

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **Chinese School: The Values and Expectations**

#### **Introduction**

What makes the KMT Yunnanese able to maintain their cultural identity is existence of the village, a cultural community. Also, what is the most crucial factor of successful continuation of Yunnanese identity would be the well-organized Chinese school in the village. The Chinese school in Ban Tham Santisuk has been paid great attention by the headmen and village seniors from the beginning. It later developed to one of most self-sufficient Chinese schools in northern Thailand. A superior reputation attracts even children from the other villages as well as Thai children and hill tribal children to come to learn at the Chinese school in Ban Tham Santisuk. In the final chapter, we will examine what the Chinese school means to villagers and how villagers view the Chinese school. To start the discussion, it is appropriate to trace back the history of the Chinese school in the village first and explain current operational systems and situation.

#### **6-1. Chinese School in Perspective**

##### **6-1-1. Brief History**

Ban Tham Santisuk's Chinese school was established right after the establishment of the village in 1954. The first Chinese headman, General Lee, devoted himself to organizing and developing Chinese education in the village. A simple plain thatched house was built for Chinese lessons up to primary level, also offering Mandarin Chinese, which was the dialect of most of the residents in the village. General Lee became the principal and took over all the duties of managing finances, recruiting teachers, and finding funds for the school's operation. The main purpose of establishing the Chinese school was to educate children in the village to preserve their Chinese heritage: getting ready to return to China was one of great concerns. General Lee believed that the chaotic situation would normalize after a while, and he and the villagers would be able to repatriate to China.

Some of educated seniors in the villages, who were intent on teaching Chinese to their descendants, stood in for teachers and tried to share as much Chinese knowledge as they could. Other villagers were also eager to send their children to the Chinese school so they would not forget their own language. In order to respond to a demand from the villagers, General Lee developed Chinese lesson up to primary level 6 in 1959 in spite of financial difficulties<sup>32</sup>.

Furthermore, with his recognition of the value of education itself, Thai and English lessons were also introduced at the Chinese school. He hired one female Thai teacher to teach basic Thai language to Chinese children but he could not find anyone to teach English. He was not able to afford to pay much higher than 150 baht per month, which was the salary for the Thai teacher<sup>33</sup> and no one wanted to come to teach at this salary. He had no choice but he himself became an English teacher. In order to be able to be qualified enough to teach English, he went to Hong Kong for 5 months to study English. General Lee gave his comment,

*"I believed that it was fundamental to learn the language which they lived in. If our offspring know Thai, they would never go adrift in Thailand in the future. In addition, English is the universal language that they must know. If they know English, they can communicate with not only Chinese but also many people in the world. From my own experience, I thought it was necessary to have English lessons in a foreign country... I asked Christian missionaries, who came to the village temporarily, to teach English in the Chinese school. During their stay in the village, I offered them to stay in my house so that I could also learn English. I paid 1 dollar per hour for the missionaries' work in the Chinese school. The price was not cheap but it was worth it to pay for the children's future".*  
(Translation is mine)

The Nationalist government in Taiwan had contributed school textbooks and the school introduced the school curriculum from Taiwan. Not only Mandarin

<sup>32</sup> Interview with the first Chinese headman.

Chinese, but Chinese literature, philosophy, mathematics, geography, society, music & tc. were also taught in the school. The Taiwan government also provided financial aid and scholarships to all students who wanted to go to study in Taiwan each year starting in 1968. By the 1960s when the Chinese school was given a name as “Refugee Children’s School”, the Chinese school had grown up to the junior high school level, including 2 kindergarten classes, elementary school grade levels, and junior high levels. These were 200 students with 10 teachers in 1964. General Lee collected 5 baht fees from junior high students.

When the Thai Border Patrol Police withdrew from the village in 1985, the Chinese school was formally named as “Ban Tham Santisuk Chinese School”. A year later, however, the Chinese school had to close for two years due to the government promulgated integration policy. Although all Chinese lessons at the school were banned, Chinese teachers kept teaching secretly at homes or other places such as Chinese temple, Mosque, farms, people’s houses, and so on. When the military base of the Fifth army in Chiang Rai was finally disbanded in 1988, the policy of the Thai government was toleration and the Chinese schools were officially allowed to operate again.

As soon as the restriction from the Thai government was relaxed, systemization of the Chinese school was instigated by the Chinese headman, Mr. Huang. To motivate teachers, he raised their monthly salary and added a bonus system. To develop teacher quality, he organized an annual seminar to provide amateur Chinese teachers with training on how to teach Chinese effectively. To encourage students, he also regularly checked each classroom and consulted with students who had problems. To create academic learning atmosphere, he imposed the wearing of uniform, thought it was stopped after some years (see figure 10).

Every village’s acknowledgment of the value of education as well as their high level of motivation gave an energy to education made it possible to keep and develop

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<sup>33</sup> The salary paid to the Chinese teachers was 100 baht per month.

Ban Tham Santisuk's Chinese school. The school now attracts children from other KMT villages and the village has become to some measure famous for its Chinese education. According to the village headman, there were a total of 31 student in northern Thailand who received scholarships out of 200 students total in the world in 2000. 12 students out of 31 students in northern Thailand were from Ban Tham Santisuk's Chinese school.

Figure 10: Students with their Uniform in 1993



#### 6-1-2. Characteristics of Students in the Chinese School

The number of students in the Chinese school was 612 in 2001<sup>34</sup>. Within those 612, about 100 students were from hill tribe families and about 30 students were from Thai families. About 12 % of the students did not have Thai citizenship and most of these had immigrated from Burma.

