill tribes.

The second question is how the TRC could successfully function as “a permanent advisory and training institution,” when it belonged to just one out of many government agencies working with the hill tribes. Geddes [1967: 578–579] asked how could the TRC freely and easily supply information to other agencies and also receive aid from them in the gathering of information. He was also worried about the TRC's low-rank status as a section of the Hill Tribes Division, which was then a subsidiary of the Bureau of Land Settlement. The TRC staff would thus belong to “relatively low grade” ranks, and thus create some human resource problems because qualified persons may not want to work with the Centre permanently.

The third problem arose from the objective of the Center “to evaluate continuously the hill tribe projects conducted by both the government and private organizations.” If the TRC was a section of the DPW, how could it evaluate the DPW, which was its own department? Neither would it be easy to offer evaluations of the projects of other departments. For the TRC to perform this role, Geddes favoured its attachment to the university. Yet even this attachment bothered him; he feared that the TRC might still be unable to “exercise considerable influence on government activities” because, he thought, “In Thailand at the present time the universities do not have the same degree of prestige as is often accorded to them in Western countries.” To overcome this problem, Geddes suggested that, “in drawing up conditions for a university attachment, provision could be made for a definite relationship of the Centre to government agencies working with hill tribes” [*ibid.*: 579–580].

The last question which was raised by Geddes was related to the role of TRC researchers, whether they should assume the role of pure academics who supplied information to all who needed it, or the role of government officers who used academic work purely to obtain information that would be useful for government purposes. A more important question is who would the researchers represent, the tribal peoples or the government. Geddes' concept of the role of the advanced researcher, which was rejected by some government officials, was reflected in his writing:

During my stay at the Centre, and I believe subsequently, members of the staff were encouraged to regard their role as one of representing the tribes people to the Government rather than the Government to the people. They did not engage in the promotion of developmental measures, which was the province of other sections of the Hill Tribes Division of the Department of Public Welfare. The lack of a positive involvement in planning by the Centre later brought criticism from some Thai authorities [in his footnote, he refers to a paper on “Overcoming the Problems of the Hill Tribes,” by Krachang Bhanthumnavin published in *Spectrum*, Vol. I, No. 1, October 1972, by SEATO in Bangkok] but it did serve the purpose, in circles where its reports were read

or its voice listened to, of attuning policy to the tribes' desires, and in the political troubles which came later to the tribal areas there were no instances of conflict between the people and members of the Centre. [1976: vii]

These questions had remained unsolved throughout the TRC/TRI's life but as an organization under the implementing agencies, first the Ministry of Interior (1965–92) and then the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare (1992–2002), it had the commitment to serve its mother organizations' mandate, which was set up in response to the government policy on the hill tribes. As the government policy evolved, the TRI's role had been continuously adjusted, as reflected in its changing research focus, in the following three phases, which are divided and described by the TRI in its publication of the 30 years anniversary [1995: 5].

Phase I: (1965–71)

- The study of hill tribe communities according to each tribe, along socio-economic and anthropological lines
- The survey and study of particular topics

Phase II: (1972–83)

- The study of agriculture and land use
- The study of particular topics as requested by other agencies, namely the Royal Project, the Royal Forestry Department, Chiang Mai Provincial Administration, USAID, FAO

Phase III: (1984–present [1995])

- Action research, searching for factors which contribute to the success of a project
- Cooperation with ORSTOM (1989–92) to develop human resources and research projects
- The study of particular topics in response to state policy, such as on HIV/AIDS, prostitution and labour.

I will here further describe the focus of each phase in responding to the changing policy and administration. In phase I, with the guidance from anthropologist advisors, basic anthropological research was carried out on each tribe in several topics in order to gain in-depth understanding on the people's livelihood, culture and attitudes for the design of appropriate government measures. Examples of research works conducted by foreign researchers who either associated or cooperated with the TRI can be found in Keyes [1979], and McKinnon and Wanat [1983]. But the work of foreign advisors in this phase was interrupted by a significant event called the "Thailand Controversy," which occurred in 1970, in the United States, when some American anthropologists who received financial support from the US Department of Defense's counterinsurgency research program, were criticized and later investigated by the American

Anthropological Association Executive Board on ethical issues [Wakin 1992: 8]. This “Thailand Controversy” later covered the account of the TRC, which was accused of being a SEATO-centre whose work was to give information to the military to suppress the hill tribes.¹⁶⁾ Geddes [1983] and Hinton [2002], the first two TRC advisors, explained that the TRC was not related to military operations and SEATO “only provided the channels through which unilateral aid from Australia, New Zealand, Britain, and America passed” [Wakin 1992: 192]. However, as reported by Wakin [*ibid.*: 193–194], there was also another complicating event in relation to the Tribal Data Center (TDC), which was set up by the Department of Defense’s Advanced Research Projects Agency (ARPA), to develop systems of data collection, processing, and publishing concerning tribal people of Northern Thailand and nearby areas. ARPA had approached Hinton, then the TRC advisor, many times seeking closer “coordination” in the carrying out of the project, but was not successful at that time. ARPA then went to the Dean of Social Sciences at Chiang Mai University and created the Lanna Thai Research Center as a joint ARPA–Faculty of Social Sciences operation. In late 1969, the TRC accepted to cooperate with the Faculty of Social Sciences in ARPA-financed TDC. Oughton, the then TRC agricultural advisor was quoted by Wakin [1992: 198], explaining that there was no reason to refuse the involvement in the gathering of information “in an honest and open way” for information can be used by both sides: those who were involved in subversive activities and those who designed measures to counter insurgency.

The Thailand Controversy around the issue of TRC not only had an impact among academic society in Australia but also in Chiang Mai.¹⁷⁾ In 1973, a group of Chiang Mai University lecturers and students protested in front of the TRC, accusing that it was employed by the US [Prasit and Panadda 2005: 218]. As written by Chantaboon [1995: 104], the “Thailand Controversy” had discouraged American Anthropologists from working with TRC on the hill tribes. He cited examples of an American anthropologist who, for fear of accusation, had to take his book which was formerly donated to the TRC library back, another one had to stop his teaching work at a university and returned home before the end of the term. In effect, after Phase I, the TRC had ceased to have anthropological advisors. Many foreign experts subsequently worked at the TRC on various projects, but they were agriculturalists or geographers or from other disciplines whose work focused

16) Issues of Tribal Research Center’s function were reported in Wolf and Jorgensen’s article [1970], sparking Thailand Controversy in Australia.

17) Accounts on the “Thailand Controversy” especially its impact in Australian academic society are comprehensively written by Hinton [2002] and Robinson [2004], emphasizing actors in the University of Sydney department of anthropology in the 1970s. Both discuss ethical issues in research conduct. Hinton, however, points out the importance of doing an anthropology of anthropologists, for the characteristics of each anthropologist greatly influences the way he/she acts.

on highland development.¹⁸⁾

In phase II, the government stressed the national integration policy, which aimed to change the hill tribes, seen as “non-Thai” because of their different culture and religion, to become “Thai,” mainly by opening more schools in the highlands so that young people could learn the Thai language, culture, and history of Thai nation etc. to instill the sense of being citizens of Thailand. Dhammacharik Buddhist program, which was set up in 1965 and supported by the DPW had also worked in the highlands to engage in development activities while persuading hill tribes to become Buddhist.¹⁹⁾ Around the end of this phase, many foreign governments and donor agencies initiated highland development projects in order to introduce alternative crops to replace opium. TRC researchers had thus moved from basic research to applied research, helping various agencies and projects to collect base-line, socio-economic data, and proposing appropriate policy recommendations to agencies and projects that were implementing activities among the hill tribes. Examples of research topics done in this phase are “Cooperation of Hill Tribes in Family Planning” [Wanat 1986], “Handbook for Working with the Musur” [Supchai 1984], and “Taboos and Popular Practices among the Lisu” [Prasert 1986].

In the year 1984, which was the start of Phase III, government armed forces started to launch opium suppression by cutting opium plants in many opium fields in the highlands. They continued the activity every year which led to the dramatic reduction of opium cultivation area because hill farmers were forced to change to other crops to earn their living. Many joint Thai and foreign highland development projects had started to operate their integrated rural development in the highlands to extend new crops and introduce social development activities. For many projects, field workers were staff of the DPW’s hill tribe development and welfare centers, which had many hill tribe development and welfare field units in the highlands. The TRC research staff played significant role in field staff training, and monitoring and conducting applied research for these highland development projects. With this expansion in the scope of work, the TRC was upgraded to the Tribal Research Institute—the same status as a Division under the Department of Public Welfare.

In the early 1990s, most highland development projects terminated their operation towards their utmost goal, which was to reduce opium cultivation area and to provide alternatives to opium. These goals had seemingly been achieved. Without the projects, hill tribe development and welfare staff stationed in field units had little activities to accomplish and lost justification to stay on in the highlands. The TRI’s roles which were to assist development projects and to work with those units in the field were reduced. As

18) For example, Garry A. Oughton, an agriculturalist from Australia; F. G. B. Keen, and John M. McKinnon, both are geographers from New Zealand.

19) Details of Dhammacharik Buddhist missionary program can be seen in my own book [Kwanchewan 2003] and Hayami [1999; 2004].

hill tribe problems in relation to opium cultivation were principally solved and communist operation had stopped since the 1980s, the “hill tribe problems” which remained in the eyes of the government was their socio-economic disadvantages. Thus when the reform of bureaucratic system took place in 1993, the TRI was transferred, together with its mother organization, the Department of Public Welfare, to a new ministry—the Ministry for Labour and Social Welfare. The hill tribes were to be seen as one among many groups of disadvantaged people, whose labour skills had to be developed and social welfare given in order to put them in a more advantageous position. Under the new ministry, the TRI researchers continued their research on hill tribes, looking at social problems and finding the way to improve the labour skills and social welfare. Thus, research topics in this period included drug abuse, HIV/AIDS and commercial sex work, which was increasingly prevalent among the hill tribes, as well as an assessment of state mechanism such as Village Welfare Centers, which were set up to deal with these problems.²⁰⁾

To sum up: TRI's role had changed from that of conducting basic research among each tribe to applied research to assist the national integration policy. Although the main “hill tribe problems”: the opium cultivation and communist expansion had declined, the TRI had been further used, with the continuation of foreign support in forms of Thai and international joint highland development projects, to make sure that the hill tribes were fully integrated. In 1990s, when the problems were no longer seen in terms of national security, the Department of Public Welfare, which was in the past dealing intensively with hill tribes, together with the TRI, was moved to be under the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare to focus on the hill tribe as a disadvantaged group. The TRI's academic component, development of resource center and dissemination, was less supported by its mother organization although not totally rejected.

TRI and the Trend in Ethnic Studies and Development

The TRC was set up during the time when few institutions and individuals took up research on hill tribes. But as time went by, as I will mention in detail below, many research institutions have been set up, either attached to universities or independently, and expanding their scope of work on ethnic studies and development. Ethnic organizations and communities have also conducted their own research to serve their own development activities. As an institute which was set up to serve the government's policy and implementation, TRI's role and achievement were different from those of

20) Research topics in this phase are for example, “Transmission of HIV/AIDs in Pang Pob Area of Chiang Kham, Phayao” [Niphatwet 1996], “Culture and and Drug Abuse: Case Study of the Meo” [Songwit 1998], “Hill Tribe Community and the Tambon Administrative Office: Case Study of Villages under the Royal Project” [Uraiwan *et al.* 2001], and “Village Welfare Center: Case Study of Learning Process Initiation in Hill Tribe Village” [Itsak 1996].

other academic institutions and ethnic organizations. These can be described in two main areas, namely in the construction of the hill tribes discourse and in research and development, as follows.

1. *Constructing the Discourse on the “Hill Tribes”*

Before the official term of “hill tribes” was used, different terms were used to refer to groups of people who live in the hills of Northern Thailand, and who usually have cultures that were different from the lowland Thai people. Boonchuay [1950; 1962] used the term *chon chat* or nationality and *chat* or nation to refer to many ethnic groups including some hill groups, which are later defined as hill tribes. Sometimes the term “hill tribes” were used without clear definition as to exactly which groups the writer was referring to. Boonchuay’s book on *Hill Tribes in Thailand* also includes the Sakai, the hunter-gatherer group usually found in the forest areas in the South of Thailand. The research project on Hill Tribes of Thailand of the Siam Society in 1960–62 also covered the Mlabri which was not in the later official list of hill tribes. When the “Hill Tribe Welfare Committee” was set up in 1959, the official definition of hill tribes was designed to include only nine hill groups, which were Karen, Hmong, Lahu, Akha, Thin, Khamu, Lisu, Mien and Lua. These nine groups were portrayed in a negative way since the beginning such as that found in the report of the first Socio-Economic Survey of the Hill Tribes in Northern Thailand, conducted by the Thai government, under the supervision of foreign anthropologists.

According to this report [Mannndorff 1967: 534], two points were always repeated: that the hill tribes were people who were a problem to Thailand, and by nature were totally different from Thai lowlanders and from each other. According to the report:

These tribesmen differ considerably from the Thai population in their ethnic, linguistic and cultural characteristics. . . . The hill tribes present a many-sided problem to the Thai government, on general grounds of public policy and welfare. [*ibid.*: 1]

The Thai, as a typical lowland population, have never exhibited any particular interest in settling in or developing the mountains through their 800 years of history in this country. As a consequence, the mountains have lain open to the immigration of peoples who differ considerably in their ethnic and cultural characteristics from the Thai lowland population. [*ibid.*: 4]

. . . there are those tribes who have come into Thailand rather recently, like the Meo and Yao, the Lisu, Lahu and Akha. They definitely do not show any characteristic trend to assimilate with the Thai people or with other tribes, nor are they inclined to move from their mountain areas to lower regions. [*ibid.*: 13]

Slash and burn agriculture is the economic foundation of hill tribes under discussion. . . . Evidently many of the problems which the hill tribes cause in this country—such as destruction of forests, opium growing, border insecurity, difficulties of administration and control—are to

some extent connected with this very fact. [*ibid.*: 14]

The term “hill tribes problems,” which was used to refer to the problems caused by the hill tribes namely insurgency operation, opium growing and trading, and forest destruction, had become an official discourse as it had been widely used in text books, newspaper and official reports and documents.

The TRC/TRI's research and development work focusing on only nine tribes, and not some other groups which also live in the highlands of Northern Thailand such as the Yunnanese, the Shan etc., had confirmed the definition of hill tribes as those who were deemed to have problems and thus needed more government attention and intervention.

