CHAPTER I
POLITICS AT THE MARGINS: LISU IDENTITY AND COMMUNITY IN THE THAI STATE

1.1 Introduction

Lisu in Thailand, like ethnic minorities elsewhere in the world, have in the recent past chosen the forest, public spaces, and the gates of government institutions as places of assembly and protest to assert their rights to place and identity.[1] These collective methods of protest over land, access to forest resources, the right to practice traditional forms of agricultural, and legal status registration are issues of representation in which the formation of networks at the clan and ethnic group level, along with relationships and alliances with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) nationally and internationally, are significant in scope and direction. Networking, and the building of alliances that transcend local boundaries, is based on solidarity that facilitates advocacy, political mobilization and lobbying, processes that is referred to as the politics of place, and effectively expand the level of contact and interaction beyond the local "village." The central argument of this study is that as theoretical and empirical understanding, meanings and experiences of community shift existing at multiple sites (multilocality), so too do the corresponding individual and collective understandings of identity shift, resulting in a situation where Lisu identity is strengthened as a result of historical interaction with state and non-state actors, conflict and contestation over place and resources, and the forming of networks and alliances. Lisu, as this study shows, have been classified as living in a certain fixed locality defined as the property of the state.

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[1] The Aboriginal Tent Embassy, on the lawns opposite Old Parliament House in Canberra, for example, is the longest–standing protest in Australia. The spread of tents is a constant reminder to the Australian government of the difficult living conditions of many Aboriginal peoples and the invasion of Aboriginal lands and territories. The Aboriginal Tent Embassy was established in 1972 to confront the McMahon government's refusal to address land rights, and remains a spearhead of the sovereignty movement for freedom and peace.

Through articulations of power at local, national and international levels, actors including villagers, NGOs, bureaucrats, the military and international non-governmental organizations (INGOs), create and construct the meanings of community within particular political and historical contexts. Previously, state and local relationships have been characterized by a dichotomous correlation of power and control, where state-demarcated territory is viewed as fixed and clearly bounded, while local interpretations of the same location or resource are perceived as fluid and flexible (Kemp 1991, Hirsch 1993, Vandergeest and Peluso 1995, and Vandergeest 1996). However, as this study emphasizes the significance of boundaries lies less in the physical demarcation of the boundary, but in who has control over their definition and enforcement. Such processes of exercising control are embedded in ideological frameworks pursued by different actors, and expressed through policies and activities that they implement. Boundaries established by state agencies are based upon a preconceived knowledge both of resources and those whose livelihoods depend on them. However, through contestation with local peoples, and changing policy and development goals, the enforcement of fixed boundaries can also be seen as shifting. This position is developed further in the following chapters.

As increased attention has been given to the twin issues of territory and ethnicity, together conceptualized as problematic in the creation of a homogenous society by the Thai state, local communities have in turn acknowledged and transcended fixed notions of community in their struggle for rights, legitimacy and livelihood security. This study demonstrates that as a result of these processes there is a need to reconceptualize the community, and Lisu identity, as existing across multiple and contested sites that have generated new imaginings of both the village and the people who live there. If we look at notions of community and identity not as final products, but as interrelated processes, then the ways that people experience these phenomena are manifested through changing historical, political and social contexts. In such a situation, each group of actors, both external and internal, may in fact view the community and Lisu identity in a different way. An analysis of such perceptions requires a multidimensional understanding of the interactions and relationships that exist in a Lisu community, not only those visible through the

dichotomous minority/majority approach operational within the framework of state mechanisms, but also the interactions of minority peoples in local systems, influenced by variable economic and political dynamics.

Through the investigating into how Lisu conceptualize and experience the notion of community as a place, a home or village, a fluid configuration of social relationships embedded with social and cultural meaning, or as a site of struggle against external pressure, it is possible to examine the ways in which Lisu identify themselves with their community. Addressing the politics of place, then, directly challenges a conceptualization of the distinctive polarity of the global and the local, or in fact majority and minority divisions. This is achieved by demonstrating that the simple dualisms that have characterized much of the research into state and minority group relationships and interactions in Thailand — civilized and uncivilized, developed and underdeveloped, state and local, lowland and highland, hill and valley, *müang* and *pa*,[2] us and them, Thai and non-Thai — are insufficient to investigate, analyze or describe the lived realities of local communities, interacting culturally, politically and economically in diverse ways and on many scales with state agencies, regional allies, international bodies and markets. These fluid historical and political representations are distinguished by complexity and diversity, and magnified through the interconnectedness of narratives and voice of the land and its people (Chapter III, section 3.2). In this sense the problematic of territory and ethnicity is highlighted, for on the one hand these notions embrace "deterritorialized" characteristics of land and people, and on the other represent localized articulations of relationships between actors and institutions.

Beyond a simple dialectical relationship between domination and resistance, empirical narratives outlined in this study illuminate the ways in which these issues are embedded in the demonstration and assertion of rights to place. This research thus offers insight into the realities of a contemporary "village in the forest" in northern Thailand, where local, state and non-state actors and institutions are interconnected in

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[2] "*Müang*" is a Thai term denoting a city, township or principality, and indirectly refers to a civilized and developed area or a political domain. In more contemporary analysis the term has come to symbolize urban areas, whereas "*Pa*" is a Thai term that refers to forest areas, those that are wild, uncivilized or in a non-urban area.

ways seldom discussed by scholars, that highlight the complexity of the historical, political and geographical relations between these oppositional notions.

Since the 1970s, within the space of a single generation, highland communities have undergone enormous transformation, including population growth, and increased market integration. This study argues that community, identity and place are not neutral concepts theoretically or empirically; rather, they encompass multiple meanings and experiences that are contested. This argument is advanced by situating the investigation of these concepts at the overlapping and intersecting points of lived experiences; as exemplified by the narratives constructed in a Lisu village in northern Thailand.

1.2 Research Rationale

In recent times, development in Thailand has been characterized by a shift of focus from the intensification and extension of agriculture and industry promoting export-led strategies towards collaboration between government and investors. An analysis of the development experience in Thailand clearly illustrates the common phenomenon of development propelled by both government and the economic capitalist system (Chayan 2003:1). Such a focus has invariably resulted in the exploitation of land, water and forests by the government and business sectors alike. Economic development models pursued exuberantly by consecutive governments have had considerable impact on the lives of rural communities. The construction of dams without consideration of local livelihoods dependent on river and fishery resources or adequate anticipation of the areas impacted by flooding, the relocation of communities for large-scale plantations promoted by local entrepreneurs and international organizations, such as rubber (Chapter III, Section 3.4.2) and eucalyptus, widespread struggles over land (Chapter IV, Section 4.5.3), and other issues of social and environmental justice have all characterized local and state conflict in Thailand over the past four decades of development planning and implementation.

The organization of the earth into states and territories separated by international borders has profoundly shaped peoples' everyday lives and movement.