Students in the Chinese school in Ban Tham Santisuk mainly consist of Yunnanese children from the other KMT villages. The table 2 shows an example of distribution of students' population in the Chinese school<sup>35</sup>. In general, students in

<sup>34</sup> According to the village headman.

<sup>35</sup> Two classrooms from elementary school and two classrooms from junior high school were picked up to identify a place of origin of the student in the school.

the Chinese school are divisible into three categories according to their residence: students who were born in Ban Tham Santisuk (Original students), students who were born in the other villages and moved to Ban Tham Santisuk (Non-original students), and students who come to the Chinese school in Ban Tham Santisuk while staying their villages in nearby (Commuter students). The students tend to be segregated in classrooms according to which group they belong to. If the students are original residents, they stay together by themselves, no matter how old they are. In the same way, students from other villages also form sub-groups by themselves.

Table 2: Total Number of Students for Four Classes

	Original Students	Non-Original Students	Commuter Students	Total
Junior high 3	4	24	8	36
Junior high 2	8	20	13	41
Elementary 6	16	10	15	41
Elementary 4	13	17	3	33
Total	41	71	39	151

(Village's own investigation in 2001)

The number of original students account only for about one-third of all students. Most non-original students are from Pha Tang and Tak, where there are affiliated orphanages. The living standard and educational condition in Pha Tang and Tak are not as good, compared with the more than adequate conditions in Ban Tham Santisuk, (which has the Thai school up to high school level and the Chinese school up to junior high level). It also attracts many Yunnanese families in the other KMT villages and creates influx of Yunnanese children from other villages into Ban Tham Santisuk.

Table 3: Home Language of all Students

	Original students	Non-original students	Commuter students	Total
Thai	17	12	10	39
Chinese	23	49	28	100
Both	0	2	1	3
Others	0	2	0	3
N/A	1	6	0	6
Total	41	71	39	151



Table 3 shows home language of the students in four classrooms. Interestingly, there is a big difference between original resident students and non-original/commuter students in terms of language usage. Compared to non-original/commuter students, original students speak Thai on a daily basis (40%), whereas only 20% of non-original/commuter students speak with their parents in Thai. In the same way, about 70% of non-original/commuter students speak Chinese at home while 56 % of students from Ban Tham Santisuk speak Chinese at home.

Figure 11: Classroom in Elementary 4



Figure 12: Classroom in Junior high 3



### 6-1-3. Operating System of the Chinese School

In spite of the large number of students, the Thai government does not recognize the Chinese school as a regular (public) school. It is officially regarded as a private educational institution, operated by the community without any support from the Thai government<sup>36</sup>.

The Chinese school operates twice a day, in the early morning, Monday to Friday. On Saturday, there is only a long morning class, and there is no class on Sunday. The school offers total 12 different levels of lessons, from kindergarten to junior high. The first semester starts in March and ends in July, and the second semester runs from September to beginning of February. The Chinese school has holidays for a month in both August and February. The school curriculum, academic schedule, textbooks and schooling materials are all provided by the Taiwanese government. Mandarin Chinese which is used in Taiwan is taught in the school.

The school has also been granted scholarships for selected students to carry on their study in Taiwan. Although the scholarships used to be given to any qualified student, the Taiwanese government in 1986 imposed the qualification on applicants that they must be Thai citizens. The regulations gradually became more restrictive and since 1992 those who can get full scholarship must be Thai citizens, graduates of both Thai high school and Chinese junior high school, pass an official examination from the Taiwanese government, have an interview with Taiwanese officers, and return to Thailand within 5 years even after he/she has obtained the scholarship. Therefore, there have been only a few students who fulfil the requirements and gain an opportunity to continue their study in Taiwan with a full scholarship.

The school is supported by donations and tuition fees. Though the school finances were totally covered by donations from the Taiwan government previously, about 80% of school funds are now covered by tuition fees from students. Tuition for kindergarten is 120 baht a month, 240 bath for primary, and 300 baht for junior high.

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<sup>36</sup> Interview with the District officer in educational section.

For those families who are not able to pay monthly tuition fees, they are able to utilize a deferred payment system<sup>37</sup>. The Taiwanese government as well as many other Chinese-speaking countries like Malaysia, Singapore and Hong Kong, except China, continue to provide educational funds. Such donations are usually given indirectly under the name of private organization, NGOs, or monks, in order to avoid creating political conflict since the Chinese school is not officially recognized by the Thai government

#### **6-1-4. School Regulations**

Basically, there is no standardized school curriculum that the student are forced to learn. All nationalities are accepted as long as the student is willing to study hard. Students who are eligible to enroll in the Chinese school must be at least 5 years old. One also must sit for an examination to determine the pupil's Chinese ability before starting in the Chinese school. According to the results of the examination, the school decides at which level the student should start, which means older students might study with young children, even if able to speak Chinese adequately, the student must be able read and write properly too. There is another kind of examination at the end of each semester, and students can either move up or down in level. If exam scores do not reach a certain level on the final examinations of the second semester, students must repeat the same level again, or lower their level.

There are no school activities except for an annual sports festival every year, in which every Yunnanese school in Chiang Mai and Chiang Rai gather together and compete. As for daily activity, all students are obliged to gather in the schoolyard and sing the Taiwanese national anthem before they go home.

There is punishment for absence or dismissal for delinquent students. Teachers first warn students and try to rehabilitate their behavior. Teachers visit their homes to discuss the issue and ask their parents' for cooperation. Nevertheless, if there is no improvement, then the school expels students with a temporary absence

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<sup>37</sup> There are about 20 families who use deferred payment system in 2001.



