

## CHAPTER 5

### Self-Identification

#### Introduction

The self-identification of the KMT Yunnanese will be discussed in this chapter. It is not possible to describe ethnic identity among the KTM Yunnanese in a simple term because not all of them were born in the same place, took the same path to Thailand, experienced the same events, and grew up in the same environment. Some of KMT Yunnanese were born in China, some in Burma, some in the mountains and some in Thailand. In order to demonstrate this clearly, the people will be divided into four groups according to age. Following birth-age groups correspond to the five periods in the political history of the village because all of the people born in a certain period have experienced the same political pressure and social circumstance which have had a great impact on identity formation as well as cultural practices in the village.

#### 5-1. Case Studies: Life Stories of 12 Informants

12 life stories are exemplified from the case study in order to clarify the features of people in Baan Tham Santisuk in their 30s to 60s, who have experience a wide range of backgrounds. These case studies are based on the stories related to the researcher and the reported language of the case study reflects the simplicity of the reporting environment.

##### Case 1: Mr. Cin

Sex: Male

Age: 66 years old

Birthplace / Year: China / 1935

Cin was 13 years old when he left his hometown. He was born in a farmhouse. When the fighting between the Nationalists and Communists worsened in the middle of the 1940s, he stopped farming and fled to Burma. He joined a self-defense guard on his way to Burma. Since then, he drifted in mountainous border areas until he arrived in Thailand. The domestic fighting never stopped. Chinese Communists were following and attacking at his group. On the way he had to move frequently and immediately to escape being caught by his enemies. The only way to survive was to run away when he saw the enemies. He had nothing but one old useless pistol and a knife to protect himself from danger. After he had wandering along the borders for 11 years, he and his group came into Thailand. At the time he was 24 years old.

One year later, he married a 16 year old Thai girl from Chiang Rai. The two met at a Thai temple near the village where they went sightseeing with their friends. After they had gone out several times, he brought betrothal money to her family to take her as his wife. She accepted his proposal and moved into his house to stay with his family and relatives. Conversation was difficult since neither of them understood the language of their partner. At that time, having a family was more important for him, and for her, than communicating with each other. He wanted to have a family to settle himself in Thailand, and she wanted stable income. The KMT soldiers were in a higher position compared to the Thai villagers, though they were financially poor. Moreover, he was getting 20 baht each month for military stipends from the KMT army.

After he had a family, he could no longer live on just his military allowance salary. In order to make a living, he did everything he could. Because he had an official ID card which enabled him to leave the village to work outside. His first job was carrying and selling eggs. He brought about 10,000 to 20,000 eggs to Chiang Rai, Chiang Mai, and Lampang to sell; 3 baht for 10 eggs. He also took waged laborer's work throughout the year. Cutting trees was one of his temporary jobs. He would receive gain 3~5 baht for cutting one tree. It was difficult to find day jobs at that time because local people were afraid to hire Chinese immigrants. Only those which Thai people would not take were jobs he could apply for. Most of the jobs were not well

paid for the hard work involved but he took every chance to get the money since job opportunities were very limited for him as a Chinese immigrant.

He had made his living from egg trading and wage labor until his third child was born in the early 1970s. It became impossible for him to afford all the expenses of supporting his family by those small trade and temporary jobs. One day, a friend visiting him from Burma, saw he was bringing up three children by himself and asked him if he was interested in going back to the military again to improve his family finances. He accepted his friend's offer, went back to the military and saw action in Burma. For about the next 10 years he served as a Nationalist army. Only once a year could he go home to visit his family after he had completed his military service and by the time he came back to Thailand, there was an a fourth child. He went into small trade again. He collected ice from many places in Chiang Rai and sold it schools in Chiang Rai as well as in the village. He kept selling ice for 1~2 years until his fifth child was born. That was the turning point in his life. At the time when his fifth child was born, his eldest daughter, who had gone to Taiwan, started to send money home to support her family. After she had graduated from a school in Taiwan, she even went to Japan and continued sending large remittances from there. Her support relieved his burden and he could finally stop working. Furthermore, a few years after she came back from Japan, she bought a 14-rai piece of land in Chiang Rai. He hired people to cultivate rice and gave 2% of the total profit to them. Rice was sold at a good price. Besides the income from his children's remittance, there was always rice to eat. This property completely reformed his life and made the family finance stable. He did not need to worry about starvation anymore. After a while, they stopped selling rice and started to store rice for self-consumption.

**Case 2: Mr. Yang**

Sex: Male

Age: 66 years old

Birthplace /Year: China /1935

Yang is one of the leaders who established the village in 1954. He was 18 years old when he left China. He fled to Burma with his father, who was one of leaders of the Nationalist armies, and General Lee, who became the first headman of the village. During the 4 years he was in Burma, he attended a military school founded by Nationalist armies in Burma. It was an obligation for every soldier to learn how to fight. Afterwards his military group was ordered to fight on the border between Thailand and Burma and was stationed there. No one knew when they would come across the enemy and when the enemy would attack. Life was chaotic and dangerous. Living conditions were too difficult for those women and elders who were dependents of the soldiers. As an assistant, Mr. Yang negotiated with Thai authorities, along with his father and General Lee. Their request to stay temporarily in Thailand was approved by the district officers and their dependents were brought from the mountain to Ban Tham Santisuk in 1954. He took part in the procedure of organizing migration and settlement as well as organizing Chinese school in the new village.

Yang was 22 years old when he arrived in the village. By his own experience, he keenly felt the necessity of learning Thai so that he could negotiate with relevant Thai authorities. He was too old to go to school so he tried to learn Thai by himself. He bought a Thai dictionary and newspapers and tried to read Thai. He also bought Thai tapes to practice Thai pronunciation and to correct his Chinese accent. Although children in the village were going to the Thai school, which was controlled by the Border Patrol Police, there were actually none of them who could speak Thai well and no one was interested in learning Thai seriously. Therefore, he was the only one at the time who could speak Thai. Due to his Thai proficiency, he played an important role in public relations for the village. Whenever someone needed to talk to Thai authorities, he was always there to mediate between the two sides.

