



Masterthesis

**Coping With Modernity:
Northern Thailand's Akha New Wayfaring
in the City of Chiang Mai.**

**Paul Heering
studentnumber 3761932
supervisor Rutger-Jan Scholtens
Cultural Anthropology
Multiculturalism in a Comparative Perspective**



University of Utrecht, The Netherlands July 2013

Coping with Modernity:

Northern Thailand's Akha New Wayfaring in the City of Chiang Mai.

*“Creative tension comes from the combination of two distinct perspectives,
and from that creative tension new insights can continue to emerge”.*

Nancy Farris

*“And the seasons they go round and round,
and the painted ponies go up and down.
We're captive on the carousel of time.
We can't return, we can only look behind
from where we came, and go round
and round and round In the circle game”.*

Joni Mitchell

Abstract.

This masterthesis highlights the transitional processes of an indigenous people towards urbanization in a globalizing world. It is a reflection of fieldwork, carried out in Northern Thailand from February to April 2013, among the Akha people, from Sino-Tibetan origin, and most deprived of all hilltribes. I focus on the representations of the urban Akha. From the time this group migrated into the Golden Triangle region of northern Thailand some 160 years ago, they occupied the most remote hilltops at altitudes up to 1,500 meters, to dwell in patrilineal village communities amidst other hilltribe groups. They were known as “khon pa”, the wayfarers of the forest, where they lived in harmony with nature to the prescripts of Akhazang, their unique cosmology. In the Thai state process of nation-building, they are reluctant to assimilate into dominant Thai culture. Much of the Akha people still lack official citizenship, which pins them down to their living grounds and makes traveling an illegal act.

Government policy in the 1970s and 1980s halted opium cultivation and encouraged to implement rotational farming instead of slash-and-burn practices, grow alternative crops instead of opium and take part in Royal Agricultural Projects. Recent government restrictions on forestry forces them to relocate, abandon the mountaintops, losing all landrights. Poverty stricken and marginalized by negative public image as uncivilized, uneducated destroyers of forest ecology and accused of bad habits and being entropy resistant, they leave the villages in ever increasing numbers seeking new livelihoods. Coming from subsistence economies, they lack city skills and in most cases cannot read and write or speak Thai language. Arriving in the city, they disappear in the margins, the bad areas called slums and mix with other hilltribes, in mutual dependent heterogeneous hilltribe communities. They are queuing on the lowest level in Thai society. Though deprived, more and more manage to make a living, by using their flexibility and ability to respond to changed circumstances, shifting identities and using new strategies. The slums of Chiang Mai, places where they dwell and try to succeed, in adapting to modern life to become wayfarers of the city, was one of my main fieldwork areas.

Keywords: Cultural Anthropology, hilltribes, Northern Thailand, urban migration, slums, education, religion, shifting identities.

-Contents-

Abstract	1
Acknowledgements	4
Preamble	4
Preface, Research Questions and Overview	5
Preface	5
Research Questions	5
Overview	6
1. Akha Wayfaring	7
2. Hilltribe People, Akha People, Akha Vision, Akha Life and Akha Authorities.	13
2.1 Hilltribe People	13
2.2 Akha People	14
2.3 Akha Vision	17
2.4 Akha Life and Akha Authorities	18
3. The Akha and the Thai	20
3.1 The Akha and the Thai	20
3.2 Tribal Research Center (TRC) and Tribal Research Institute (TRI).....	24
3.3 Land Use and State-control	28
3.4 Citizenship	30
4. City Life	32
4.1 Economics	32
4.2 Education, Learning and the School System	37
4.3 Religion	42
4.4 Social Situation and the Slums	43
Summary	48

5. Akha Strategies	49
5.1 On Business in the City and Beyond	49
5.2 On Images	51
5.3 On Practical Religion	54
5.4 On Shifting Identity	56
 Conclusion	57
 Afterword	60
Methodology	60
Data Gathering	61
 Appendix A: Glossary of Thai (T) and Akha (A) Terms	63
 Bibliography	66

Acknowledgements

I am very thankful to Marja, Francis and Nikki, who convinced me that I could do it. (Starting this studying project turned out to be one of the best decisions in my life). Marja, for her loving care and patience (and fetching me dozens of drinks and meals, during reading and writing). They are the rulers of my heart. I thank my parents for their loving support. This thesis could never have been accomplished, without the wonderful and trustful people of Thailand.

