

CHAPTER II

TRANSFORMATION OF HIGHLAND SWIDDEN SOCIETY

During the past three or four decades, highlanders' life in the mountain region has been slowly but steadily changed in the inevitable process of modernization. Although the Pwo Karen community at my research site is still isolated in many respects, the situation since the 1960s, which is described by Hinton (1975) as politically, socially and economically "more isolated than most," can hardly be found at present. Nowadays, as compared with Hinton's time, the Pwo Karen community is governed as Thai citizens, and is more dependent on the outside world through development projects proposed and supported by both domestic and international organizations, as well as through its increasing involvement in the market system.

At the beginning of this section, I review the two contending notions of development modernization theories and development discourse theories concerning the issues of development in highland areas of Thailand. In this consideration, I focus my attention upon the agricultural transformation process observed in my research site of the Pwo Karen community in Mae Sariang district of Mae Hong Song province, based on the framework of the three related key-concepts of "development," "environmental concern" and "market economy." It is notable that these three concepts have also functioned as instrumental factors for mobilising the Pwo Karen villagers' decision-making processes.

2.1 Population Growth and Economic Development in Modernization

2.1.1 Discussions of Population Growth

The issue of population growth and density in highland swidden society has been widely discussed by several scholars in previous research (Kunstadter 1969 *et al.*). Hinton also investigates the issue for the case of Ban Dong Luang by discussing the three basic concepts; "gross population density," "physiologic density" and "carrying capacity." Similar to other highland swidden communities, the rising population in Ban

Dong Luang has long been an issue of high concern for the villagers. Additionally, the villagers worried in the 1960s that the reduced fallow would permanently damage their land (Hinton 1975:141). The fallow period towards the end of the 1960s was approximately five and a half years for most households in Ban Dong Luang. Even though this fallow period is longer than the present fallow period in the village, as I will mention later, the fallow period was never sufficiently long to regenerate soil fertility to meet the villagers' demands. Hinton reports that, although some erosion of the soil could be seen at that time, there was no excessive land degradation during his research period (1975:140-141). Since then in Ban Dong Luang, however, the soil has severely deteriorated from intensive chemical inputs for cabbage cultivation (interview with villagers in Ban Dong Luang). As can be seen from Table 2.1, the population of Ban Mae Chang thirty years ago surveyed by Hinton (1975:40) was 144 persons (32 households). From my survey in June of 2002, the major part (*i.e.*, mother village) of Ban Mae Chang had 245 persons from 54 households its satellite village (Ban Mae Chang Bon) had 53 persons from 19 households, showing -67.1 percent population growth rate. In Ban Dong Luang, the population at present in its major part (*i.e.*, mother village) is 248 persons, which is about the double of that in the 1960s. The speed of population expansion in the satellite village of Ban Dong Luang (*i.e.*, Ban Dong Noi) has been much faster than that of its mother village, showing a 321.3 percent population growth rate.

The relationship between population growth and environmental degradation in the context of economic development has been discussed within the frameworks of several population theories. In the following, I will briefly review some of representative population theories in the field of demography and economics, referring primarily to Desta (1999:79-95):

- (1) As one view of the pessimistic school of thought, Reverend Thomas Malthus, writing at the end of the eighteenth century, was the first to propose that unchecked population growth will inevitably cause a subsistence level of living and lead to starvation. He contends that the sole way to avoid poverty due to increasing

population is to practice “moral restraint” at the family level, by delayed marriage and practicing abstinence to limit the number of offspring. However, the flaw of Malthusian theory is that he did not have the ability to foresee how technical progress could support a larger population, and how the power of education and industrialization could reduce fertility rates.

- (2) Since the arrival of the twentieth century, the arguments about population growth have been interconnected with “environmental concern,” in which the natural resources on the earth will be depleted to serve the need of the global population expansion. It has been also linked to the “poverty” issue for which the growth model of the neoclassical economics states that the high population rates and the poor living on a subsistence level are burdens on economic development. Thus, the neoclassical-economic growth model promotes family planning programmes to stabilize the population.
- (3) The radical view mainly of the neo-Marxist economists asserts that the problem is not due to population but “underdevelopment.” These economists argues that over-consumption by developed countries has reduced natural resources and limited underdeveloped societies. They cite the fact that the rich nations of the so-called First World consume almost 80 percent of the world’s resources, which is approximately 16 times of that consumed by the residents in the Third World. This radical school of thought stands in opposition to birth control programmes on the grounds that such programmes will delay an inevitable economic revolution in society.
- (4) The optimistic view of pronatalists, such as Julian Simon, does not regard population growth as a problem for development. Simon states that the free market will adjust to resource shortages generated by population increases, and that human ingenuity will solve any problems through technological innovation. Moreover, he advocates that population growth allows the society to progress by stimulating innovation. In Simon’s argument, the ultimate resource is people, who can exert their wills and imaginations primarily for their benefit. In the long-term

perspective, the increasing population will become productive agents who contribute to social development. He views technological innovation as permitting economic outputs to outpace population growth. However, this theoretical perspective does not see the real condition of “less developed countries,” that they lack the necessary capital investment and educated labour force to lead them to the stage of economic take-off.

There are arguments concerning population growth in long standing around the world by so-called post-development scholars who have keenly criticized the reconstructed “development discourse¹.” For instance, regarding the above-mentioned optimistic view of population growth (4) in economic development theory, it is argued that it tends to fail to take into account contexts of socio-economic inequality. Mitchell (1995: 140-141) argues this point by reviewing the perspective of early classic economic development theories and the critiques against it. Shultzs (1964: 23, 29, cited from *ibid.*) contends that “traditional” farmers efficiently utilize their resources within the limits of the expertise and technology available to them, through which they have eliminated inefficiencies and reached “a particular type of equilibrium” in which the agricultural economy is “incapable of growth except at high cost.” More to the point, “the transformation from traditional agriculture is an investment problem dependent on a flow of new high-payoff inputs: the inputs of scientific agriculture,” as explained by Louis Berger International Inc. (1985: 2, cited from *ibid.*). Hill (1986: 25, cited from *ibid.*) shows his fear that the most “‘efficient’ allocation of resources in Schultz’s terms” would never allocate land to the poorest farmers. This is certainly exemplified by the case of poor villagers in Ban Dong Luang in this study as I will explain later in CHAPTERs III,

¹ Originally, the concept of “discourse” which has been extensively theorized by French philosopher (and historian) Michael Foucault, is deemed as the production of knowledge through language, as a system of representation (Hall 2001: 72). The “discursive practice of development (Escobar 1992)” has been linked to the exercise of power to form the reality not naturally but historically. For instance, the special terms of ‘democracy’ and ‘social movement’ are argued that development is created both by power, and the intervention in the First World to the Third World, which also connects to the dualistic orientalism (*ibid.*). It is criticised by Escobar (*ibid.*) that the reality of ‘development as discourse’ and ‘powerful hegemonic form of representation’ are equal to the colonization of the Third World by creating

IV and V.

As another argument on the issue of population growth, Williams (1995: 158-167) presents the rising trend of concerns on the population growth by the World Bank to the Third World. He delineates how the concept of population growth has been regarded as a crucial problem in development discourse. During the 1960s, the obsession with population growth by the World Bank firstly focused on Asia by diagnosing that the population pressure is the major problem of agricultural development in the Third World. In order to increase agricultural productivity, the World Bank promoted the birth control programme in the region and yield-enhancing technologies of the “green revolution.” Since the 1980s, the World Bank’s attention has shifted to Africa, and the official reports have chanted the hackneyed phrase about population growth as the inception in the passage of “more people – less land – lower productivity – less food for everyone (Williams 1995:159).” Towards African agricultural practices, successive World Bank studies report the deteriorating situation of the two forms of conventional farming practices of “slash and burn” and “nomadic livestock raising,” and emphasize the importance of the introduction of new agricultural technologies (Williams 1995:164).

Although those World Bank development projects stress the importance of sustainable methods (*e.g.* World Bank 1990, cited from *ibid.*), they totally ignore the numerous local strategies that have actually sustained African farmers over hundreds of years to cope with their environment by permanent cultivation of land, terracing of hillsides, control of pests, and adapting rice-cultivation to different sources of water (Netting 1968; Mortimore 1989; Richards 1985; cited from Williams 1995:165). As a result, attempts to improve African farming methods by such developmental agents’ approaches, ignores the local complexity and context, and thus there have been few success and many failures (Heyer *et al.* 1981, cited from Williams 1995:166). This experience has led the World Bank complain that the investment in Africa in the past three decades has been “disappointing.”