Although a few researchers, working closely with one or two hill tribes, expressed their appreciation of hill tribe culture and tried to correct the misunderstandings or wrong images of the hill tribes in their writings, especially in the TRI newsletter, still the main focus of the TRI research was to find out hill tribes problems and alternatives for the development projects. As a government research agency, the TRI seems to represent the government towards the hill tribe peoples, instead of the reverse as was the original wish of Geddes, the TRC first advisor and founder. Prasit and Panadda [2005: 216] cited examples of terms with bad connotations on the hill tribes and their practices such as *rai luan loi* or shifting cultivation, *kan nab thue phi* or spirit worshipping. These terms were continuously used by the TRI amidst the criticism from highland ethnic organizations and communities, which, especially from the 1990s onward, began to use other terms to imply a non-biased understanding on their practices such as *rai mun wien* or rotational cultivation or *rabob kwam chue* or belief system. Also, the TRI was reluctant to officially change the terms they used to call hill tribes, which were often perceived as derogatory by the people designated, to autonyms or terms used by hill peoples to call themselves. For example, they continued to use the terms Meo, Musur, Ikaw instead of Hmong, Lahu and Akha, respectively, which are increasingly used by academic and ethnic organizations and communities and the media.

2. Research and Development

The socio-economic report recommended, among other things, that the Thai Government make a decision on the legal position of tribal communities and on the proper land tenure to be granted to them. It is now 40 years since this recommendation was made, and requests by many hill communities for Thai citizenship and for land use rights have continued, but to no avail. It is not clear how far the TRI was influential at policy level. Also, it may be because the TRI research had not been seriously developed to help tribal villagers solve their problems, which were consequences of the government policy and the modernization. This is not to deny that toward the end of the TRI's existence, a few individual researchers at TRI had started to work closely with ethnic NGOs and ethnic communities, and often criticized government policy in their writings. Chuphinit [1989],

for instance, showed that the government policy on opium reduction led to the wide-spreading use of heroin which had worse impact on hill tribes and general Thai society. He also claimed that the relocation policy was doomed to failure and would only cause more problems because new land allocated was often too small and not suitable for cultivation. People had to move on to work as unskilled labourers in the city, get less return and become poorer than before [Chuphinit 1996]. Somphob [1995] always argued for the right of Karen to live in Thung Yai Naresuan National Park, in the west of Thailand, amid plans to relocate them. Thawit *et al.* [1997] reported the trend of urban migration among the hill tribes, which was a result of the government's restriction on forest land use and the increasing need for cash. In a new urban environment, hill tribes faced new problems, yet tried to adapt their way of life.

As I see it, the success of the TRI was not in conducting applied research to make an impact on ethnic communities or on policy, but in giving academic advice and service to scholars (students, researchers, lecturers etc.) and other people with general interest such as tourists. In the early period up to the 1980s, scholars who came to consult the TRC/TRI and used its library were more foreigners than the Thai. During that time graduate schools on social sciences where students would conduct research on ethnic communities or ethnic issues, had not yet opened in Thailand. During 1965–95, the TRI listed 93 foreign scholars who conducted research in hill tribe communities in cooperation with the TRI. These scholars produced valuable reports, dissertations and books on the hill tribes of Northern Thailand, and later on the hill tribes of other countries of the Mekong region as well. Their books and reports were kept at the TRI library for further studies. There is no record of how many Thai scholars used the Institute's library and consulted with the TRI researchers. But as graduate schools have been opened in Chiang Mai University and in other universities in Northern Thailand, more students and researchers conducting research on the hill tribes have come to the center for consultation with the researchers who were experts on a specific tribe. Some TRI researchers also served as committee members for master's thesis examination. Other important clients of the TRC/TRI were foreign tourists, who came to visit the Tribal Museum, to look at the library and to ask for basic information such as the number of hill tribes divided into each group in each location. TRI researchers also sometimes helped organize study trips to visit hill communities or coordinated with DPW's local officers to arrange such trips.

All in all, the TRI had functioned as the government's tool to conduct applied research for the government's development of appropriate measures to deal with "the hill tribe problems." The government's development process, however, had had a positive effects for it gave the tools (i.e. formal education, knowledge from training etc.), and facility (i.e. modern transportation, communication etc.) to ethnic communities to connect with each other and to organize themselves to represent their own interest. From the 1990s onward, many Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), large and small, were set up by ethnic peoples themselves to deal with their real problems. Some NGOs have

represented the interest of all hill tribes, some only a specific tribe.²¹⁾ Some focus on specific issues such as natural resource management, health, education, and culture. Some of them also conduct applied research, publish the result and disseminate the result by writing, organizing seminars etc. They usually argue against the discourse on “hill tribes problems,” asserting that many factors cause problems of opium cultivation and deforestation. They point out that demands from opium users, involvement of some bad authorities in drug trade, logging business, to mention only a few factors, have also to be blamed. The government policy which has proclaimed the protected forest area on the hill communities’ settlement and arable land has to be changed for it seriously affects highland people’s livelihood. At the same time, knowledge on forest and ecology and the value of their culture are explained by these organizations to correct misunderstandings on hill tribe livelihood and culture.

In the last two to three decades, many social science research institutions attached to universities and graduate schools have been set up. To mention a few important ones: the Language and Culture for Rural Development Research Institute of Mahidol University in Bangkok which was set up since 1974 has played an important role in researching ethnic culture especially language and music; the Sirindhorn Anthropology Center, a young institution, has played a great role especially since the early 2000s, in conducting ethnic research, building up database of bibliography on ethnic studies and ethnic media and annually organizing anthropology meetings, in which ethnic issues are an important part. Looking only at Chiang Mai University: graduate study programs on human and environmental management, non-formal education, gender studies and social development have been opened, and each year many graduate students conduct their research in ethnic communities or choose ethnicity-related issues as theses topics. As a result of government’s extension of formal education to the hill tribes, young ethnic people have increasingly studied in colleges and higher degrees and return to conduct research in their own communities. The Social Research Institute, formerly the Lanna Thai Research Center mentioned earlier, has also Ethnic Studies and Development Research Group within it, to which I belong. Besides, the Regional Center for Social Sciences and Sustainable Development of the Faculty of Social Sciences also opened an international graduate course where some students select ethnic issues as their research topics. These graduate students and researchers, especially those from Chiang Mai and the North, had

21) In Chiang Mai, the Inter-Mountain Peoples Education and Culture of Thailand (IMPECT) seems to be the biggest ethnic organization in terms of number of staff, scope of activities and budget. Set up in 1980s, it started working with various hill tribe communities and later also joined some regional organizations and networks working with tribal communities in Greater Mekhong subregion (Myanmar, Thailand, Yunnan Province of China, Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia) and elsewhere. It links with many other international non-governmental organizations and helps organizing many international forum to empower ethnic communities.

come to visit TRI and asked for advice and cooperation to do research. The TRI researchers were largely acknowledged for their vast knowledge on socio-economic and cultural aspects of the tribes on which they had expertise. But, except for a few researchers who worked closely with non-government ethnic organizations and social science academicians, most researchers were generally seen as government research officials, those defending government's policy and doing research according to the assignment of their mother organization.

For other researchers in ethnic organizations and in academic institutions, Chiang Mai University in particular, the current and increasing trend in the approach to ethnic studies is to go beyond the role of advanced researcher, the term put forward by Geddes above, that is, not just to represent the people but to facilitate, encourage and empower ethnic people and communities to conduct their own research, to disseminate the result, and push for policy alternatives. This trend has for some time been facilitated by the Thailand Research Fund's local office in Chiang Mai, which will give funding to any project only if it shows that local communities are involved in a way that benefit them. Also, recent research goes beyond the study of a community or a tribe but focuses on ethnic relations and comparison across locations and nations.

In 2002, in contrast to the atmosphere of the grand opening in 1965, the termination of TRI was accomplished quietly with less public notice and was a sad event for TRI researchers. Chiang Mai University, which has no institutional cooperative work with the TRI, wanted to demolish the TRI office as quickly as possible to gain space for a new faculty building. Some TRI researchers took it upon themselves to move books and other research materials partly to the Tribal Museum in the Rama IX Lanna Park, and partly to the DPW's hostel for disadvantaged boys, both in Chiang Mai. A few researchers have asked not to be moved to work in other provinces but to remain working at the Museum until their retirement. As the TRI had less cooperation with other research institutes and non-governmental ethnic organizations and communities, unsurprisingly its dissolution did not draw any outcry from other organizations or communities in Thailand.

The TRI's task to focus its research and development on the hill tribes to assist the government to solve "hill tribe problems" seemed to come to an end for the problems had been fundamentally solved with the hill tribes being integrated into Thai society. Reasons for its termination may be well explained by an official's words: "there is no need for further study on the 'hill tribes' as they are now considered to have become Thai; thus '*chao khao*', the term for 'hill tribes' which can be translated as 'other people', becomes '*chao rao*' or 'our people'" [*The Nation* April 13, 2004].

Conclusion

In this paper, I have shown that the rise of the TRI has come from the need of the Thai

government, with the support from foreign agencies, to set up a research center to deal with “hill tribes problems,” in the context where few Thai research institutes and individual researchers were interested in ethnic studies. Although some problems have diminished, after the CPT collapsed in 1982 and opium cultivation was largely reduced in 1984, still some “hill tribe problems” remained such as the forest destruction and the poor livelihood conditions. The TRC still found its role in assisting in the research and development of many joint Thai and international highland development projects which had operated among hill tribes in northern highlands during 1980s–90s. Thus its status was upgraded to the division level in 1984. When most international highland development projects had left in the 1990s and the implementation of the national integration policy was seemingly achieved, “hill tribe problems” were reduced to just the problem of being disadvantaged. Therefore, with the bureaucratic reform in 1993, the TRI was moved to the Ministry for Labour and Social Welfare, and researchers have supported the development of hill tribes to be skilled labourers and to gain social welfare. In 2002, when the government was confident that hill tribe peoples were well integrated into Thai society just like other Thai peoples, there was no need to focus their research and development on the hill tribes as a specific category. TRI was thus dissolved and together with it the Division of Hill Tribe Welfare, and its Hill Tribe Development and Welfare Units, thus erasing all the word “hill tribe” which had been in the directory of government agencies for many decades.

I have also shown that the TRC academic-oriented structure and research plan resulted from the founders’ belief and ideas of “applied research.” The TRC had served its mother organizations by providing them necessary information for the monitoring, evaluation and improvement of the government and highland development projects while its resource center including the museum, and library had served academic society and other interested people and groups for many decades. It seems to be natural for an institute to be created and dissolved by its mother organization when its goal was seen as achieved. But for researchers who are interested in ethnic studies, like myself, the end of TRI without the handing over of resource materials and experts, who have experienced working with hill tribes for many decades, to be further used at the right place is a great waste. The contradiction between its academic role and its affiliation with an implementing agency had existed since the beginning of its set up but nothing can be done for there was a rigid line demarcating between agencies of different Department/Ministry, making it difficult if not impossible to move, share and integrate human and other resources across a department.

But looking at the trend of ethnic research and development, I found that “hill tribe” category which was created by the government and confirmed by the TRC/TRI cannot easily be erased. Ethnic and research organizations and communities are on the rise to study the hill tribes, or new terms as they now call them “highlanders/highland ethnic groups/ethnic groups,” on its history, culture, local knowledge and identity. The “hill

tribe problems” may have diminished and “hill tribes” are no longer targeted as a distinctive category, but problems of hill tribes, arising from new environment and government policy, still exist. The research and development task carried out by hill tribe organizations and communities is now aimed for solving their own problems although with limited support from the government and foreign funding organizations, unlike the TRC when it was set up 40 years ago.

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Negotiating Ethnic Representation between Self and Other: The Case of Karen and Eco-tourism in Thailand*

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Abstract

Since the late 1980s, the hill dwelling minority in Thailand have gained visibility amid social movements concerning environmental conservation, community forest rights, and the appeal for citizenship. In this process they have gained a stage and a voice to represent themselves to a considerable degree. The discourse and representation pertaining to the hill-dwellers are becoming an arena of negotiation, where the hill-dwellers themselves are active participants. In this paper, I examine the layers of discourse regarding the Karen which has evolved within the changing socio-political context. Participants in the discourse adopt varied elements of the existing layers of discourse by travelers, missionaries, academics, administrators and NGOs which have all contributed to the stereotype of the Karen as the meek and submissive hill-dwellers. In the latter half of the paper, I take up a case of a recent eco-tourism venture in Chiang Mai Province, and analyze how villagers whose existence has been precarious for decades due to its position on the edge of a National Park have chosen to represent themselves in the venture. Eco-tourism especially provides a pertinent arena for the negotiation of such self/other representation.

Keywords: Eco-tourism, Northern Thailand, Karen, identity negotiation, ethnic representation

"[treating a whole range of other cultural elements as if they were co-variant with language in defining ethnic classification] gives weight to ways of perceiving the highlanders which have far-reaching political, social, and economic consequences: it cannot be dismissed as being merely an academic peccadillo. The social realities of the highlands are far more subtle, complex, and fluid than an ethnic classifier could ever conceive." [Hinton 1983: 158, 166]

With respect and appreciation for his lifetime of work especially in Northern Thailand, I begin this paper by reflecting on the work of the late Peter Hinton. Hinton points out that in Burma,¹⁾ tribalist notions of minorities and inaccurate description of facts regard-

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1) Throughout this paper, I will use "Burma" rather than "Myanmar," since I am referring to the evolving context of ethnic representation since colonial times.

ing them have paradoxically made real those very facts. The result was the longstanding conflict and tragedy after independence. Hinton claims that Thailand did not experience such conflicts partly for demographic reasons where the hill-dwellers are far smaller in proportion, and, because the modernist European ideas of societies and cultures had less of an impact. In his understanding, in Thailand, pre-existing “tacit understanding” between “the central power and the people of the periphery largely remains, despite the efforts in the past by various Europeans (myself included) to impose a tribal model on approaches to administration” [1983: 167 parenthesis by Hinton].

During the quarter of century since the time he wrote the above quote, Thailand has undergone significant changes. Perhaps we are now in a better position to look back at the changing contexts of ethnic characterization. Hinton’s words now lead us to look at the current state of “ethnic cultures” in Thailand in a new light.

It was at the time when Hinton began his research in the Northern Thai hills in the early 1960s that the position of the hill people became problematized, including the “tacit understanding” suggested in Hinton’s words above. As Pinkaew points out, the tacit recognition of the pre-modern state’s hill/valley distinction, which enabled the mountain minorities to come to terms with the powerful valley-dwellers in asymmetrical reciprocal relationships, was absent in the term *chaw khaw* (hill tribes) which came to official use in 1959 [Pinkaew 2001: 44–46]. Ethnic identification became politicized, due to the politicization of space, in which the notion of the bounded territorial nation-state and supposed cultural homogeneity within the territory problematized the border-dwelling hill minorities. The political implications of ethnic categories and representations may not have led to armed struggle in Thailand as they did in Burma, yet they have been no less profound in their effects.

Throughout this process, in spite of Hinton’s questioning of a cultural and ethnic entity called “Karen” and his profound critique of the tribalist notion of ethnicity, the layering of discourse on the Karen and their ethnic attributes has seen no end. Both in Burma and Thailand, the layering of discourse on the minorities as “others” has been ongoing for over two centuries of evolving political situation, from the kingdoms to the modernizing nation state and towards globalization. In the process, tribalist notion of ethnicity and stereotypical characterizations have evolved in correspondence with the political situation.