Political maps with individual states represented by different colors, and thick black lines designating boundaries highlight this phenomenon. However, for mobile and transborder populations of the world, these lines are not immediately apparent on the ground but are made visible by border gates, check-points, armies and police. Territory delineated by lines on a map have multiple meanings, both real and imagined, from the perspective of state–encompassing "master narratives" and "totalizing discourses," and in local people's imaginings: blue representing water, green representing forest, and black indicating a border, for example, along with political, social and cultural assertions dividing people and resources. The classification of highland peoples and their knowledge systems spreads deeper than government labeling and policy, penetrating social and political realms where hill people are negatively portrayed as destroyers of the forest, involved in the narcotics trade and posing a threat to national security. However,

> Thailand is hardly unique in being a country where the boundaries of the nation-state do not coincide with the extent of an ethnic population of a single speech group. The first two components listed in the national identity construct are territory and people, and in virtually all discourses of nationhood there is a tension between ethnicity and territory.
> (Reynolds 1991:17)

In Thailand, the state development of social and geographical classifications, as historical interpretations and representations of civilization represented by the terms "*müang*" and "*pa*," have entailed significant implications for ethnic minority peoples (Pinkaew 2003, 2001, Turton 2000, and Thongchai 1994). Through the processes of ethnic classification and ethnography highland people have been classified as "*chao khao*" or "hill people." [3] This is a geographic term with social significance and implications. It classifies people not only into a single social group, but also into a fixed geographical location, inescapably linking the concepts of ethnicity and territory. Within this context, it is important to acknowledge that state and ethnic minority relations are defined within discourse, not outside of it, and are created and maintained by both groups. Such is the nature of these simultaneous and

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[3] *chao khao* is a Thai term given to ethnic groups located throughout northern Thailand, namely Akha, Hmong, H'tin, Karen, Khamu, Lahu, Lisu, Lua, Malabri and Iu Mien. Literally translated, this term means "people of the hills," but the more commonly used term is "hill tribe." Pinkaew (2003:29) illustrates its double meaning: when used as a pun with the term *chao rao* (us people), its implied meaning is the opposite, 'them people'. In official usage, the term *chao khao* is problematic, since it is inconsistently and differently defined both between and within different agencies.

interlocking narratives that they provide a reference point for this study. These debates are not merely rhetorical, for they directly affect the everyday lives of ethnic minorities through government policy implementation and in the interaction of complex webs of actors and institutions.

As the state marks out frontiers, "it constitutes what is within [its people and resources] by homogenizing the before and after of the content of this enclosure" (Poulantzas 1978, cited in Alonso 1994:387). The state represents that, which is considered internal by emphasizing differentiation socially and culturally, thereby simultaneously defining self-identity, and that of "others." Inclusion and exclusion are powerful, variously constituted forces that run deep and penetrate all levels of the social stratum. Therefore, space itself is not devoid of meaning, through these processes it becomes imbued with power that in turn represents the phenomena of spatial politics. Space in this situation has become more than a context for analysis, but has been given meaning and power through the actions of state agencies and local people alike.

The maintenance of the nation (or *chat* in Thai), and in turn nationhood, relies on the notion that political and cultural boundaries should be consistent with national ideology. How minority groups negotiate these classifications plays a significant role in creating a voice, or voices, for themselves at local, national and international levels. The state project of fixing people to place with attached social meaning and the transformation of space into territory, central to nation-state building and nationalism, has also relied on the conceptualization of a population as living within a single, shared spatial frame (Alonso 1994:382). Therefore, a central question for this research is, how do the practices of fixing people to place and the territorialization of land and resources affect the identity of those who live there?

To begin to answer the above question, an analysis of the linkages, theoretical and empirical, between notions of identity and community is critical. The identity of highland minority peoples, in this case Lisu, can be seen as connected to community at different levels, with local expressions of Lisu identity played out through such

channels as kinship networks, ritual practices, and interaction with outside agencies. Policies and state ideology are based on assumptions that highland people are destroyers of the forest, backwards, and non-Thai, these communities are also targets for the projects of state, non-governmental and international organizations related to both tourism and development.

Perceptions of community conceptualized as a fixed place with a relatively homogeneous population thus underlie and affect, influence and inform official action as well as government and non-governmental development efforts. The irony of modern times is, however, that as actual places become ever more blurred, and indeterminate, while ideas of culturally and ethnically distinct places become perhaps even more important. It is particularly discernable in this sense how imagined communities (Anderson 1991) come to be attached to imagined places. However, people have undoubtedly always been more mobile, and identities less fixed than the static approaches of classical anthropology would suggest (Gupta and Ferguson 1999:37).

The state uses strategies of dominance, including policy mechanisms, that promote a collective identity based on national ideology, centralized education, media, maps, citizenship (Chapter V, section 5.5.1), ethnic classification, and the demarcation of inclusive and exclusive areas such as national parks, wildlife sanctuaries, watershed areas and national borders as tools to compare one person, group, community or people with another. In this way, the creation of boundaries and fixed territorial units is an essential element of the legitimization of state power, along with the production and transformation of images of local people. This argument assumes that where there are boundaries, there are also centers and peripheries (Fernandez 2000:117). A related assumption is that centers need peripheries for the maintenance and promotion of their own identity, in this case Thai and non-Thai. Further, it can be seen that relative location on the periphery determines the degree of control and assimilation into the state apparatus, as well as shapes one's identity and experience of community, way of thinking, and lived world.

From an administrative perspective, the village is constructed for the purpose of control or "ease of administration," with the creation of boundaries both physical and conceptual. Through the process of state-led development and policy implementation, the state promotes an ordered categorization of both territory and its population, emphasizing the significance of a common and shared identity, namely Thainess, or *khwam pen thai* (Reynolds 1991). At both the ideological and practical level, the state fixes people to places that are imbued with historical and political meaning; as discussed above, "hill people" are perceived as uncivilized, underdeveloped, and backwards. This approach presumes that such groups come to exist through similar historical processes, and are unchanging in a stable and homogeneous form.

There is an interesting overlap in these approaches: that is, development. The state, NGOs, INGOs and local people, in circumstances where they have the power to implement and manage projects themselves, follow development agendas based on predetermined knowledge, assumptions, understandings, perceptions and interpretations of the community and community members. Therefore, in the process of constructing community that involves political, social, economical or cultural manifestations or a combination of these dynamics, not only is the community created as a homogeneous entity fixed in place and time, but community members are also constructed to fit these development objectives (Pigg 1992). This holds equally true whether development strategies promote national integration and policies of containment, or sustainable development programs based on local wisdom and biodiversity; both fix the community and its residents to place.

The past twenty years of the development of highland areas and people in Thailand has been characterized by multiple, intertwined factors. These dynamics include the tightening of government policy regarding forestry management and traditional agricultural practices, policies aimed at assimilation, and the territorialization of land. As a direct result, there has been a redefinition of boundaries, resources and people, and an unprecedented level of integration of highland communities into national and international markets, the promotion and

subsequent reliance on cash crops and external income sources, and transformation of the production systems of agriculture and the structure of labor. The connections between town and village have intensified significantly, the meaning and experiences of which have penetrated many aspects of highland peoples' livelihoods as well as local and wider understandings of tradition and modernity.