The abovementioned African cases are shared with other regions that are

abnormalities such ‘the poor,’ ‘the malnourished,’ ‘the illiterate,’ ‘pregnant women’ and ‘the landless.’

objectified in the development scheme around the world. Therefore, a number of arguments and critiques of development by a school of discourse theorists has entailed. In the mountainous region of northern Thailand, there have been several problems that are not only socio-economically, but also politically crucial, issues for the swidden-practicing highlanders, especially since the outset of national and global modernization. ¶ In this process, although they do not use the term of “development discourse,” Kunstadter and Chapman (1978:3-5) discuss how highland swiddeners have been driven into the twofold undesirably harsh status of “marginalization” and “stigmatization.” For the former status, among its fundamentally associated problems are “population growth” as well as the problems resulting from the socio-economic inequalities of the highland areas. Moreover, in the course of powerfully defending the natural resources, the universally prevailing “environmental” consciousness about soil, watershed and forest resources in the mountain areas have not only constrained the subsistence of residents in the uplands, but also frequently abused the swiddeners as major “intruders” who trigger “environment degradation” in Thailand. The Pwo Karen in this study have also been suffering from the above twofold distressed life under development discourse.

According to the research of the middle of the 1980s on Ban Mae Chang by Kwanchewan (1988), the promotion of wet-rice farming and cash cropping of cabbage and coffee in the vicinity of Ban Mae Chang was launched by the Hill Tribe Welfare Centre at Mae Ho (HTWCM). In Ban Mae Chang, however, these programs were not carried out in a fruitful way. For instance, wet-rice farming projects could not be diffused as well as had been expected mainly because of, (1) the inappropriate seed varieties provided by the office, (2) the physical limits to the amount of available water for wet rice and; (3) the constraints of the labour force to be used for irrigated farming (Kwanchewan 1988:103). In fact, the Skaw Karen villages located near the main road such as Ban Mae Kanai, had utilized the opportunities offered through the agricultural development projects by the HTWCM. In contrast, the Pwo Karen people in Ban Mae Chang did not generally embark on those development menus in the 1980s. A few villagers of Ban Mae Chang adopted the coffee-promotion programme, yet they became

disappointed with their trials since they could sell the beans for only a few baht per kilogram after waiting three-years for the harvest. The officials of the development project contend that there is no problem with marketing and price, but the problem is the Pwo Karen's lazy attitudes as they prefer only to be employed (Kwanchewan 1988:103-104).

The Pwo Karen community has been dealing with such difficulties as increasing population, decreasing arable land, shortening fallow period, declining natural resources, and chronic rice deficit. In this situation, they are wedged in between the marginality from choices and the stigmatization of the alleged environmental degradation by cabbage cultivation, which is a necessary agricultural approach for them to survive under such restricted circumstances surrounding them. Nevertheless, since the wave of development arrived in the highland region, the Pwo Karen people in Ban Mae Chang have been, and still are, described in the same derogatory term by outsiders involved in the implementation of development programmes.

2.1.2 Modernization of the Pwo Karen in My Research Site

Because of growing concerns about the highland areas in the early 1960s, the first governmental development project came to the forest region of the Pwo Karen in Mae Sariang. Since 1963, the Karen residing in the area have been administratively organized under the Hill Tribe Development and Welfare Centre in Mae Hong Son, which is located at Mae Ho. In Ban Mae Chang, the government's Tribal Development and Welfare Unit (TDWU) was set up in 1964, focusing mainly on agricultural development in the region, including the other five Pwo Karen villages and one Skaw Karen village. The TDWU in Ban Mae Chang established an informal school, which was later incorporated into the formal primary school to provide the formal education for the children in 1973. The major highland development projects in Thailand, which principally focused on the replacement of the opium poppy with other cash crops such as tea, coffee, fruits and vegetables, started in 1971. In 1976, in order to rearrange the national administrative system of Thailand, the Cabinet decided on policies and strategies relating to the highlanders, aiming to integrate the ethnic groups into Thai society, with

full rights and the maintenance of their cultural and religious practices, to build them up as “first class” self-reliant Thai citizens (Renard *et al.* 1994:6). In the late 1980s, the TDWU building was abandoned and was later dismantled for the construction of a new school building in the 1990s.

2.1.2.1 Dependence on Development Projects

Formal education has provided the Pwo Karen villagers with the Thai literacy that allows them to make contacts outside the village by themselves, enhancing the children’s changes of gaining official Thai identity by paying their respects to the national authorities through the formal education system. Many of the villagers who can speak central Thai language often go to work in such town areas as Mae Ho, Mae Sariang and Chiang Mai, as temporary or seasonal wage labourers. Even though some of them speak Thai with an accent, those who have learned in the formal education system do not hesitate in general to speak to outsiders, unlike the elder generation.

They are also well aware of news from the outside world through radios in households and a television at the village school. Almost every night, the villagers in Ban Mae Chang got together in front of the school television set, which is the only one in the village, whenever power is available from the portable independent electric generator. They enjoy not only the news, but also the TV dramas and movies, which are most favourable of them. The generations enjoying TV range from infants to the elder villagers. Inside the village, some households with radios or cassette players enjoy listening to the news and music including the Thai folk and pops from the radio program and recorded tapes. Some of the villagers enjoy the Skaw Karen music recorded on cassette tapes, and sing it as if those songs of the Skaw Karen were their own folk songs of the Pwo Karen. There is one Ban Mae Chang man in his early thirties who knows some of the Skaw Karen songs, but will sing only the Thai pops and folk songs and what he learned in his elementary school education.

I was impressed by the fact that, because of the influence of the mass media, the villagers are more abreast of current affairs than I had previously thought. When I

conducted my fieldwork during the rainy season in 2002, due to the then political conflict between Thailand and Myanmar, one elder villager in his sixties worried that the Myanmar people might attack the Pwo Karen people residing in the border region (interviewed on June 8th 2002, in Ban Mae Chang Bon). Although the Pwo Karen people in Ban Mae Chang do not exactly remember when their ancestors fled from Burma (Myanmar), estimating their arrival at about three centuries ago, they are usually familiar with information about the recent political conflicts between Thai and Myanmar through the TV and radio. Another story of interest concerned me when I stayed at Ban Mae Chang on March 22nd to 23rd 2003 with the eight American undergraduate students, who were studying at Payap University in Chiang Mai. This study tour was organized by Dr. Kwanchewan, Social Research Institute of Chiang Mai University. It was the first time for almost all the villagers of Ban Mae Chang to see the real American people, and they asked me “They are not related to the present war, are not they?” In fact, the timing of our stay at the village corresponded to the beginning of the war between the United States and Iraq in March 2003.

When the previous research by Kwanchewan was carried out for the village in the late 1980s, the villagers’ response towards the external development projects and the formal education was “just observing” as a negative and reluctant or “resistant” attitude (see the section 1.4.1.2 Pwo Karen People in Mae Sariang and Modernization). However, it may not be analytically appropriate if we assume that the villagers are neglectful in maintaining their tradition in production and knowledge system while restricting their children from learning in the classroom. Since the NGOs’ had become more active in the cooperation with the northern highlanders, the villagers in this area have consulted with NGO’s about their problems, hoping for better possible “choices,” and resulting in the gradual changes in their attitude. Today, for instance, regarding educational development for their young generation, parents say; “Because we really want our children to stay inside the village while they are studying at school, we want high school facilities to enable our children to obtain a basic education in our community. Because we want to improve our life, we should help each other at both household and

community levels, in our own way with external helps such as those from local NGO's (interview with Mr. Palao: aged 52, Mr. Tai: aged 33).” They have, however, no concrete ideas or perspectives on what to do for their educational and community reform for the future. At present, the cooperation with the NGOs seems to be going well, with villagers maintaining high expectations that the activities will provide a broader range of alternatives that are appropriate to their situation and needs.