Yang taught Chinese at the Chinese school until he married a Yunnanese woman when he was 23 years old. After he had children, he stopped teaching and left the village to make his living. It was not easy for him to find a job in Thailand because he could not freely leave the village. He only had a temporary ID card and

had to ask for permission from the immigration office to leave the village. It took 2 to 3 days for the procedure and permission was issued for only few days. That is why it was more practical to go to Burma or Laos to work. His relatives were also in Burma and Laos, and this kinship network helped him carry out his business easily. He engaged in jade trading between Burma and Laos for 13 years. He bought diamonds and jade in Burma and brought them into Laos. Income from jade trading was not stable; the price for the precious stone was sometimes 10,000 to 20,000 baht and sometimes 400,000 baht to 500,000 baht for a shipment. Throughout the 1970s, he frequently engaged in border trading to make money.

According to Chinese tradition, it is the eldest son's responsibility to stay at home and look after the family. Mr. Yang was the eldest son and there were another 7 younger brothers and sisters. Through the money he made trading jade, he sent his 7 other brothers/sisters to Chinese school. They all completed the Chinese school and achieved success in their lives by going to Taiwan. Although one of his younger brothers recently returned from Taiwan and opened a factory in Chiang Mai, he is the only one who remained in the village to take care his father.

After he stopped trading, he went back to the Chinese school and has been teaching Chinese there for many years. He also sent his 5 children to go to the Thai and Chinese school in the village and to Taiwan after their graduation. One of his daughters, who went to Japan for further study for two years, is working in a Japanese travel agency in Bangkok. Three sons have settled in Taiwan and the other daughter is working at a Japanese factory in Wiang Papao.

**Case 3: Mr. Xie**

**Sex: Male**

**Age: 57 years old**

**Birthplace / Year: China / 1944**

Xie was 13 years old when he left China. He did not join the Nationalist army in Burma. He stayed in Burma for 5 years and came to Thailand alone when he was

18 years old. He stayed in Chiang Rai at first for 10 years and worked with local Yunnanese Chinese there from helping transport goods. In order to look for a better life, he left Chiang Rai and moved from one place to another until he reached Baan Tham Santisuk. Right after his arrival, he married a Christian Akha woman who came to sell vegetables from her village in a mountain. When his first baby was born in 1974, Xie and his wife raised pigs for sale to make a living. It was after his second child was born in 1978 that a Christian missionary came to the village and gave land to all Christians in the village. The missionary encouraged him to cultivate crops so that his family would have always something to eat. Since then, he has been making a living growing vegetables. He could make around 4~5,000 baht per month and sometimes his monthly income to 2~3,000 baht, depending on fluctuating demand each month. Apart from farming, he also received monies from his children in Taiwan on an irregular basis.

**Case 4: Mr. Chen**

**Sex: Male**

**Age: 52 years old**

**Birthplace / Year: Burma / 1949**

Chen was born in Burma and lived there for 17 years until he came to Thailand. He had a Burmese ID card when he arrived in Ban Tham Santisuk in 1966. After his arrival, he went to the Thai school, which was founded by the Border Patrol Police, but stopped attending after three years because he was too old to go to elementary school. Besides the fact that he was too old to study, he had to work for his family. However, getting a job in Thailand was not easy for him, much the same as other villagers. He could go nowhere without permission, which took several days to get and usually was valid only one day. Due to those conditions and the fact that he had a Burmese ID card and that his relatives were living in Burma, he started trading in the regions, especially between Burma and Thailand. He bought toys in Burma or Tachilek and took them to Chiang Mai, Mae Sai, Chiang Rai, Chiang Khon and even Bangkok. Since it was considered as illegal trade, he had to walk through the mountains over Mae Hong Son to go to Burma. When he crossed the border, he

was escorted by Nationalist troops in Doi Mae Salong. The troops gave him security and protection but he had to pay a trading tax to them. He brought many goods made in China, drugs, clothes and jade, and sold them in Thailand. Jade was the most profitable among those. He had even went to Laos occasionally before Laos became Communist. Some of his friends opened shops in Laos, enabling him to extend his trading area to Laos. He bought students' socks and other daily necessities from Laos and brought them back to sell in Chiang Mai.

After 10 years of staying in the village carrying on border trade, he stopped and taught Chinese at the Chinese school for a couple of years. He was proficient in Chinese since he had completed Chinese junior high in Burma. The Chinese school in the village wanted him to stay, but he left the village to work in Lampang for 2 years. At the time, he was 27 years old. After he came back to the village, he engaged in border trading again for another 10 years, until he had got an alien card in 1988. Laos was no longer a country he could enter freely due to the Communist government there.

Chen had married a Yunnanese woman from Burma when he was trading. He held the ceremony in Burma and came back to Thailand with her. Their first baby was born in 1979, but he had to leave the village to work. When the second child was born, he was engaged in Jade and Diamond trading. He brought jewelry to a Yunnanese man in Chiang Mai who owned jewelry shop there. His trading partners in Burma were Yunnanese traders as well. After 1985, it became difficult to carry out trade between Thailand and Burma because the government started to strictly regulate those doing illegal trade. He was 36 years old when his third and fourth children, twins were born. Instead of border trading, he made sweets, "Khao Soi" (Northern Thai noodles), "khanom jin" (one of Thai noodle), and sold them in Chiang Rai, Chiang Dao, and Chiang Sean to make a living. Occasionally he still went to Burma to buy Jade and other goods to make money, but not so often as before. When he finally obtained a Tang Daw card (alien card/ legal status for immigrants) in 1988, 22 years after his arrival, he completely stopped border trading. He brought in income by making foods, but it was only enough to live day to day. Later, he started

to raise pigs. Though he raised about 200 pigs, he quit in 2000 because of the smell. The Chinese committee did not want villagers to raise pigs anymore because of the smell. He had to sell all the pigs to butchers in Mae Sai, Huekai, as well as people in these villages. Big pigs, which weighed more than 100 kg, brought in 3,000 to 4,000 baht. He started to teach Chinese at the Chinese school again in 1995 and has been teaching there till now.

**Case 5:Mrs. Zen**

**Sex: Female**  
**Age: 55 years old**  
**Birthplace / Year: China / 1946**

Zen comes from a farming family. She left China when she was 10 years old. She came to Thailand with her parents in a group of more than 100 people. The large group was divided into smaller groups of 20 people. They walked through mountainous areas everyday. She had to endure hunger all the time until she finally reached Baan Tham Santisuk. At the time, Zen was 15 years old.