Figure 13: After School Gathering



from school or asks them to leave permanently. The same punishments are applied to students who cause fights more than twice or cheat in examinations: though expulsion from school rarely happens in practice. Usually the problem is solved when teachers visit student's house. The parents come to the school and willingly cooperate with school. The village is also too small to allow trouble; everyone knows each other and people are disinclined to allow others to speak badly of their peers.

In order to develop students' Chinese ability, the school used to promote a "no-speaking Thai" rule, but they realized that if teachers do not use Thai to explain, the student would not understand the lectures fully, especially subjects like History, Mathematics, and Science. In order to improve academic quality, the Chinese committee cooperated with the Yunnanese association in Chiang Rai to organize a teacher-training project<sup>38</sup>.

<sup>38</sup> The Yunnanese association in Chiang Rai invites three or four retired teachers from Taiwan to train Chinese school teachers in Chiang Rai and Chiang Mai for two months, October to December, every year. Each School sends at least two teachers to attend this training. Baan Tham Santisuk is the annual location for this training project. Every Saturday during training period, from 11:00 to 3:00, Taiwanese

## 6-2. Views and Expectations from Villagers toward Chinese School

### 6-2-1. From the first generation

#### Chinese school: Real educational institution

People in the first generation, who were born and grew up in China, still regard the Chinese school as a real school where their children can learn Chinese and maintain Chinese identity. Being refugees, they had a very strong zeal to organize a Chinese school for their children. Forming the Chinese school and sending their children there was the only achievable way for the first generation to build their future in Thailand. Some decades later, the first generations' genuine positive attitude toward the Chinese school have not changed as Mr. Yang (Case 2) said,

*"I want my children to speak perfect Chinese so that I can let them go to Taiwan for further study. Even if they have not finished Thai school yet, I send them to Taiwan because it's more important to know Chinese for their future in Thailand. It's not too late to come back to study Thai after they finish school in Taiwan. They can re-start learning Thai anytime they want because they are already Thai Nationals. But Chinese is different. They (children in the village) would forget it after they graduated from Chinese school because they do not use it. It is not enough to master Chinese only up to junior high in a rural village if you want to speak Chinese effectively. You must complete university level in Chinese. The Chinese ability of younger generation has been declining and gradually will disappear from their conversation. Moreover, with such poor Chinese ability, one can never apply for a good job. In order to make their Chinese more solid, I sent all my children to study in Taiwan after they graduated from the Chinese school". (Translation is mine)*

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teaches teach teaching methodology for children. It is seen among the teachers in Chinese schools as very valuable training since almost all teachers have no professional teaching skill.

Cultural concern is the one of main factors for the first generation to adhere to the Chinese school system. However, at the same time, they also pay equal attention from an economic point of view; as graduating from the Chinese school gives the means to have chance to work in Taiwan. What they expect to accomplish is both physical/educational reward from their children, including financial support and “*faithfulness / indebtedness*” from their children; a concept embedded in Confucian ideology. According to Confucian teachings, it is the duty of children to show filial gratitude toward their parents by supporting the family. The amount of money is not the crux, rather it is *per se* the children’s loyalty toward their parents.

In fact, almost all of the first generation are dependent on remittances from their children in Taiwan. Mr. Cin (case 1) sent all of his 5 children to Taiwan. After his children graduated from the Chinese school in the village, all of them settled in Taiwan, except one youngest son, who is 18 year old. Similarly, Mr. Xie (Case 3) also have children who graduated a school in Taiwan and settled there, except one youngest son who are 20 year old. Ms. Zen, (Case 5) also has her children all of whom was received to Taiwan except the youngest daughter, who is 16 years old. All of them have getting monthly remittance from their children in Taiwan, though the amount are not high, between 2,000 to 3,000 baht per month.

### **Expectation: Well balanced with the Thai school**

The first generation put their first priority in the Chinese school, considering it as a real school, but they are equally aware of the importance of the Thai school, especially for acquiring Thai language. Speaking Thai is now a fundamental qualification to live in Thailand. They understand that one can never get good job in Thailand without speaking Thai as they themselves could not speak Thai at all and failed to get job in Thailand: not only failing to get job, they also felt inferior because of their inability of speak Thai. It often happened that they were caught by the police and asked questions they could not answer in fluent Thai, and in such situations they always felt their esteem reduced and they themselves insulted. The first generation, based on their own experience, require that their children must be good at speaking Thai.

Unlike their own status, children in the village are not “refugees” anymore but Thai citizens. They even know that it would never be sufficient to attend only compulsory Thai schooling. Living expense in Thai urban areas are much higher than in the village and life there is also full of modern attractive goods. Therefore, the first generation try to provide their children, if they still have any, with the highest level Thai education: where their children can learn Thai in order to be able to survive modern life in Thailand. Many old people today, therefore, expect Thai schools to teach certain rules of behavior appropriate to living in Thailand which they, themselves are unable teach their children at home.

### **6-2-2. From the second/third generations**

#### **Chinese school: Economical institution**

The Chinese school is still a significant institution for the second and third generations, and they still expect the Chinese school to provide a vital knowledge of being Chinese including the language, culture and tradition. They do not view the Chinese school as their educational institution but as economical necessity linked to living in Thailand.