2.1.2.2 Coexistence of Modernity and Traditionalism in Health Care

Changes in the population of swidden society are directly related to the per-capita productivity and consumption amount. Therefore, the population dynamics are a fundamental issue among the villagers in the highland region, where the population has been steadily increasing since the village formation. The expanding population has brought about the depletion of the natural resources around them, in which not only animals for the resource of protein, but also the herbal medicine for their daily use have been decreasing. The villagers are at present depending more on the Western medical treatment and doctors in the towns such as Mae Ho and Mae Sariang. Although it is still difficult for them to secure access to this health care, they can generally get basic medical examination and drugs for free or at low cost.

From the economic point of view, the Pwo Karen people do not see any advantages in having a large family, nor do they desire large families (Hinton 1975:72). According to Hinton's study in the 1960s, they used rudimentary methods for birth control (*e.g.*, use the roots of specific plants for abortion), but did not practice infanticide. At that time, it was not yet an option for the Pwo Karen villagers to use western birth control devices or drugs, but some said that they would like to use them if available (*ibid.*). Presently, the women in the Pwo Karen villages generally take birth control pills, which are available for free at the clinic in Mae Ho. The village informant said that they have been using the pill in this way for a decade.

Meanwhile, in Ban Mae Chang, the official program to control malaria concurrently came to the village with welfare projects and the formal education system in

the 1970s. The program has promoted the use of mosquito nets at every household as the most effective prevention method. Many of the villagers follow this advice. However, there were some cases of malaria in Ban Mae Chang in the 2002 rainy season. One twenty-year old male was reported to be infected in the forest near the village during that rainy season. He was taken to the hospital in Mae Sariang and stayed for four nights there (interviewed in December 2002).

It is another reality that the Pwo Karen, similar to other highland ethnic groups, are always in danger of injury and of being infected with some serious tropical diseases, which are sometimes fatal. According to the research by Hinton, the death rate among the very young especially the infant mortality rate, was significantly high due to, firstly insufficient intake of nutrition, secondly low standards of hygiene and sanitation, and thirdly inaccessibility to the suitable medical and public health service (Hinton 1975:69). Animal protein was only consumed at the ceremonial occasions after offering the sacrifices to the spirits, and the villagers hardly encountered any wild animals because they were becoming depleted during the period Hinton studied. According to my field survey, the villagers sometimes consume canned sardine, if they can afford it, and dry fish, probably a kind of horse mackerel, to put in the preserved chilli paste called *Nam Prick* in Thai, or in soup. They occasionally consume animal protein by eating chickens or pigs during or just after the ritual ceremonies. Their standard daily meals today are similar to the old days as Hinton (1975:69) describes in his study, mainly rice with a stew containing only melons and chillies.

Although the Pwo Karen villagers have become more familiar with the scientific medical treatment than before, they still rely more on their traditional healing methods than western medical methods in practice. The Pwo Karen people in Ban Mae Chang believe that the *Ancestor or Matrilineal Guardian Spirit* is the most important spirit for their health. If the spirit is treated properly, the lineage members can expect to be guarded and granted sound health (Somphob 1986: 170). According to research by Somphob, this spirit is traced matrilineally, and the matrilineal spiritual head, *ther myug khwae* in Pwo language, has the most powerful influence over health and general welfare

(*ibid.*).

The majority of the villagers in Ban Mae Chang maintain this belief, and ask for the female spiritual head for remedy through feasting. Whenever the villagers get sick or injured, they hold a ritual at the family level first, by offering a chicken or a pig, depending on the grade of the spirits. If the ritual is not effective, they will ask the female spiritual head in their lineage to conduct other rituals. This level of the ritual ceremony generally takes three days. At first, they hold rites by offering chickens or pigs to the spirit through the female spiritual head. It follows that they (the family members and the spiritual head) eat meat from the wings, limbs, and body on the first day. On the second day, they eat the head. On the last day, they eat the internal organs (interview with Mr. Niw). During the ritual period, outsiders (those who do not share the same lineage) are not allowed to step into the household with the sick or injured person.

The villagers often worry stomach and intestinal ailments caused mainly, they suppose, by spirits or parasites. While the Japanese university NGO group GONGOVA stayed in Ban Mae Chang to carry out their cooperative activities, the group opened for about two weeks a small volunteer clinic served by a Japanese doctor for the villagers' health care during the period.² One day, two infants and three adults came to the clinic to ask for drugs to cure the parasites. The clinic did not have the medicine for vermifuge to give them. Instead, the doctor asked them to describe the condition. One patient explained that he felt there was something moving inside and around his stomach and intestines. One of the elder females informed us that she was not sure whether the pain was due to parasites, many anxieties of life or some evil spirits affecting the body.

In conjunction with the aforementioned, the Pwo Karen people believe every person has thirty-three "souls" which reside in different parts of the body (Somphob 1986: 170). They regard "soul" as the vital entity that effects their physical and mental health. However, "souls" are frequently wandering off either at their own discretion or at

² I already mentioned about the NGO volunteer activity of a Japanese university group in Ban Mae Chang in CHAPTER I (section 1.5.1 First and Second Visits to Ban Mae Chang: Preliminary Field Surveys). I had precious opportunities, through the role of nursing assistant to the doctor, to take care of the villagers who came to the clinic. Facing the patients, I asked each of them the health conditions on when and where they got the injuries or physical problems, and how they felt them.

the demand of a spirit which is hostile to the person, leaving the person unguarded and therefore in danger of becoming ill (*ibid.*). The soul is susceptible to enticement by spirits of nature, to evil souls or revengeful ghosts, and to sorcery (Somphob 1986:170-171). One of the widows in Ban Dong Luang mentioned in an interview that her husband had died due to the sorcery of the revengeful soul of his neighbour (interviewed on 19th January 2003, in Ban Dong Luang).

It is reported that in past times the Pwo Karen were generally unwilling to use modern medicine because they thought that it was detrimental rather than effective in curing ailments (Somphob 1986:171). Nowadays, they know the effectiveness of western drugs even though treatment by doctors at hospitals sometimes tends to be tough, and they generally appreciate it as a benefit of modernization. At the same time, they still believe and follow the traditional manner to feast with spirits for both mental and physical problems. Although the Pwo Karen villagers strongly maintain their traditional manner in health care, it does not necessarily mean that they just lean to ethnocentric manner. When their traditional herbal mixtures or rituals for remedy resulted in failure, they often ask for better solutions and advice from neighbouring Skaw Karen, Lua, and Thai (Khon Muang) people (Somphob 1986:172, and my interview with some villagers). It is notable that Somphob (*ibid.*) reports that they are pragmatic enough to willingly try anything that works. They are living between the application of the scientific knowledge provided by the modernity and the maintenance of traditional observance in their belief system, and are always searching for the best methods for their life.

2.2 Policies for Forestry

2.2.1 History of “Scientific Forestry” in Thailand

The history of forest management in Thailand started in the era of King Chulalongkorn’s modernization projects from 1869 to 1911, under the influence of the European approaches to establish an administration and to integrate the kingdom’s

regional tributary states of the North, Northeast and South (Sureerantna 2001:118).³ In this background, the Royal Forestry Department (RFD) was established in 1896 by the recommendation of a British forester who served as the then concerned administrator. Subsequently, the forest regulation scheme of the central government was gradually expanded through acts as the Forest Protection Act of 1913 and the Protection and Reservation of Forest Act in 1938. The government initiated the authorization of land ownership rights (title deeds) under the Land Act in 1954, and this nationalization of the forest continued into 1960. The National Forest Reserve Act of 1964 was enacted, which became the starting point for conflicts between forest resource preservation and the agricultural land use by the highland shifting cultivators. According to the legal setting that all of the land including the forest belongs to the state (Sophon 1978:46), the RFD holds full responsibility over the administration and management of the forest resources and the issues concerned with the forest resources. Under this framework, since the 1970s, the RFD has set up more strict programmes than ever to call a halt to forest loss and deforestation, in which shifting cultivation by the highlanders is also accounted for. The major strategies of the RFD under the ideology of natural forest conservation policies are as follows;

1. demarcation and declaration of many more conservation forests, such as national parks, forest parks, wildlife sanctuaries, non-hunting areas, and forest reserves;
2. strong enforcement of forest laws and regulations, and implement strict forest patrolling;
3. relocation of people residing inside the forest reserves or conservation forests; and
4. attempt to limit the upland or mountainous areas already occupied by hill tribes, and under shifting cultivation.