She married a KMT solider who was stationed at Mae Salong at the beginning of the 1970s. Their first child was born in 1973. Ever since the Nationalist troops arrived in Thailand in the beginning of the 1960s, her husband had served in the Fifth army and run between Mae Salong and Ban Tham Santisuk for about 20 years. Appointed by the leader of the Fifth army, he became the third Chinese headman in the village in 1975. However, he still had to come and go between the village and Mae Salong, and so Zen's family life remained unsettled. She had to stay at home alone and take care of her children while raising chickens and pigs to make a living. There was no communication with Thais except for occasional dealing. Her life became more stable when her husband finally came back from Mae Salong in the middle of the 1980s. Since he had been granted Thai citizenship as compensation for his military service, she could buy land outside of the village in his name and started to cultivate vegetables with her husband. Even though her husband had come back home, she did not go out except on special occasions, such as when she needed a birth

certificate, when she needed to buy seeds for planting, and so on, because she did not know how to speak Thai at all. But she herself has never thought about going back to China. From the beginning, she regarded Thailand as her new home.

Their monthly income from farming depends on the market, season and quality of the vegetables. Their minimum income per month is around 2,000 to 3,000 baht, and at most they earn 5,000 to 6,000 baht. Besides income from agriculture, she also gets monthly remittances from her children who are in Taiwan. She has five children: 28, 24, 18, 17, and 15 years old. The four older children have all left the village and went Taiwan after they finished Chinese school. They send about 2,000 to 3,000 baht each month.

#### **Case 6: Mrs. Zhan**

**Male: Female**

**Age: 63 years old**

**Birthplace / Year: China / 1938**

Zhan left China with her husband. While living in Chiang Thun in Burma for several years, she gave birth to two children. The fighting in Burma got worse so she had to leave Burma with her family, and more than 300 soldiers. At the time one of her children was 3 and the other one was only 6 months old. She had to carry her babies on her back and front and walked through the mountains for 22 days until they arrived in Mae Sai. There was no light used on a road everyday. There was no flashlight on the way. She was very afraid of being arrested by the police or Burmese armies.

When she arrived in Ban Tham Santisuk in 1959, there were already residents in the village, but there was nothing but forest around the village. She rented a house for 20 baht per month from early-arrival KMT families to settle down in the village. Her husband had gone to fight again. Getting permission to leave the village, she went to Chiang Rai to look for a job. After about 10 years working, she could finally buy her own house. It cost about 2,000 to 3,000 baht, noodles cost only 50 satang at the time.

Zhan's living conditions have improved since the 1990s, when she started to receive money from her children who had left the village. She has a total five children; except the oldest daughter who stays in the village with her, all of her children left the village and settled in Taiwan and Bangkok. The youngest son still goes an international college in Bangkok. A couple of years ago, the eldest son built a grocery to sell sweets in front of the house so that she has something to do in the village.

#### **Case 7: Ms. Chu**

**Sex: Female**

**Age: 44 year old**

**Birthplace / Year: Burma / 1957**

Chu was born in Burma but moved to Laos when she was one year old. She lived in a Yunnanese community in Laos for 13 years. She lived in a community which only spoke Yunnanese Chinese. Chu's father was a member of the KTM army and worked as a cook while he was in Laos. Her mother, who was also Yunnanese Chinese, cultivated land. Siw attended the state school but stopped going there after few months. She did not like to go there because she was the only non-Laotian student in the class. Other students teased her and even hit her when the teacher was not looking. She stopped going to the school and helped her father work, boiling rice, cooking, bringing medicine, and also helping her mother.

In the beginning of the 1970s, Chu's father got a house in Ban Tham Santisuk and her family moved into the village when she was 14 years old. She went to neither Chinese school nor Thai school in Baan Tham, but worked to support her parents. When she was 17 years old, she left the village to work in a plant factory in Chiang Rai. She worked as a cook in the staff cafeteria. Several years later, she married a Yunnanese man who she met at the same work place in 1980. She was 23 years old.

After her marriage, Chu moved to Chiang Mai and had her first child in 1981 and second in 1986. She then came back to the village with her two sons to send

them to the Chinese school and has been living in Ban Tham Santisuk since, working day jobs near the village. By doing these odd job, she can make at least 120 baht a day. Her husband has been working in Taiwan as a construction worker and sending between 10,000 to 25,000 baht per month.

Although Chu has obtained Thai citizenship, she admitted that she doesn't know much about Thai culture. In the same way, she doesn't think that she knows about Chinese culture well. What she knows about Chinese culture is only she has seen in the Yunnanese community in Laos and here in Ban Tham Santisuk. Chu feels that she doesn't know real Chinese culture, and leaves it to the Chinese school to teach Chinese culture.

#### **Case 8: Ms. Ling**

**Sex: Female**

**Age: 38 year old**

**Birthplace / Year: Thailand / 1963**

Ling was born in a small KMT village in the mountains in Thailand and grew up there until the Thai government relocated the KMT Yunnanese from the mountains in 1975 to the lowland in Thailand. Her parents were both members of the KMT army. With encouragement from the Thai government, her father left their village and settled in Ban Tham Santisuk when she was then 12 years old. After they had arrived in the village, her father went on a military expedition in the mountains again. Her mother made a living by selling tofu and soymilk at the village market. There were a total of 9 brothers and sisters, including herself. Ling is the oldest daughter. In order to support her family, she went to work in Whiang Papao 3 to 4 days a week, even though she was still of school age. When she was at home, she had to help her mother or take care of her younger siblings since it was considered the elder siblings' duty to look after their younger brothers and sisters, as well as support their parents. She could rarely go to the Chinese school in between her job and housework.

When Ling became old enough to leave the house, she went to Bangkok to work in one of Taiwanese factories in the beginning of the 1980s. All the other employers were Chinese, including Yunnanese Chinese and overseas Chinese. Though the working hours were long and tough, she could make more than 10,000 baht a month. At the time, around the beginning of the 1980s, people like her, who could speak Chinese, could make a lot of money working with Chinese businessmen in the city. While working at the factory, she attended an adult school for her secondary education. After working during the daytime, she went to adult school from 6:00 to 8:00 in the evening for three years until she received a Thai junior high school diploma. In the meantime, she also tried to study Chinese by herself. After she came back from the school, she studied Chinese alone. Though her life was quite busy, Ling was very happy about it because it was her first time spending her time and money on studying.