In Thailand, recent changes in the positioning of the “hill tribes” have been accompanied by significant changes in cultural understanding and representation of these hill tribe “others,” and in the ways in which the “others” themselves participate in this discourse. Since the late 1980s, hill-dwellers have gained visibility amid social movements surrounding dam construction, environmental conservation, community forest rights, and the appeal for citizenship. In this process they have gained a stage and a voice to represent themselves to a considerable degree. The discourse and representation pertaining to the hill-dwellers are becoming an arena of negotiation, where the hill-

dwellers themselves are active participants. Here, we see that all participants in the discourse adopt varied elements of the existing layers of discourse that have been built up over the centuries. The discourse on “Karen Consensus” which I discuss below is a case in point. For the marginalized in a hegemonic state, the only way to talk back effectively has been to take up the discourse of the dominant, and by doing so, the marginalized have increasingly found space for negotiation.

There have been layers of discourse regarding the Karen, which have evolved along with the changing socio-political context in Burma and Thailand. Whether in a positive light as the pre-modern nature-loving Karen of the forest, or, in a negative light as the closed and backward people who are slow to take up any opportunity given by development agencies, the layers of discourse by travelers, missionaries, academics, administrators and NGOs have contributed to the stereotype of the Karen as the meek and submissive hill-dwellers.

With such attributes, forest-dwelling Karen have become desirable targets of eco-tourism in Thailand, where urbanite tourists seek the romance of alternative life in the hill forests. Eco-tourism especially provides a pertinent arena for the negotiation of self/other representation, where certain aspects of their “culture as practice” have been consumed by the lowland and foreign outsiders, written up as Karen culture, then re-adopted as “culture as spectacle” by others, and then, by Karen themselves [Acciaioli 1985].

In the first part of the paper, I pursue the evolving discourse on the Karen, from Karen (*yaang*) as forest people (*chaw paa*) to Karen (*Kariang*) as hill tribe (*chaw khaw*), then to Karen (*pga k'nyau*) as indigenous people. In the latter half of the paper, I take up a case of a recent eco-tourism venture in Chiang Mai Province, and analyze how villagers whose existence has been precarious for decades due to its position on the edge of a National Park since 1972, have chosen to represent themselves in the venture.²⁾ Within evolving inter-ethnic relationships and state involvement with the cultures of “others,” existing layers of discourse have affected the ways in which Karen choose to represent themselves in a pressured situation.

The diversity in Karen modes of livelihood, economic conditions and ecological situation denies any monolithic definition, yet the Karen communities in all their individuality, are finding paths to make statements of their own through idioms borrowed from the mainstream discourse. Now that the Karen villages are participating in this ongoing formation of discourse, we should go back to the villages from where people

2) This ethnographic part of the paper is based on fieldwork carried out in Chiang Mai Province in July 2003 for two weeks, with the support of Nissei Foundation, and presented in brief in the International Workshop on Forest Ecology in Thailand (Kyoto, October 2003). The JSPS Core University Program also allowed me to travel and gather information in Thailand on several occasions.

are talking back to the kinds of discourses established through the interaction of scholarly as well as state, administrative, and activist discourse.

Early Discourse: *Chaw Paa Yaang*

I would first like to trace the modernist style of discourse and stereotypes that emerged regarding the Karen in the early stages of consolidating ethnic classification.³⁾ I will briefly touch upon the earlier process in Burma. Not only in the modernist style of ethnic categorization, but also in the ethnic stereotypes themselves, there is much in common between the discourses that evolved in Thailand and those of colonial Burma.

A prototype of ethnic literature could be traced back to the encyclopedic attempt by the American Baptist missionary Mason, in which he described and categorized the “tribes” in Burma by possible origins, location of habitat, language, and costume [Mason 1860: 71]. It is worth noting that he included many “races” such as Chin (Kyen), Ying-Bau, etc. in his classification of the Karen. Mason wrote encyclopedic treatises as his own missionary endeavor succeeded in forming Karen churches. It was the time between the second and third Anglo-Burmese War, when the British were seeking to incorporate Upper Burma which included such peoples as the Chin and Ying-Bau. He defined “Karen” as “a Burmese word applied to most of the mountaineers of Pegu and Southern Burmah. There were White Karens, Red Karens, and Black Karens, so designated from the prevailing colour of the dress; Burmese Karens and Talaing Karens, from the nations with which they are associated.” Mason’s writings were well-cited and influential in later colonial writings [for example, Scott and Hardimann 1900–01].

Between missionaries and colonialists during the nineteenth century, we see a gradual consolidation of categories, as the mission and colonial administration matured. Prior to this, “others” from the point of view of the Burmans were locally defined based on face to face interaction. Mason’s earlier scheme of understanding intermixed a collection of such local definitions with the European bent towards a more systematic categorization and arguments regarding origins and ethnic characteristics. A century later, Mason’s speculations “took on the status of a ‘culturally’ based political doctrine” as the official views for the Karen nationalists/separatists themselves providing validation of the existence of their separate state [Rajah 1990: 115]. Ethnic characterizations that were imposed by outsiders (in this case western missionaries and administrators) are taken up by the people thus designated themselves.

Full ethnographic description in the modern sense began to appear in the twentieth

3) The term “Karen” is today used to refer generally to most Karennic language speakers, and derives from terms used by their neighbors (the Burmese term is *Kayin*). The self-designation by Karen-speakers differ from one linguistic sub-group to another (*pga k’nyau* in Sgaw Karen, and *phloun* in Pwo Karen, etc.).

century. Marshall [1922], ethnographer cum missionary, characterized the Karen in Burma as one “who draw[s] the blinds over the windows of his heart and leaves one to wonder what goes on within,” and as timid, and desirous of avoiding trouble with others, resulting in shyness, caution, and concealment. He reiterated preceding accounts that described them as “peaceable, honest and good,” and remarkable for their chastity. By the twentieth century, Karen in Burma seemed to have a reputation as morally upright, reserved and shy people, rather lacking in humor.

The tacit understanding that Hinton points out for Karen in Thailand characterizes the relationship between the ruling peoples of the polities, and the people in the outlying peripheries both in Burma and Thailand in pre-modern times. The forest-dwellers maintained autonomy and symbiotic relationships with the people of the polities. While the relationship was certainly not symmetrical, there was no top-down ethnic classification. People were classified in terms of their relationship to the polity, payment of tax or tribute, rather than by language and culture as in the modern ethnic classification. Ethnic labels derived from face-to-face relationships. This is why in Mason’s early classification, we see a variety of Karen designations that is not based on any overarching standard or system.

It was after the territorial boundary negotiation with the colonial neighbors that attempts towards administrative centralization and investigation of the peoples in the peripheries began in Thailand. The effort to survey the limits of their land to negotiate territorial boundaries in 1890 accompanied survey of the ethno-linguistic features of the uncivilized forest-dwellers, the *chaw paa*, inhabiting those lands.⁴⁾ Systematic survey of the tribes in the peripheries was taken up by the Siam Society in the 1920s.⁵⁾ This was a period in the formation of the modern nation state in which the monarchy was intent on defining the Thai nation as culturally homogeneous as against their “others,” especially

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- 4) At the time when the banks of the Salween were still contested territory between the newly installed British and the Thai (Siamese), in the attempt to claim the eastern bank, the Siamese court sent an official to survey the territory. This official, Nai Banchaphumsathan who may have been a professional surveyor trained in the Survey Department wrote a report in 1890 [Wilson and Hanks 1985]. Much of the account is a narrative of the topographical, demographic, economic and political situation of the Salween, but towards the end, the surveyor includes some ethnographic information of the Lawa and the White Karen: hair style; costume; houses; worship and the chicken bone oracle; and characteristics such as hospitality, honesty, diligence and language. There was of course much contact between Karen and the Thai or the Burmese especially in the border regions. Siamese officials association with the Karen is depicted by Suraphong [1988]. These contacts did not accompany systematic attempts to understand the other.
 - 5) The Siam Society issued a “questionnaire” in 1921, asking for particular information regarding the manners and customs of the “obscure tribes in Siam,” to which replies came for “White Karen (*yaang kaleuy*), Red Karen (*yaang daeng*), Meao, Leu, Shans and Yao” from Northern Thailand. The questionnaire covered such items as physical characteristics, costumes, social organization, religion and glossary.

at this time, the Chinese, a period of nationalistic self-reflection and self-definition of Thainess [Loos 2006].

In writings up to the first half of the twentieth century, the predominant terms used for the people in the hills and forests were *khon paa* (or *chaw paa*) and *kha*. They were referred to as natives of the forest, in ranked order from civilized to wild from Lawa, Yaang (Northern Thai and Shan term for the Karen speaking peoples they found in their locale, which seem to include all kinds of Karen speakers) and Kha.⁶⁾ Yaang were classified among the forest-dwellers, and characterized as *khon chaw paa*, wearing top-knots and dress like the Mon, deemed superior to the truly wild *kha*, but nonetheless, as people of the forest (*paa*) as opposed to people of the city-state (*muang*).

A comparison of the works of Bunchuai Srisawat, before and after the instigation of various hill-tribe policies in the 1960s is quite illuminating. In *30 chaat nai Chiangrai* [1950], the Karen were referred to as *yaang*, who were deemed earlier settlers in the area than the Tais. The sub-categories of *yaang* are rather a strange mixture of category by location, by place of derivation, and by color of costume: *Yaang doi* (mountain *yaang*), *yaang naam* (water *yaang*), *yaang suai kaban* (*yaang* from the Zwei Kabin mountain in Karen State, Burma), *yaang khaaw* (white Karen). This is because they were terms taken from local usage in different parts of the north, without any attempt to unify and categorize. Northern Thai peoples had their respective designation for their neighboring strangers, which were never coordinated by a centralized ruling system. Discourse of cleanliness was also used to determine the degree of civilization so that even among the *yaang*, the *yaang naam* were cleanly and loved to bathe, whereas the *yaang doi* were filthy and disliked bathing, were mobile, held fast to their customs, were closed to outsiders. *Yaang khaaw* were kind and filled with hospitality. Visitors were welcomed into the leader's house and generously provided with betel and tobacco. The *yaang khaaw* were modest, reserved, unambitious, "lovers of nature." They formed a tightly-knit group and will not mix with lowlanders. Elders were respected, community governance was orderly and they were morally upright. *Yaang kaleu* were lovers of peace. Already in these characterizations, we find most of the notable features of the characteristic attributed to the Karen today. It is striking to note Bunchuai referring to the Karen as lovers of nature, half a century before the discourse on environmental conservation in which the Karen found a footing in arguing for themselves as people who have long coexisted with the forest and nature. This undoubtedly accompanied a change in the meaning of nature itself for the Thai lowlanders, from *paa*, the wild forests beyond the civilized world of the *muang*, to a valuable national resource that needs to be tamed, delineated and preserved (*thammachat*).

6) Within Kha were counted the Khatin, Khamu, Khamet as well as sometimes Kha Meo, Kha Kui, Kha Musu, and Kha Tong Luang [Bunchuai 1950].

Discourse under Hill Tribe Policy: *Chaw Khaw Kariang*

The term *chaw khaw* came into official usage in 1959 with the beginnings of hill tribe policy. As regards the Karen, the shifts in their designation from *chaw paa* to *chaw khaw* coincided roughly with the shift from the haphazard quasi-classification according to local terms, to the rigid top-down monolithic classification. In 1963, Bunchuai published *Chaw khaw nai Thai* where the term *Kariang* is used for Karen in place of the previous *yaang*. At the very end of the book, Bunchuai was reluctant to categorize the Karen along with others as *chaw khaw* since they lived nearer to the lowlands, or on very low hill-tops.⁷⁾ In any case, after the 1960s, the terms *chaw paa*, *yaang*, was replaced by the official designation *chaw khaw Kariang*, and with this, the “tacit understanding” was overwritten.⁸⁾ In the state discourse *chaw paa* a term that “assumed a ... spatial and civilizational hierarchy that was premised on Bangkok as the pinnacle of civilization, Thainess, and normalcy” [Jonsson 2005] was replaced by *chaw khaw* as the official category with the foundation of institutions and policies geared towards these people who were deemed a threat to the Thai nation. The designation of *chaw paa*, and *chaw khaw*, which “indexed unruliness, illicit practices and threats to the country’s borders” [*ibid.*] co-existed with ambiguous overlaps. In this process, the *yaang* or *Kariang* had somehow shifted from being forest-dwellers in the outlying margins of the kingdom, to official hill-tribes, joining the ranks of the trouble-makers in the ecologically valuable but precarious, strategically vulnerable region. In the process of national integration of the modern nation state and the efforts towards national development since the 1950s, for those people locals referred to as *chaw paa* and *yaang* in their respective regions, the state called into effect monolithic classification *chaw khaw* and *Kariang* as objects of rule and intervention.

Writings from the 1960s and 1970s set the tone for later representation of the hill-dwellers. The style of ethnic description used here was similar to those already set in

7) The others, along with the Karen are Sakai, Semang, Phii Tong Luang, and *kha* (which includes Khamu, Lamet, Thin). For their costumes they use “blackish colors” and the people themselves originate from within Thailand. Bunchuai wanted to distinguish these somberly dressed *chaw paa* from the brightly colorful *chaw khaw*. Those inhabiting areas with higher elevation such as Musoe (Lahu), Lisaw (Lisu), Maeo (Hmong), Yao (Mien), Kaw (Akha), these people originate from China and wear costumes with bright colors, and very strange ornaments. They plant opium to sell or consume, and plant swidden rice and corn. They prefer to live on hilltops and perform shifting cultivation near the water sources. They move around seeking new locations for their swiddens. These, according to Bunchuai, were properly the *chaw khaw* [Bunchuai 1963: 460–461].

8) The officially designated *chaw khaw* are the nine groups, Karen, Hmong, Lisu, Akha, Lahu, Yao, Lawa, Khamu, and Htin, although the last two or three are dropped in certain official policies or in documents.

nineteenth century Burma mentioned above. Young [1962] described each group by possible origins, racial affiliation, migration routes, population, linguistic affiliation, religious beliefs, village location, physical appearances and cultural features. In line with the tradition set by missionaries and administrators in Burma, he placed great emphasis on the difference in costume as the distinguishing features among the sub-groups. Also, at the time when the culture and personality school was the prevalent trend in anthropology in the U. S., he pointed out ethnic characteristics for each group. The Karen were characterized by lack of thrift and energy in subsistence activities, steadfastness to customs, moral character, peace-loving and orderly but closed communities.

Academic (mostly anthropological) writings on the *chaw khaw* since the 1970s and into the 1980s tend to emphasize the cultural coherence and distinctiveness of each group. This is as much in response to the tendencies of contemporary anthropological discipline, as against the discourse of *chaw khaw* which problematized the hill population in monolithic terms. Cultural relativism was a needed antidote, and anthropologists were obliged to interpret and represent each ethnic group in its own essentialist terms.