(Sureerantna 2001:123)

Dominated by the ideology of conservation, the RFD has pursued active reservation programmes for the forest since the 1960s, when the conflicts between local people and the scientific forest classification system were induced. According to the research at the

³ I owe the historical trace of the forestry in Thailand in this subsection to Dr. Sureerantna Lakanavichian's "Forest Policy and History," in *Forest in Culture – Culture in Forest: Perspectives from Northern Thailand*, edited by Ebbe Poulsen and Flemming Skov *et al.*, 2001(Denmark: Research Centre on Forest

end of the 1980s, it was estimated that 1.2 million families, approximately 20% of Thai farmers, were in illegal occupation of land in the forest reserves (Hirsch 1990:168, cited from England 1996:65).

Forestry in Thailand and the perspective of the state influenced by the environmentalism, can be conceptualised as “territorialization” in which the state power expands its control over not only natural resources, but also what the people can do inside its boundaries (Vandergeest and Peluso 1995:255). Sack offers an adequate definition of the concept of territorialization, describing it as an “attempt by an individual or group to affect, influence, or control people, phenomena, and relationships by delimiting and asserting control over a geographic area (Sack 1986:19, cited from Vandergeest and Peluso 1995:387-388).” It means that territorialization generates a new marginal weak people and coerces them by legal control. The history of forestry in Thailand can be divided into three stages by applying the concept of territorialization: (1) “declaration” of the land code that all the unoccupied land within the national boundaries, which includes all of the forest, belongs to the state, (2) “demarcation” of reserve and permanent forests which was initiated in the 1930s and accelerated after 1964, and (3) “functional territorialization,” the remapping of the forest according to scientific criteria such as soil type, slope, and vegetation, which has become the basis for laws prohibiting and prescribing specific activities in the concerned region (Vandergeest and Peluso 1995:408).

Peluso (1992:42-52) provides a case study of “scientific forestry” in Java. From the colonial period through the post-colonial era after the national independence, the German structures and ideology of “scientific forestry” have affected the forest, people-forester relations, and the nature of contemporary state forestry in Java. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, the scientific concept of “sustainable forest management” by the state, which means for its own profit, and the new concept of “Forest Service” was subsequently becoming a production enterprise, extending its custodial role by expanding police activities and formalizing an “emerging ideology of conservation (Peluso

1992:76).” In the process of territorialization in Thailand, although the contextual differences with Java should be taken into account, “scientific forestry” management has also played a significant role in devising and implementing the aforementioned forestry policies interconnected with the conservation ideology.

2.2.2 Impacts and Response of Forestry Policy in Pwo Karen Community

With the Wildlife Preservation Act in 1960 and the National Park Act of 1961, the government has continuously enclosed more and more forest areas to conserve natural forest resources and to solve the over-heating deforestation issue (Santita 1996:261). In Uthaitani province, in 1986, there was an incident of resettlement implemented by such coercive forestry policies, through which a large scale relocation of villagers took place in the extension project of the Huai Kha Khaeng Wildlife Sanctuary inside which logging and swidden agriculture were totally prohibited. In this case, six Pwo Karen youths were arrested, jailed, and accused of illegal felling, although it was said that the logs they cut were a few small trees for house posts (Gravers 2001:68). There are an estimated 5,000 to 8,000 Karen people living in the Thung Yai-Naresuan-Huai Kha Khaeng sanctuaries and national parks, which cover a total forest area of about 14,000 km² (*ibid.*). Inside the sanctuary or at the border of the new buffer zone around the sanctuary, there are some Pwo Karen villages in Ban Rai district in which the villagers can neither exercise their communal-use rights over their commons anymore, nor do they have the chance to participate in the related projects. Moreover, restrictions and controls over the forests were enforced with increasing vigour, to the point that the villagers have practically almost no access to the forest resources (*ibid.*).

I would like to quickly review here the case of the Pwo Karen groups in Uthaitani province to examine how they have adapted themselves to the changing circumstances and how they have responded to external forces.

Case of Saney Phong Village: Creation of Image as Traditional Conservationist⁴

⁴ All of the following information that are related to the Pwo Karen villages of Uthaitani province is cited from “Karen Notions of Environment – Space, Place and Power in a Political Landscape” by

In Saney Phong village, located inside the Thung Yai Sanctuary near the town of Sangkhlabri, the situation of the Pwo Karen under the forestry policies is different from the aforementioned case in Ban Rai district. The villagers are more actively involved with various projects such as the Wildlife Fund Thailand, and also host the Royal Forestry Department (RFD), a Patana Chao Khao office (Hill Tribe Development Centre), and a WWF training centre. According to the survey by Gravers (2001), the village is beautifully situated among high, evergreen trees, and surrounded with limestone rock. In 1996, there were about 60 households consisting of more than 300 inhabitants. The arable areas in the village have been restricted and reduced the fallow period to 3-4 years, which make the traditional rotational fallow system difficult to maintain. Nevertheless, the rice output there is still high enough without using chemical fertilizer.

The Pwo Karen villagers have been well organised and inspired by a charismatic Karen Buddhist monk to protect their environment and maintain their animistic annual ceremonies for the rice harvest and the forest surrounding the village. The animistic characteristic of the ceremonies has been integrated with Buddhism, and it is held in front of the monastery and presented to *Phe Bee Yuh*, the Rice Goddess.⁵ The monk has been the leader of the monastery as well as the informal leader of the village for about 30 years.

The Pwo Karen villagers in this area belong to the Lu Wah (white string) Buddhist denomination, and are totally forbidden from hunting wild animals. Although the state authorities urged the Pwo Karen to raise chickens and pigs for income generation, many villagers who hold strong beliefs concerning the killing animals resisted the instructions by claiming that the “village will not be well.” This resolute standpoint of the Pwo Karen is seen in the oath, which is proclaimed at the end of ceremonies for *Phe Bee Yuh* for the “Earth Goddess” and their ancestors, as follows; “*This Land has sheltered us for generations. We live here happily and peacefully because we respect Nature (sic.). We promise to bear in mind that we have to follow our ancestors in protecting the forest which is our home.*” Nation (January 25, 1992), cited from Gravers (2001:69)

Although it can be criticized that the connotation of “Nature” in this translation is somewhat romanticized, the content of the oath by the Pwo Karen in this article is trustworthy and correct in details, according to Gravers’ observation (Gravers 2001:69).

In the 1990s, the Pwo Karen residing in the region of Thung Yai-Naresuan Wildlife Sanctuary became the centre of a debate around settlement inside national parks and sanctuaries. Within this political and environmental context, the Pwo Karen in the area were newly regarded as “traditional conservationists,” and their ritual for

Mikael Gravers (2001) in *Forest in Culture – Culture in Forest: Perspectives from Northern Thailand* edited by Ebbe Poulsen and *et al.* (Research Centre on Forest and People in Thailand).

⁵ Gravers reports that the Pwo Karen villagers in Uthaitani province show their respect to the female authority of “Rice Goddess (Gravers 2001:68).” The significant factor for the desirable rice harvest is absolutely depending on the help by her, “Earth Goddess (*ibid.*:64).” However, it is different from the Pwo Karen belief in Mae Sariang, in which the male spirit so-called “The Lord of the Land and Water” is the ruler of all natural resources (Hinton 1986:160, and interview and observation in my fieldwork). I will restrict myself to indicating this difference here, and will not go into deeper discussion about this difference in this study.

the Earth Goddess was featured in detail by the mass media (*ibid.*)⁶ The increasing social attention and environmental discourse involving the RFD, biologists, NGOs, anthropologists and, even the Karen people themselves as well, consequently impacted on the villagers' daily life and cosmology. Inventing a new tradition to declare their oath to protect the forest in front of the religious authorities (monks and symbols of their ancestors), their physical space (*i.e.*, forest) is more shrinking. At the same time, their discretion to make livings in the forest is further restricted by today's political wind.

Regarding the above, what is the situation of the Pwo Karen people around Mae Sariang, especially in Ban Mae Chang and Ban Dong Luang, on which I focus my analytical attention in this study?