In certain circumstances, highland people through various connections with NGOs have joined alliances and networks at local and national levels, increasing political mobilization and representation, along with the exponential expansion of development funding, and interaction with state and non-state actors. All of these phenomena indicate a closing of the "gap," so to speak, between centers and peripheries, hills and valleys, and a reconceptualizing of community and the theoretical linkages between economic relations and modernity. These changes are distinctive in terms of their intensity and rapidity. Different generations have generally experienced and responded to these changes differently, and incorporating such analysis broadens scholarly understanding of a village in the forest and how it is linked with the outside world.

Conceptualizing the linkage between community and identity, this study illustrates that where people live, their place, community or home, and the networks and alliances that they form, are the sources of basic materialistic substance, symbolic meaning, contestation, struggle, and ethnic identity as a distinct group. This leads not only to the development of resistance strategies and alternative understandings of place and how people identify with these new locales, but also to the emergence of different ideas about development and progress that challenge previously held beliefs and ideologies. Identity in this case can be seen as a political strategy that differentiates and mobilizes ethnic minorities through the promotion of their distinct culture and traditional practices in response to external pressures. This is certainly the case when we consider issues such as human rights, land rights, rights to place, personal legal status and other issues of concern for minority and ethnic communities.

The state uses different techniques to fix people to place, defining place through the use of resource demarcation, and creation of an administrative unit known

as a Thai village, checkpoints and borders. This process affects Lisu in different ways collectively and individually; therefore how Lisu respond to this situation and identify with these phenomena by recreating and reconceptualizing community is central to this study. It is here where the concepts of community and identity are articulated through the notion of the politicization of place. Community itself is not a fixed and unchanging entity, and identity of highland people as connected to place is undergoing significant change. The following research focuses primarily on how the Lisu conceptualize and attach meaning to community and how through this process, identity manifests itself within the context of state-guided development and ethnic classification. Through the reconceptualization of community as a fluid and dynamic entity simultaneously located within a fixed geographical position with physical boundaries and transcending boundaries, the relationship between local places and national ideology can be examined.

1.3 Research Questions

This study seeks to investigate the conceptualization of community and the linkages between place and identity. To this end, I have explored multiple dimensions of community and identity read through life histories, lived experiences and everyday articulations of power in the context of the modern situation of the Lisu, an ethnic group of northern Thailand. Specific research questions and objectives are as follows:

1. How do Lisu conceptualize, give meaning to, and experience "place" and community?

2. How do the practices of fixing people to place and the territorialization of land and resources affect local representations of community?

3. What is the relationship between changing social, political and economic circumstances and shifting representations of Lisu identity, and how are the dynamics of identity and multiple locales of community navigated and contested among local, state, and non-state actors?

4. To what extent do state ideologies of identity and community penetrate local realities and expressions of a collective national identity?

1.4 Research Objectives

1. To examine and understand how ethnic identity is represented in the larger national Thai discourse, Thai "world", in order to explore the historical development of ethnic classification as carried out by the state, and local interpretations.

2. To understand the dynamics of everyday lived experiences, life stories and local histories manifested in experiences of community and identity in the changing context of state–guided development.

3. To analyze how representations of community and identity reflect the current situation of development and ethnicity in northern Thailand.

1.5 Contextual Background

During the summer of 1999, from April to May, over 3,000 highland people joined farmers, the rural and urban poor, people affected by large development projects, people who had lost access to land and been denied basic rights such as birth registration and citizenship, people fighting for the right to practice traditional forms of agriculture, people advocating a Community Forest Bill (1990, 1996), NGOs and academics, and set up tents in front of Chiang Mai City Hall to have their voices heard. Their demands were simple: they proclaimed the right to be granted Thai citizenship and the recognition of their "place," settlement and land use rights in protected areas. However, the position of the government was clear:

On the 2nd of May [1999], negotiations with Deputy Interior Minister Vantana Asvahame and Deputy Agricultural Minister Newin Chidchop began. In the context of the debate on the Community Forestry Bill Newin already had made clear his position that use rights in community forest shall be granted to Thai nationals only.
(Buergin 2000:17-18)

This was as much a collective struggle as it was individual. They included struggles that both directly and indirectly questioned individual status while asserting

the right to be different, and they underlined everything that makes individuals truly individual. These struggles went to the heart of the political and social meaning implicit in the conceptualization of both community and identity. Among those sleeping under makeshift tents on the grass in front of City Hall were over 800 people from the Lisu ethnic group from Chiang Mai, Chiang Rai and Mae Hong Son provinces of northern Thailand. It is on the Lisu who were protesting and those in a village in northern Thailand that this research focuses.

Affirming social justice, democracy and alternative politics is not new in Thailand; "[w]ithin six decades of the Thai constitutional democracy, from 1932-1992, Thailand witnessed 18 coup d'état, 15 constitutions, 15 elections and 20 governments" (Komatra 1998:12). In such an unstable political regime, professionals and technocrats in the bureaucratic system who were able to sustain their power played a key role in policy formulation and decision-making (ibid). Administration and control over resources and highland people in northern Thailand is similarly complex, with 11 government ministries encompassing 31 different departments and 168 agencies involved in various, and sometimes competing, development and regulatory programs in ethnic minority communities (Tawin 1997:99-100). Since the introduction of the Seventh National Economic and Social Development Plan (1991-1996), social conflicts in the use of resources and protests against various development projects have increased and spread to all sectors of society. According to one study conducted by the Interior Ministry, there were 713 rallies arranged by people's organizations in 1994, 161 of which were held in the north of Thailand (Quinn 1997:56). In 1995, there were 694, many of which were related to environmental issues involving natural resources, land, water and forest (ibid). Such demonstrations occurred in every region of the country and were taken up by marginalized people such as rural villagers, people suffering from HIV/AIDS, ethnic minority groups living in forest areas, villagers in communities in various river basins, fishing communities, and so on.

A national logging ban came into affect in 1989 and drastically influenced highland communities, transforming resource management and use methods and

policy, followed by RFD emphasis on the resettlement of communities in conservation areas. The mid 1990s witnessed the emergence of ethnic minority group participation in national public demonstrations with people identifying themselves as the rural poor. This coincided with increased attempts by NGOs and academics to work with highland communities in debates regarding swidden cultivation and resource management. The environment and social impacts of a boom in tree plantations, land seizures, relocation and discriminating policies leading to conflicts over land have created motives for mobilization and new expressions of solidarity and unity between affected communities. Small fishing communities in southern Thailand have struggled against attempts to destroy mangrove forests for commercial benefit, with local protests over the Thai-Malay gas pipeline illustrating cases of community resistance and the rise of civil society (Missingham 2003).