I thank my Anthropology teachers at Utrecht University for their inspiring lessons. Rutger-Jan Scholtens, my mentor, who was enthusiastic from the very start for this project, made me learn to question and consider every single word in a sentence. I am thankful as well, to my fellow students, for making me feel one of them. I enjoyed it all.

Preamble

The slum I call Kanthoke Paradise, is a gated community. Gated, walled and roofed, it encloses a community of one hundred and fifty-two mountain people of multiple ethnic descent. Invisible from the mainstreet as well as from the soi (side street) and hidden behind a large wall with attached sink roofs. The thousands that pass each day over often jammed Wualai Road, are unaware of the lived lifes inside. Only by stretching high over its stone fence the curious observer can catch glimpses of life inside, see shacks built seemingly premeditated, riddled with mud and garbage, a river that ceased to circulate in the dry season leaving a penetrating stench and wardrobes in the outdoors.

The entrance of this triangular shaped Paradise can easily be observed. This observation shows that backstreet activities are multiple and ultimately lead to exit route Wualai. A pickup car, motor with loaded side wagon and motorbikes pass the only connection route with Chiang Mai City on a regular base, and residents walking in and out with small series of food containers at lunch and dinner hours are proof of permanent human dwelling. The old man gathering plastic waste from the neighboring shops and selling it to the adjacent recycle center, is a daily regularity.

The gate is a border. Making how to cross (and stay inside) my challenge. Not any activity can be observed, no people accosted just in the first section. Shabby houses and outdoor clothes-hangers are no exception to the city rule, and do not reveal some special quarter. But what is around that first corner? Now, I consider forty-four year old Amaran and sole English speaker, my friend and informant of Kanthoke Paradise. I know about family relations and ethnic networks now. Met aunts, nephews, sisters, cousins of people that I met before, during research on places far away from this site. I've come to know the names and different ethnicities of babies, youngsters and adults, was informed about their activities and multiple ways to make a living. I am familiar with their daily pursuits and worries; they made me partner of their thoughts and concerns. Being interested in their history, comprising a time period of thirty-two years, I started to research at a more profound dialectic level. Their history and their reasons to descend from the mountains, I was to learn later.

Preface, Research Questions and Overview.

Preface.

Thailand's urge to develop as a nation-state, modernize and emerge as a player in globalization processes, is modeled by implementing strategies, such as citizenship, border, census and access by improving infrastructure. The State, dominated by the Thai majority, requires integration of the originally nomadic minorities, demands their participation and claims a full identity shift. Minority groups become territorialized, feel restricted and marginalized and are positioned in a unequal power relationship to the state.

The Akha people, confronted with this new age, see themselves surrounded by a capitalist consumer society, that differs entirely from the previous world they inhabited from generation to generation. Change is urgently needed to overcome arrears.

In pre-state times, minority groups managed to escape dominance by stronger coalitions, by migrating to remote and undesired spaces, the mountains of Northern Thailand. Inside newly demarcated state borderlines, they tried to dissolve in "*the boundary-less and uncertain space outside the gaze of the state*" and seek for "*invisibility by absence of room in-between nation-state boundaries*" (McKinnon, 2005:43). They became "*people who do not exist in modern state*" (McKinnon, 2005: *ibid*).

But the pressures are becoming too strong for the Akha people: within one generation, illiterate self-sufficient animists have to be transformed into skilled Buddhists, fully integrated in modern capitalist society, as employees in factories and offices. In less than two decades, transformation from "Agraria", the agricultural society the Akha lived in for centuries, via "Industria", the industrialized society towards "Globalia", the era of transnational movement and modern technology, has to be set into motion. Frictions arise. How the Akha will cope, is the main topic of my fieldwork.

Research Questions.