2.2.3 Local Situation and Resource Management

The situation of the Pwo Karen people in the forests of Mae Sariang district is different from the above cases in which the Pwo Karen people have suffered from marginalization and strictly prohibited to carry out the swidden farming. There are two major reasons for this. First, the differences in geographic configurations between Uthaitхани province and Mae Sariang district of Mae Hong Son province. The second is related to the official status of land-use regulation; the research site of my study in Mae Sariang district is classified into the "reserved forest (pàa sañüan)," in which the enforcement of forestry policies is not as strict as in the areas classified into the "protected forest (pàa ànúrák)." The villagers of Ban Mae Chang and Ban Dong Luang, therefore, have not been so harshly restricted in their traditional farming so far. To the extent of knowledge gathered in my fieldwork, the relationship between the Pwo Karen people and the office of the RFD seems to have been moderate.

Around the years of 1999 and 2000, officials of the RFD came to Ban Mae Chang to discuss how to manage the forest with the villagers, and made an agreement to demarcate the natural-resource areas (interview with the official village headman of Ban Mae Chang). After the meeting between the officials and the village committee, it was agreed that the protected area, the headwater area and watershed areas should be banned

⁶ Gravers (2001:81) offers some references of this trend in *The Nation*, November 3rd 1991, and January 25th 1992; *Bangkok Post*, August 9th 1992.

from farming use. The official village headman told me that the villagers understand the new official regulation on their forest, and it has not been so difficult for them to observe the regulation so far. For the villagers of Ban Mae Chang, the basic skeleton of the new regulation for forest protection instructed by the RFD shares almost identical principal with their traditional recognition of the natural resource management. Even though, strictly speaking, the Pwo Karen people do not have the same concept of “watershed” as indicated by the forestry policies in Thailand, they have not conventionally used the forest near the water resources since they know that the water resources must be correctly managed and maintained. It is to be noted here that their recognition of the importance of the water-resource management is not necessarily based on their belief in the control over resources, but is based on the practical convenience and benefit in light of their actual experience.

The official regulation is fairly convenient and favourable for the villagers of Ban Mae Chang. Before the implementation of this regulation, many of the villagers from Ban Dong Luang which is the neighbouring another Pwo Karen village, came to log the trees in the territory of Ban Mae Chang for their own use. Since some of the villagers in Ban Dong Luang have made large profits by cabbage cultivation, their need for woods for fuel and construction materials has increased. Yet, there is no longer any rich forest available for the villagers of Ban Dong Luang since they have nearly depleted their forest. As a consequence, they resorted to the intrusion into the richer forest of Ban Mae Chang. The villagers of Ban Mae Chang have neither forbidden their neighbours nor blamed them. They just allowed those from the neighbouring village to cut trees. It was not long before that the Ban Mae Chang villagers came to fear the possible depletion of their forest resources. However, they hesitated to accuse their neighbours of exploiting the forest belonging to Ban Mae Chang (interview with Mr. Tusa, Mr. Ton, and others).

The advent of official control over the natural resources in the region was actually beneficial to the villagers of Ban Mae Chang, as it helped legitimize the security of their own forest. In this sense, forest-resource management in Ban Mae Chang can be considered as a programme of “reciprocity” between the forest farmers (*i.e.*, the Ban Mae

Chang villagers) and the forestry officials (*i.e.*, the RFD government officials). However, there is a question whether this harmonious “reciprocity” relationship will last long or not. Is it just a matter of time before the highlanders have to give up their traditional way of life with swidden cultivation? They do not know what kind of external forces will come about to change their forest utilization practices, or when this will happen. It has become a crucial matter for the Pwo Karen people of Ban Mae Chang to judge how to survive with shrinking swidden land, shortening fallow period and unavoidable increasing involvement in the market economy.

2.3 Market Economy and Technology in Local Subsistence

Until the beginning of the 1980s, the most crucial concern in the mountain region for the government was to eradicate opium production by highland ethnic minorities. The combined efforts through many official development programmes as well as foreign aid support, resulted in the increased commercialization of several specific cash crops in the highlands (Anan 1996:211). This movement to promote cash cropping as a substitute for opium, has consequently encouraged more use of the chemical fertilizer and insecticides as well as the water (Mingsan 1994, cited from Anan 1996:212). Moreover, it is evident that, in several programmes, commercial interests have taken over the need for the conservation of the natural environment (UNDCP 1994, cited from Anan 1996:211). These phenomena have required the highlanders to considerably change their subsistence from shifting cultivation to the new agricultural schemes based on the permanent settlement. To meet this requirement, they have made strenuous efforts to adjust themselves to the agricultural transformation.

Concerning the agricultural adjustment of the highlanders, the “Green Revolution” also promoted the agricultural development in the process of farming modernization. This terminology has been widely used since the 1960s to describe the results of efforts to increase the crop yields and to diversify crop varieties, in order to meet the huge demand for food crops from the rapidly growing population in

agriculturally less-advanced regions of the world. In Thailand, the advent of the new miracle-crops (*i.e.*, crops with significantly higher productivity) has been a dynamic vehicle of national economic growth. The Thai economy had been driven for a century, by the exports of products from the primary industry such as teak, rubber and especially rice⁷, and combined forestry and agricultural products accounted for almost four-fifths of total exports (Pasuk and Baker 1998:22). Under the rising market economy system and growing global economy, technological innovations in agriculture have greatly influenced the swiddeners' life in the northern mountainous region.

In light of the above-mentioned agricultural modernization process, a number of new discordant problems have been induced as a result of various development projects aiming at the national economic development and control of deforestation through the creation of national parks in the forest areas. For the local people who reside in the forest area, their life has been disturbed by contradictory policies that, on one hand, encourage the swiddeners to adopt a consumption-oriented economy, and on the other hand, restrict the land-use of the hill side farmland that has been sustained by traditional methods. In fact, the highlanders' life has often deteriorated after the implementation of policies to resettle communities or the restriction of their agriculture. In 1994, the Mien villages of Mae San and Pa Daeng, both of which are located inside the Doi Luang National Park of Lampang province, were relocated to an upland area outside of the national park in the name of conservation of natural resources inside the national park (Anan 1996:212-213). Yet, it is said that the real motive behind this policy implementation was to promote tourism in that area because the scenic environment surrounding the waterfall is attractive to tourists. Before that time, the Mien villagers had made valuable investments in coffee plantations for more than a decade, adjusting their farming activities to the changing circumstances around them. As a result, they were forced to change their subsistence to more deeply rely on wage labour since the new land provided by the government was unsuitable for growing coffee (*ibid.*). This example has been criticized from time to time as a case of contradictory development programmes in which the two national interests of

⁷ The rice contributed two-thirds of all exports in 1960s.

“commercialization” and “conservation” clash with the local interests in the local space.

The problems related to commercialized agriculture and its consequences can be seen in the village of the Pwo Karen as well. On this point, I would like to mention the case of the Pwo Karen community in Uthaithani province reported by Gravers (2001:59-67). The present situation of Ban Dong Luang is obviously reflected by this case, and this case would possibly serve as an undesirable model in near future for the Pwo Karen people in Ban Mae Chang and Ban Dong Luang of Mae Sariang district in Mae Hong Son province.

Case of Wa Ga Gla village:

Reduction of Living Standards by Exploitation and Conservation under Modernization⁸

The Pwo Karen village Wa Ga Gla is located 20 km north of town in Ban Rai district in Uthaithani province. Until 1960, the area was dominated by mixed deciduous vegetation with an area of semi-evergreen forest, and had limited teak mixed with dipterocarp and bamboo (Gravers 2001:62). “Wa Ga” means a kind of bamboo which could be seen abundantly around the village in the old times. The Pwo Karen people in the region carried out a rotational fallow system of rice farming on the hill until around the 1960s. According to the research by Gravers in 1970, the Pwo Karen considered that 7-10 years should be secured for rejuvenation of old plot to get sufficient rice output, although they had been able to wait a longer period for fallow before 1970 (Graver 2001:65).

In the 1970s, the Pwo Karen had to change their subsistence life because of external agencies of the logging industry and forestry policies. The inception was the instalment of a paved road into Wa Ga Gla village by the logging industry (Thai Plywood Co.) in 1971, and every tree of any value such as teak, dipterocarp, redwood and rare species of hardwood, was logged. After exploitation of woods by logging industry in the southern part of the area, the ideology of conservation by forestry policies drove the Pwo Karen life into a tight corner. The Royal Forestry Department decided that the Pwo Karen were inhabiting a “reserved forest (pàa saññan),” and *officially* prohibited swidden cultivation inside the area.⁹ Deteriorated by the land-rush of Thai peasants who occupied large areas of land and took big trees into their possession, the Pwo Karen status of living could not maintain their traditional subsistence nor obtain title deed for their residing land.