In many cases local people were supported by academics and NGOs, so that mass rallies and protests were not generally organized by local people themselves, but their presence and in turn the ability of these external groups to mobilize large numbers of people was fundamental for this process. Some highland peoples through the formation of networks at the ethnic group level, along with connections to NGOs and alliances such as the Assembly of Indigenous and Tribal Peoples of Thailand (AITPT), have participated in protests and rallies demonstrating at the national level. Their participation as well as their primary goals and objectives centered on issues of identity, and rights to a particular place, "a village in the forest." This signaled a situation where identity and a sense of place emerged through contestation over resources, along with social and environmental justice.

These people, including Lisu, demanded that the government recognize the rights of local people to control and manage local resources and the right to make decisions to choose the direction of development appropriate for their localities, including the right to public information. These demands were the foundation for the proposals presented to the government to readjust its policies and laws to decentralize decision-making power for the development and management of natural resources. These demands were not utopian in nature, but had developed from experience and

knowledge of the adverse effects of various development projects, including the destruction of resources and damage to the security of livelihoods, ways of life and culture for ethnic and rural populations.

Responses to these issues by highland peoples have been diverse in scope and direction integrating discursive strategies into traditional ceremonies to counter the state's position on forest management and rights to live in the forest. In, 2001 *e da ma lua*, the Lisu forest ordination ceremony, was the first forest ceremony I observed at the research site, Ban Sai Ngam, in Mae Hong Son province, northern Thailand. The Mae Fa Luang Lisu Cultural and Environmental Network of Mae Hong Son[4] (from this point forward referred to as the Lisu Network of Mae Hong Son), in collaboration with a local NGO, organized the ceremony to help protect a newly–established community forest. The range of attendees illustrated the cultural and political significance of the staging of this ceremony. Along with villagers from nine Lisu communities in the Lisu Network, there were also representatives from NGOs based in Chiang Mai and Mae Hong Son, representatives from an INGO, teachers from the local village schools, government representatives, army officers and the author (at the time a part-time volunteer at the above–mentioned NGO). Ritual symbols were erected early in the morning as guests began arriving in a cleared area of the forest. Village elders performed ceremonial chanting, a pig was sacrificed, and trees were decorated with saffron cloth to represent Buddhist ordination of the tree (although no monks were in attendance) as well as traditional woven bamboo symbols, *ta leo*, to show that the trees were to be protected.

The timing of the ceremony was also significant; it coincided with increased government and military presence in the area, and the promotion of awareness of the local rights of communities in resource management, and the use of local knowledge in forest conservation by local and international non-governmental organizations (INGO). This particular ceremony helped to show all those in attendance that Lisu can in fact preserve the forest. The diverse range of participants, the setting of the

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4 There are currently three Lisu networks that have been established on a provincial level: the Lisu Networks of Chiang Mai, Chiang Rai and Mae Hong Son. This research refers to the Mae Fa Luang Lisu Cultural and Environmental Network of Mae Hong Son.

ceremony, and the integration of religious beliefs (Buddhism and animism) and actors involved highlighted the complexity of social interaction and dimensions of transformation in the highlands of northern Thailand.

Adaptations and negotiations of highland people in response to both internal change and external pressure in the form of policy and state-promoted development have been continually played out at the local, national and international levels with the emergence of communities aligned not only through fixed geographical places but also by more fluid, flexible and unstructured characteristics. This can be seen through the formation of ethnic–based networks at the intra– and inter– community levels, and the forging of alliances between local communities and NGOs, linking these struggles to international movements of indigenous and tribal peoples. Such processes are also visible at the personal level of clan and kinship relations. Therefore, how Lisu construct and conceptualize the very meaning of community and in turn how they identify with these new manifestations are critical for an analysis and understanding of the modern situation of Lisu in Thailand.

1.6 Cultural Settings: Situating the Lisu of Northern Thailand

> It is difficult now, back in civilization, to
> evoke the sense of freedom that comes upon a
> man when he stands on a mountaintop and looks
> out over tens of thousands of acres of fertile
> and unexplored land in the valleys below. It is
> only then that a man knows that, given the wit
> and the will to survive, he need not bow his head to
> any government, to any ideology, to any small-
> minded men who feel that they control the
> essentials of his existence. I understand more
> fully ... the Lisu.
> (Eugene Morse 1974: 64-65, cited in Prasert 1989:173)

As depicted in stories, songs, ceremonies and rituals, Lisu kinship lineage and relationships with the natural environment flow across national boundaries, the political and administrative systems of southwestern China's Yunnan Prefecture, including Lijiang Prefecture and Wei Xi Lisu Autonomous County, India's Assam Region, the Kachin and Shan States in the Union of Myanmar, and northern Thailand. There are currently over 38,299 Lisu living in Thailand, consisting of 155 village clusters and 6,553 households (Hilltribe Welfare Division 2002:24), with an estimated

population of 923,257 highland people living in Thailand (ibid: 11, and Appendix A). Since the formation of national boundaries and increasing attention placed on national security in border areas, the Lisu of northern Thailand have had little contact with Lisu from either Myanmar or Yunnan. Elders, however, can still recite stories and songs of migration, constructing place in their ritual and memory, but there is little interest held by the Lisu of northern Thailand to return. This can be the result of prolonged isolation of communities and groups, increased interaction with the Thai state, the tightening of borders, or even the production of a new identity, that of "Lisu-Thai", a category that the Lisu of Myanmar, Yunnan and Assam cannot claim.[5]

Lisu speak a Tibeto-Burman language of the Lolo (Yi) sub–group. Lisu, according to Lewis (1970:51), speak five dialects, however the Lisu in Thailand speak only one, with many Yunnanese (Haw) Chinese words mixed in. According to Dessaint (1992:333), to become a Lisu implies the acceptance of a set of cultural goals, as well as the means by which such goals are to be attained. Further, in the 'pre-Thai' period, the worlds of minority peoples like the Lisu were affected by the political and cultural systems of large hegemonic powers including the Yunnanese (Haw) Chinese and Tai chiefs (Klein Hutheesing 1990a:7, and Turton 2000).

Lisu, like other ethnic groups in northern Thailand, are not homogeneous, expressing a great deal of ethnic variation through ritual and social organization and interaction. The distinctive dress and language of the Lisu can be taken as signs of their particular ethnic identity, and as claims to membership in one ethnic category among the many involved in a network of relations (Durrenberger 1971). In this sense, these claims to being Lisu are indications of taking a particular role among a number of alternative roles at the same level, the level of ethnic identification (Figure 1.1 and 1.2). In any investigation into the representations of identity and articulations of power within and between marginalized groups and the state, clothing and

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[5] The figure of 923,257, as representing the highland population of northern Thailand does not include minority groups and immigrant populations from Myanmar, Laos and Cambodia. This is a conservative figure for it only counts registered highland people, i.e. those who have been granted citizenship or other identification cards. The area considered as northern Thailand covers 20 provinces including; Kanchanaburi, Prajuabkirikhan, Phrachburi, Rachaburi, Suphanburi, Kamphaengphet, Chiang Rai, Chiang Mai, Tak, Nan, Phitsonulok, Phetchabun, Phrae, Mae Hong Son, Lampang, Lamphun, Sukothai, Uthaithani, Phayao, and Lei.

language are significant markers in creating and maintaining ethnic boundaries. However, what is important for this research is when, where and under what circumstances Lisu clothing is worn, and different languages spoken (Lisu, Thai, Karen, Lahu, Haw Chinese or Shan languages), highlighting interconnections and relationships between different ethnic groups.