After she worked in Bangkok for about 10 years, she left for Japan in 1991 as a migrant worker on a two years contract when she was 28 years old. After she came back from Japan, she was hired by the Japanese president of a Japanese company in Bangkok and served as his housemaid starting in 1993. Ling had two children at the time but she left them in the village so she could concentrate on her work. She worked so hard to support her children and her family in the village that she severely damaged her health. She was taken into hospital in 1999 and stayed there for 2 years.

She has just recovered from her illness and came back to Ban Tham Santisuk in 2001. Now, Ling lives with her two sons, aged 9 and 12. To make a living, she makes sweets at home and sells them in the village's market, in Chiang Rai and elsewhere she gets orders. Her husband is in Taiwan and supports her by sending remittances from there. Her Japanese ex-employer couple is also supporting her, helping with her health and her two children.

In the future, she has plan to attend vocational school in Bangkok for Bakery, after her children grow up, so that she might have a chance to have a shop in the village and make enough income via her own business.

**Case 9: Ms. Shue****Sex: Female****Age: 38 year old****Birthplace: Burma / 1963**

Shue was born and grew up in a Yunnanese village in Burma. She was 18 years old when she came to Thailand. Her parents and relatives left for Thailand before she came. When her parents first came to Thailand, they had brought nothing but a bag, a pair of trousers and one piece of clothe. Though her father used to be a KMT soldier in Burma, he came as a refugee and completely withdrew from the army when he arrived in Ban Tham Santisuk. Her parents first worked for a Thai cultivating land. When Shue arrived in Thailand in 1981, her parents were living in Chiang Mai and owned a shop. She engaged in trade between Chiang Mai and Burma to help her parents. She brought goods such as socks and bicycles from Burma to Chiang Mai, and coffee, garlic, and other agricultural products from Chiang Mai to Burma. Her main customers were Yunnanese Chinese since she could speak only Yunnanese Chinese, a little Burmese, and a little Tai. Though there were only a few times, when she dealt with Thai customers, she tried to adapt herself, speaking Tai, which is similar to the northern Thai dialect, in order to make a good deal as well as keep a good relationship with Thai customers. Though she could not speak same language as them, Shue liked to deal with Thai people because it was easy for her to handle Thai people.

After she worked in Chiang Mai for two years, Shue went to Taiwan as a migrant worker in 1983. She was sent to a hospital to take care of old patients. After she came back from Taiwan, she married a Yunnanese man from Ban Tham Santisuk. He completed junior high school in both Chinese and Thai, and often emphasized the values of education. He put especially great importance on Chinese education. After she first gave birth in 1987 and again in 1988, her family moved to Baan Tham Santisuk to provide their children a Chinese education.

Now, she stays in her relative's house and takes care of her three children. Her life in the village is completely dependent on remittances from her husband, who is working in Taiwan right now. The amount is usually about 10,000 baht per month. Although she always asks her children about their homework, she cannot check them since she can hardly read and write Chinese. What she does for her children is to sit beside them until they finish doing their homework. In the meantime, she also tries to speak a lot of Chinese with her children so that they do not forget Chinese and improve their speaking skill.

**Case 10: Ms. Lee**

**Sex: Female**

**Age: 48 year old**

**Birthplace/ Year: Thailand (Doi Thung) / 1954**

Lee was born in Mt. Doi Thung in Thailand in 1954. Her father had left China and joined the Nationalist army on their way to Thailand. Her mother followed him later and stayed in Doi Thung with other KMT dependents until 1954. Then her family moved to Mae Faluang and stayed until the beginning of the 1970s. She went to Chinese school in Tae Thai village, which belonged to General Khun Sa, up to junior high. When Lee's mother passed away, her father re-married with a Thai woman and Lee went to work in Hue Phun. She taught Chinese for 10 years in Hue Phun and married a KMT soldier who had just left military duty. After getting married, they came down to Ban Tham Santisuk and had their first child in 1984. Lee taught at the Chinese school in the village and her husband worked as odd jobs to make a living.

Lee's finances worsened when her husband passed away in 2000. She started to teach Chinese privately again, though she had not been teaching since she got Thai citizenship in 1992. Her monthly income from teaching is between 1,000 to 3,000 baht, depending on number of students, but it is never enough to pay educational expenses as well as support the family. Because it has been too difficult for her to meet educational expenses, her eldest daughter has only completed Thai primary

school and Chinese school up to level 5. Another two children, 12 year old girl and the 15 year old boy, also don't go to Chinese school. They stopped going after the girl finished primary level 3 and the boy level 5. Though she would like to give her children a Chinese education, she has no idea how she can afford it. There is no one to send her money from abroad. Her eldest daughter has married an Akha man and she too has difficulties in handing her finance. Lee has 9 brothers and sisters in law in Thailand but she has almost no connection with them. They stay with their Thai mother without ever gone to Chinese school.

### **Case 11: Mr. Gao**

**Sex: Male**

**Age: 43 year old**

**Birthplace / Year: Burma / 1958**

Gao was born in Burma. His parents were trader there. After 6 years, he and his parents came to Thailand as refugees in 1966. When they arrived in Ban Tham Santisuk, his parents started raising pigs and chickens. Their animals were often stolen by Thai burglars so he felt scared to leave from the village, especially at night. Regardless, he had to stay in the village because he needed a special permission to leave anyhow. It was complicated to ask for permission and the procedure took a long time. On one occasion, he wanted to leave the village to see a dentist to have a bad tooth treated, as there was no dentist in the village, but he could not wait to get permission to leave the village. In the end, he had to pull out the bad tooth by himself. There was no alternative at the time.

Gao went to the village Thai school, which was under the supervision of the Border Patrol Police, up to elementary level 4, and the Chinese school up to junior high. After he finished school, he went to work in Bangkok. He made a living repairing cars for the first two years. Afterward, he traveled through many places to look for jobs and did many things to make money, until he married a Sino-Thai woman in 1984 when he was 26 years old. He came back to Ban Tham Santisuk after the marriage and worked selling food and driving children to school outside the

village. In 1985, he went to Japan to work. He could not read Japanese, and was scared and intimidated to ask for help to Japanese. He found that it too difficult to live in Japan and decided to go home only after 10 days after his arrival. Gao came back to Thailand and worked in Chiang Mai for 5 years before he finally returned to Baan Tham Santisuk. He worked in the village for a couple of years and then in 1993 went to work in Taiwan where he stayed for 6 years until he harmed his heart. A doctor ordered him to stop work and he came back to the village in 1999. Currently, Gao's health has not yet improved so still he has no job. Instead, his wife sells Thai noodles and papaya salad in the village to make money. She makes about 3,000 baht per month but there no actual income.