It was during the 1960s when maize, the first wonder crop of modernization,

⁸ The description in this part has greatly benefited from Gravers (2001).

⁹ As above mentioned in the last subsection, this is the same legal status as the Pwo Karen villages of Ban Mae Chang and other neighbouring Karen villages of Mae Sariang district in Mae Hong Son province.

was introduced for animal feed or land industrial production, moreover, encouraged in order to expand the trade surplus (Gravers 2001:66). After state territorial control for forest resources, the Pwo Karen were urged by the officials to grow maize and join the market system. Some of the pioneering households among the Pwo successfully made profit by cash cropping of maize, and other followers joined later. The impacts of maize cropping came into sight in early 1972. The villagers became modern consumers of radios, watches, bicycles and motorcycles. The rice yield had dramatically declined. A new economic class differentiation was generated, and a larger socio-economic gap between the relatively rich and the poorer households was developed. In this process, more households became dependent on maize growing as a supplementary crop to rice, however, the number of maize farmers had been reduced to only a few by 1976.

Under the agricultural transformation in which the swiddeners were forced to join the market system, the social and moral value of Pwo Karen had been deteriorating since their life was changed. Some Pwo Karen men began smoking opium, which made them work harder to buy both rice and opium. Not only such opium addicted, but also many of the young male and female began to work outside the village as labourers in factories and farms. Divorce, which was morally detested among the society before, was increasing, mainly because of adultery of the Karen males. The cooperative work system in the community was replaced by wage labour.

However, the most serious effect in this process was the new trend of selling their land to other Thai peasants and farmers. This practice was particularly common with opium addicts. It is reported that some Pwo Karen sold their land for only 3-500 baht per *rai* at the beginning, but the value had increased to 3-4,000 baht in 1989, 9,000 baht in 1996 (Gravers 2001:67). According to the study by Gravers (*ibid.*), at least one Pwo Karen sold as much as 1,000 *rai* to a rich outsider to use the land for a resort. The sale of land could have been hardly avoided in the village although the majority reckoned it was a wrongdoing. After the land was yielded to the outsiders, most of the land seems to have been registered with title deeds by the new owners, which means the Pwo Karen eternally lost the land.

In the 1980s, after maize production decreased, a new cash crop was introduced: pineapple. The soil condition was suitable, and a market existed for the villagers in Wa Ga Gla. The villagers who still held land could get 25-30,000 baht on 1/2 hectare by pineapple cropping. At the same time, however, the new cash cropping of pineapple required more technology like fertilizer and tractor ploughing. For pineapple cultivation, monetary exchange had increased by payment of chemical fertilizer and renting tractor, and some richer Pwo Karen farmers hired labour for 60-70 baht per day.

By 1989, most forest trees had disappeared. According to the estimation by Gravers (2001:67), the total loss of the forest would be, probably, 70-80 km² out of the about 100 km² which the Pwo Karen formally defined as part of Wa Ga Gla for their agriculture and the uninhabited forest used for hunting and gathering. In 1970, bamboo was the most popular forest product used for houses, baskets, mats, water and food containers for daily life. By 1990, bamboo had become a rare plant, and the name of Wa Ga Gla had become a nostalgic relic.

2.3.1 Mono-cultural Cash Cropping and the Market Space

In 1977, the Office of the Narcotic Control Board (ONCB) was set up to tackle the problems of drug trafficking and drug dependence, as well as to achieve opium-eradication in the highland regions of Thailand. It was not until 1980, that the “Northern Agriculture Development Project” funded by the World Bank started to implement the following three components in five provinces of northern Thailand; 1) “Upland Rain-fed Agricultural Development” (by the Land Development Department), 2) “Highland Social and Economic Development” (by the Public Welfare Department), and 3) “Forestry Development” (by the Royal Forestry Department). Subsequently, after the World Bank’s involvement in the early 1980s, many other development agents such as Thai-German Highland Development Programme (1981-1996) and Thai-Norwegian Church Aid Highland Development Project (1985-1994), flowed into the highlands (Elawat 1997:85).

These development projects were initiated to introduce cash cropping, particularly coffee, fruit trees and temperate vegetables, in order to increase incomes for the highlanders. Among the villagers of the highland ethnic groups, those who have long experience with the market economy system through the traditional opium growing activities in the past, such as the Hmong, have adapted themselves well to the new agricultural scheme. After the 1980s, mainly among the Hmong people cabbage cultivation spread around the hilly areas (Anan 1996: 212). For instance, the Hmong group in Chomthong district of Chiang Mai province converted most of their old opium fields to the cabbage and potato fields, enabled by the instalment of a reservoir feeding the gravity-operated sprinkler systems under the United Nations development project, Highland Agricultural Marketing and Production (HAMP) in 1984 (Renard 1988, cited from Anan 1996: 212). During the period from 1985 to 1989, the Hmong had extensively expanded their cultivation of cabbage with the support of the United Nations Program for Drug Abuse Control (UNPDAC) (*ibid.*). It is reported that the Karen groups residing in the same area (Chomthong district) embarked in 1984 on the cultivation of cabbage, red radish and lettuce in addition to the former cash crops such as coffee and

peanuts (Mischung 1986:76).

In Ban Mae Chang and other neighbouring Pwo Karen villages, cabbage has been essentially the sole cash crop for the swiddeners for about fifteen years. Some of them have engaged in cabbage cultivation since the middle of the 1980s when the Hmong group introduced cabbage cultivation by renting the farmland of the Pwo Karen people in Mae Sariang. Although the per-capita rice output has gradually declined primarily due to the population growth, the Pwo Karen villagers in Ban Mae Chang have maintained their traditional rotational fallow farming. In Ban Mae Chang, cabbage cultivation had been conducted regularly by a limited number of at most (estimated) 10 households until 2001. However, the number of the households growing cabbage in the rainy season of 2002 jumped up to 23 households, which is 31.5 percent of the total 73 households. All of them know how to grow cabbage through their wage labour experience, and utilized Village Fund 2002 loans in order to partially or totally invest in cabbage cultivation. The five households incurred debt from the failure of their cabbage crop. Actually, there are not a few households that regularly grow cabbage and struggle with heavy debt from previous trials. On the one hand, in Ban Dong Luang, the cognate group of the Pwo Karen almost all the villagers have heavily relied on cabbage cultivation inside their village territory as a supplement to rice. Due to the increasing population, the per-household arable land has steadily shrunk to under a half size of before, and consequently they can no longer produce enough rice for their household consumption by the traditional rotational fallow system in the swidden land. Thus, there are only two choices available for the Pwo Karen people; to adopt the cabbage cultivation to supplement rice, or to work as wage labourers in the cabbage fields of the richer households inside and outside the village.

Why do they grow only cabbage, and why do they not try other cash crops? The most practical answer to this question is that only the cabbage has the easiest access to the market. There are three cabbage-trading places at Mae Ho, which is at the junction connecting the mountain road from the Karen villages in the mountain to the national highway Route 108 running from Chiang Mai to Mae Sariang. Mae Ho is situated 1,088

m above sea level, which is higher than the altitude of Ban Mae Chang (874 m) and Ban Dong Luang (1,073 m). Taking advantage of the cool weather and access to the highway, the cabbage trading places (or regional cabbage markets) developed successfully. Each of the trading places is regarded as a sort of *koodan* (i.e. “godown” in English) in Thai where there are at least four main actors; (1) the “producers,” coming mainly from the highland ethnic minority villages, transporting the cabbage by pickup trucks from their own villages to obtain cash by trading the cabbage, (2) the “middle agents,” in other words, “forwarding agents” or “merchants,” mainly coming from the large markets in the country to the *koodan* and transporting the cabbage by the large-size trucks away from Mae Ho to large markets in cities, (3) another group of “middle agents” as “investors” in the cabbage, who are also involved in cabbage trading by providing the producers with all of the necessary materials for cropping and (4) the “store owners of the trading place” who offer the market space and facilities (e.g., weighing machine) for the other agents and, in parallel, operate other businesses such as gas stations, grocery stores, and restaurants. The trading of cabbage is usually conducted under a commission system. Each agent, such as storeowner, labourer, merchant, and producer has to pay a commission fee. For instance, the storeowner requires the producers from the villages to pay 20 Baht per a pickup truck of cabbage that comes to the trading place.