Where do these considerations now take us? The above points of discussion lead inevitably to consideration of the subjective nature of ethnic classification and theoretical debates regarding the use of language, text, narratives and "official history" to approach an understanding of the complex relations between the state and local communities. The subjective drawing of state boundaries, especially in the aftermath of colonization and state formation has divided the populations of indigenous peoples across several countries and political systems.
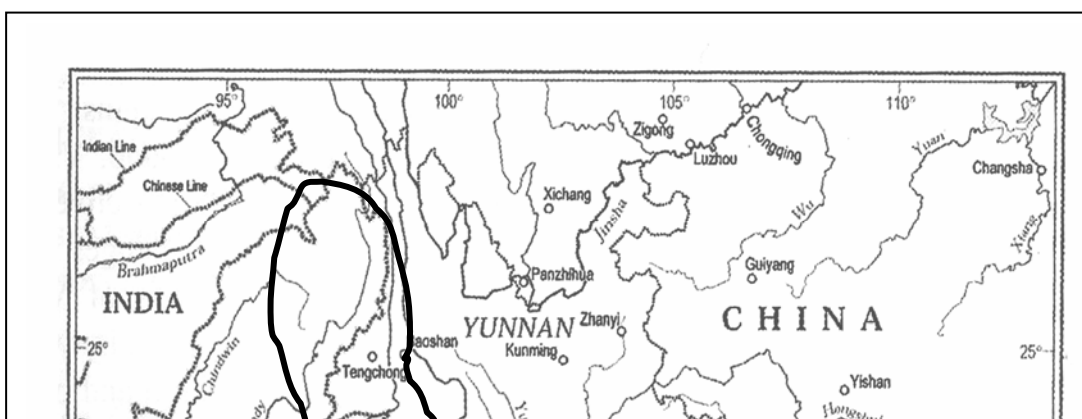
Map 1.1 Location of Lisu ethnic group across the national boundaries of China (PRC), India, Myanmar and Thailand.
Source: United Nations map number 4112, July 1999. From Mingsarn Kaosa-ard and Dore, John [eds.], 2003 pp.iii.

Map 1.2 Main ethno-linguistic groups of Thailand.
Source: CeDRASEMI, CNRS-EHESS, CEGET-CNRS 1985, in Kermel-Torrès 2004.

Figure 1.1 Traditional Lisu clothing   **Figure 1.2** Traditional Lisu clothing
for men   for women

1.7 Researching Community and Identity in Northern Thailand

The dynamic and fluid relationships between community, identity, and social interaction as a part of *"Lisuness"* (Klein Hutheesing 1990a) are explored in a Lisu community in northern Thailand's Mae Hong Son province. The reconceptualization of community and the current state/ethnic discourse are used as a guide for the study. The element that embodies the primary sense of classification and discrimination in the examination of the nature of community is the perception of its boundary. It is here through the use of various methodological techniques such as household survey, interviewing, participant observation, and the collection of local history and narratives, that the interaction of lived worlds can be explored. Issues of identity emerge from these stories, from people's lives, events and encounters, and help to illustrate the situations that encapsulate identity, both individual and collective.

By collecting and recording life narratives, stories and local history it is possible to understand the processes of construction and reconstruction of identities and to observe patterns of change through both time and place. When interpretation and analysis of data begins, Geertz (1973:3) tells us that an important consideration to take into account is that "[w]hat we call our data are really our own constructions of other peoples' constructions of what they and their compatriots are up to." Given that observations are so personal and that interpretations of what is seen depends upon the eyes through which these observations are made.

In December 2000, I spent my first night in a Lisu village. I arrived late in the evening with an NGO (the Inter-Mountain Peoples Education and Culture Association of Thailand, IMPECT) after driving nine kilometers on a dirt road, the village was covered with mist. We ate on a small rattan table on the floor, and all I remember of

the food is that it was very spicy and the corn whisky was strong. Thinking back, nothing in particular stands out from this first trip. It was similar to other highland villages I had visited in Thailand in many respects. From this first trip, I began to visit more Lisu communities throughout northern Thailand, assisting staff where I could, in the areas of resource management, early childhood education, policy advocacy and teaching English at local schools. As my Thai language proficiency improved and my ability to say a few words and phrases in Lisu such as "thank you" (*aquer-bomo*) and "What is your name?" (*nu-mue-alli-bae*), the subject matter of my conversations expanded somewhat. It is important to note that as a result of state policies of integration, increased interaction and economic integration, more highland people can converse in the northern Thai dialect (*kham müang*), however it is still primarily the younger generation who are more comfortable with the central Thai language, culture and lifestyle.

1.7.1 Locating A Lisu Village: *Ban Sai Ngam* or *Ja Zu Na Khauw*

As the title of this section suggests, the research site, like many other highland communities, has two names. *Ban Sai Ngam* is the official Thai administrative name. The name refers to a large sai tree (strangling fig) at the entrance to the village. *Ja Zu Na Khauw* is the Lisu name and refers to the river on the banks of which the village was established. Both names are significant, and their meaning and interpretation by different actors is a fundamental aspect of this research. Therefore, this research will focus on the two names, vernacular and official, of the research site in order to investigate local and state interaction. Both of these names are used in the following pages, but they are not interchangeable and will be used within the specific context of local and state narratives of community.

The village is located in Müang Pai district Mae Hong Son province, northern Thailand (Map 3.1 and 3.2). There are a plentitude of tourist maps available at guesthouses, cafés and tourist offices in the nearby town, showing trekking routes and off-road driving opportunities. On all of these maps Ban Sai Ngam is identified differently, as a hill-tribe trekking location, a tourist attraction with a hot spring, and a site for the Huai Nam Dang National Park Office Number 7 and the Lum Nam Pai

Wildlife Sanctuary. The control and administration of Müang Pai district has undergone significant transformation over a period of 700 years. Throughout its history the control of Müang Pai, situated on the frontier of the modern Thai state, has shifted between Shan chiefs (present day Shan state in Myanmar), Lan Na kings (Chiang Mai kingdom), and finally as an official domain under Siamese (Thai) authority by the early twentieth century (Chapter III, section 3.3.1). The ethnic diversity of the area is strikingly evident, particularly on market day with Karen, Lahu, Shan, Lisu, Thai and an increasing number of international tourists (Chapter V, section 5.3.1). Within Müang Pai district, Lisu make up a significant portion of the population and in certain sub-districts they constitute a majority, for example the research site (Chapter III, section 3.4, 3.4.1). Currently ten Lisu villages in Müang Pai have joined together to form the Lisu Network of Mae Hong Son that is linked to nationally to other ethnic networks and alliances.