If varied cultures were acknowledged by the authorities, it was towards the need to assimilate. The 1973 publication by Thailand's Library Association titled *Pii nong chaw khaw* (Our Brothers and Sisters, the Hill Tribes) emphasized that *chaw khaw* are migrants into Thailand from neighboring territories, who maintain distinct culture, custom and identity, wearing their own costumes. Their development is deemed one of the most important policies of the state. As they are most vulnerable to the influence of communists, in order for them to become real brothers and sisters to Thai citizens, "we must make them loyal participants in protecting (our) nation" [1973: 9]. In this volume, Karen are introduced as elephant mahouts who are extremely superstitious, lovers of peace, enjoying solitude and seclusion, and remaining steadfast to their customs. In writings reflecting strong state interest, the Karen score high on the scale of meekness and governability just as their counterparts were characterized in Burma.

Insofar as the Karen met this description, maintaining their submissiveness to the state, they were benign, and perhaps to a much larger extent than most other hill tribe groups, the "tacit understanding" could be maintained. At the same time that they were deemed meek and governable, yet for development workers, they were the most inscrutable group. While they were not unruly, they were difficult to incorporate in the ongoing developmental mode of the nation. Development workers I encountered in the hills would tell me how difficult it was to work with the Karen who were slow to take up opportunities and new ventures, whereas with the Hmong, they could just introduce something and they will be off making the most out of it and finding further paths by themselves. Chupinit mentions a nickname given to the Karen by a development worker "yaang-ma-toi" (meaning hot asphalt, sticky and slow moving), a pun on *yaang* [1989: 79]. Thus ethnic stereotypes were rampant among administrators and development workers who entered the hills.

As communist insurgency, violence, and state surveillance over the hills subsided, a wave of fieldworkers (including myself) and development agencies entered the hills in the 1980s, each focusing on one or the other of the groups. The depiction of each group of hill tribe and reification of its colorfully distinctive cultures by anthropologists matched well the demands of the tourist boom in the 1980s. Postcards of hill-tribes in their colorful costumes appeared on every street corner in Chiang Mai. The well-illustrated coffee-table book by Paul and Elaine Lewis was published in 1984, in numerous languages. The book spends many pages on well-collected photographs of costumes, ornaments and various artifacts from each group as well as persuasively written stereotyped characterization of each group. In this book, the Lewises represent the Karen with the phrase “desire for harmony.” They depict the Karen as people who live in “awe of authority and desire for harmony,” as submissive, hospitable and morally righteous people. It is this same representation of the Karen which has been repeated over and over in discourses pertaining to Karen.

In a book published in the 30th year of the foundation of the Tribal Research Institute (founded as the Tribal Research Centre), the Karen specialist and zealous spokesperson for the Karen, Prawit Potthart wrote in poetic language the beauty of Karen culture, “Karen are submissive and gentle, polite, warm and non-aggressive, and they would never show any bad feelings to others. If there is anything that is not pleasing to them, they would not let a hint of it appear on the surface: tidal waves on the inside, yet clear water on the outside” [Prawit 1995, my translation]. Also, he mentions rich ecological knowledge among the Karen, in cultivation, in foraging food and herbs, etc. from the forest which have been handed down to them from their ancestors in line with the rising interest in indigenous knowledge I mention below.

Of course, Karen are themselves not unaware of such discourse which developed over two centuries. I would hear self-made commentaries by Karen villagers in the hills about the slowness of Karen in adopting anything new and foreign, or their superstitiousness, either in self-derogatory tone or conversely, in denigrating development efforts. In a tour of the Karen Baptist youth group among their newly converted Christian villages in Omkoi District in 1987, the leader, Pati Khru Sant, eminent Christian leader and former manager of the Bangkok branch of Siam Commercial Bank, made speeches in several villages repeating “I always tell the Thai people around me, we Karen are slow and not very smart, but we are honest and trustworthy.”

The Recent Turn: *Pga K'nyau*

From the 1990s, Thai language material on the *chaw khaw*, especially the Karen increased. Publication on Karen ranged from the university publications such as Mahidol [Suriyaa and Somthrong 1995], the Tribal Research Institute publications, NGO publications some

of which are based on sound ethnographic research [Pinkaew 1996] others on narratives and songs collected from Karen elders [The Foundation of Education for Life and Society 2002; Phau Lee Paa and Kalayaa Weerasakdi 1987; 1996; Kannikar and Bencha 1997], and some by Karen writers [Beu Phau 1997].

On the one hand, contents and quality of information in some of these publications have drastically changed. Undoubtedly, the general knowledge base on the hill Karen population among lowlanders have expanded. Yet, at the same time the sheer accumulation of printed pages seem to merely add layers on the existing description that have produced the stereotypes. In the Mahidol series on the minority groups, the 30 some pages of detailed description of linguistic, social and cultural aspects concluded with a description of the Karen as “an unambitious people who prefer seclusion, who keep their feelings to themselves, dislike aggressive or sarcastic manners and speech, tending to evade contradicting or demonstrating dissatisfaction by backing away from a situation. Another important characteristic is the unwillingness to receive any influence from other peoples and to change themselves accordingly” [1995: 35, my translation]. The Thai Culture Encyclopedia that came out in 1999 had entries on the Karen under the title “Yaang,” “Yaang Kaleu,” “Yaang Khaw” and “Yaang Daeng,” mostly taken from Bunchuai’s earlier writing in 1950 [Somchot 1999].⁹⁾ While state agencies, NGOs and Karen themselves are all participant to the proliferation of information, their notion of “culture” as well as their understanding of “difference” itself seem to stay wide apart.

The increase in the voices from among the Karen people themselves came concomitant with the emphasis on indigenous knowledge and life in the forest, spurred by acutely politicized debates on environmental conservation and the position of *chaw khaw*. For concerned citizens in Thailand, Karen are now better known as *pga k’nyau* (the Skaw Karen¹⁰⁾ term for their own people) a label that goes hand in hand with understanding of them as people who have lived in the forests. It was in the 1990s with increasing media attention and politicization of ethnic culture in relation to the debates over forest conservation that this self-designation has gained wider usage in place of the previous “*yaang*” or “*kariang*” [Hayami 1997]. This was discourse that emerged between NGOs, concerned lowland citizens as well as Karen leaders, strategically as a way for Karen in hill communities to claim the right to maintain their livelihood in the forests.

The UN designated the year 1993 the year of Indigenous Peoples, and the following decade, the Indigenous Peoples Decade. Prior to this, in 1988, there was a meeting of Asian Indigenous Peoples in Chiang Mai, where Karen representatives were also present. Participants agreed on a common definition of indigenous peoples as “people indigenous

9) See Jonsson [2003] for a review article on the Yao sections of this encyclopedia, written by the same author.

10) The Karen language group includes numerous subcategories of languages. In Thailand, Skaw Karen and Pwo Karen are the two largest language groups.

to conquered territory, and who differentiate themselves from other sectors of the ruling class, and who maintain their own language, religion, customs and worldview.” Given that in the historical consciousness of elite Thai people, it has been taken for granted that Karen people in general preceded the Tais in the present Thai territory, and Karen were preceded in turn by Mon-Khmer speaking peoples, the designation of Karen as indigenous peoples did not go against official Thai history. The global interest in indigenous peoples and their rights (especially rights to land) added a political edge to this historical claim. Karen gained the terms in which to represent themselves and to claim their rights to the forest.

With increasing emphasis on indigenous knowledge of forests, the Karen have come full circle from the denigration as the uncivilized “other” in the forest in pre-modern Thailand, to the designation as forest wardens with rich knowledge of the forest that the lowlanders lack. This is knowledge that is nonetheless, based on their quaint life in the forests. Some of the interest in the hills, and specifically on the Karen, can be seen against the background of global interest in biological diversity and conservation of indigenous knowledge¹¹⁾ towards sustainable development on the one hand, and the rights of indigenous peoples on the other. It was against this global trend of the environmental debate as well as the situation specific to Thailand, the logging ban in 1989, and issues related to rights of the hill-dwelling minority that much of the literature in the 1990s appeared.

Knowledge about the Karen that became quite widely held in the 1990s presents the Karen rather monolithically as the people who live in the forest with rich knowledge and wisdom about nature, whose communities are tightly consolidated. They were characterized as inscrutable to influence from the outside, and their modes of livelihood based on swidden cultivation as being unaggressive, and their tradition and rituals are rife with notions that make possible their resource management [Walker 2001]. As *yaang* they were the wild and uncivilized *chaw paa*. Then as *Kariang* they were the unruly intruders *chaw khaw*, and are now depicted as the forest-dwelling indigenous nature lovers *pga k'nyau*. Inhabitants of the wild forests have now become wardens of precious environment and holders of ecological knowledge to which urban Thai lowlanders unabashedly

11) In 1992, the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development was held, promoting protection of the earth's biological diversity and the need to conserve the knowledge in the local communities towards sustainable development. Indigenous knowledge in this context, was defined as follows: “The unique, traditional and local knowledge existing within and developed around specific conditions of people indigenous to a particular geographic area. The development of such knowledge systems, covering all aspects of life, including management of the natural environment, has been a matter of survival to the peoples who generated this system. They are also dynamic, as new knowledge is continuously added. It is often contrasted with the systematic knowledge generated within the international academic and research institutes. It is therefore unsystematic, undocumented knowledge of the powerless.”

claim ignorance. Karen provide an alternative way of life, diametrically opposed to their own, idealized, maybe, but never envied.

The monolithic representation has been critiqued as the discourse of “Karen Consensus.” The critique is that it may deter a finer understanding of the richly varied modes of subsistence and adaptation found among the widely dispersed Karen areas, and constrain Karen to singular mode of subsistence, and further close them off from opportunities in development schemes. The view of Karen as benign non-aggressive people with little interest in development may actually be detrimental to their development [Walker 2001; Hayami 2000].

Yet, in the debates surrounding the rights of the people in the forest, it is also important to note that existing stereotypes gave them voices to claim their own livelihood. Karen villagers found that the emphasis on their indigenous knowledge and modes of livelihood was strategic defense against the pre-existing view of hill-dwellers and swidden practitioners as being destroyers of forest, irresponsible non-citizens.

Karen leaders took up the discourse, even as they were aware of the extremely varied subsistence practices. It was also a reaction to pre-existing even more detrimental images of hill tribes that might have brought measures devastating to their livelihood in the hills. The discourse was effective in that it was put forward as a creative strategy of defense towards hegemonic discourse that defined the Karen as destructive forest encroachers [Yos 2004; Sunaga 2004].

We now need further ethnographic understanding of the varied ways in which the Karen in the hill are coping in this situation, including the emerging local attempts at self-representation. The emerging local self-representation itself draws upon, emulates, refutes, and talks back to existing representations which I have outlined up to now, which has been woven by administrators and missionaries, not to mention academics who have talked and written about the Karen against the background of the history and politics of the states as well as the academic traditions of the times. Placed in a position where they cannot refuse policies that give them the name of hill tribes, the Karen villagers find ways by which to talk back from those very discourse of those in power. It is in this context that I here focus on the case of an eco-tourism venture in one Karen village.

Tourism in the Thai Hills

Jungle tourism, as the hill-tribe tourism was often referred to, had been left in the hands of small private enterprises until quite recently. With the flourish of this industry, trekking tour agencies competed among themselves by advertising remote, untouched places, thereby spreading their maps further into the hills, which had also been made easier by improved infrastructure in the 1980s. Such hill-tribe tourism was not officially

promoted in the Thai state-policy on tourism. While on the one hand the state policy was towards assimilation of hill minorities, on the other hand, certain representation of the hill cultures as consumer items became a vital part of the international tourist industry. As Michaud points out, there was great disjunction between international tourism where hill-tribe trekking was a well-advertised attraction, and the absence of national discourse on hill-tribe tourism [1997: 129]. State attitude to tribal tourism was *laissez-faire*, and regulation of hill-tribe trekking was left primarily to private entrepreneurs until the early 1990s. Cultural diversity was not among the state's tourist agendas. From the hill village point of view, the economic effect of tribal tourism was negligible, it had become prevalent both in its geographical distribution as well as sheer quantity. Only meager and temporary profits were enjoyed by a few villagers in each of the widely dispersed trekking villages.

In the 1980s, eco-tourism emerged as a solution to the global search for alternative tourism. In Thailand too, it had become the magic word in the 1990s, and all kinds of tourism came to be represented under the word "eco-tourism." The Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT), which promoted eco-tourism since the mid-1990s defined it as "a visit to any particular tourism area with purpose to study, enjoy, and appreciate the scenery — natural and social — as well as the life style of the local people, based on the knowledge about the responsibility for the ecological system of the area." Thus widely defined, it could embrace any form of tourism into the hill villages, ranging from the existing trekking tours as well as some brands of mass tourism which ventured into forested areas or national parks.

Meanwhile, with closing forest frontiers, the contestation over forested land became intensified. A major factor in this was state delineation of land after 1985, one of the most drastic for the hill-dwellers being the founding of national parks. For the state, eco-tourism could provide a formula for making economic use of the national parks, finding a way to appease the villagers, and giving pretext for orienting development in the areas in certain directions. The forest-dwelling people have gained a new place in the context of eco-tourism and the general interest in nature by lowlanders.

The interest in eco-tourism was concomitant with the rising interest among urban Thai people towards "nature" in the environmental debate already discussed above. Tourist activities were no longer primarily for foreigners, but for Thai urbanites as well. With increasing contestation over forested land and resources in the hills, and state involvement in the hills, tourism became one path for state intrusion into the forest in the 1990s. Behind this was the global as well as national enthusiasm for eco-tourism. Into the late 1990s, state policy promoted eco-tourism, especially in national parks.

The 1960s and 70s was a time when the problem of the hills was primarily one of internal security, as communist insurgency was a real threat. Into the peaceful 1980s, the hill minorities were still primarily targets for assimilation. Now into the 1990s, as the population in the hills themselves began to show willingness to connect with lowland

culture and society to gain citizenship and rights as citizens, paradoxically, it has become possible for the state to recognize certain modes of differences among them. This was the background for promotion of eco-tourism in the hills, where difference has become cultural resource.

Community-based eco-tourism was hailed as a problem solver to be promoted in 15,223 villages all over the country. Despite its original appeal as alternative tourism, there has already been enough experience in Thailand that locals as well as environmentalists are not outright positive about eco-tourism. Some have pointed it out as being “merely a ploy to open up ecologically sensitive areas to tourists.” In this view, eco-tourism is a way for the cash-strapped government to open up Thailand’s precious national parks to environmentally destructive investment that might bring badly needed foreign exchange after the financial crisis. Even what seemed to be the better part of eco-tourism which encouraged local communities to participate in sustainable tourism, had gradually come to be questioned already towards the late 1990s. Ventures started by organizations that aimed for quality-eco-tourism such as NGO-REST (Responsible, Ecological, Social Tour program, established in 1994, during the high tide of eco-tourism) met dissatisfaction from environmentalists on the one hand and local communities on the other. Another issue that was debated in the REST case was that villagers’ efforts to dress in traditional costume, play musical instruments and have their women weave cloths in their houses for the visitors would be commercialization of their own culture, making a show case of their own culture, rather than reviving their traditional culture.