Around those four main actors, there are various kinds of sub-actors working under the employment system in each role at *koodan*. In the *koodan*² store, which is the biggest trading place at Mae Ho and is attached to the house of *O.Bo.To.*, they run a restaurant together with a grocery store and also sell car parts next to the unloading and loading section. This restaurant conducts good business and receives many customers from early morning until the evening almost every day. The business hours depend upon the situation of the cabbage trading, and therefore they close the shop after the cabbage trading is finished sometimes around at 20:00 o’clock. At this *koodan*², some Skaw Karen women are working at the reception box, to which the producers come by pickup truck full of cabbages to register at first on the weighbridge, and then receive cash for the cabbage yield after loading their cabbage on to the large-size truck. Those Skaw Karen

women reside near Mae Ho and are hired as wage labourers. The Karen males also work mainly for loading cabbage on to the large-size trucks at each of the *koodan*, and sometimes work at the gas station too. There is another *koodan1* located about 300 meters away from *koodan2*. Its owner deals petrol as well as groceries. According to a local informant, the owner of *koodan1* is a Chinese-Thai, that of *koodan2* is a Thai, and that of *koodan3* is of Hmong lineage. These trading places and their attached stores of *koodan* provide both Thai lowlanders and the ethnic highland farmers with job opportunities.

To the cabbage-trading places at Mae Ho come the producers from Mae La Noi, Khun Yuam and Mae Sariang districts as well as from several other districts in the northern part of Mae Hong Son province. The ethnicities of producers are mostly Hmong, Skaw Karen and Pwo Karen.¹⁰ The market price of cabbage was 3 baht per kilogram on January 26th 2003, when I had the chance to interview a Hmong farmer from a highland village near the upper border of Myanmar. The Hmong village from which he came is under scheme of the Royal Project and engaging in the Food Bank project with a fine irrigation system. They can thus grow the cabbage and other crops throughout the year. The problem for the Hmong farmers, however, is that the market place for the cabbage and other cash crops are too far from their village. In practice, it is only possible for them to bring the cabbage to the market at Mae Ho by themselves, which is the nearest market for them, even though it takes about six hours for the 280 km journey from their home village. The Hmong man whom I spoke to has grown cabbage for ten years. He also grows rice for family consumption in the rainy season and cabbage only during the dry season. In the Hmong village, all households of around 55-60 families grow the cabbage at present. On that day when I met him, he said that ten households including his own from his village came to Mae Ho to sell the cabbage. After the completion of loading the cabbage to a large-size truck with his teenage son, he got around 6,500 baht for 2,040 kg of cabbage. Another Hmong man from the same village

¹⁰ I surveyed at the cabbage trading places four times (August 14th 2002, January 26th, March 8th and 23rd 2003), and interviewed with two cabbage producers (Hmong and Skaw Karen), one cook from the restaurant and one shop owner at the *koodan2*. At *koodan1*, I interviewed with one Skaw Karen producer and one shop owner.

gained around 7,000 baht by over 2,200 kg of cabbage on the same day. He told me as follows about the system and condition of *kooday* at Mae Ho, his cabbage cultivation and his livelihood:

This morning we left our village for Mae Ho before dawn. It took six hours for us to get here. Before I come to sell the cabbage here, I need to book the space for a large-size truck. Otherwise, if the carrying capacity of the truck here is full, we might have to go to Chiang Mai by ourselves to sell the cabbage. We have to inform in advance the size of the crop and when we want to come to sell at *kooday*. Mae Ho is a convenient place for storing the cabbage because of the cool weather. They say cabbages can be kept for two days here at Mae Ho. Around April to May, which are the hottest months in Thailand, the price of cabbage is the highest because usually they cannot grow the cabbage in the highlands around that time. Actually, in this dry season, it is not necessary for us to book the space beforehand, since it is less crowded than usual, and we can come here directly. My life after growing cabbage? Sometimes in the black, and sometimes in the red. As you know, village life has gradually progressed, but at the same time debt has become a big burden for me.

There are a number of agents, which can be companying, associations and individuals, who invest in the cabbage cultivation in the highland areas around Mae Ho and around the town of Mae Sariang. They offer all of the required materials for cabbage cultivation - seed, fertilizer and pesticide - to villagers. Producers in turn offer their labour and land. In general, during the harvest period, the investors come up to the cabbage field in the highland to collect and transport the cabbage to Mae Ho. The transportation costs are counted as extra expenditures of the production. The profit is shared fifty-fifty between the investor and the producer. If they do not make a profit, the investor will lose all their money, while the producer would not lose money but lose the opportunity cost¹¹. The Hmong farmers sometimes become investors in the Pwo Karen villager of Ban Mae Chang, Ban Dong Luang and other nearby villages as well. For the Pwo Karen people in Ban Mae Chang, the middlemen who invest in cabbage are frequently their neighbours in the same village or such rich highland farmers outside the village as those from Ban Dong Luang and Ban Huai Pla Kang.

The merchants come to Mae Ho from around Thailand with the large-size transport truck, which can carry 12,000 kg of cargo. It means that about five pickups

(around 2,000-2,500 kg of cabbage can be loaded per pickup) of cabbage can be contained in one big truck. They transport the cabbage, for example, to Bangkok, Nakhonsawan (surveyed on August 14th 2002) and Nakhonphatom (surveyed on January 26th 2003). According to a receptionist at the trading place, the large-size trucks of the middle agents come to the store approximately 40 times per month.¹² In the rainy season, the number of trucks coming is more than 60 times per month.

2.3.2 Economic Development and Environmental Preservation

Since they started using chemical fertilizer for the cabbage cultivation in Ban Mae Chang and Ban Dong Luang, the rice productivity per unit area of farmland has become higher than before. The villagers who have engaged in cabbage cultivation say that their rice productivity has been increasing due to the use of fertilizer. Those who have enjoyed profits from cabbage in the Pwo Karen villages, who are generally among the first group to have launched the cabbage cultivation, concurrently gained more rice than before. However, this is just a transient phenomenon, which is obvious in light of the previous experiences of other pioneering ethnic groups in cabbage cultivation. They are actually aware of it, and confess that they have to quit putting fertilizer, otherwise the land will become sterilize and they will eventually starve.

Water resources for the Pwo Karen villages are also affected by the decreasing forest coverage caused by the population growth and degrading quality of soil caused by the shortening fallow period and increasing chemical inputs. In addition, some rich villagers use the water for their cabbage cultivation during the dry season by using the sprinkler system. The water demand has increased due to the changes in agriculture in the forest.

Because of the cabbage cultivation in the Pwo Karen villages, the environmental conditions on the soil and water in and around their forests, have significantly deteriorated. The gap between the upper income-class households and the lower-income

¹¹ The opportunity cost in terms of the price of labourer and the rental price of the cabbage farmland.

¹² “40 times” here means that the total number of 40 large-size trucks come to the trading place to transport the cabbage per-month during the dry season.

households¹³ is widening with respect to the degree of involvement in the cash cropping. Similar to the case of the Pwo Karen in Wa Ga Gla, there exists little forest for the villagers of Ban Dong Luang. The original meaning the village name of Dong Luang interpreted as “Great Forest,” now sounds somewhat empty.