Selecting one particular community for study allowed me to investigate the dynamics of social interaction on many conceptual and practical levels. The research and the researcher followed the paths of social relations and networks, both formally–created and informally–established, effectively shifting analytical focus beyond the discrete locality of the village to encompass surrounding communities and village members who are now residing and working elsewhere. In this way the community that I selected for analysis, Ban Sai Ngam *(Ja Zu Na Khuaw)*, is ideally suited to gain an understanding of the relationships of community and identity. These relationships and networks encompass the immediate village and spread through clan and kinship to other communities in the surrounding area and to other provinces in northern Thailand such as Chiang Mai, as well as Bangkok (the capital in central Thailand) and Hat Yai (southern Thailand). The notions of community and identity can therefore be approached as both fixed in a particular geographical position, 'the village', and as encompassing national and international relations.

1.7.2 Why *Ja Zu Na Khuaw*?

Why this collection of houses and not another? Justification for the selection of this village revolves around my familiarity with both the village and NGO workers

in the area. It is through my experiences in this area that I have come to recognize and reflect upon the formation of social relations both within the community and at inter and intra community levels, illustrating the social dynamics of experiences related to community and identity. The theoretical and methodological motives for the selection of this particular cluster of houses and not another are related to: (1) its status as a newly established village with a history of resistance and struggles for control over land and other resources, along with links to NGOs and INGOs, this has included village members arresting forestry officials for illegal logging; (2) the classification of the community as a national park, *uthayarn haeng chat,* and wildlife sanctuary, *khet raksa phan sat pa*; and (3) because it is a medium sized village I was able to collect and conduct village level interviews and socio-economic data. Collectively, these factors have significant implications for ways of life, agricultural practices, and, as I later show, concepts of identity and community.

Other critical factors in the choice of the research site include the historical background of the area and the province, and the linking of official and local history. This includes archival and archeological data and the more contemporary development history of the area as a project site for both national and international non-governmental organizations. The large, semi-permanent army division is a noticeable presence in the physical and social landscape of the community, through the construction of housing, roadblocks and checkpoints, and workshops aimed at youth. Overall, the village has a highly mobile population with community members regularly traveling back and forth from the village to the nearby market town of Pai (approximately 12 kilometers away by paved road).

1.7.3 In the Field: Landscapes, Lives and Events

My day starts before six when I slowly get out of bed. The grandmother and granddaughter have already been up for some time starting the fire and preparing rice and food for the pigs. Before the sun rises the silence is broken first by the sound of dogs barking, second by roosters, and third by the sound of a motorbike horn signaling the arrival of a lowland Thai man (*khon müang*) selling pork and vegetables and other things such as sweets. These and other sounds signal the start of the day. I sleep on a raised platform in the kitchen next to Alupha (the sixth son). I help out where I can. Sometimes I sit and speak Lisu and English with people in the house and boil water for tea for *Pho* (father). In the morning I have found it enjoyable to practice my Lisu, because everyone is at home and staying close to the fire. After breakfast I start my interviews either in the village, walking around and talking to those people who are home, going to the fields or going fishing to talk with the villagers. I have

lunch either at home or in the field and start interviews again in the late afternoon. I play football from five in the afternoon to after six with the young boys at the school, take a shower and write up my notes for the day. After this I visit nearby families or go with Alupha to watch a movie, then come back home, finish my notes and go to bed, exhausted.
(Personal field notes, January 2004)

I began my fieldwork by mapping kinship and clan lineage in the community. This was done primarily through household surveys and informal interviews. At this early stage I also began to collect information on the movement of people, development projects and village political structure, as well as mapping the geographical setting of the village. Collecting information on clans proved to be a very successful entry point for discussion of other topics such as migration, land conflicts, and the history of the area. After the first month I had a greater understanding of the villagers' everyday lives and was familiar with clan groupings, development projects and relations with government officials. I was intrigued at the amount of activity in the village; something happened every day, whether it was a healing ceremony, a meeting, a visit by district officials, public health officers spraying for mosquitoes, the installation of a telephone, a visit by the Princess to Pai town, or the checking of chickens for possible infection by bird flu. Aware that I had been involved with an NGO that has been working in the area, many people would ask if I could help to find money to fund different community projects, some of which included ideas to build a cultural museum in the village and support New Year activities.

My preliminary research started in the summer of 2003, and I conducted the major portion of my research from December 2003 to May 2004. By this time I had gathered a considerable number of life histories, participated in community events, recorded interviews, stories and songs, and took well over 300 photographs. I used four notebooks for my field notes. The first was a calendar, used to record daily events and schedule appointments and meetings. The second book was a diary and notebook that I carried with me every day, writing down what I observed along with maps, sketches and family trees. Third, I kept a separate book for interviews and household surveys. Finally, I kept a small notebook on the Lisu words that I was learning.

While mapping various descriptions of village history and the importance of the surrounding areas, there was talk of sacred forests, spirits, and clan groups, as well as the market price for garlic, areas in the forest where the best bamboo shoots could be found, where wild boar and deer live, where the community had confronted the army, when the school was built, and when the first car drove to the village. Beyond this, there was mention made of national park restrictions on agricultural land, the lack of land title, and forestry check-points. Significantly, there is also a history of protest in Ban Sai Ngam. In 1998, villagers discovered army personnel and forestry staff using chainsaws to cut trees in the conservation forest and using electric fishing equipment and bombs to catch fish in the stream. They arrested the offenders, confiscated the equipment and escorted them to the Pai police station (Chapter IV, section 4.5.3). In 1999, 2001, 2002 and 2004, a handful members of Ban Sai Ngam joined protests in Chiang Mai and Bangkok over land rights, citizenship and various development projects. During my period of field research, I witnessed other significant events such as road development, ceremonies and rituals performed at the family, clan and village levels, Lisu New Year Celebrations, new steps for a traditional dance, a funeral and the naming of a child, village elections, and meetings held with police, army, NGOs and local government officers in the village.

Answers to such questions as, "Why did Alupha buy a TV?" and "Why did Ame move to Bangkok?" and, "Is Lisu culture declining?" invariably led to the adoption of both methodological and theoretical assumptions regarding data collection and conceptualization of the research. Because the movement of community members reflects the changing situation of the community, research was conducted in people's homes, the market town, and a newly-established tourist village in Chiang Mai (Chapter V, section 5.9.1), as well as at the school, forestry office, district government office, on the back of a motorcycle, in the forest and the fields. As a result, the research has moved away from neatly constructed surveys and questionnaires and quantitative historical data, to focus more on interview material and observation as primary sources of data.