An example of local antagonism to state-initiated eco-tourism efforts is my own field site. In an earlier paper, I analyzed the social movements and resulting failure of a pine forest logging project by the Forest Industry Organization (FIO) supported by an international conglomerate. Local inhabitants successfully drew a close to the project by claiming their own forests and their own successful co-existence with the forest. This had been successful by recourse to their own tradition blended with adoption of Buddhist practices and a discourse of alternative environmental conservation based on indigenous knowledge [Hayami 1997]. Having failed in its pine forest project in the early 1990s, FIO returned with a new project promoting eco-tourism in the same area, this time funded by Japanese Bank for International Cooperation. Another protest movement arose from the locals. In the former protest against the logging venture, villagers had emphasized their Karen tradition, and marched in Karen costume. This time, however, in protesting the eco-tourism venture in which their visible ethnic traditions would become spectacles of tourism, they avoided the outright use of such ethnic symbolism and marched in jeans and Thai attire. Rather than to submit to the designs of the authorities promoting tourism by making a spectacle of themselves as the “ethnic others,” they chose to look like any other Thai citizen.

Thus eco-tourism itself remains debated. My intention here is not to address the debate regarding eco-tourism, but to consider how villagers in Doi Inthanon use the

state-imposed opportunity of eco-tourism in defining and representing themselves and how in the process, they draw upon or deny existing representation. In the activities surrounding the eco-tourism, we see negotiations of ethnic representations by participating actors from all sides.

The Doi Inthanon Eco-Tourism

It is in the 1970s that government intervention began in a way that directly affected village livelihood in M village.¹²⁾ The Royal Project arrived in 1970, promoting coffee and other vegetables, building a school, and in 1972, the area was enclosed as Doi Inthanon National Park, the first national park in the Northern Region. Roads were built drastically improving access from the nearby market town of Chom Thong, bringing in projects and traders into the area. According to Roland Mischung who began anthropological research here in 1983, it was around the same decade that villagers began to abandon some of their rituals. Swidden cultivation was terminated, and land certificates (N. S. 3) were issued for irrigated rice fields.¹³⁾ Opium cultivation was terminated around the time that the Royal Project began agricultural extension work. Life began to change pace rapidly. Throughout the 1980s, there had been constant conflicts between the villagers and the national park office. While the park brought improved infrastructure such as roads and therefore a new mode of lifestyle, older practices such as hunting and swiddening became impossible. Villagers relied on irrigated rice fields and cash crop cultivation in their surroundings. In 2003, the main cash crops were coffee, daisies, garbellas, strawberries, and cabbage.

The initiative for the eco-tourism project came from the National Park in 1999. In its promotion of tourism in the Doi Inthanon National Park in general, and after decades of conflicting relationship with the villagers, the deputy director of the park initiated

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- 12) The ancestors of the present inhabitants of the five Karen villages including M were six families that had arrived from Papun, Burma in the last decade of the 19th century. In early years of settlement, they paid taxes to Lawa inhabitants, and gained permission from the Court in Chiang Mai (by paying an elephant) to cultivate in this area, and subsequently paid annual tribute. They opened swidden fields in virgin primary forest and in the 1920s began cultivating rice in irrigated rice fields, which became increasingly dominant. In 1925, a Hmong settlement was founded in the same region, cultivating opium, and Karen soon followed on a much smaller scale. Village M in the present location was founded in 1947. It was a day's march to the nearest *khon muang* village. There was a local network of exchange between the *khon muang*, Karen, Hmong, and Lawa villages in the area, from Chom Thong to Mae Chaem (Interviews conducted in 2003, and Mischung [1986]).
 - 13) At the time, Mischung counted 200 *rai* of irrigated rice fields, 28 of swidden, and 15 of poppy fields, over 200 cattle and water buffalos, and three elephants. Today there are perhaps 50 draft animals altogether and the last of the elephants were sold off when the area was designated national park [Mischung 1986].

this project. The National Park supported the formation of the village Tourism Alliance with the alleged objective of 1) providing supplementary income to the villagers 2) reducing illegal use of forest resource especially land encroachment and wild animal hunting 3) providing genuine knowledge about the Karen people and rectifying misunderstanding about the Karen to the outsiders 4) building environmental awareness to local Karen people and visitors. It was to become a showcase of community-based tourism. The park gave administrative support, especially the consent to operate sustainable tourism in the park. Behind this move was the TAT's targeting of the country's 81 national parks for new tourism projects in the late 1990s. The park office also began training guides, supporting study tours in the Park, while the local branch of the Royal Project also cooperated, making this a joint effort of state agencies involved in the area and the villagers.

For the village eco-tourism project, they targeted M village which was closest to the main road. M village is located at the southeastern entering point of Doi Inthanon National Park along a highway, which will bring tourists from Chiang Mai in two hours convenient drive. It is one of a cluster of several villages, mostly Karen but also a few Hmong. There is a National Park office across the highway. The Tourist Guide's association sent a delegate to explain how to promote eco-tourism, and nine villagers were sent to study another eco-tourism venture in a village in Mae Hongson.

When the park officials brought the plan to the villagers, enthusiastic response came from two younger men, both of whom had married in from neighboring Mae Sariang district. S, a well-educated and energetic man, was the former Tambon Council representative. He is an eloquent man with good networks in the region. His primary business partner, C, is the manager of the business, receiving a salary from the eco-tourism account. They have the support of the village headman, and the project began with a thirteen-member committee, consisting of the headmen from four villages, tambon council members and a few villagers. The design of the business was primarily drawn by C and S, with advice from the park officials. There are villagers who are well-versed in the traditional lore, such as the 70-year-old the ritual leader (*sa pgha hi kho*) who, without a son as heir to his position, will probably be the last ritual leader in the village, or a medicine man who is knowledgeable in the forests, herbs, and magical incantations. These and other respected elders, however, kept distance from this new eco-tourism venture. The business was started by the above mentioned two in-marrying young men, with the backing of the headman and the park office. S claims, villagers were not initially enthusiastic with any venture promoted by the park. There were constant conflicts between the National Park and the villagers, and there has been much skepticism on both sides. However, the headman was in no position to refuse the proposal from the park office.

As one descends the dirt road from the main highway, between the running stream and rice fields, several rustic-looking bungalows have been built for the tourists, ar-

ranged on a grassy mound along the river and tree shades.¹⁴⁾ The initial investment was made by the Royal Forest Department, the Doi Inthanon National Park (400,000 baht), and a few villagers who put down 400 baht each. This was used for the land rent, bungalow construction, purchase of goods to prepare the bungalows. From the second year, several villagers participated by paying 400 baht investment per household and now into the fourth year, there were 10 investing members.

S, who spins out most of the ideas of the business, explained that the eco-tourism is educational for the villagers. He selected a formerly renowned hunter who knew the hills and streams like his backyard, as one of the guides, hoping that he would become a good example for the villagers to take interest. A man who had lost the means to put his ecological knowledge to practice due to the intervention of the National Park could now find a new way of making use of his knowledge, putting it to practice under the project initiated by the National Park. The initial investment for building bungalows and preparing necessities for guests cost 400,000 baht, of which in the fourth year 80,000 debt remained. Once all debts are returned, S said, he will gather all interested villagers and decide how to distribute the profits from then on.

In addition, with the help of his neighbors, S built a village museum next to his own house. The museum is a one-room house with a hearth, terrace, and shelves along the inner wall. Over the hearth is an earthenware urn for liquor-making. Besides the hearth is a earthenware water-boiling pot, which are nowadays extremely rare in Karen villages. The other objects on exhibit here are: an elephant harness, plough used on water buffaloes, fishing nets, a spinning wheel, hunting weapons, lacquer containers for betel-chewing kits, spoons and plates carved from wood, baskets, and a winnowing fan. Asked if the artifacts on display were from this village, S responded “no, the villagers here don’t understand that their tools are worth exhibiting, and were too shy to provide me with their things. Most of them I got from other villages.” Tourists spend some time in this one-room museum listening to S as he proudly presents the traditional lifestyle of his own people, pointing out how the Karen used to ride elephants, how they used to use earthenware pots, etc.

On the other side of the museum is a small thatched canteen where he serves freshly brewed coffee to the tourists. This is another business he is promoting in his village. As he serves the coffee,¹⁵⁾ he explains to his guests, his coffee is free of chemicals, and he

14) The land upon which these bungalows stand belongs to two persons: one is S himself, and the other, a former villager who has now married out to a neighboring village. The rent for this latter man for the first year was 6,000 baht for 3 *rai*. After the second year, it will be a five-year contract with a 10,000 baht rent per year. However, the contract included the condition that no perennial trees would be planted. The owner wanted to be able to resume irrigated rice fields if the venture turned out unsuccessful. S provides his land for free.

15) Coffee is not consumed by villagers in this region.

roasts his coffee using bamboo charcoal, emphasizing environment-friendly production and processing. He explains how villagers are now growing coffee, which is sold some to the Royal Project, some to a region-wide network of a coffee co-op that trades with companies from Ubon, Bangkok and Chiangmai, including Lanna Coffee in Chiang Mai, and Starbucks Thailand.

During my stay, a study tour arrived with a bus-load of participants. Study tours organized by NGOs on such topics as sustainable land-use was a frequent customer in the village. They were first welcomed at the eco-tour headquarters, where the village headman welcomed them, introducing the village. In his speech in Thai, he said, “The Thai people think that we who live in the hills, the *chaw khaw* encroach and destroy the forest. I beg you to take a walk in our village and forest, and see for yourselves if this is true. This is why we began this eco-tourism. We wanted to show you how we Karen live.... The most important thing is that more people know about how Karen live.”

The tours vary from a one day trip to the hilltops, a half a day walk to the waterfall, or a half a day in the village to observe Karen village life.¹⁶⁾ A tourist can choose to stay in the bungalow, or to “home-stay” in the village. Village households who are registered members will take their turn in accommodating a tourist. Several villagers are involved in cooking and preparing meals for the bungalow guests. During the tour of the village,



Fig. 1 Visiting the Village Museum



Fig. 2 Bungalow for Eco-tourists

16) The half a day course to the water fall was 200 baht per group, the one day course to the hill top, 300 baht, one night stay with both these courses would be 600 baht, a tour within the village was 100 baht, a tour of the village fields, 100 baht. A night stay in a four-person's bungalow was 400 baht per bungalow per night in the rainy season, and 800 baht in the dry season. Meals were 50 to 80 baht per meal. Villagers, on the other hand were paid 120 baht per labor day. To rent a car 800 to 1,000 baht for a day, 400 baht for driving to Chom Thong. A motorbike rented for a day was 200 baht. The unified charge rate for home-stay in the village would be 100 baht per person per night plus 50 baht per meal. If several tourists stayed in one house, the house would pay 70 baht per night to the committee, and kept the rest. For example, if there is one tourist, the household would gain 200 baht for the one-night stay and two meals, of which they would keep 130 baht.



Fig. 3 A View of the Village and Beyond



Fig. 4 Inside the Village Museum

the guides would explain to the tourists, how fish and forest returned after opium and swidden was abolished, showing a photograph from the early 1980s with scars on the mountain slopes made by opium swiddens, comparing it with the mountain in front of them which showed a lush green hillside on exactly the same spot. The tour takes them to the coffee gardens and cash-crop fields, explaining the chemical-free cash-producing efforts of the villagers.

There seem to be elements of agro-tourism in such aspects of the tour design in M village. While the fine points of the difference between eco-tourism and agro-tourism are of no concern to us here, it is significant that the villagers themselves included such elements in what they term their eco-tourism. Such elements of agro-tourism would be observed in other modernized lowland Thai villages with forward notions of agriculture.

On another occasion, a village meeting was held, presided by the Director of the National Park. The meeting began in Thai with 50 or so villagers from 3 villages. While

waiting for the arrival of the director, some notices from the district administration were announced: one was to do with a rally at the district office to which villagers were asked to attend, especially young women were to wear the white Karen tunic. Another announcement was made regarding land registration. Those villagers who wished to register their land must present the application. At this point, the National Park Director arrived, clad in the red Karen tunic shirt and turban. Some villagers asked him about the land registration, and in response he began a speech. "The responsibility of the national park is to make you recognize the boundaries of the national park and not to encroach on park territory. It is not within my responsibility to give you land rights. However, you must understand that individual land rights would be difficult to grant now. If such rights were granted, the area will be packed with resort hotels in no time. Issuing of N. S. 3 titles cannot be expected." Having said this, he began to promote tourism. "In the past year, tourists to the Doi Inthanon National Park numbered 700,000. The deadline for application to the tour guides closed today. I am disappointed that there were very few applicants from these three villages. We must all participate in improving the tourist service. Here, the Hmong are quite visible from the main road and have contributed to the tourism in this area by their visibility, but regarding the Karen, tourists will not know there were Karen around unless they came down as far as the village. You must heighten your visibility by increasing publicity. In N village, they sell handicrafts, but who will buy these things if you keep the shops in these secluded villages away from the road? Go out on the main roads and sell. You Karen have weaving, your own writing, and a high level of culture. You must show them. Also, nature conservation is important. If you conserve nature, more people will come. Because there is such a rich variety of birds here, tourists come to watch the birds. Teach your children to watch and enjoy them rather than hunt and eat them. This coming weekend, we will have a bird-watching seminar for you and the children. There will be a slide show and lessons on the birds. Then on Sunday, there will be a seminar specifically for children of these villages, which will end with a graded test. There will be more and more Thai tourists coming this way in the future. You must teach your children to conserve nature."

Then, one villager asked when electricity will come to the village, and the director answered they were looking into the matter. In fact, even as most of the other villages in the same area, as well as far less accessible villages further up had been provided with electricity, M village had been left out, precisely because of the eco-tourism. The National Park was not about to damage the rustic traditional life of the nature-loving Karen by allowing electricity. In the park officials' minds, that is not what tourists are looking for in the Karen village.