It has been a highly debatable issue whether economic development can coexist with secure environmental conditions or not. In the case of the Pwo Karen villages, both of the case study on Uthaithani by Gravers and my case study on Mae Sariang, show that the expected harmonious interplay between the two aims of the economic development and environmental preservation has not been achieved. In association with the forest management policy, it is worthwhile to mention the Salween logging scandal of 1998 though it is not directly related to my research site. The scandal was exposed by a senior forestry official who came to the Government House with five million baht to claim that the money had been offered to him as an attempted bribe by an illegal logger. It was reported that around 13,000 to 20,000 logs had been illegally cut down in the forest around the Salween and first illegally forwarded to Myanmar, and that then they had been brought back to Thailand as legal imports (Pasuk and Baker 2000:128). The Bangkok Post (*Perspective August 8th 1999*, cited from Hargreave 2003:17) reported that, despite the creation of the Salween National Park in 1978, at least 45,000 teak logs were cut from the forest in this national park between 1995 to 1997 with the “Mae Sariang district villagers --- including teachers, policemen, soldiers, government officials ---- often involved (*ibid.*)” It is also reported that the politicians offered 500 baht per tree to the local Karen villagers residing in the forest to let them commit the illegal activity (*ibid.*). This incident is a widely known forestry scandal, which was carried out as a conspiracy between the local people and politicians in the Salween area. At the same time, this scandal implies one type of contradiction between the ideal forestry policies and actual local subsistence intertwined with the economic desires of each social actors.

After this scandal, through the reflection of past governance, the district official committee of Mae Sariang has considered a new plan to launch an eco-tourism

¹³ See CHAPTER III for the definition of the income class (from Table 3.1 to 3,3).

programme along the Salween River. By applying the concept and brisk image of “eco-tourism” to the river region, the Mae Sariang district office is now attempting to vitalize the local socio-economic atmosphere with the aim of the so-called rural community development (interview with the District Officer on 7th March 2003). It is important that the situation is monitored to evaluate whether the impact of the eco-tourism programme on the local livelihood and the natural environments is beneficial or exploitative in the long-run perspective.

2.3.3 Consumerism and Economic Inequality in the Community

The highland swiddeners in the forest of Mae Sariang are nowadays enjoying the modernized life to some extent. The young male villagers wear modern shirts and jeans, while the young females studying at the village school also wear convenient outfits such as T-shirts and jersey pants. The Pwo Karen adult ladies still wear the traditional skirts woven by themselves, but put T-shirts on top. The old men wear glasses if they can afford. Some villagers wear watches as a new type of accessory. Many households now own radios to which the family members listen almost every day. A sole TV-set in the village is placed at the village school canteen, where the villagers get together to look at programme every evening. The electricity necessary for the TV is supplied through batteries or a mobile generator. In Ban Mae Chang with the 54 households in total, there are three cars owned by the upper-income class households. According to my survey in December 2002, there are ten motorcycles mostly owned by the young males. In Ban Dong Luang with over 60 households in total, some villagers of which are wealthier than the rich in Ban Mae Chang, there are nine cars owned by the upper-income class households and 15 motorcycles.

These property-holdings have been to a large extent promoted by the fact that they have been involved in the monetary economy which has changed the relationships among the villagers and their perspectives on social status and property management. In order to buy vehicles such as motorcycles, they usually have to pay the charge in instalments. Many of them have fallen into serious debt and have to resort to borrowing

from the upper-income class neighbours or the official loan system of the Village Fund 2002 to repay the loans. It seems to me that the youths in the village at first feel the loan from others would be an easy way to purchase commodities they desire to consume or own. However, they actually have to work harder than before to earn the money for the repayment. Consequently, the economic gap between the upper-income class and lower-income class has widened.

2.4 Summary

The main points of discussing in this chapter, are summarized below.

- (1) Around thirty years ago in 1968-1969, the population of Ban Mae Chang, Ban Mae Chang Bon, Ban Dong Luang and Ban Dong Noi were 144, 79, 118 and 61 persons respectively. The present population in 2002-2003 for each of the above four villages are 245, 53, 248 and 257 persons respectively. The population growth rates of each village between the two thirty-year interval periods are 70.1 percent, -67.1 percent, 110.2 percent and 321.3 percent respectively.
- (2) There are four major theories discussing about the relationship between population growth and economic development. (i) Population growth will lead the society eventually to the poverty under the minimum subsistence level. (ii) Population growth will increase the burden against the natural environments and deplete natural resources (Neoclassical economic school). (iii) The faster rates of population growth in developing countries, as compared with the developed countries, will widen the gap between the two groups of countries concerning global resource consumption with the developed countries using significantly larger amount of natural resources than the developing countries (Neo-Marxian school). (iv) The faster speed of technological innovation permits economic production to outpace the increasing demand from population growth, and the population growth eventually raises standards of living (J. L. Simon school).
- (3) As to the interpretation of the meanings of socio-economic development of society,

there are two major theories; development discourse theory and development modernization theory. The development discourse theory argues that development usually creates new power relationships, and tends to marginalize and often stigmatize the non-power side people, while the development modernization theory argues that development is a prerequisite for society to get rid of poverty and enjoy both qualitative and quantitative affluence.

- (4) In 1964, the Tribal Development and Welfare Unit (TDWU) of the Hill Tribe Welfare Centre was set up in Ban Mae Chang, to administratively govern the vicinity of the Pwo Karen villages by promoting the formal primary education and public health care. The TDWU in Ban Mae Chang ceased functioning by the late 1980s.
- (5) In the 1980s, the Hill Tribe Welfare Centre at Mae Ho in Mae Hong Son province, promoted the villagers in Ban Mae Chang and its neighbouring villages to farm the wet-rice, cabbage and coffee. The results have, however, turned out to be not so fruitful.
- (6) The enactment and enforcement of the National Forest Resource Act of 1964 have induced the dissonance between the intention of those people who would like to secure the preservation of forest resources and that of highland swiddeners who would like to use the forest land for agricultural activities in traditional ways. Among the laws associated with the above Act of 1964, are the Wildlife Preservation Act of 1960 and the National Park Act of 1961.
- (7) Ban Mae Chang lies in an area classified as “reserved forest” which is less restricted than “protected forest” in its use by the local people. In the years of 1999 and 2000, the Royal Forestry Department (RFD) and the villagers of Ban Mae Chang got together to demarcate the natural-resource areas in the village forest, and agreed that the “protected area,” “headwater area” and “watershed area” in the forest should be free of farming use. Official control over natural resources in Ban Mae Chang has been so far beneficial to the villagers of Ban Mae Chang since this official regulation can serve as an effective instrument to protect their forest from exploitation by the people of the neighbouring villages.

- (8) At Mae Ho in Mae Sariang district, there are three cabbage-trading places where the villagers (producers) bring the cabbage by pickup trucks (carrying capacity: 2-2.5 tons) to sell them (from villages as far as 280 km away), and the middle agents (forwarding agents) purchase the cabbage to transport them on large-size trucks (carrying capacity: 12 tons) as far as to Bangkok, Nakhonsawan, and Nakhonphatom. At the end of January 2003 (in the dry season), the market price of cabbage at the Mae Ho trading places was 3 baht per kilogram. Mae Ho (1,088 m above sea level) is situated at the junction of the national highway Route 108 (19 km from Mae Sariang towards Chiang Mai) and the mountain non-paved road from Ban Mae Chang (26 km from Mae Ho) and its neighbouring Karen villages.
- (9) As the economic development has progressed in both Ban Mae Chang and Ban Dong Luang, the economic gap between the households in the upper-income class and those in the lower-income has grown.

Table 2.1 Population and Household Changes in the Pwo Karen Villages

Survey Period	A		B		C	
	1968-1969		2002-2003		Growth Rate (B-A)/A×100	
	Population (Person)	Number of Households	Population (Person)	Number of Households	Population (%)	Number of Households (%)
Ban Mae Chang	144	32	245	57 ¹⁾	70.1	68.8
Ban Mae Chang Bon	79	17	53	19	-67.1	11.8
Ban Dong Luang	118	26	248	69 ²⁾	110.2	142.3
Ban Dong Noi	61	14	257	unknown	321.3	-

[Notes] 1) Out of these fifty-seven (57) households in Ban Mae Chang, there are six (6) households which are non-productive in the sense that they are completely supported by other relative-family households and not involved in agricultural activities at all. Therefore, other tables carry fifty-one (51) households for Ban Mae Chang when considering its agricultural activities. Meanwhile, a semi-official list of households which was prepared for the author by the assistant of the village headman, shows the fifty-four (54) households.

2) Out of these sixty-nine (69) households in Ban Dong Luang, there are also six (6) households which are non-productive. Therefore, other tables carry sixty-three (63) households for Ban Dong Luang when considering its agricultural activities.

Source: Constructed from Hinton's study (1975:137) and the information obtained through my fieldworks (in February, March and December of 2002, and January of 2003)