Central issue is how cultural representation of Akha is performed during the transition process of migration to the city. To answer this question, I explore scientific publications and data to discover who the Akha are and how their historical background is constituted. Of great importance in this process of transition are the effects of government policy on integration of

minorities. Questions I answer, are: What is the impact of Thai government policy on the Akha people and how do they cope with situations that result? What is the status of Akha citizens? What are the realities of daily life they face? And finally: What will the future bring? The preambule, a narrative about engaging a mountainpeoples' gated community, suggests, that I address the urgent problem of ethnic minorities in Thailand: How to survive in the city. I could not find any publications about this subject, it is a field largely unexplored, still of great importance. Implications in the field of economical and social conditions for both Thai government and mountainpeople, are major. What are the problems and would a change or modification of policy in future be expedient for both parties involved? Are Akha strategies adequate to survive?

What are the reasons for former invisible hilltribe people to come down the mountains and manifest so discernible in the streets? In a world flattened (Friedman 2005) and apparently belittled by time-space compression (Harvey 1990), minority groups disappear or are absorbed in bigger entities by the globalizing powers of disembedding, acceleration, standardization and mixing, despite of special rights granted to protect. Their special ways of being-in-the-world, I describe.

Overview.

In chapter one I will position the Akha people in Ingold's concepts of wayfaring, movement and being-in-the-world. For a better understanding of their special way of life and becoming, I explain how this indigenous group ended up -along with other groups- in the border region of Northern Thailand. Their specific traditional ways are described in chapter two as well. In chapter three I indicate differences between their lives and the Thai majority, by pointing to highland and lowland dichotomies and more, resulting in problems related with government policy choices.

Mountain people feel the urge to come down the mountains in bigger numbers than ever before, settling in slums in urban agglomerations. Their advancements will be subject of chapter four. In chapter five, I make comments on Akha people's survival strategies in modernity to engage the future, linking education, religion and economics, before I conclude.

1. Akha Wayfaring

Reading Ingold's *"Being Alive"* (2011) and his ideas about man, living things and nature, I was struck by the resemblances and connections it showed with Grünfeld's *"Wayfarers of the Thai Forest: the Akha"* (1982). Grünfeld accounts of an indigenous peoples' way of living surrounded by nature, and living in harmony with it. It is an ethnography about people living *with* nature in a respectable way, with the awareness of mutual dependency. And this is precisely what Ingold tries to remind us of: that in the Western world the connection between people and the natural world is lost. Ingold shows us that we have forgotten to be alive in the world, and he argues that we have to reconnect. By means of anthropology, he seeks a *comparative* understanding of human being and knowing, by "studying human becomings as they unfold within the weave of the world" (Radcliffe-Brown in Ingold 2011:230)¹. In *"Being Alive"*, he breaks down the great divide between human beings and the natural world. And that is just the way-of- being the "Wayfarers of the Thai Forest" fulfill in their daily dwellings and movements.

The book *"Wayfarers"* depicts a journey in the remote Golden Triangle region, where the author visits a traditional hilltribe village, accompanied by two anthropologists and a student. The dirt roads to the village are slippery, the hillsides steep and the people considered "wild". The anthropologists, who frequent the village on a regular base, know better and are reluctant to move the author in. Too many visitors before have ridiculed the Akha, they argued. "Very often journalists have presented the Akha as colourful primitives and failed to recognize the depth and sophistication of their cultural heritage" (Grünfeld 1982:23 citing anthropologist Dr. Alting von Geusau). Few people have understood their way of moving in the hills.

Movement is the key in Ingold's work. Our humanity doesn't come fully formed, but is continually made and remade in our movements along the ways of life. Life, for Ingold, is an ongoing, unending process of *wayfaring*: "*My contention is that wayfaring is the fundamental mode by which living beings inhabit the earth. Every such being has, accordingly, to be imagined as a line of its own movement or –more realistically- as a bundle of lines* (Ingold 2011:12-3)".

¹ Radcliffe-Brown (in Ingold 2011:230): "Without systematic comparative studies anthropology will become only historiography and ethnography. The aim of comparison is to pass from the particular to the general, from the general to the more general, and ultimately to the universal".

To *dwelling*, a term and concept usually attributed to Heidegger, Ingold appends movement. For Ingold dwelling is literally, “*to be embarked upon a movement along a way of life*” (Ingold 2011:12). To him, it is not important to be in place, but to be along paths.