#### **Case 12:Mr. Kuo**

**Sex: Male**

**Age: 44 year old**

**Birthplace / Year: Thailand (Chiang Mai) / 1957**

Kuo was born in Fang District, Chiang Mai Province and his parents moved into Baan Tham when he was 1 year old. He went to the military founded Thai school up to level 4, which was the highest level of Thai education they offered at the time. It was difficult for him to follow the lessons in Thai school and understand Thai words as he advanced in level. After he finished Thai primary school 4 and Chinese junior high, he left the village to work. That was the common life pattern among Kuo's generation. It was partly true that Thai school became too difficult for him to follow, but the main reason he had was to work to support his family.

After Kuo finished Chinese junior high school in 1972, he went to Lampang to carry fish source for four years. All the other workers as well as all the customers were Chinese. The accounts books, and receipts were written in Chinese. Phone calls were made in Chinese and all transactions were done in Chinese. There were only a few times when he used Thai, when he had to show his business documents and receipts to Thai officials. He wrote what he heard Thai phonetically in Chinese and thus survived his conversations with Thai officials. Thai was the less important

for Kuo at the time because he could make his living without speaking Thai. There were always job offers as long as he could speak Chinese.

Kuo got married in 1976 a Yunnanese woman who had been his classmate in the Chinese school, and came back to the village. He was 19 years old. For work in the village, he bought a minibus and took people from one village to the other everyday. In the middle of the 1980s, many taxi drivers were attacked and killed by bandits on the routes they drove in mountainous areas. Because of the danger, Kuo stopped driving in the mountains in 1986, and only took students from neighboring villages to the Chinese school in Ban Tham Santisuk. Later, he cooked and sold some pork in the village to increase his income. In 1989 he bought extra land in front of his house and opened a shop. The land was registered under his wife's name, who had already obtained Thai citizenship while he still held an alien card. All the goods in the shop were made in Thailand and brought from Chiang Rai. Kuo also bought 9-rai of land in Chiang Rai to raise animals. He raised about 300 pigs and chickens on his new farm. Now he raises only one-third of that. He hired Thai workers to feed his animals. Later still, he bought a pond and raised fishes, which brings 20,000 baht for each catch he sells. Kuo has never gone to Taiwan but made a life for himself in Thailand through his language ability and his Chinese connections.

## **5-2. Self-Identification**

### **5-2-1. The villagers in their 50s and over**

= KMT Soldiers/ Chinese from Yunnan

The people in their 50s and over are the original immigrants to Ban Tham Santisuk who experienced the warfare in China and Burma and the hardship before and after they arrived in the village in 1954. Although there is a difference between people in their over 60s and people in their 50s on the point whether they were soldiers or they were dependents of the KMT soldiers, people in this group share strong feeling of belonging to the KMT soldiers.

Especially, the people in their age over 60s essentially identify themselves as democratic Chinese from the mainland China with high ideology towards “freedom”, “peace”, “modernity”, and “equality”. Though mainland China is still their homeland, where they came from and still keep in touch with the relatives and families they left behind, there is no affiliation with China. While asserting themselves as Nationalist Chinese though, they neither have political/ideological affiliation with Taiwan. Far from that, they have negative attitudes toward Taiwan as Taiwan is often described among many of the first generation as a country, which is “too small”, “too expensive”, “too crowded”, and “too materialized”. A 66-year-old villager commented,

*“I have children who live in Taiwan, but I by myself never thought about going there. There are too many people in a small land. It is very crowded and obviously uncomfortable to live there. The environment and weather also are not good, humid... The climate is not good; heavy rain and frequent earthquakes... and people were also different from here” (Translation is mine)*

Surprisingly or not, people in the first generation acknowledge themselves well in Thailand, and regard Thailand as a “final place” to end their life. It is commonly thought that living in Thailand and staying in Ban Tham Santisuk until they die are the best because “it is convenient and comfortable like the hometown in China”. They perceive Thai state as a country of “freedom”, “democracy” and “no violence” in comparison of Communist regime, but their image to Thai people are unfortunately “untrustworthy”, “aggressive”, “lazy” and “irresponsible” due to the direct experiences with local Thais during their first stage. Furthermore, they also distinguish themselves from local “Haw” and “Oversea Chinese” in Thailand and tend to less trust those other Chinese groups.

Needless to say, they have strong attachment to the village where they have spent time and energy settling their lives. Their strong affections toward the village are the crucial factors to make the following generations possible to remain as

Yunnanese Chinese. They try to maintain traditional way of life within the village through organizing cultural events, regulating the villagers and giving Chinese education to their offsprings in order to keep the village as their homeland. The village's regulations have been set up by elders on the based of Confucianism. According to Confucianism, the elders are supposed to be highly respected by younger generations, and younger people should be loyal to the elders. Men are supposed to be more dominant than women: the duty of men and women are clearly divided and it is not acceptable to interfere each other's work. Therefore, men in the first generation, the eldest group in the village, are the cores in the village who have most powerful authorities to rule the village and lead the villagers.

For example, whenever there are official events or official visiting from outside, a former KMT army cook, now 80 year old, exercise his skill. All dishes he makes are Yunnanese. Village's female elders also takes a share of the preparation on special occasions in the village, such as weddings, funerals and other ceremonial days as well since they are the only group who know Yunnanese tradition well. One person is responsible for cooking fish, another cooks chicken, others pork, and others sweets, and thus they prepare foods according to the way they have learned from their mother in China. Tastes of those foods are basically similar to Chinese foods in everywhere but less oily and thick than Chinese food in common. Each occasion has particular food to be prepared; noodles are served on the second day of funeral ceremony and hard-boiled pork legs are served on birthday ceremonies. Yet, a pickled vegetable, looks like butterbur flower stalk and sweet taste, is often seen almost every occasion.

Traditional practices are still often seen in the village. One of two former KMT leaders, who came down to initially survey the land with General Lee, Mr. Yang's birthday party was held when I was in the village. He turned 94 years old in year 2001 and he is the oldest man in the village. His relatives gathered from all over the country and almost every villager was visiting him to celebrate his birthday, which lasted for two days.