1.8 Methodology and Sources: Stories, Songs and Interviews

In order to gain a greater understanding of a Lisu community, it was necessary to understand the historical, social and political relationships between lowland Thai populations and highland ethnic minorities. To do this I gathered policy documents and briefs, reviewed and researched articles, and spoke with friends and colleagues working in the field of highland development in Thailand. These efforts provided invaluable sources of information highlighting the impacts of national policy implementation on local communities. From the original Economic Development Plan in 1961 and the establishment of the Hill Tribe Development and Welfare Center in 1963, to the present Third Master Plan for Community Development, Environment and the Control of Narcotic Crops in the Highlands (from Office of the Committee to Facilitate the Solution to National Security Problems relating to Hilltribes and the Cultivation of Narcotic Crops (COHAN), Office of the National Security Council), highland people have been categorized and classified geographically, socially and politically. Another central element of the analysis of the position of highland people, ethnic minorities and local communities within the state administrative and legal systems is the question of citizenship and personal status registration. The past two decades have witnessed a tightening in the regulation, classification and utilization of land, along with the expansion of control over forest management by centralized government departments such as the Ministry of Forestry, Parks and Wildlife, and the Royal Forestry Department (RFD). Analysis of these policies is significant for this research for they highlight the transformation and complexity of the situation in highland communities.

As indicated in the above section, initial research depended significantly on documents regarding historical and census data, development projects, and the forestry and citizenship policy of Thailand. Connected with this approach was an investigation into international organizations and available policy mechanisms specifically related to indigenous peoples. In addition, once the research began, emphasis was placed on historical analysis of the area, as constructed by local peoples' stories and life histories, government documents including surveys from the Hill Tribe Welfare Division (1972, 1977, 1993, 1997, 2002 Highland Community

Survey), archival information of La Na history, and the Burmese Chronicles. This investigation served as a starting point for comparison, and helped to approach an understanding of the evolution of the entire area, the interaction of different peoples, and the interaction between local history and official history (Chapter III, section 3.3.1).

When gathering information of village history, it was primarily the male elders who offered to provide details, while women listened quietly nearby. When I asked female elders similar questions pertaining to village history, they would refer the question back to the male elders or simply answer, "I do not know." Therefore, alternative methods were used to gain insight into the views of female elders, this including changing the setting of the interview or conversation. While men in the village felt comfortable in a formal interview setting with a notebook and pen at the ready, for interviews with women I changed the setting. When interviewing female members of the village I sat and talked with them in the kitchen while they prepared the evening meal or boiled water for tea, I walked with them to the forest and talked with them while we were catching fish in the stream.

I received enormous variation in response to questions such as, "What year was the village established?" with answers ranging between 1970 and 1983. In order to cross–check this data I spoke with female elders about the birth of their children, a major event in their lives, by asking questions such as "Where and in what Lisu year [and corresponding animal sign] was your third daughter born?"[6] I was then able to determine an approximate time for when they moved to the area, and this in turn helped narrow the timeframe for when the village was established and other important events took place.

I also reviewed the names of villagers who were eligible to vote in Ban Sai Ngam district elections, a list which was nailed to the door of the community hall. I did this in order to compare the names and household numbers from the government

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[6] The Lisu follow a cycle of twelve days named after animals, similar to that of the Chinese twelve-day calendar. The year has twelve months of either 30 or 31 days. The years form twelve-year cycles as the Chinese calendar (Durrenberger 1989: 13). By determining the animal of their birth, I could trace the age of a person using a Lisu calendar.

electoral role with those compiled from my individual household interviews. The names which people frequently gave me were their Lisu names and clan groupings, while the names listed on the electoral role are officially registered names, Thai names and surnames. Many families have changed their clan names to Thai surnames, and there are some discrepancies between the official electoral form and my own surveys especially regarding families who have changed their names. During interviews I asked people for example, "what is your name and your clan?" They would tell me their Lisu name and clan grouping; some showed me their Thai identification card with a Thai name and surname. Some people even found it difficult to remember their Thai names.

The target groups for this research included, firstly, elders and community leaders including traditional spiritual leaders and the village leader. These groups assisted the research in gaining a historical perspective regarding cultural practices, ceremonies and traditions, internal social structure, and political organization and representation. This served as an essential foundation for analyzing the impacts of change and development in the community. Secondly, by focusing on youth I gained an understanding into the perspectives of younger generations, their beliefs, attitudes and social relationships related to changes in the community, and how they have responded and adapted to these changes. Research within these two groups included attention to both older and younger generations in terms of their mobility and adaptation to changing situations. A third external group important to this research includes government officials and NGO staff, army personnel and teachers who work in the area.

During my research I lived with one family. Pho Yee Kor Lao Yee Pa and his wife Ba Kae Ma were original settlers in the area, and Pho Yee Kor Lao Yee Pa was the first village headman, and is now an elder and cultural advisor for the village. His wife is a highly respected herbal medicine healer. They provided me not only with a place to stay and kindness, but also information regarding the history of the area, ritual and cultural practices of the Lisu, an understanding of Lisu belief in spirits and traditional healing; they were my teachers in the village. We spent many days

together talking and discussing problems facing Lisu communities today, along with possible solutions, ritual practice and Lisu stories. I first met this family through a friendship with their son, now a staff member of a local NGO. Other key informants included a traditional healer and previous village leader with experience working with NGOs, and state agencies. He was able to share with me his knowledge on spirit healing and the adaptation of scientific medicine in traditional healing ceremonies (Chapter V, section 5.4.1) and was a main actor in the conflict with forestry officials. I traveled with him into the forest to collect herbal medicine and to nearby villages to perform healing ceremonies. Additionally, a Lisu NGO staff member working in the village helped me to understand the position of state agencies regarding highland people, along with information on current government policies affecting highland peoples. He has worked in the village for over 10 years implementing various development projects, including the formation of the Lisu Network of Mae Hong Son, and during my research he was elected to provincial parliament (Chapter V, section 5.6).

Basic socio-economic and demographic information was taken from a sample of the households in the community. This facilitated the collection and analysis of basic data concerning population, agricultural practices, the size and type of land holdings including the crops grown and the harvest calendar, and kinship lineage and clan structures which indicates relationships at the family and community level, as well as between village members and other communities. I also gathered information on personal status (citizenship), religious beliefs and ceremonial practices, migration patterns, and the frequency of and motives for travel outside of the community.

Population data and household information was first collected from the Sub-district Administrative Organization (SAO) village representative, who showed me data collected on August 5, 2003, which indicated that there were 61 households in the village. While walking through the village and mapping the area I counted 64 households. It had been during the Sub-district level representative elections for provincial parliament in March 2004 that the notification was nailed to the community hall listing eligible voters in the village, from a total of 74 households. The

movement of villagers and their house registration can account for these discrepancies; many families had moved in and out of the community during previous years. Some kept their house registered in Ban Sai Ngam and lived elsewhere, while others who have moved to the village were yet to register. Also, government data collection methods and subsequent documentation have been shown to have a relatively high rate of inaccuracy when dealing with Lisu in the area regarding birth registration, family name registration, or the registration for health and welfare services and identification cards. To conduct household surveys, I required an interpreter for most of the interviews. Questions were prepared beforehand and time was spent with the interpreter involved to ensure a shared understanding of the questions. Further, in order to cover the households for the survey, I required the assistance of several interpreters from different clans, which enabled me to reach and interview a diverse cross-section of the community.