Those middle-aged people in the village are the people who could not go to Taiwan, or came back from Taiwan for some reason. The villagers who could not go to Taiwan had difficulties to find a way to survive in Thailand. They tried to improve their positions in Thailand from zero base through utilizing their Chinese literacy and cultural base. In the same way, people who came back from Taiwan also established their economic status in Thailand and became successful middlemen in Thailand by utilizing Chinese connections. Due to their direct experience, villagers in the second and third generations place more emphasize on the economical value of the Chinese school over its cultural aspect.

### **Chinese school: Not the means to go to Taiwan**

The Chinese school was used to be the first step to go to Taiwan. Going to Taiwan was some kind of “American Dream” for many people in 30s and 40s to increase economic opportunity. However, people in these generations today do not associate the Chinese school with going to Taiwan anymore, because these who graduated from the Chinese school cannot automatically go to study in Taiwan today. It is not as easy as previously to send their children to Taiwan when all living expenses and educational fees were covered by the Taiwanese government. It is too expensive for the young parents to afford all living expenses abroad, which cost at least ten or twenty thousand baht per month, the ticket fee, which cost fifty or sixty thousand baht and educational fees, which became more and more expensive.

Even though they could manage to send their children to Taiwan, it is not easy for people who have Thai citizenship to live in Taiwan, for it is difficult to find job and adapt to the Taiwanese way of life coupled with pressure from time and work. One 36 year old man who has gone to Taiwan told of his experience,

*“First I went to study in Taiwan. I could not speak a word at first because I was too shy to speak to them. They also speak a different Chinese from what we speak in the village. I stopped going to study after one year though it was a three years program. Studying was difficult over there since there was a lot of vocabulary that I did not know and there were so many other things that you have to do at the same time. I went to work instead of study. The work required nothing but my labor”.*

*(Translation is mine)*

There still are some young parents who wish their children to go to Taiwan, to broaden their view and enlarge their future in more general sense. Times have changed. Almost none of the young parents nowadays dream of sending their children to Taiwan, letting them find job there and expecting their children’s filial affiliations to be returned in monetary form.



### **Expectation: Supplement language school after the Thai school**

Even though they built their life without knowing much Thai, it is a fact that Thai schooling became a progressively more important educational institution as they realized the importance of the Thai language to live in Thailand became obvious. Those who left Taiwan or remained in Thailand had no certification from Thai high school and had no Thai citizenship so they were characterized by Thais as nothing but “Chinese illiterate immigrants”, including the soldiers. And that is why they had to rely on the extensive Chinese network and Chinese culture, as the only strategy to overcome poverty and survive in Thailand. They found themselves as ‘unqualified’ and realized that there would be no future, especially without knowing Thai. So, the second and third generation put more priority on the Thai school. Nowadays, many young parents don’t let their children to go to the Chinese school if their children wake up late, and avoid anything which might impact on their children at Thai school.

Furthermore, some of the young parents even have the view that the Chinese school can disadvantage their children in educational achievement in Thai school. They are afraid that if their children devote only half their effort to Thai and the other half to Chinese, their Thai ability eventually becomes less than that of other Thai students. Besides that, it is obvious that the Chinese used by children in the village is very poor compared to those who have studied for long time or who speak Chinese as their first language. There is no way for the children in the village to be able to speak Chinese equally well when compared to those Chinese in Taiwan, Singapore, Malaysia, and China whose mother tongue is Chinese. In this way, there develops a sense to send their children only as far as elementary level, and later let their children concentrate only on the Thai school. This way, their children become ethnic Chinese stock in Thailand; speaking perfect Thai but only able to demonstrate a basic level of Chinese. In fact, the young parents identify with their children as Thai nationals, and therefore it is more important to give their children a chance to learn proper Thai with appropriate environment. The fact that the villagers of second and third generations could not get enough education and had an inadequate learning environment during their childhood made them more eager to give a good Thai education to their children.

Their families lived as poor refugees and as children of poor families, the second and third generations had to go to work to support their families when they were young. They could only go to school when money and opportunity were available.

They do not only pay attention to the length of the Thai education, but they also pay great attention to the quality of Thai educational institutions too. Quite a few families send their children to one of the private Thai schools in Mae Sai, which costs 7,000 baht a year. This is about twice the state school rate. They do this because in general they are not satisfied with the Thai school in the village. According to them, teachers at Thai public state school are “often absent from school and they are not really interested in teaching”. There are even some people who are worried that their children will become lazy like these teachers, if their children attend the school in the village.

For example, Ms. Ling (case 8) had two sons; aged 9 and 12, who went to a private school in Mae Sai. Although she planned to send her sons to Chiang Mai or Bangkok where were better educational institutions than in Chiang Rai or Mae Sai, she was also afraid that her son would forget Chinese after her sons felt home. Mr. Kuo (case 12) had two daughters, 18 and 12, and two sons, 15 and 10. He did all he could and spent most of his income on his children's education. Now all of his children go to a private Thai school in Mae Sai and aim to enter Chiang Mai University. Unfortunately, there are also some families like Mr. Gao (case 11), who cannot afford to do that. He has three children all of whom go to the state junior high school in the village. Although he wants to send his children to a private Thai school in Mae Sai, his income is not enough to send his children to the private school. He has gone to Taiwan but became so ill that he came back to Thailand. He had certificates from neither Thai school nor schools in Taiwan so his income has never been stable enough to afford better education for his children. Although he expressed his hope to send his children to a Thai university, it seems an improbable option to make his dream come true at the moment.