Figure 7: Mr. Yang's Birthday Party (Mr. Yang and his children)



Figure 8: Mr. Yang's birthday Party (Villagers who were visiting him)



On such an occasion, the young people in the village are ordered to help set up the ceremonial space. Good seats are always prepared for male elders who come later

to eat, drink and afterward, play mah-jongg all day long. Besides such a ceremonial day, playing mah-jongg is one of the daily activities for Yunnanese men. They spend a day by going the mah-jongg shop, or visiting the Chinese headman's house, and sitting and talking to each other while drinking tea. Those places are strongly defined as male social space. Basically, the Chinese headman's house is occupied by male visitors only and women in the village never go to the mah-jongg club.

As for senior women's daily activities, they visit other female friends' house, visit the Chinese temple, talk to each other, walk around the village while taking care of their homes. There is a group of about 10 old women who practice social dance. They meet everyday to practice as much as possible. One of them is Thai, and her house is the practice space.

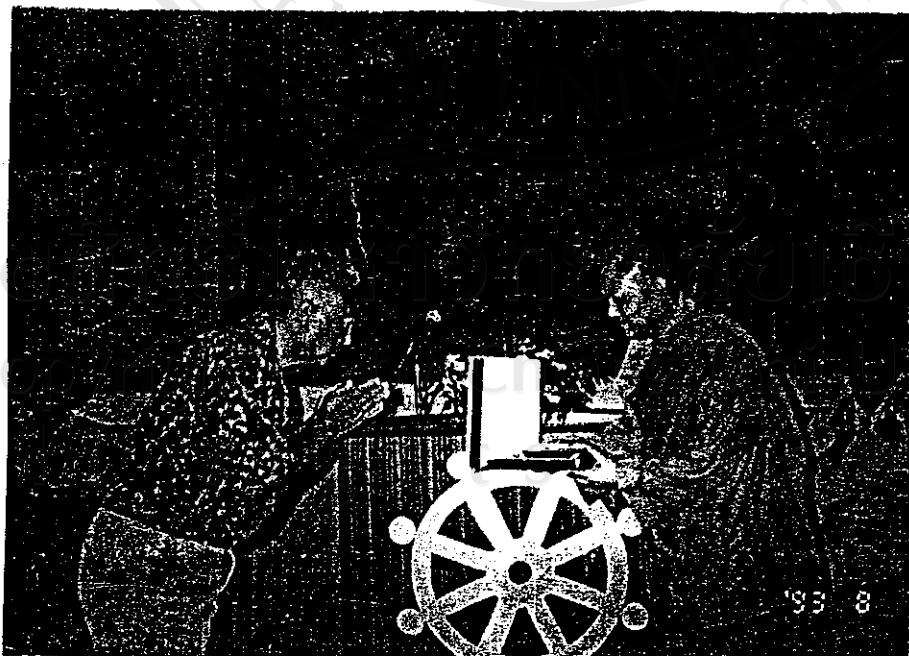
I must mention that the word "women" in the village does not only mean Yunnanese women, but it also includes Thai and hill tribe women who have married KMT Yunnanese man as well. Indeed, there are a number of Yunnanese families whose mothers are non-Yunnanese due to the large degree of inter-marriage in the beginning. During the 1950s and 60s, when the Yunnanese men started to settle in Thailand, there were very few Yunnanese women available in the village. Therefore, it was necessary for single Yunnanese men to marry Thai or hill tribe women in order to make families in Thailand. Equally, it was also necessary for the Thai and hill tribe women to find life-partner whom they could financially rely on. Though there was almost no communication, the interests of both sides made it possible to have a family until now. Interestingly, non-Yunnanese women who have married Yunnanese men have been assimilated into Yunnanese culture and have established good relationships with the Yunnanese women in the village. They cook Yunnanese food, making items for the Yunnanese rituals and speak Yunnanese.

Those traditional events also remain old military principles to some extent. The picture of, Sun Yat-sen ("Xinhai heming" Revolutionist) and the flag of Taiwan are set on the stage whenever there is a village's ceremonial day and all former Chinese headmen are invited and asked to give the opening speech on stage. The

Chairman of the Yunnanese association in Chiang Rai, who is one of former Nationalist leaders, is also invited. These seniors speak in the Yunnanese dialect, which is different from what young people learn at the school, so those in their 20s need translations for simple Chinese idioms.

While retaining elements of a traditional lifestyle, they also respect Thai culture and follow Thai way in certain level. The elders in the village are very optimistic about being integrated into Thai culture and Thai society, because as I mentioned before, they regard Thailand as final place. Respect towards the Thai king and the Thai government are also seen, as there are always Thai king's picture and Thai flag on Yunnanese ceremonial days, as well as at the Chinese school. Moreover, except for those in their age 70s and 80s, people in their age 50s are able to communicate and speak Thai. In fact, when I visited the present Chinese headman and the first Chinese headman, both of them "wai"ed (to clasp one's hands together about one's chest: a Thai formal way of salutation) as a greeting and tried to speak Thai throughout the conversation.

Figure 9: The current Chinese headman and Thai monk (Picture was taken in 1993)



### 5-2-2. The villagers in their age 30s and 40s

#### = Children of KMT soldiers/ Chinese in Yunnanese communities

People in this group consist of those who were born in between 1954-1964 (the second generation) and 1964-1975 (the third generation) who lived the period when there was no definite policy towards the KMT Yunnanese in Thailand.

The second generations assert themselves as the children of KMT soldiers, “used to be refugees” and became “Haw” in Thailand. Being refugees, especially the second generation they have experienced moving frequently from one place to another, enjoyed only limited freedom and have undergone the difficulties for basic survival. They have grown up in the village full of military elements and Confucianism, and therefore, bounded by those memories that their fathers were going off to fight, they were strongly punished by military father if they were lazy, lied and against their parents, and they had to work hard to support families. Therefore, some martial feelings have been well transmitted into their everyday life and people in these groups also connect themselves closely to the KMT soldiers.