Later that week, a seminar was held for the villagers, where a visiting Thai nature specialist at the park gave lessons on the birds in Doi Inthanon. With slides (using an electric generator) showing the birds, she explained each bird species by Thai name, its habitat, feeding ground, etc. entreating villagers to enjoy the birds as they fly and sing,

not to do harm. Announcements had been made in the village well in advance by the headman through the morning loudspeaker, and at least one person per household had to be present, although most of these household representatives were children or younger housewives. They were curious to watch the slides, but most of the birds they knew very well by Karen name, and knew their habitats and feeding habits well from their childhood. Some youths, however, were busy taking notes, since knowing the Thai names for these birds would help them become good tour-guides and give better chances to be hired at the Park also. At the time the park had 50 registered guides, only 3 of whom were local Karen. Local Karen knowledge of birds and of any aspect of their ecological knowledge regarding the surrounding environment are known to most villagers but never verbalized. By “teaching them” the knowledge in the Thai language, in effect, Karen knowledge is overwritten and loses its voice, to be taken over by knowledge as defined by Thai modern nature-lovers. C, the manager of M village eco-tourism, had collected and printed a booklet of Karen folktales on the birds translated into Thai. He told me they were very popular among the visiting Thai bird-watchers and nature-lovers. The folktales as elements of Karen cultural tradition added charm to their adventures and the joy of bird-watching.

Discussion

The launching of the eco-tourism in the area by initiative of the National Park office can be understood as appropriation of ethnic culture by a local state agency. The park sets the conditions by which the eco-tourism is to be carried out, and it makes suggestions about the ways in which the Karen should make a show of their culture, which they should be proud of. What constitutes culture to be proud of, to make a show of, is determined by the state agency. Villagers in turn, cannot but take up the given suggestions, and use the terms set by the authorities. Elements of “Karen culture” have been hand-picked by the park officials in making an appropriate show within the National Park setting. In doing so, Karen indigenous knowledge of nature and forest is completely re-written as is apparent in the bird-watching session given in Thai. Karen are taught how to love birds (rather than hunt them as edibles), and how to love nature.

However, villagers are also taking initiative in designing their eco-tourism. The museum or the bird booklet are villagers’ response to the eyes of the tourists who come to find the rustic life of the “other” in the hills. The objects on display in the museum are pieces from their daily village life, which, to villagers of the younger generation like S, have become objects of the recent past. He objectifies certain parts of his village life by putting them on show to outsiders as pieces of Karen village life. In the “tribal” museums in the urban centers which display the tribal essences of *chaw khaw* and the success of developmental efforts as manifestation of state power [Jonsson 2005: 64–69], culture is

objectified as collection of artifacts. Acciaioli [1985: 160–162] and Volkman [1984: 166] discuss cases in Toraja where culture is “misrecognized” by the practitioners themselves, as the people themselves “come to view their own tradition as a collection of the concrete.” Acciaioli points out, “dialogue is possible only in the terms imposed from without” [*ibid.*: 158]. In the Toraja case, the people’s own notion of “culture” itself is re-written and the terms of representation are entirely set by the state notion of culture as art. Unlike what the tribal museum or the Toraja case suggests, in the Karen eco-tourism in Doi Inthanon, by framing the “traditional life” in the material presentation in the village museum, or by translating certain parts of their folk tradition in a booklet on birds, and further, by demonstrating the present economic activities in the village to the visitors, the villagers are presenting a far more complex notion of culture and view of life in the hills than that imposed by the authorities. They are certainly adopting the terms imposed on them, but by doing so, they are storing up space for themselves to negotiate and challenge the imposed notions. The museum as a frame draws attention to the continuity and difference between what it represents and what goes on in the space outside the frame. Life in the hills is changing, and villagers are finding ways to cope, and are re-presenting their own tradition as tradition to outsiders while also adopting elements from current modern practices. Through such manipulation of both the “traditional” and the modern in material culture, agricultural technology, and lifestyle, “identity negotiation” [Adams 1998] is possible.

These are elements of Karen “culture” and daily life that they prepare for others to see. In Northern Thailand more widely too, there is ongoing creation and recognition of Karen culture which seem to be popular both among appreciative Thai audience as well as among Karen themselves. An indispensable figure in the Karen self-representation in this region was the local-born singer Thu Pho, who has creatively used the Karen musical instrument “*tena*” (a harp) to sing both traditional genre as well as his own new songs, and of whom the villagers boasted, that the Thai Queen was a great fan and invited him over to sing whenever she was in the nearby palace. Creative re-configuration of Karen-ness is ongoing just as it has always been, but with an added reflexivity of villagers who are now keenly aware of those “Other’s” eyes capitalizing on the presence of those very eyes that denigrate them.

Eco-tourism in the area is undoubtedly brought in by the initiative of the authorities, and at the time of my visit, only less than half of the villagers had taken it seriously. Those who refuse it are resisting to adopt what the National Park is trying to promote, yet they cannot deny their co-villagers’ participation because they know their position vis-à-vis the state. Those who have taken it up have used it as a way of representing themselves with messages that override the “rustic hill tribe” image that the official view is trying to promote, and at the same time are attempting to make some profit. Thus, the accumulation of Karen-ness as has been defined by others over more than a century, the peace-loving, elephant-loving, nature-loving, forest-dwelling, non-aggressive, easily satis-

fied, self-sufficient, and backward Karen, is played upon in presenting themselves under the constraint of a state-promoted eco-tourism.

Conclusion

The “others” will follow the definitions and discourse imposed upon them, submitting to the modernist impositions yet at the same time rendering their daily life possible and meaningful by making use of the institutions and representations prepared by the authorities. Indigenous knowledge can be either claimed as a centerpiece in a movement demanding rights, or, can be concealed in claiming their readiness to adopt new activities. Various haphazard pieces are put together in a spontaneous conglomeration of hybrid representation and the end product is never exactly what the authorities envisioned. Within the space that has been taken over by modernity, still attempt is made to embed their own terms within this modernist discourse, and take on elements of the majority culture and society, in order to continue their daily lives in their own terms. If the authorities appropriate others’ ethnic cultures, then the others appropriate the very terms in which the authorities define them. Whether they are defined as wild forest people, as hill tribe intruders, or as indigenous people, their only way to cope is to appropriate those very terms. When “others” are called in derogatory terms, they are not merely consolidated in those terms, but rather, the denigrating terms open up a possibility. By being called in derogatory terms, paradoxically, “others” are given a position from which to talk back. The denigrated “other” begins to use the same language of denigration in response to the call, and here emerges a subject that begins to use those terms in its own utterance [Butler 1997].

From the pre-modern tacit understanding as mentioned by Hinton, to the rigid ethnic categorization of the hill-tribe policy era, now it seems the hill-valley relationship has entered a new stage of negotiation. It is still true that the state holds the unquestionable power in the asymmetrical relationship, yet, the accumulation of past discourse provides various possibilities for the hill-dwellers themselves, to add their voices in constructing the future. Even if their living conditions are unquestionably defined by the authorities, the hill-dwellers may choose to talk back using the same terms that have been applied to them, from pre-modern tacit understanding to modernist ethnic classification.

Even if it is on a stage set by the authorities, and even if they are delimited by the terms imposed upon them by those in power, it is significant that the local voices are becoming more varied and widely dispersed in their sources, because, as Hinton points out, the terms that define them have far-reaching political, social and economic consequences.

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Book Reviews

Interface of the Local and Global: Reframing Understanding of the Hmong

Nicholas Tapp. *The Hmong of China: Context, Agency and the Imaginary*. Boston: Brill Academic Publishers, 2003, xxi+538p.

Nicholas Tapp; Jean Michaud; Christian Culas; and Gary Yia Lee, eds. *Hmong/Miao in Asia*. Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 2004, xx+500p.

Lilao Bouapao. *Rural Development in Lao PDR: Managing Projects for Integrated Sustainable Livelihoods*. Chiang Mai: Regional Center for Social Science and Sustainable Development, 2005, xv+195p.

The past 10 years have seen tremendous changes in the upland landscapes and livelihoods of mainland Southeast Asia. The transformations occurring across the region highlight the dynamism, creativity and adaptability of the populations that live there. Nonetheless, like many groups in upland mainland Southeast Asia, our understanding of the Hmong has been developed largely in the contexts of the opium economy and the politics of national integration.

Government efforts to deal with the “minority problem” (such as the *panha chao khao* in Thailand) led researchers concerned with social justice to respond with studies of the customary practices, local knowledge and adaptation mechanisms of these groups. While government policy trumpeted the negative impacts of these marginal communities on national interest, a community of researchers has struggled to understand and articulate the implications of government intervention on cultural integrity, eco-

nomic well-being and the political relevance of the upland areas.

The Hmong have been given a central position in these discourses. This is particularly so in Thailand, where much work on the Hmong and their responses to development interventions has been conducted. Three recent studies concerning the Hmong provide an interesting view on the contemporary intersection between minority and majority worlds, and the adaptations and challenges coexisting in that space. Three important points emerge from these publications.

First, observing the social agency of minority groups as they interact with dominant society underscores a high degree of dynamism and fluidity. In the past, minority has more often than not meant marginal and monolithic. But this ignores the efforts of groups to adapt, adopt and resist influences, while providing a useful framework for observing the dynamic tensions involved with the integration processes brought on by globalized world systems.

Second, the upland minorities of the region have long been understood to be transboundary, in that their original geographic distribution and history of mobility have ignored the boundaries of the nation state. Approaches to research on transboundary groups have been challenged by the diversity of socio-political contexts across the region. New work is showing the value of a robust understanding of local adaptation to regional and global forces emerging from a diversity of disciplinary approaches based in the field.

Third, the dominance of outside observers in analysis of upland society is coming to an end. The role of ethnic minority scholars is gaining prominence. These researchers, observing social phenomena from a dual insider/outsider perspective, provide not only valuable insights, but have begun to give new political meaning and relevance to their analysis.

In *The Hmong of China* (2003), Nicholas Tapp explores “context, agency and the imaginary” in the world of the Chinese Hmong. Starting his work with the Hmong in Thailand in the 1980s, Tapp was initially struck by the tension between “China as a cultural source” and “China as an oppressor” within expressions of Hmong ethnicity. “Returning” to the original cultural context of Hmong culture, Tapp gives us the first ethnographic study of the Hmong (as opposed to other groups classified with the Hmong in the Chinese nationality term Miao) in China. Tapp presents richly detailed analysis of Hmong livelihoods, kinship structures and relations, ritual practice and relations with other sectors of Han society. Contemporary Hmong life in China demonstrates an articulation, reminiscent of his earlier account from Thailand, of the dynamic and creative tension between the reliance on Han culture as a source of cultural innovation and the homogenizing pressures of the dominant Han. Tapp uses “texts” — songs, legends and the language of rituals — as a window for interpreting the “imaginary” reality of contemporary village life.

One of Tapp’s thought-provoking arguments is that the Han-Hmong cultural relationship creates an inter-ethnic space characterized by creative “re-workings and re-fashionings,” where the critical agency of the Hmong is located. For example, the efforts of one local clan group to record its genealogy and preserve it in a Han-style ancestral hall and utilize social networks linking local and overseas Hmong, show how the Hmong wield influence over the dominant external social forces. Thus, in this analysis agency refers not to the ability of the Hmong to observe and evaluate the cultural discourse of their own “Hmong” identity, but emphasizes rather the processes through which Hmong social agency itself functions within the context of a larger and more powerful “rhetoric of civility” associated with the Chinese state. Indeed,

Tapp concludes that agency is best understood as a continual resignification of culture within new contexts. Such a framework is helpful within the evolving contexts of a globalized world, because it recognizes the importance of social relations across ethnic borders and the resulting tension between local power to decide and global power to impose.

Hmong/Miao in Asia (2004) is a commendably explicit effort to address contemporary upland minority social issues in the context of an evolving transnational identity. To do this, the editors and authors have had to work past the flawed ethnic categories imposed by state authorities. The people known throughout South-east Asia as the Hmong are one of three groups included in the Miao category used in China. As the editors explain in the introduction, the study of the Hmong and Miao has typically ignored the transboundary nature of these people, relying instead on single country, and more generally, nation-state based approaches.

This book, featuring the latest thinking of many authorities on the Hmong/Miao, places the transboundary nature of the Hmong/Miao front and center. Perspectives from China, Thailand, Vietnam and Laos, with references to Hmong communities in the West, contribute to the editors’ illustration of the transboundary nature of Hmong identity. The chapters deal with a wide range of issues grouped into two themes. “Issues of History, Language and Identity” explores articulation and interpretation of Hmong culture in its transboundary context. “Current Issues,” presents analysis of environment and natural resources issues, HIV/AIDS, marriage patterns and rape. Rich in diversity and detail, this collection is a valuable contribution to understanding how the dynamism and creativity of the Hmong/Miao thrive across national boundaries.

It is important to note that of the 20 con-

tributing authors, 5 are Hmong researchers themselves—3 Lao Hmong based in the west, 1 Thai Hmong and 1 Vietnamese Hmong. It is also interesting that this publication foreshadows the emergence of a talented community of young Hmong/Miao researchers who have grown up in the Southeast Asian region, largely in the post-Cold War world. This book has set the stage for the growth of influential Hmong/Miao commentary on the challenges and opportunities faced by minority groups.

The potential of a new generation of Hmong researchers is demonstrated by Lilao Bouapao in *Rural Development in Lao PDR* (2005). This work follows in a tradition of examining Hmong adaptation and response to development interventions, mostly in context of crop replacement and consolidation of the Thai nation-state's control over upland areas and peoples. Lilao has focused his attention on national and international development interventions in a village, his own native village, in Laos. The analysis focuses on four development interventions and their impacts on the livelihoods and environment of the local Hmong. He finds that there is an acute lack of environmental and social considerations in the management of development projects. Lilao identifies and elaborates the gap between past field-level experiences of development intervention and the current practices of development. Especially important in his account is the lack of understanding of local history and social processes among agents of rural development, and the failure to recognize local people as the holders of valuable knowledge regarding development options. Lilao presents national and multi-lateral development policy makers with conclusions about the importance of local participation and consultation within the decision making processes of rural development.

Representation of Hmong throughout the levels of the Lao government is far better than in

other countries in the region, and the Hmong also comprise a larger proportion of the total Lao national population than in neighboring countries. Nonetheless, the situation of the Hmong within Laos is still made tense by the history of conflict and the strength of Hmong kinship linkages with overseas Hmong. This makes the critique of development by a Hmong scholar all the more interesting and important. This book is a valuable contribution to the literature on development in Laos, and provides recommendations that should be heeded by development agencies. This work may also be a significant step in the development of a research community with strong linkages to, and stakes in, the reality of the local-national-global interface in social development.

These three recent publications represent three different types of scholarship. All three are welcome contributions to their fields. In addition to the information and insights that they each provide, considered together they suggest positive and creative new directions with relevance for not only scholars interested in Hmong and minority issues, but also those struggling to understand and explain the tensions, contradictions and creations in a world of intensifying interlinkages.

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Karel Steenbrink. *Catholics in Indonesia: A Documented History, 1808–1942*, Vol. 1: *A Modest Recovery, 1808–1903*. Leiden: KITLV, 2003, xviii + 534p.