“They [Akha] have an enormous repertoire of traditional patterns, with which to ornament jackets, leggings and headdresses. Many of their designs have names; one of them, in which a line runs back and forth like a mountain trail, is known, appropriately enough, as “The Path”” (Manifest of AFECT, Association for Akha Education and Culture in Thailand) .

“*The path, and not the place, is the primary condition of being, or rather of becoming*” (Ingold 2011:ibid). Paths followed, where movements take place, lives are lived, skills developed, observations are made and understandings grown, are the areas where action takes place. Wayfaring is place binding. Every dweller follows a path, and a trail is “*placed*” in this way. Places are the radius of movements.

Evenki reindeer herders in Siberia, like Akha people in Thailand or Yanomami in the Amazon estuary, live “*everywhere*” (Anderson in Ingold 2011:149), possessing no land, but dwelling it.²

“*The Evenki people did not occupy their country, they inhabited it. And whereas occupation is areal, habitation is lineal. That is to say, it takes people not across the land surface, but along the paths that lead from place to place*” (Ingold 2011:ibid).

When people meet, there is an entanglement of trails that links their lives. Each entanglement is a knot, and many lines make a bigger knot. The knots form a meshwork. “*Everywhere*” (from Evenki to Akha and Yanomami) is a meshwork of entangled trails, along which people live their lives. And linear movement along those trails is *wayfaring*. Wayfaring is a continuous movement in the world, it is a traveling trail. A process of growth and development.

“The Path”, the traveling trail, most important and intricate of traditional patterns, symbolizes Akha’s journey. It is the circle of birth and rebirth, the cycle of new beginnings. It is the way or path of Tao-Chinese wisdom and the guideline of experienced lives of the ancestors. It is both trap and escape, fear and hope, destiny and future. The way it has always been and always will be. In my opinion, the heart of “The Akha Way” is in this pattern.

² The Akha live by the code “*all is always now*”, an inherent believe of the “eternal wheel of time”, where there is no separation between mankind and a material or objective world. It is the bridging link between the world and the human psyche, the collective unconscious, or the synchronicity of human life. (AFECT manifest).

The movement, the continued journeying of Akha through the ages towards growth, development and prosperity, resembles Ingold's Wayfaring. Literally and figuratively, it is a quest through time and places. Two thousand years of escaping dominant cultures and wandering from place to place, practiced in current time. The Akha were guided, on this long and challenging journey to new homegrounds, by stories and rules of *Akhazang*, their cosmology, which I will unravel in the next chapter. These function as geneological lifelines.

In this cosmography, guided by *Akhazang*, borders and nation-states have no value, except to enclose in bounded areas. Yet, this border making, demarcation, holds severe consequences for the Akha people. Sturgeon, geographer and investigating Akha border landscapes in both Thailand and China, distinguishes two different perceptions of border (Sturgeon 2005:6-7). First, the border is the margin or edge of a nation-state, the periphery of a large political entity. This border has no perpetual value in *Akhazang*, has no meaning to Akha philosophy, being drawn to restrict and cut off family networks. Secondly, she argues that the border is a dividing line, that links two nation-states, including the social relationships surrounding that line. This second meaning, as a dividing line with dynamics across it, has a complex history for Akha and meets with their nomadic nature.

Main consequence for Akha of the first border represents "maneuvering and struggle" (Sturgeon 2005:9) in subordinate negotiations. Engagements with the Thai state are struggleful and troublesome, because they take place under unfavorable conditions in unequal power relations and with powerful demarcations by the nation-state. The second border for the Akha people according to Sturgeon (2005:ibid.) is a processual landscape, a terrain of personal biography and community history, a landscape with complicated land use over long time periods, in response to local needs, state plans and border possibilities. Here, cross-cultural and long-distance encounters emerge. For the mountain people the border has always been an area for opportunities, with the cooperation of legal and illegal on the verge of place and time.