However, the second/third generation feel perplex about themselves, and unclear about the place they belong to. In case of people who have gone to Taiwan realized that the Taiwanese recognize them as “Thai” or “foreigners” and. People, even though they speak Yunnanese Chinese. They know that culture and way of living in Taiwan are different from in the village. In the same way, they do not find Yunnan as their homeland since people in Yunnan also see Yunnanese from Thailand as “strangers” even though they could speak the same dialect. Such discoveries are quite shocking for people in the second/third generation, as they have always regarded Taiwan as their final destination, and Yunnan as their original home. A 30 years old woman confided complex feeling she experienced when she went to Yunnan,

*“Yunnanese people were different from us. I am also Chinese and speak Chinese like they do, but I felt like I’m not Chinese because they did not treat me as Chinese but Thai or foreigner. Things cost twice as much because of my Thai passport. Wherever I buy something, I had to pay*

*foreign price that was really expensive. And I was often cheated. No matter how much I tried to convince them that I'm Chinese, they never consented. I really wanted to shout, "I'm Chinese!" ... Though I have Thai nationality, I felt like I have no real nationality and feel like no one wants to accept me". (Translation is mine)*

In spite of the perception from the people in Yunnan and Taiwan as “foreign nations”, the villagers in second/third generations are hardly recognized as “Thai” in Thailand. Furthermore, the term “Haw” was applied to classify them, which makes their position even more ambiguous. The term “Haw”, under the contemporary usage, implies image of Chinese immigrants who are unsophisticated, unintelligent and violent so that it is hardy accepted by the second/third generation. A contemptuous attitude of Thai officials towards people who are classified as “Haw” further discouraged them to accept becoming “Haw”. However, they cannot completely separate themselves from being “Haw” since they could take advantage of another “Haw” local network, which already developed in northern Thailand as Muslim traders, to expand their economical activities. In fact, without being “Haw” that at least classifies them as Chinese, they would never have achieved their success in Thailand where they had no connection, no authority, and no status.

Although many of the second/third generation left the village, various kinds of Chinese celebrations, worship rituals, village events and daily activities in the village are still matters of great importance for them. They try to come back to ceremonial occasions, and help organizing the village's events with the first generations by instructing and mobilizing the young villagers. Furthermore, there is a tendency among the middle-aged villagers, especially among men who had left for Thai cities to work, started to come back to the village with their families in order to provide their children with Chinese education and environment to learn Yunnanese culture. Among those “returned villagers”, what is observed was a strong unreceptive attitude toward Thais. “Returned villagers” experienced to be treated more differently and tyrannically by Thais in outside of the village than other villagers had in the village. They have nothing to feel proud of being Thai so that remains to be Yunnanese while

speaking Yunnanese with their friends, as well as at home, and teaching Yunnanese value and discipline to their children.

### **5-2-3. The villagers in their 10s and 20s**

#### **= Children of KMT soldiers/ Yunnanese in Thailand**

Self-identity of KMT Yunnanese seems to become more complicated as people get younger. The people in the fourth generation are the youngest children of KMT soldiers, born 1975 to 1987, who also experienced the village's development process. Coming to this generation, their identity became more complicated and identity conflict occurs frequently, while fundamental identities remain to be the children of KMT soldiers. Indeed, the fourth generations have more acquired "Thainess" from Thai school compared to former generations. Their Thai is nearly native, almost like Thais speak, and they are familiar with Thai culture. As a result, they often caught in between two self-images of being Thai and being KMT Yunnanese.

They are also in a dilemma about their position in Thailand if they can be recognized as Yunnanese, Thai or only as "Haw" in Thai definition. As I mention earlier, it is broadly understood that "Haw" are "opium traffickers", "unsophisticated Chinese hill tribes" or "savage soldiers". I had a chance to go to day trip with young villagers to Chiang Khong where we met Thai tourists from Bangkok. The Thai tourists heard the young villagers were speaking Thai and Yunnanese. Thai people throw meaningful look and ask the young villagers, 'where you from?' and even asked rude questions without concealing their curiosities, which impetus sensitive points to being "Haw". When Thai people meet "Haw" in real situations, Thai people are confused by the contradicting images of "Haw" and the actual appearance of "Haw" who look like Thai in their appearances, wearing modern cloths, speaking fluent Thai or northern Thai and even conducting accordingly to the Thai way.

Thus, the stereotyping image of "Haw" has already been penetrated into the people in Thailand and generalized there. Thai people simply lay those "Haw" images on people who speak Yunnanese or Thai with Chinese accent. No matter

how much they dress like Thais, behave Thais and speak Thai perfectly, they are labeled as “Haw” when they speak Yunnanese. Then, Thais treat Yunnanese according to they treat “Haw”, especially in official places like schools, city halls, and other governmental institutions.

The young KMT Yunnanese have been experienced this kind of unpleasant interaction with Thai people and imposed the term “Haw”. When people in this group were children, there was a conflict often with Thai people from neighboring villages. The villagers in fourth generation were already able to understand and speak Thai, so the conflict with Thai young people became more tensed. Thai children often came to tease villagers, calling them as “Wai Haw”. The village Yunnanese children called them “Khulo” with despised sense to insult them back.

The interactions with Thai, which make so-called “Haw” people feel inferior, are still happened in everyday life. A 22 years old man studying in Chiang Rai talked about his bad memories of school,

*“Sometimes, I heard teachers in the school rebuking students who are being impolite in public, saying ‘Do you come from Yunnan where there is no culture?’ I just listened to them but thought in my mind that I am the one who comes from uncultured Yunnan. I wanted to argue with him that he should explain why I’m here, learning with him if Yunnan is a savage place and if people come from Yunnan are uncultured”. (Translation is mine)*

What makes the young villagers move forward to keep being Yunnanese is ethnic pride and high self-respect toward Yunnanese culture, which they have acquired through living in the cultural community; attending the Chinese school, participating in village’s ceremonies and being grown up as children of KMT soldiers. The people in fourth generation remember the tasks of their poverty and the absolute authority of their soldier-fathers in the village. Their fathers were frequently absent from home, elder siblings were working far away to support the family, and most importantly, the village was surrounded by the military when they were young.

Staying at home, they were taught by their mothers to speak Yunnanese, Yunnanese culture and their migration history. Being the youngest in the village, they also learned proper way to be youngest group; had to obey village seniors and no dissuasion was accepted. Attending the Chinese school, they acquired knowledge about Chinese language, culture, and values. With this self-understanding, which they have gotten from the school, they were able to become Yunnanese Chinese without being deprived their self-respect by Thais, the national dominant group.