### **Expectation: Cultural institution substitute for domestic function**

Many young parents today expect the Chinese school to teach more detailed information of Yunnanese culture and tradition, than ever before. Ethics, such as sincerity, honesty, endurance, and diligence are somehow transmitted at home through interaction within family, but detailed Yunnanese tradition and culture are not provided at home since the people in second and third generations no longer know exactly what Yunnanese culture is. Most people in the village, except the elders, have never seen large scale traditional genuine Yunnanese ritual, so they do not know how to conduct Yunnanese ceremonies properly and are unable to explain their significance. Besides this, the young parents today have less time to spend with their children. Inter-marriage between Yunnanese Chinese and non-Yunnanese Chinese, especially Yunnanese men and Thai women, has also increased. Compare to previously, the cultural background of the young parents is not sufficient to provide enough cultural information to their children at home. Those young parents rely more on the Chinese school where a vast trove of Yunnanese culture is available.

Moreover, they are even likely to abrogate domestic responsibility to the school. Due to the long schooling hours at Thai school, Yunnanese children today are used to speaking Thai with their friends, sisters and brothers, villagers and their parents, whether they like it or not. It is also easier for them to speak, read, listen, and write Thai than Chinese. The children are not proficient enough to learn a lot of Chinese vocabulary, and to handle difficult conversation in Chinese. The Yunnanese young parents, who can speak both Thai and Chinese, use a language that their children are better at speaking in order to have a smooth conversation. Therefore, communications at home, except between the first generation and youngest generation, are often done in Thai. Though the young parents are well aware of this situation, it is difficult to force their children to speak only Chinese at home. Hence the young parents expect the Chinese school, where teachers speak only Chinese, to provide the impetus to speak and practice Chinese so that their children will not forget their 'mother tongue'.

### 6-2-3. From the fourth and fifth generation

#### Chinese school: Socio-cultural gathering place

As Thai nationals, who are required to go to school and learn culture and language, it has been natural for the young generation in the village to regard the Thai school as their real educational institution. Although the Thai school became the official educational institution for the younger generations, the value of Chinese school has not been totally lost. It is still firmly rooted in their psyche to attend the Chinese school in the same way as other children in the village have been doing for years. Even after the Thai school up to the high school level was introduced in the village, they still usually begin the day at the Chinese school and end at the Chinese school everyday. It has been a natural passage of everyday life for the children in the village to attend two schools; go to Chinese school before Thai school starts and after Thai school finishes.

As for the children, it is not easy to handle two schools efficiently. In fact, many children in the village stopped going to the Chinese school, and attended only the Thai school. Some may be told by their parents to focus only on the Thai school, but some dropped out from the Chinese school by themselves because they could not cope with long studying hours each day. The learning atmosphere at the Chinese school is also one of the reasons that mitigates against children attending. A 21 year old man, who stopped going to the Chinese school after primary level 4, explained his feeling toward the Chinese school,

*"The school was too old fashioned. Teachers were just always right, and students had no way to resist them. Besides no freedom at school, all lectures were tough because we had to follow the academic schedule in Taiwan. We never had enough time to learn but memorizing words to pass an examination". (Translation is mine)*

However, the Chinese school significantly also functions as the cultural institution which provides a space to gather, exchange information and share reminiscences. The longer children attend the Thai school, the more the Chinese

school increases its cultural role because the Thai schools provide Thai notional concepts which are contradictory to the concepts and value of their own Yunnanese culture. What they learn from the Thai school does not always correspond to what they know from home, and information which the Thai school provides is also not the same information with what they may already have, or they learned from the Chinese school. One of particular example is the term “Haw”. Thai school teachers often described “Haw” as “barbarians who have no culture” and quote them as an immigrant Chinese group with a sense of exclusion from the Thai nation. Since all know that Yunnanese Chinese are classified and called as “Haw”, consequently, the young Yunnanese children have to face ridicule. Some of the young people might feel inferior about their own culture and increased negative attitude as “second group” develops towards their own social grouping.

Nevertheless, the Yunnanese children are able to ensue self-understanding and have a positive identity of being “non-Thai” at the Chinese school where tells them exactly who they are, giving them a certain history and definite culture. The fact that there are many other Yunnanese students who are in the same position in Thailand with the same history, encourages the young people to accept their differences from Thais and overcome the ideological conflict with the other Yunnanese students.

Moreover, the information gained from the Chinese school not only stimulates self-awareness and prevents the young generation from plunging into an identity crisis, it also fortifies the feeling of belonging among the young people. The young people in the village, especially the fourth generation, aged between 15 and 30, are strongly bound by memories related to the school; their parents who hit them with a bamboo stick if they woke up too late to go to school; the classrooms that had no light so they had to study with candles at night especially when it was winter and the school that was closed a couple times a year. That they studied in pig farms, temple or then teacher’s house – often secretly. These kinds of special memories allow a sharing of the ‘sameness’ with other students and develop cultural ties and even strengthen the ethnic identity boundary that surrounds them.



### **Expectation: Internal cultural heritage to stabilize cultural identity**

The economical value of the Chinese school has been much reduced; on the other hand the cultural role of the Chinese school has been enhanced from the young generation point of view. The young people in the village today are less interested in going to Taiwan, and have no expectation to do so through the Chinese school. One of reasons is the migration policy, which the Taiwan government has made restrictive since the beginning of 1990. Students who are able to transfer from the Chinese school in the village to the Chinese high school in Taiwan must have Thai citizenship, graduate from Thai high school and Chinese junior high school with good grade, pass the examination and interview with the state officers. They can go to study in Taiwan individually if they want, but as a matter of fact, there are only few families in the village who can afford to pay all expenses, including travel fee, visa procedure, educational fee and living expense in Taiwan.