Catholics comprise 3% of the Indonesian population, forming the third largest religious community after Muslims (87%) and Protestants (6%). In post-colonial Indonesia, Catholics, have wielded influence out of proportion to their modest numbers. In great part, this is thanks to

Catholic institutions (like their Protestant counterparts) having pioneered the introduction of modern education not just to the Christian minority but also to the non-Christian majority. Karel Steenbrink's *Catholics in Indonesia* offers a rich portrait of the roots of a community (or, better, a far-flung network of diverse communities) that has played an important role in the making of modern Indonesia.

In researching Indonesian Catholic history, Steenbrink, a major authority on Indonesian Islam and for many years coordinator of cooperation between Leiden University and Islamic institutes of higher learning in Indonesia, is returning in a sense to his own academic roots: he wrote his 1970 master's thesis for the Catholic University of Nijmegen on the Chinese Catholics of Bangka. A former seminarian, he is in some sense an "insider" to the world of the Catholic clergy who provide the bulk of his data, while at the same time his study of Islam and collaboration with Muslim intellectuals give him a wider perspective.

Although not himself seeking to offer any "grand theory" on the historical phenomenon of conversion to world religions or on the evolution of history in general, Steenbrink does hope that his study of the growth of Catholicism in late colonial Indonesia will offer insights useful to those inquiries. His own background enables him to spot weaknesses in generalizations such as Lamin Sanneh's thesis (p. 230) that differences between Christian and Islamic missionizing are attributable to the two religions' different attitudes to the translatability of scripture. Steenbrink queries (though more gently than in my paraphrase) whether Sanneh misses the fact that understandings of the person of Christ are more central to defining Christianity than is its scriptural tradition per se (and so Islam's attitude to the Qur'an is more properly to be compared to Christianity's attitude to Christ rather than to

the Bible).

The book is part of a projected two-volume survey of the history of Catholicism in the Netherlands East Indies covering the years 1808–1942. After two centuries when the VOC had prohibited Catholic clergy from entering its territories, it was the arrival of the Enlightenment in the form of Louis Bonaparte's Governor General Herman Willem Daendels that—under the principle of freedom of religion—re-opened the colony to Catholic priests (Daendels was himself a Catholic, a fact noted by Steenbrink but not commonly encountered in conventional histories). The inauguration of the Ethical Policy in 1901 marks the break between the two volumes. To help achieve its new goal of educating the indigenous, the colonial government sponsored a massive expansion of Christian missionary activity, resulting in an explosion in the indigenous Christian population (in the case of Catholics, a near 18-fold jump from 27,000 in 1900 to 480,000 in 1940). The communities established, often tenuously, in the nineteenth century would develop under greatly transformed circumstances during the twentieth century.

In Volume One, after briefly discussing the issue of Indonesian conversions to world religions in general, Steenbrink takes the reader on a tour of the archipelago: Java (Europeans and Eurasians)—Bangka (Chinese)—Borneo (Chinese and Dayaks)—Sumatra (Bataks)—Flores (a chapter each on the east and the center of the island)—Sumba—West Timor—Kendari and the Kai Islands—Minahasa—the Moluccas—Java (Javanese converts).

He begins with the Church's attempts to cater to the spiritual needs of the European and Eurasian Catholics in the cities and towns of Java (a large proportion consisted of soldiers in the colonial army) as well as the material ones of such marginal groups as mixed-race orphans. He documents the hierarchy's conflicts with a state

from which it welcomed money (priests received government salaries) but not interference. However, his focus does not remain long on the Europeans and Eurasians, for the dynamic sector of the Church and its future belonged to the indigenous population. Indeed, the European-Eurasian population did not exhibit the intensified religiosity that characterized both the colony's indigenous peoples, whether Muslim, Protestant, or Catholic, *and* (from 1870 to 1940) metropolitan Dutch society.

Steenbrink highlights the key roles played by laypersons in promoting Catholicism in the archipelago. This is no mere attempt to bring to light an "underground" history but rather recognizes the plain reality that lay leaders took initiative because clergy and other religious were very thin on the ground. This lay vanguard, as it were, of Catholicization included a wide range of characters: a Scottish-Malay clerk in Semarang who without Church authorization dispensed the sacraments from a house chapel; a Chinese physician from British Penang who founded a Catholic community among his countrymen in Bangka; a German (and Protestant!) entrepreneur on Kai Kecil who asked the bishop of Batavia to send priests to evangelize the local population.

The most successful lay leaders were the local rulers in Flores (who admittedly were rulers and were not starting from scratch, building on an indigenized Catholicism with Portuguese roots). Perhaps the most fascinating chapters in the book for the general reader are the two drama-filled ones on Flores: court intrigue; petty warfare; the spectacles of Ibero-Florinese piety; pagan highlanders coming to attend Catholic feasts; Catholic rulers maintaining traditional shrines for the pagan highlanders; and even a prophetess who inspired the supreme pagan priest in Larantuka to convert. The history Steenbrink presents here might well be fruitfully compared with that of the Catholi-

cized royal elite of early modern Kongo (northern Angola) studied by John K. Thornton (*The Kongolesse Saint Anthony*). The Florinese rajas were allying with the European Catholic hierarchy not only to increase their power over their own subjects but also to preserve as much autonomy as possible in the face of an increasingly intrusive Dutch colonial regime.

Catholics in Indonesia rests on a massive body of archival research; Steenbrink exploited the resources of five ecclesiastical archives, including that of the Jesuit Provincial in Semarang. Half of the volume consists of a selection of documents (in the original Dutch or in a few cases Latin or French, but each helpfully prefaced by a short English description). In many cases, a reader can go directly via a footnote from a point in Steenbrink's text to an excerpt of the source, although the compilation includes more than just material relevant to his narrative (for instance, we find two Malay catechisms, one in the dialect of Malay local to eastern Flores). Furthering its utility as a reference, Steenbrink adds appendices, one giving statistics for Catholic schools in the colony in 1903, others listing priests, Jesuit brothers, nuns, and Protestant clergy mentioned in the text accompanied with information on their career trajectories.

In this study, Steenbrink presents evidence that complicates our picture of both the colonial encounter and of religious conversion. Not all Europeans served the interests of the colonial government all the time, and not all Westernization disempowered the indigenous people. Steenbrink's perspective allows him to portray Dutch colonial officials, partaking of both Catholic and Enlightenment values, as just as much bearers of "complicated religious identities" as syncretistic "natives."

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青山和佳、『貧困の民族誌—フィリピン・ダバオ市のサマの生活』東京大学出版会、2006.
414p.

フィリピンのマイノリティ（少数民族）といえば、多様な非キリスト教徒を指す。彼らは人口の1割を占めるにすぎないが、同国を初めて訪れる観光客でも、「バジャウ（「サマ」の通称）」には会おうかもしれない。船着場で海に落とされたコインを素もぐりで拾いあげるパフォーマンスを観せる子どもたち。市場で、やせた身体にボロをまとって物乞いする母・娘。そんな彼らを思わず目で追っていると隣のフィリピン人が耳元でささやく。彼らは「バジャウ」なのだ。

本書は、周囲から「一番貧しい人たち」という眼差しを受けながら、ダバオという地方都市の「貧困」を生きるサマに焦点があてられている。研究目的は、「貧困の実体的理解」である。1997年8月より、著者は調査地に出入り入ったりして彼らの貧困のなかに身をおくうちに、「およそ考えていた仮説ではとらえにくい分析テーマ——エスニック・アイデンティティ」がその理解を助ける鍵概念になると気づいていく。

本書のすばらしさは、「このテーマを断ち切らずに、現場の人びとが行為や語りで示唆してくれる『世の中の見方』を手がかりに研究を進めたい」（p. 2）、そう考えた著者が労を惜しまず実施したユニークで緻密な調査と、その豊富な一次データの集積にある。8年間にもわたる調査の結果から、フィリピンのマイノリティ研究や、既存の経済学の「貧困研究」への方法論に貴重な貢献がなされている点も注目値する。その研究内容が評価され、本書は第2回井植記念「アジア太平洋研究賞」を受賞した。

フィリピンの少数民族は、近代化や国民国家の成立、そして経済のグローバル化のなかで、「エスニック・アイデンティティ」の著しい変容を迫られる。ダバオ市のサマの社会変容は他の少数民族とどう違うのか。著者はまず、フィリピンの少数民族やサマに関する先行研究を参考にし、比較することから、調査対象となったサマの「エスニック・アイデンティティ」変容の特徴を浮き彫りにしていく。

移住前からは大きく異なる生活空間で、多数派社会に組み込まれ、固有の生活様式や文化を喪失していく。この点で、サマはEder [1987] が研究対象としたバタックと同じである。実際、著者も、少数民族が「適応困難」を迫られる側面に光をあてたEderの考え方に強く共感している。しかし、Ederがバタックの社会を「民族絶滅の途上」にある、と描いたのに対して、著者はサマ社会を「生活様式の変化を迫られる過程でこそ、従前とは異なる民族意識が絶えず生成、変化」していると分析する。

では、多数派社会との接触のなかで、新しいエスニック・アイデンティティを獲得したサマは、清水 [1997] が提示したアエタのように、先住民としての意識に目覚め、主体的かつ柔軟に「文化戦略」や「アイデンティティ・ポリティクス」を実践するのだろうか。長津 [Nagatsu 2001; 長津 2001; 2004] や床呂 [1999] が描いたマレーシアやスルー諸島のサマのように、国民国家に包摂される過程で単に周縁化されるのではなく、戦略的にアイデンティティを使い分け、国家や国境の成立を利用するなどして、適応していく様子はみられるだろうか。または、金 [2003] が研究した豊島の家船民のように国家との「政治的交換」を成立させたり、赤嶺 [1999] が示したバラワン島のサマのように「市場的交換」をおこなうことは可能であろうか。

著者が対象とした社会では、「バジャウ」という主に海サマに対する自称・他称であったアイデンティティが、陸サマにまで拡大している。しかし、「アイデンティティ・ポリティクス」は展開されない。なぜなのか。先行研究との比較で、著者の視点は「エスニック・アイデンティティ」が動員される内外の条件の違いに向けられる。外部条件としては、現在のサマ社会には、アエタのような「外部からの注目やエスニック・アイデンティティの覚醒に結びつく」とされるような出来事はない。内部条件としては、それを可能にする政治的まとまりもなければ、指導者もない。資源は、市場経済の周縁部でわずかな交換を成り立たせるほどしかもちあわせていない。外的な要因からも内的な要因からも「周縁」への位置づけを余儀なくされながら、絶えず生成変化していく「エスニック・アイデンティティ」とは何なのか。

著者はこの実態に向き合いながら、貧困の度合い

こそが、ダバオ市のサマの「エスニック・アイデンティティ」に関係していることを導いていく。複雑多様で一見混沌としてみる現状のなかで、地域社会の人びとと根気よくつきあひながら、著者が構築したデータ収集方法とその内容は、敬服に値する。実際には、調査期間を通じて「価値前提を含む分析の枠組みが揺れ続け」(p. 325)、計画的ではなかった面もあるという。しかし、揺られながらも、「貧困の実体的理解」という焦点にあわせては一切ぶれることなく、調査方法や内容項目の一つ一つが熟考され、緻密に練りあげられていく。結果、付録に収められた豊富な一次データは、貧困を生きる民族集団の日常の経済的行為を理解する「厚いデータ」となって、読み手を圧倒する。ここに「開発経済学における貧困研究と人類学的な民族誌の手法とを橋渡し」(p. 325)しようとした著者の試みが達成されたことがうかがえる。両分野をつなぐ新しい研究手法の手法として、大いに参考にすることができよう。

こうした調査の積み重ねから、著者は「バジャウ」というアイデンティティが一定方向に変化しているのではなく、サマ社会内部で多方向に生成されるアイデンティティの総体であることを理解していく。多方向に膨らみながら、まとまりのない「エスニック・アイデンティティ」。この実態が、「バジャウ」「サマ」というアイデンティティを各々に自己同定し、別々の他者に向かって発信する、5つの異なる社会的地位のグループの紹介で示される。この5つのグループは、「社会的不平等の調査」の結果、被調査者の主観を重視して抽出されたものだ。つづいて、5つのグループを代表する家族の生活実態や語りが、第5～9章まで、それぞれ1章ずつ割かれて、ていねいに記述される。

本書の半分もの分量が割かれて、5つのグループを代表する家族が厚く記述されるのには理由がある。そこに本書のもう一つのねらい「貧困者を主体としてとらえることの必要性」が込められているとみるのは、深読みだろうか。第5～9章では、貧困の度合いが「エスニック・アイデンティティ」の操作範囲に関連していることが示されると同時に、サマが、貧困者という「卑賤感」に尊厳を傷つけられながらも、周縁に位置づけられる内外の条件下で「自尊心」を保ち、生活維持のために試行錯誤をおこな

いながら、主体的に暮らしている様子が伝えられる。

他者との関係や貧困の度合いによって形成される「エスニック・アイデンティティ」、そして「自尊心」や「尊厳」までもが、経済活動における主体的選択の一つ一つに影響する。本書は、人類学や地域研究にとっても示唆深い、なによりも既存の経済学の貧困研究への問題提起を出発点としている。経済学では、「エスニシティといえば固定的なレッテル(あるいはラベル)」という実体論的アプローチをとることが一般的で、「エスニック・アイデンティティ」は往々にして経済的な変数に対する説明変数とみなされる。これに対し、著者の研究は、「エスニック・アイデンティティ」を被説明変数としてもとらえなおす意義を見事に実証したといえるだろう。しかしながら、別の問題もある。

この点に関して、経済学と人類学や地域研究とのあいだに広がる見方のギャップのことである。エスニシティが「他者との関係性のなかで常に生成される」というアプローチは、いまや人類学や地域研究では常識である。経済学を背景とする著者が人類学のエスニシティの関係論の見識に驚いたように、人類学者や地域研究者は、経済学のエスニシティの固定的見識にショックを受けるはずだ。本書のアプローチが経済学にどのようにフィードバックされていくのかが楽しみである。同時に、本書に刺激され、経済学と人類学や地域研究をつなぐ、優れた仕事が生まれることを期待する。

さて、構成は「フィールドワークという調査プロセスそのもの」という本書は、「クリスチャン・バジャウとして新しく生きる?」というタイトルの章で、その実証研究部分がしめくられる。この章では、キリスト教の受容にともなって、外部から投入される資源がサマの暮らしぶりや、「エスニック・アイデンティティ」にどのような影響を与えているか、というテーマに焦点があてられている。

キリスト教の受容は、5つのグループのうち第3グループを中心に、第5グループを巻き込みながら、海サマ・コミュニティに新しい指導者としての牧師の台頭と権力構造の変化を引き起こし、サマの自己同定を肯定的なものに転じた。こうした動きは、「文化戦略」や「アイデンティティ・ポリティクス」の契機となるだろうか。著者は、その契機には

ならないと否定する。新しい指導者の台頭や権力構造の変化、そしてアイデンティティの肯定的転換は「コミュニティの結束と万人の社会的上昇というような単純な社会的変化を——少なくとも現時点では——もたらすのではなかった」(p. 290) のだと。