They were often mobilized to help Chinese committee to organize festivals whenever the road was reconstructed, village's utilities were re-built and there was a donation from other countries to cerebrate development in the village and future prosperity. Young people's attendance was significant since they were responsible for manual work such as carrying desks, serving food, placing gifts and setting the stage with the pictures of the Thai king and Sun Yat-sen (Sun Wen) as well as flags of Thailand and Taiwan. The village's festivals were held more frequently after the village started to flourish in 1975, and by participating in social events, the young villagers acquired a sense of belonging and unity.

To keep the sense of belonging each other, it was significant to speak Yunnanese dialect. Speaking Yunnanese is a significant ethnic marker categorizing “in” and “out”. By speaking their language, which Thai do not understand, the young villagers increase the feeling of being alike, and sharing secrets of being different together. If someone in the village stops speaking Yunnanese with his/her friends, those friends feel that he/she does not belong to the same group anymore. As a 19 year old man in the village put it,

*“I would feel that he is not in my group anymore if he came to talk to me only in Thai. I would feel that he is not what I knew, and would not feel like he is my true friend who I know everything about since we were children”. (Translation is mine)*

Sometimes, the young villagers intend to speak Thai and Chinese at the same time in order to show that “Haw” able to speak Thai or be seen Thais as Thai. This is

an attempt to take inappropriate image of “Haw” away from others by exposing their history and abilities to other people, and to deal with deep-rooted negative images of “Haw” in Thailand. Though, basically the young people tend to use Yunnanese when they want to talk about things, which happened within the village, to describe it exactly, to enliven and make the conversation more vivid. It is also easier for them to explain, understand and use either language according to what they heard, said, or felt. When they don’t remember proper Chinese, they use Thai to compensate for their lack of vocabulary. In the same way, they speak Thai to talk about Thai music, Thai TV, or what happened with Thai friends.

Fewer numbers of people were going to Taiwan in this generation partly because opportunities to go to Taiwan had much diminished as the Taiwan government put strict regulations on the migration policy. The crucial reason, however, is that following economic achievements of former generations plus enforced state integration policies made them look for a chance in Thailand instead. Success stories and economical activities of former generations in Thai cities who are very active in the communication fields, translators and tour guides, doing small business with oversea Chinese or Chinese enterprises from Taiwan, Singapore, Hong Kong and Malaysia, give stimulus to young people to establish their status in Thailand.

Therefore, they are more and ever struggle to find their position in Thailand, not as illegal immigrant Chinese “Haw”, not as simply “Thai” but as one of Thai citizen who are Yunnanese descendant. In fact, some of the young people seem to accept becoming “Haw”, which runs against their self-definition, as a strategy to enter into Thai society and even show other people that “Haw” are not like what Thais imagine.

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#### 5-2-4. The villagers age less than 15

##### =Children of Yunnanese/ Chinese in Thailand

The last generation is the fifth generation who born after the village was completely integrated into the Thai national administration system in 1984. Except recent migrants from other villages or Burma, the children in fifth generation are all Thai nationalities by official recognition. The village became a normal Thai village. A Thai school was normalized and developed up to high school level in 1996. Although these Thai schools are not actually located within Ban Tham Santisuk, it is less than 10 minute walk from Ban Tham Santisuk to get there. So it became normal for teenagers in the village to go to Thai school up to high school. As a result of the implementation of Thai education, in fact, the “Thai-ness” and Thai language have certainly infiltrated into their behaviors.

They are often perceived by others as “becoming more Thai”. A Thai teacher commented that Yunnanese children are 100% Chinese and do not speak Thai when they enter a Thai school. But they gradually acquire some fundamental “Thai-ness”, how to speak Thai, how to respect elders, how to walk, how to eat and how to behave, besides just teaching Thai language. By the time when they graduate, their behaviors gradually change to similar to Thai way. Above and beyond anything, the implementation of Thai education is making village teenagers unable to convey ideas effectively in Chinese. Many the older generations are surprised to discover how little their siblings can speak Chinese. A 62 year old woman was disappointed when her youngest son said “wood stick” to describe a chopstick in Chinese.

However, village teenagers are equally aware of their cultural identity as Yunnanese Chinese and seem to understand their position as “nationally Thai but culturally Chinese” and their “parents come from Yunnan”. By staying the village, the teenagers acquire a sense of belonging and unity as well as everybody does. Cultural identity is also penetrated through their daily activities in the village, interaction with villagers and at the Chinese school. At home, their parents (the second and third generation) try to speak Yunnanese, make Yunnanese food, perform

simple Yunnanese rituals, and send their children to learn Chinese in order to transmit Yunnanese culture to their children.

For instance, on a occasion like Full Moon Cerebration (Wai Prachan), a ceremony to express their gratitude for the moon and considered an important day to meet family members who work outside of the village, Yunnanese mother and grand mother make egg cakes and special sweet for the moon. Yunnanese mothers recommend children to walk around the village so that they will be called out by the villagers in each home to stop by and eat egg cakes in their home until late, which is considered to be fun for the children. Teenagers also learn how to behave as youngest group in the village through the interactions with seniors in the village. They required not going to certain type of social events because they are too young to have a social participation.

Once a year, all children in the Chinese school also play one of the leading parts of the village' festival, the Taiwan National Day. The members of Chinese committee approach the teachers in the Chinese school to get students to perform something for the festival. The students and teachers have to practice for their performances, which can be Chinese dances, Chinese songs, and other performances related to Chinese culture.

Thus, the young villagers in fifth generation are acquiring cultural norm by living in the community; however, the information from the Thai school has strong influence on their behavior and probably their self-understanding. A woman who are in her middle 40s, explained she was puzzled when her daughter "way"ed to her after she came back from the village's Thai primary school. She asked her daughter why she did "way" to her, and the daughter answered, "because teacher at school told me to do it when I come home and meet my parent". Another example is that one female elder, in her 60s, asked her grand daughter why she don't speak Yunnanese to her. The little girl said to her, "We are living in Thailand and use Thai money. So why don't you speak Thai?"

Consciously or not, it is clear that some certain “Thai ways” are unflattering to young teenagers in the village. If there is nothing give them a different information of who they are, the young generation would be easily converted to Thais one day. In another word, if there is no Chinese school and cultural community where tell Yunnanese history in Thailand, the value and culture, then Yunnanese identity can be deprived from the young villagers in fifth generation by strong influence from the Thai school and negative public image toward “Haw”.



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