Yet, what is more influencing the younger generations is an increasing number of unsuccessful stories they hear from elder siblings and other seniors in the village. They have been seen their elder siblings or former generations fail in Taiwan and came back to Thailand with nothing except some cash. They also hear all the difficulties their siblings faced in Taiwan in terms of cultural gap and language handicap. The young people know that their Chinese is insufficient, as their vocabulary is limited within a junior high level and need someone to translate official/technical Chinese into colloquial forms. Therefore, many young people in the village are afraid to go to Taiwan, well aware of the inability to handle official Chinese.

The Xie's (case 3) youngest son, for example, went to Taiwan when he was 15 year old. He returned to Thailand after he finished the Chinese school in 2001. He left Taiwan without finishing vocational school, which he had attended for 2 years. The reason of his return, he said, was because he discovered that the life in Thailand was more suited to him, including spending quality time with his friends and his family, being together with his old friends, speaking Thai and living with Thai culture. Now, he is attending to the Thai adult school in Chiang

Rai to get his high school diploma. One student who graduated from the Chinese junior high level also commented,

*"I will not be able to keep up with lectures at an academic level in Taiwan and never be able to compete with those who only speak Chinese. If I go to Taiwan right now, I know that I will fail".*  
(Translation is mine)

Then, young people's realistic expectation of the Chinese school, while knowing that their Chinese ability is insufficient, is to probably obtain certification which would help them to apply for jobs in Thailand. Recent development in the Thai economy, have meant that the young villagers have noticed that it is not enough to complete Thai high education in order to attain social mobility in Thailand. Though they realise that their imperfect Chinese would not in reality be a special skill, they 'should not be unemployed' in Thailand as long as they can read, speak and write basic Chinese and have certificate from the Chinese school. (!)

Another reason, and possibly the main inspiration, is to keep their Chinese for communication at least within the group. Speaking Chinese with a Yunnanese dialect is one of the great cultural symbols that distinguish Yunnanese from Thais, Shino-Thais and other ethnic groups in Thailand. It is not actually only about the language, but the Chinese school itself is the cultural symbol in the village providing the children with the all information they need. The young generations are raising their awareness of the significance of the Chinese school for its cultural role to construct ethnic identity, generate self-respect, and be able to be proud of "Yunnanese Chinese" or "Haw" in Thailand with their fellows.

#### **6-2-4. Attitude from Children from different villages**

As additional information, a discussion is presented on the expectations and attitudes toward the Chinese school of students who come from other KMT villages. This is quite different from the young people in the village. It is necessary to clarify living conditions in the other KMT villages before discussion. Unlike Ban Tham village, many other KMT villages are located in mountainous areas, where there are

only Chinese schools up to elementary level. Those Chinese schools are often closed when there are less students or no teacher available. Many villagers make their living by growing some agricultural products. Daily communication, including hill tribe groups, is done in Yunnanese in the remote KMT villages, and the people there still live surrounded by strong Chinese elements. Interaction with Thais has not occurred so frequently that people have less chance to speak Chinese in their villages. Moreover, there are many KMT Yunnanese in the remote areas who do not have any ID card. So they remain very much like “immigrant Yunnanese”, and are likely to focus on only Chinese schools so they can at least find a chance somewhere, maybe in Thailand, and maybe in Taiwan like Ban Tham Santisuk villagers in an earlier days.

Yunnanese children from those remote areas come to Ban Tham Santisuk for different purposes: some want to study Chinese, some only want to get a certificate from the Chinese school so that they can apply for work, and some came to register their name to get a “Haw” ID card. Those children whose true intention has nothing to do with study are easily discerned by their behavior in the classrooms. They show a lack of attention in both Thai and Chinese schools and are not particularly motivated to learn Thai. A teacher from the Chinese school perceived them as “just sitting at their desk, doing homework from Thai school, talking to their friends, reading comics, or sleeping”. A female Thai primary 1 teacher also complained Yunnanese students from other villages,

*“ ‘Haw’ students, mostly from the other villages, are not eager to learn Thai. Some of them are not even interested in the Thai language. It is especially seen among Haw students who have recently moved into the village. They focus on the Chinese school because their parents think that Chinese is more important for their children. Their parents are reluctant to send their children to Thai school because they don’t see the importance of Thai school yet”. (Translation is mine)*

Then, it should be questioned, why they still go to Thai school in spite of their unwillingness. This is because people who want to apply for Thai citizenship or any kinds of legal ID card need some documents from Thai state school. They will go to

the Thai school until they obtain some legal ID card, or until they become able to speak basic Thai or find a better job in some other place. Afterwards, those students from the other villages stop coming to Thai school and leave the village, whether they complete Thai academic year or not.

One more feature is that compared to the original young people in the village, children who come from the other KMT villages are still aiming at going to Taiwan to study and work. This is because their villages are not under the direct influence of Thai politics, economy and culture and the villagers are also have difficulty identifying or achieving them. They still rely on the possibility of becoming successful in Taiwan while in reality they have even less chance of that than in Thailand.

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## CONCLUSION

The result of the investigation demonstrates a positive continuation of cultural identity of an ethnic group in Thailand. What has happened to the KMT Yunnanese in Ban Tham Santisuk village after the enforced integration policy was a somewhat naïve attempt to maintain their culture while adapting to “Thai-ness”, so that they can claim their place in a Thai society. Moreover, they also challenge society by making a clear distinction between themselves and Thai people and other ethnic groups.