In-depth interviews were conducted with selected community members, both male and female, from diverse age and clan groups. Selection for the interviews was based on data from household surveys that identified members of my target groups. Those interviewed within the community included the village leader and village committee members, traditional leaders, traditional healers, members of local NGOs and Lisu Network committee members, Lisu and Thai NGO staff working in the village, teachers at the school, army officers in the area, forestry staff stationed in the village, at the check-point and in the main office in Pai town, the district governor, candidates for the sub-district elections, the senior advisor for the "Culture Group of Pai", a representative from a tourist company offering "treks" to hill–tribe villages, tourists who visited the village during New Year celebrations, community health staff, police, and Lisu from Ban Sai Ngam who have recently established a village in a tourist area in Chiang Mai. This process complemented the group interviews conducted with elders and youth in the community.

I found observation the most successful technique to answer many of my questions questions. I realize now how strange it must have been for community members, to have someone watch them and try to help them in their everyday

activities. While I was sitting at the village entrance noting the arrival and departure of community members a young man commented, "You have been sitting here all day. Is that how *farang* (a Thai term meaning Westerners) do research?" I used participant observation techniques extensively to investigate and understand the everyday situation of the Lisu in Ban Sai Ngam, including how they cope with the changing situation in the forest and the impacts of government policy, and how they carried out their everyday practices. I made a special effort to gain first-hand data on the issues of identity and community by delineating and interpreting the connections and networks existing within the community and with outside agencies. I spent a total of five months at the research site and in surrounding villages. For almost the entire period from January to March 2004, I lived in the village. My observations took me into the forest, to the fields, to the market and to Chiang Mai, following the paths taken by village members.

I originally intended to conduct group meetings with village elders, youth and members of the village committee. However, I found this interview format to be almost impossible to implement due to the necessary imposition on villagers' limited free time, variable availability, the quality of information that could be gained from such a meeting, and the budget required to hold them. I did, however, conduct two group meetings with the village elders and a group of young people. For these reasons, I decided to approach members of remaining groups on an individual basis and interview them separately, which in the end provided rich information and a more personalized and comfortable atmosphere.

1.9 Methodological Considerations

> There are pitfalls of cross-cultural non-understanding, the prickly undergrowth
> of conventions too sensitive to tread on: too often the denseness of the jungle of
> thought defeats any interpretation or transcription. Yet, glimpses are offered if
> one does some soul-searching in their own language.
> (Klein Hutheesing 1990a:2)

The "translation of cultures" involves what Tambiah (1990) refers to as a "double subjectivity" that is characteristic of the social sciences as presently practiced

and which does not pertain to the physical sciences. This double subjectivity involves sympathy and empathy as well as distance and neutrality on the part of the observer, analyst or interpreter of social phenomena. She or he must first, as far as is possible, "subjectively" enter into the minds of the actors to understand their intentions and reactions in terms of their meaning categories. Researchers and analysts attempt to either simultaneously or subsequently distance themselves from those phenomena and translate them into or map them onto a range of usually Western terms and categories of understanding. This in turn induces another process of self-reflexivity by which our Western understanding of ourselves, our own cultural valuations and presuppositions, are deepened and filled out (Tambiah 1990:111).

The major limitation I faced in carrying out this research was language–related, although I am competent in Thai and many of the respondents were as well. This challenge was, at least partially overcome through the use of an interpreter or village assistant and language practice on my part. Transcribing and translating across different languages required rigorous crosschecking for consistency and accuracy. Selection of an interpreter required that they have not only relevant language ability in Thai but also an understanding of Lisu culture and beliefs. Indeed, this was a critical factor in the collection of data at the community level. Therefore, variables such as the interpreter's age, sex and clan were taken into account. In respect to ethical considerations, care was taken to ensure the privacy of those sharing personal information about their lives.

1.10 The Structure of the Text

This study is presented in six chapters, including this introduction. Each chapter is linked by theoretical approaches and practical examples. In Chapter II, Theoretical Approaches to Community and Identity and Ethnic Classification, I introduce the theoretical foundations for the study. For the Lisu and other ethnic groups of northern Thailand, the emergence of the Thai state and the fixing of national borders have been fundamental in the expression and creation of ethnic

identity and community. It is within this framework that the Lisu have been categorized as "others". Such interaction is analyzed through the lens of ethnic classification and the politics of place. Overall, this incorporates an analysis of historical, social and geographical categorization through state discourses of inclusion and exclusion.

In Chapter III, Cultural Landscapes: Shifting Historical, Environmental and Political Contexts, I focus on the significance of minorities within the Thai state and the traditional Tai political systems of pre-modern Thailand. This chapter situates the Lisu in the historical, political and environmental contexts of northern Thailand and addresses the central theme of understanding the interaction between centers and peripheries and how the Lisu negotiate and adapt to life on the margin. Within the larger environmental and political background of development in a period when highland communities are undergoing unprecedented transformation, the Lisu are connected by locality in a particular context.

Chapter IV, Reconceptualizing Community: Narratives and Life Stories of Struggles for Legitimacy, Recognition and Security, explores the concept of place and locality as related to the conceptualization of a Lisu community. Such an investigation reveals the multi-dimensional aspects of a Lisu community and the layers of interaction and representation that are played out at the local, national and international levels simultaneously. The analysis involves the examination of internal social relations and organization of members of a Lisu community. This introduces the emergence of the state as a delimited physical entity where interaction between individuals and groups are characterized by the politicization of territory and ethnicity. The history of the village is interlinked with experiences with its boundaries, through the ritual practices, natural resource management and protest that continue to situate the local community in a wider framework of interaction. With the emergence of nation-states, boundaries and borders become an essential element of analysis into community and identity, for they highlight the interactions between centers and peripheries and the multiplicity of actors.

Chapter V, Identities and Shifting Contexts: Everyday Articulations of Power, introduces the reader to the notion that where people live, their place, community or home, and the networks and alliances which they form, are the source of basic materialistic substance, symbolic meaning, contestation, struggle, and of course identity. This chapter will focus on Lisu identity as related to the politics of place within changing environmental and political contexts, with reference to government policy, market integration, movement and political representation. An examination of the nature of relationships between groups is essential in the analysis of the level of acceptance and legitimacy of state authority, and that of the rights to self-determination of local communities. In Thailand, these processes are embedded in historical and political contexts based on the three pillars of King, Land and Religion illustrating the extent to which state ideologies of identity and community penetrate local realities and expressions of a collective national identity. Finally, Chapter VI presents the major findings of the research, revealing the multi-consciousness of the community and theoretical and empirical linkages between community and Lisu identity.

Overall, this study highlights both theoretical and empirical issues of community, identity and place, and the ongoing changes that are dramatically affecting Lisu and other highland peoples in the mountains and cities of Thailand. This study, although limited in time and geographical area, will, I hope, broaden our understanding of the continuing struggles of highland peoples throughout Thailand.