その理由は「エンパワーメントの壁」(pp. 312–316) という節で説明される。牧師を通じた外からの資源投入は、少なくとも調査時点においては、コミュニティ全体の結束よりは、コミュニティ内部の不平等を拡大し、社会の底上げをもたらしていない。またそれは、包囲社会(非サマ)との関係を本質的に変革するものでもない。とりわけ興味深いのは、福音伝道団体による外部からの資源投入がサマと非サマの力関係の変革を意図しない「慈善」(charity) であり、だからこそ非サマ社会は異議申し立てをしない。そして、だからこそサマは「弱者」であることと交換に財やサービスを得ることが可能になっている、というからくりの説明である。ここで、著者が冒頭でのべた疑問が思い起こされる。「だとすれば、サマは『貧困』ゆえに『貧困』に甘んじているのだろうか」。

しかし、牧師を中心として不平等な権力関係が創出されていること、「教育」が牧師とその家族によって社会的上昇の手段として位置づけられていくこと、そして、キリスト教化にともない被選挙民としての価値があがっていること、などの兆しは、同社会が以前よりも政治的交換や経済的交換の局面に動員されやすい社会に移行しているようにも読み取れる。

著者の調査地で 2004 年に伝道を開始したアメリカ人牧師がインターネットを通じて「バジャウ」に興味をもったように (p. 299), 「バジャウ」は皮肉にも「進歩の犠牲者」となった民族として、他のフィリピンの少数民族よりも外から注目されやすい存在だ。本書に登場する牧師がもたらした外からの資源は、著者の観察期間においては、社会の構造を変えるものではなかった。しかし、もう少し長い時間軸をとってダバオ市のサマ社会をみた場合は、どうなるだろうか。牧師によってもたらされた社会の小さな出来事は、文化戦略や「アイデンティティ・ポリティクス」の萌芽であるとは、とらえられないだろうか。

社会変容をみるときに、時間軸をどう設定するのか。この問題に対しても、著者は自覚的である。本書の随所に、その記述が、著者の観察期間という時間軸に限るものである、との断り書きがある。だからこそ、定点観測継続への意欲をみせるのかもしれない。このすばらしい研究に、続編がつむがれていくことを、期待する。

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ラオスの人たちは総じて奥ゆかしい。面と向かって他人を罵ったり、声高に批判したりするという光景に出くわすことはまずないと言っていい。しかし、時として一切の婉曲的表現を排し（子供のような率直さで）、こちらが一番言ってもらいたくないことを指摘されてしまい、言葉を失うことがある。

それは数カ月前、ラオス S 県在住の郷土史家 A さんにお話を伺っていたときのことである。

「村の歴史についてお年寄りたちにインタビューするとき、『子どもの頃、布や紙に書かれた古い文書を見たことはありませんか』ときいてみることにしているのですが、いつも決まって『子どもの頃、見たことはあるけれど、今ではすっかりなくなってしまったね』と同じ答えが返ってくるのです。本当に全部なくなってしまったのでしょうか」と真面目な顔をして尋ねる私に、A さんは顔をわずかに左右に振りながら、一言つぶやいた。

「君はまだまだだな」

このやり取りの含意を理解してもらうためには、ラオスの文献史料および社会主義革命（1975 年）以降の政治・社会状況について若干の説明が必要かもしれない。

ラオスの文献史料について語るとき、まず、あげなければならないのが「バイラン文書（貝葉文書）」である。これは、ラオス語で「ラン」と呼ばれるヤシ科の植物の葉を細長い長方形に切りそろえ、その表面に鉄筆で文字を刻んだものを紐で綴じた文書で、内容は仏教経典、民話、歴史、法律、占星術、呪術、薬学、慣習、儀礼等多岐にわたっている。1992 年から 2002 年にかけて、ラオス情報文化省はドイ

「伝える人」になるために

—— ラオス^{じかたもんじょ}地方文書探索の旅から ——

増 原 善 之*

ツ政府の支援を受け「ラオス・バイラン文書保存プロジェクト」を実施し、ラオス全土で 376,000 束におよぶバイラン文書を調査・登録し、このうち 54,000 束あまりをマイクロフィルムに撮影した。¹⁾ これらの文書は主として仏教寺院で保存されてきたものだが、村人たちが自宅で保管している場合も少なくない。いずれにせよ、これだけ膨大な量のバイラン文書が、今なお寺院に保存されていることは、ラオスでは伝統的に「バイラン文書の写本を作り、寺院に奉納すること」が大いなる功德行為の一つと見なされてきたという事情による。しかし、すでに存在している写本をさらに書き写す——その過程で単純な写し違いはもちろん、意図的な加筆、修正および削除もあったに違いない——ことで再生産されてきたバイラン文書は、現在進行中の出来事を記録するという同時代性に乏しいため、歴史研究に使用する場合、種々の制約があることも否定できない。その意味で後に述べる「行政文書」などとは異なるカテゴリーに属する史料と言える。

ところで、ラオスには公文書館に類するものが存在せず、ラオス国立図書館もバイラン文書以外の古文書を収集・保存していないため、歴史研究者がラオスにおいて公文書館や図書館に通って行政文書などの同時代史料を調査することは初めから無理な話である。したがって、このような古文書を本当に研究したければ、自分でラオス全土を歩き回って史料を探し出すしかない（ラオスの歴史研究は文字通り「フィールドワーク」である）。残念ながら、ラオス国内に現存するバイラン文書以外の古文書につ

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1) Dara Kanlaya. 2005. The Preservation of Palm-leaf Manuscripts in the Lao PDR. In *The Literacy Heritage of Laos: Preservation, Dissemination and Research Perspectives*, p.35. Vientiane: The National Library of Laos.

いて、まとまった調査はなされておらず、この分野の研究は依然として手探りの状態にある。そうした状況もあって、歴史研究者の間ですら、行政文書等の同時代史料が存在しないことを前提とし、新史料の探索を初めから諦める向きがあった（お恥ずかしい話だが、少し前までは私もそのうちの一人であった）。

その一方で、バンコクのタイ国立図書館古文書部には、ラオス・ラーンサーン王国期の行政文書が数十通保管されている。これらの文書の多くは、木綿布やサー紙（クワ科のカジノキから作られた紙）に墨や鉛筆で書かれたもので、国王による地方国首長の任命、地方国の領域、領民支配、国王への貢納、地方国の特産品の取扱いなどに関する記事を含んでおり、ラーンサーン王国の地方統治制度を研究する上で不可欠の同時代史料である。これらは、同王国の歴代国王から現ラオス・ホアパン県にかつて存在した地方国の首長たちに送付された文書が中心であり、1880年代に南中国からラオス北部一帯に侵入してきた中国匪賊ホー族を討伐するため、同地に派遣されたシャム（タイ）軍によってバンコクに持ち去られたものと伝えられている。タイ国立図書館であれ、どこであれ、ラーンサーン王国期の行政文書が現実に存在しているという事実は、今後、地道に探索を続けていけば、ラオス国内でもこの種の行政文書が発見される可能性があることを示している。

郷土史家 A さんとのやり取りに話を戻そう。

言うまでもなく、私が村のお年寄りに「布や紙に書かれた古い文書」について尋ねているのは、このようなラーンサーン王国期の行政文書を念頭においてのことである。しかし、そのありかを尋ねても「子どもの頃、見たことはあるけれど、今ではすっかりなくなってしまったね」という同じ答えしか返ってこないというわけである。

バイラン文書を除いて、現存する史料の量が極めて少ないことについては、これまで様々な説明がなされてきた。例えば、①伝統的にラオス人は（中国人などと違って）物事を「記録する」という意識が乏しく、行政文書であれ商業文書であれ、これまで作成されてきた文書の量自体がもともと少なかった。また、②中国の歴代王朝などに比べて、ラーンサーン王国の官僚機構は未成熟であり、その根幹を

成す文書主義も未発達だったので、行政文書の作成数も少なかった、などである。これらは作成された文書自体が少なかったという観点からの説明である。さらに、かつて存在した文書が消失していった原因としては、③ラオスの高温多湿な自然環境などにより、腐敗したり、カビが生えたり、あるいは虫やネズミなどにかじられたものが、最終的には人の手によって廃棄されたこと、④ラーンサーン王国期の隣国による侵略の結果、多数の文書が焼却されたり、持ち去られたりしたこと、⑤20世紀後半のインドシナ戦争中に多くの村々が爆撃を受け、家屋とともに文書も焼失したこと、などがあげられる。加えて、⑥1975年の社会主義革命の前後、混乱した社会状況の中で焼却され、廃棄された文書も少なくなかったであろう。

しかし、である。先に述べたバイラン文書は、同様の自然環境の下で戦禍を被りながらも37万束を越える膨大な量が、今なお全国の寺院に保存されているではないか。それに、私がインタビューを行ったお年寄りたちは、「子どもの頃、見たことがある」と口を揃えて証言しているのである（もちろん、それらが私の捜し求めている行政文書かどうか定かではないが）。たとえ、作成された文書の量自体が少なかったにせよ、わずか数十年の間にきれいさっぱりと消えてしまうものだろうか。その疑問が、「（文書は）本当に全部なくなってしまったのでしょうか」という A さんへの問いかけになったのである。

「君はまだまだだな」という A さんのつぶやきに当惑し、言葉を失っていると、彼は「ラオス史料論」の講義を始めてしまった。

「史料とは何か？」一呼吸おいて A さんが続ける。

「史料とは母親の乳房のようなものだ」

一瞬、ラオス語を聞き間違えたのかと思った。「史料」と「乳房」が頭の中で結びつかなかったからだ。困惑を浮かべる私を一瞥すると、A さんは得意そうに説明を始めた。「普通、女性の乳房というものは他人に見せるものではないだろう。乳を飲む我が子と夫以外には見せてはいけないものだ。史料も同じことだ。分かるか？」

A さんの譬えが的確であるか否かはさておき、なぜ、先祖から受け継いだ文書を他人に見せてはいけないのか。A さんだけでなく、ラオスの歴史研究者

たちは、「ラオス人は、金銀財宝であれ、なんであれ、祖先から受け継いだものについては、それらを所有していることさえ口外すると祖父母や両親から厳命される。古文書も例外ではない」と説明してくれる。財産価値のあるものについて、その所有を口外しないというのは分かるとしても、どうして古文書がそれと同じ扱いを受けるのか、疑問も湧かないわけではない。しかし、とにかく「他人に見せるなど命じられたから、見せてはいけないのだ」という極めて単純な理由が最大の理由らしい。まして古文書を他人に貸して、もしそれが返って来なかったら、それこそ「ご先祖様に顔向けができない」ということになるのだろう。したがって、古文書のありかを尋ねられたとき、とりあえず「今はもうなくなってしまった」と答えておくというのはごく自然な対応なのだ。

さらに少し前までなら、政治・社会状況も影響していたように思う。1975年の社会主義革命を機にラオスの社会構造は一変した。王族は言うに及ばず、旧体制下の高級官僚、地方国首長、在地の有力者および大商人などの一族は、先を争うように国外に逃亡していったが、中には何らかの理由により、ラオスに留まった人々もいた。いずれにせよ、旧体制下で行政文書に触れる機会があったのは、まさにこういう人たちだったのだ。だが、ラオスに留まった旧支配者層にとって、自分と一族の「過去」は固く封印しておかなければならないものだった。また、先祖から受け継いだ古文書の内容が、現在の政治・社会状況の中で特に差し障りのあるものとは考えられないものであったとしても、そうした文書を所持しているという事実が、旧体制下で支配者の側にいたことを示す動かぬ証拠になってしまうのである。この種の文書は、一族の中だけで密かに継承されていくべきものののだ。²⁾

いずれの理由にせよ、見ず知らずの外国人にいきなり古文書のありかを尋ねられて、二つ返事で見せてくれるようなおめでたいラオス人はいない。これまで私はそうした事情に対してあまりにも無神経で

ありすぎた。それだけで歴史研究者失格であり、Aさんの言葉を借りれば、歴史研究者としては「まだまだ」なのである。

Aさん曰く、「古文書を個人で保管している人はS県内にも結構いる。しかし、彼らは自分がそれらを持っていることさえ、他人には言いたがらない。かりに持っていることを打ち明けてくれたとしても、なかなか実物を見せてくれない。私も古文書の持ち主の元へ何度も何度も足を運び、それでようやく見せてもらったりしているのだ。もっとも、かなり心の広い人でも、コピーや写真撮影はもちろん、その場で筆写することさえなかなか許してくれないが……」「でも……」と私は恐る恐るAさんに質問した。「せっかく古文書を見せてもらっても、それを活用して研究したり、翻字刊行したりすることに古文書の持ち主が同意してくれないのであれば、結局何もできず、意味がないのではないのでしょうか」。Aさんはこれまで書き溜めてきた『S県史』の手書き原稿を見せながら、「その通りだ。私は自分の知り得たことのうち、ごく一部分しかここに書いていない。だが、今は公表できない情報や史料も（この『S県史』とは別に）どこかに書き留めて保管しておけば、私が死んだ後——50年後あるいは100年後かもしれないが——、それを使ってS県の歴史を研究する人が出てきてくれるかもしれない。その時のために、古文書の持ち主の同意が得られれば、可能な限り実物を見せてもらい、筆写するなり、写真を撮るなりして、次の世代に伝えていくことが一番大切なのだ。研究云々はずっと先の話だ……」。Aさんは「伝える人」になろうとしているのだ。

私はこれまで、「ラオスで何をしているのですか」と尋ねられれば、臆面もなく「ラーンサーン王国の歴史を研究しています」などと答えていた。今思えば、赤面ものである。ラオス史に本気で取り組もうとするなら、ラオスの人々の古文書に対するさまざまな思いを理解することから始めなければならない。そして、自分の足で村々を回り、人々に私という人間を理解し、信頼してもらわなければならない。そうした過程を踏まえたうえで、もし、門外不出の古文書を見せてもらえる機会が与えられたなら（公表できるか否かは別として）、それらをできる限り忠実に記録し、後世へ伝えていくことに力を注ぐ

2) 行政文書以外にも、かつての地方国首長や在地の有力者の末裔の中には、一族の「家系図」を今なお保持しているという話も聞いているが、まだ実物を確認するには至っていない。

べきなのだ。Aさんの言う通り、「研究」はずっと先の話である。

最近、私はS県を訪れるたびに、Aさんの現地調査に同行させてもらい、村々の長老や僧侶への聞き取り調査および『S県史』掲載用の写真撮影などを手伝っている。私自身の調査旅行と言うより、Aさんに弟子入りして「伝える人」になるための修行を

していると言った方が実態に近いような気がする。晴れて「免許皆伝」となるときが来るのかどうか、それは分からないが、ラオス古文書の世界を縦横に駆け巡る日が来ることを夢見て地道に努力していきたい。

私のラオス史への取り組みは、始まったばかりである。

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現地通信