As we have seen, the peculiar migration process of the KMT Yunnanese along with the Chinese Nationalist troops, who were given a special privilege by the Thai government, protected Yunnanese culture and identity from becoming extinct in Thailand. Having a common cause to defeat communist elements, the KMT soldiers and the Thai government agreed to work together for their mutual benefit. The Thai government compromised by adopting a tolerant if pragmatic policy toward the KMT Yunnanese in order to protect national security, and the KMT soldiers cooperated with the Thai military to defeat communists in exchange for temporary refuge to live in Thailand. Under this mutual agreement, the KMT soldiers were allowed to formulate a self-governed community where they could sustain their culture without having too much intervention.

The integration policy toward the KMT Yunnanese was gradually introduced when the KMT soldier became less important to the Thai government and enforced from the beginning of 1990s. Information on Thai culture has flooded into the village, especially through the Thai school, and had a impact on the villagers in Ban Tham Santisuk in both positive and negative. Many KMT Yunnanese acquired Thai language proficiency, followed Thai customs properly and even behaved like Thais. It might have made it easier to live in Thailand, but as more people become familiar with Thai culture, the more they noticed cultural contradictions over national identity vs cultural identity. In another words, the younger they got, the more they increased their identity complexity, caught between the state and cultural community. The



KMT Yunnanese, except the first generation who simply regard themselves as KMT soldiers or “Chinese from Yunnan”, define themselves at various levels in a complex hierarchy at different times for different purpose, and the younger the generation become, the greater the cultural dilemma.

Period	KMT soldiers	KMT Yunnanese in Ban Tham Santisuk
1954-1964	Yunnanese civilian refugees 2,000 (mostly were dependents of the KMT soldiers)	<Unclear life and future> Temporarily ID card (Photo and the year of entry) ... Villagers age now between 39 to 49 years old
1964-1975	KMT Yunnanese soldiers 5,900 Yunnanese civilian refugee 10,000 (mostly are dependents of the KMT soldiers)	<Settlement> Refugee Allowance ... Villagers age now between 28 to 39 years old
1975-1988	KMT Yunnanese soldiers 25,000 Yunnanese civilian refugees 3,000 The number of the KMT villages 77 villages	<Improvement > Settlement projects/ Giving legal status as - Thai citizenship (bad prachachon) - Alien Status (bad khon tang daw) - Displaced people (bad obphayop) - Independent Yunnanese (Ho Idsara) ... Villagers age now between 15 to 28 years old
1988-Now	The number of KMT Yunnanese 54,000 (1994)	<Integration> Nationalization through compulsory education ... Villagers age now less than 15 years old

The villagers in their 30s and 40s see themselves as children of KMT soldiers but have quite obscure feelings about their nationality, positioning themselves among several countries of Burma, Laos, Thailand, Taiwan, and Yunnan. They are not completely Burmese, Laotian, Yunnanese, Taiwanese, Thai, Shino-Thai nor "Haw" in Thailand in their definition. They feel that they belong to none of those countries or groups. Their strong attachment to certain communities where they were born and grew up and this intensifies the internal ties with the other members in the community.

The self-identifications among the fourth generation are the most complex and situational. Although their basic identities are children of the KMT soldiers, they are also Thai nationals in official terms, and therefore they have many opportunities to present themselves as Thai. In fact, the Thai identity is so well infiltrated into their minds and they are able to perform perfectly as Thai. They also accept becoming "Haw" sometimes when it is more practical to follow the state classification to handle situations. Thus, they are also aware of their ambiguous position in Thailand that they adopt different identification and present themselves differently according what kind of situation they are dealing with.

Although the fifth generation are too young to develop their facility of self-awareness, what seems to be true is that, the former identity as children of the KMT soldiers has been fading away and national identity as Thai is more forcefully rooted than in any other generation. However, the more they age, the more they cultivate self-awareness that their cultural origins are not the same as the Thai, in no small way, through the socio-cultural milieu in the village where the villagers fully enjoy practicing their own culture.

Thus, the KMT Yunnanese who are apparently not a cohesive group, but differentiated among the generations, are actually strongly bound by the Yunnanese culture and Yunnanese identity. Successive maintenance of Yunnanese identity largely owes itself to the existence of the Chinese school in the village, which has been functioning as cultural institution to educate children in the village to be

Chinese. Although it became an economic institution for the second and third generations to provide job opportunities, the Chinese school today is turning back to the cultural institution again for the young generations to provide valuable information about themselves.

The Chinese school provides self-understanding and self-awareness as Yunnanese Chinese, which is of considerable importance for those young people in the village who are much involved in the two socio-cultural systems. Although going to two schools is such a burden for the young villagers, and can be a barrier to Thai educational progress, they still go to the Chinese school and even wish their children to go to the school because they all see the significance of the Chinese education which helps them to keep their cultural community. Without the Chinese school, their cultural identity would be replaced by the national one, or imposed image of “Haw” based on the state identification. Thus, the Chinese school functions as a valuable institution for all generations to transmit the Yunnanese culture certainly from one generation to next generation and maintain cultural and ethnic pride. Under the state’s attempt to form the “nation-state”, the more the Yunnanese yearn for the continuation of their cultural community in Thailand, the more they will increase their expectation towards the Chinese school as one key strategy to meet their demands.

The strong attachment and expectation towards the Chinese school from the villagers in Ban Tham Santisuk was observed from this study, no matter the reason is cultural or economic. Although the former environments are replaced by the new environment and combined with Thai culture, it is assumed that the Yunnanese Chinese in Ban Tham will continue to remain a cultural group in Thailand while acquiring a sense of “Thai-ness” and making further adaptation to Thai society and Yunnanese identity. This will remain preserved as long as there is the Chinese school which tells them who they truly are.

## **Consideration and Suggestion**

Considering the further operation and continuation of the Chinese school it proposed a necessity of the Chinese school to become more effective, practical and beneficial in order to meet the expectations and demands from the villagers, which are of a higher order than the actual capability of the Chinese school today. The following are what are considered should be improved for the cultural and economical survival of the KMT Yunnanese in Thailand.

First, it is necessary to use more suitable educational materials. The Chinese school use textbooks which are send from a private organization in Taiwan a couple of years after publication. Using outdated textbooks makes the students in Ban Tham Santisuk fall behind in contemporary information and vocabulary and exacerbates the difficulty of studying at higher level Chinese institutions than junior high level in the village. Taiwan has been developing as one of industrial countries in Asia, whereas the Ban Tham Santisuk is located in provincial area in Thailand where the living standard, sense of time and value are different from the one in industrial cities. Some textbooks from Taiwan, especially such as social science, focus on current society in Taiwan, do not fit to the villagers' situation and there are also some words / concepts used in Taiwan but not used in the KMT villages in Thailand. Therefore, what are described in the textbooks from Taiwan does not always match the reality in the village. Furthermore, information about Chinese society in mainland China, where they originally come from, is never provided from those textbooks from Taiwan.

Second, condition and quality of teachers in the Chinese school, including their teaching skill, knowledge and capability to establish an intimacy with students, should be reviewed. About half of the teachers today in the Chinese school are the literate first immigrants who have gone to schools in China, and a half of them are second/third generations who have graduated from the Chinese school. However, none of them have qualification as teachers and no special skill for teaching itself. Veteran teachers adapt old teaching methods, which they experienced at schools when they were young. Because of the puritan atmosphere in classrooms, without any

entertainment pause, such lectures often fail to get attention from the students; students fall asleep, start to do their homework from Thai school, or just sit without listening. On the other hand, there are the young teachers, who only have knowledge up to junior high level, lack vocabulary and proficiency and many of them only temporarily come to teach at the Chinese school to earn cash until they will find new regular job in cities again. Those young teachers also adapt the teaching method according to how their teachers taught them at school. Hence all teachers use the same old stereotyped teaching methodology and concentrate on memorizing vocabulary.

In addition, the veteran teachers are regarded as people with absolute respect due to their seniority. This inflexible positioning makes it impossible for students to be on intimate terms with the veteran teachers. At the same time, the situation that many of the young teachers who tend to stay only in a short period also prevents the students from establishing close relationship. This condition and lack of qualified teachers certainly diminishes the efficiency of the Chinese school. Although there has been an attempt to improve teachers' skill, annual teaching training has not yet produced tangible results and it seems to take a long time to change the old ways.

Third, it seems that the villagers need to take an action to re-organize the Chinese school to become a more cultural institution. From the result of this study, I consider that cultural aspect of the Chinese school be better highlighted as many young villagers expect the school to provide space for cultural gathering, a sense of belonging, and give information to acknowledgment cultural identity. Otherwise, the Chinese school as well as many young people in the village will be plunged into a crisis in the future.

Many students in the past have dropped out from the Chinese school faced with learning disabilities caused by attending two schools. Pressure from one school becomes pressure on the other school, and eventually students who were unable to balance two schools were likely to choose to go to the Thai school only. Yet, as a matter of fact, the Chinese school is pivotally important for the Yunnanese children to build up their friendship with other students and ascertain their cultural boundaries. It



develops later to become strong self-esteem and self-understanding to help them live in Thailand as “ethnic group” or “Haw”.

Due to the changed structure of family composition, it becomes difficult for children in the village to learn Yunnanese culture at home. Compared with previously, interaction among villagers has also become dilute and occasions for family gathering have been reduced. Besides, the number of inter-marriage between Yunnanese men and non-Yunnanese women has been increasing. In such households, (non-Yunnanese) mothers do not have the traditional function to teach Yunnanese culture at home and would rather demolish the continuation of Yunnanese tradition at home. Not only in non-Yunnanese mothers households, also, young parents in general today feel simply satisfied sending their children to Chinese school and hope that the school provides everything they need. All these changed structures in the village require the necessity overhaul functions of the Chinese school to become a more cultural institution.

Lastly, all the Chinese schools in the KMT villages should have back up from the Thai government. This is a requirement in order to encourage further operation of the Chinese school. Without support from the state, it must be assumed that it would be too big a challenge for the villagers in Ban Tham Santisuk, as well as in the other villages, to reconstruct the school based on the community demands and stabilize it.

The KMT Yunnanese have never been an illegal group of people in Thailand. They were official migrants who had permission from the government and later became a (Yunnanese) national group completing a long procedure of re-nationalization (Thai). Now, there is a strong interest emerging from this group to keep the Chinese school as their prime cultural institution. They can take full advantage of their right for it to meet their need, and the state should prepare an equal accessibility to everyone in the state.

It is not only the KMT Yunnanese but all the other ethnic groups' cultures and values should be more respected and protected in the same way. If Thailand aspires to be a multi-ethnic country, as the Thai government recently emphasized, then the state should seize the initiative and understand the nature of human diversity, and

accept different cultures, languages, behaviors, values, thoughts, and existences inside of the one state.



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