In history, Akha wayfaring was sometimes paused, when safe havens were reached and people could settle, but never permanently, for their way of living depended highly on swiddening agricultural techniques. Typical are the nomadic features of constant moving (clearing new fields when soils are exhausted, and abandoning the villages). Or wayfaring was abruptly halted. This occurred by state border demarcation in Thailand since mid-1960s, when the nation-state was established. Every time new skills -experienced knowledge- were required. This resulted in an accumulated knowledge in agricultural skills and understanding

of ecological processes, which Sturgeon calls "landscape plasticity" (Sturgeon 2005:9) and includes various landscapes, altitudes and techniques. "Akha cultivation practices revolved around complex upland environments that varied greatly in elevation and microclimate" (Sturgeon 2005:8).

City skills were not included, so far. It is for his reason, that the Akha have to experience this new city life first, and it will take some time to be able to pass on new stories and experiences to future generations. The Akha are in a state of transformation, a crisis, which makes them insecure and searching for stability, until their movements and stories are stocked and secured in integrated knowledge. They remain people living in here and now, being-in-the-world.

Ingold's world is a storied world. Stories help us to navigate the world of movement, they help us to integrate the knowledge that comes from our ever-unfolding paths. To tell, is to trace a path through the world that others can follow. Like following trails through a landscape. Each story will take you so far, until you come across another one that will take you further.

Mister Athu and the "Wayfarers of the Thai Forest".

On a table at AFFECT, I gaze upon a well-known book. When Mister Athu arrives, I mention the name. "Yes, the book", he says, getting hold of it and browsing the pages. "Major part of the text we don't comprehend, but the pictures are so nice. Here you see the palmleaf roofs, they cut them in the forest and carry them on their backs to the village. We don't do this anymore. We use corrugated ones". "This will surely change the village", I put forward. But now he starts talking in a long monologue. To my big astonishment he seems to know all the people in the book. Every page, he comments. At the page facing fifteen Akha girls and women in traditional costumes, he points at them, one by one and comments their actual whereabouts. "And these have died already. I've known them, this is my village. And this is my nephew, Djoepo, this is an aunt". At the chapter called "Apoe" he halts. "She was cook at AFFECT, for twenty years, before Boon took over. "Apoe is in her eighties now". -Fieldnote-

Recent wayfaring, breaking free from the ever tighter government's restrictions, is mainly a movement downstream, because opportunities lay at lower altitudes, the lowlands. There is no other choice now -as we shall see in the following chapters- than to go down, without holding back, and to leave the homegrounds in the mountains and see, what the next bend brings.

From the well into the quiet mountain streams, the traditional people go slow and carefully. More self-assured have traveled ahead and reached the valleys, where they halted and sent

news home, of save arrival in good health, encouraging family left behind to follow. Bolder ones came streaming in the cities and took up temporary residence at first (illegally). They learned city skills on trial and error and provided strongholds in the voids. Some enterprises flourished (the Phami-Akha of SanlumYoj in chapter 4), some trials failed, but families created mutual heterogeneous communities of hilltribe people and survived. Illegal and semi-permanent residence changed into permanent as citizenship projects finally yielded ID cards for a vast majority of the mountain people in the mid 2000s. Now people are looking beyond state borders and have imaginations of moving abroad, renewing old kinship and linguistic affiliation lines in Chinese Yunnan Province (Hani-Akha people) or South-Korea and Taiwan. Stories of first experiences circulate.

Greater part of my fieldwork I was “on the move”. Meeting people and moving from place to place, mainly by motorbike, to have good access to remote places, I listened to the stories told by locals, with whom I resided in homestays or who I encountered during pauses along the way. I took my time and halted to hear these stories, concerning daily live, and contained fragments as well of lines passed on by the Akha ancestors, that still strongly direct peoples’ lives. I learned that even persons I considered modern and apparently fully adapted to citylife and western ideas and concepts, lived parts of their life ruled by tradition. Their lives torn between two worlds. I tried to reveal the hidden dimensions, the frictions between here and there, conflicts between old and new, and describe them. For my part, I opened my world, by telling stories that could equally contribute. Our concerns and fears mingled and disseminated, the stories continuing and moving both ways, *taking us further*.³

My own wayfaring produced integrated practical knowledge of the locally lived world, data. This knowledge has not been classified initially, but is “meshworked”, like all knowledge including scientific knowledge. Knowledge gathering is the product of a complex process, perpetual and constant, carried out by active acting and movement. This knowledge is evolving, in motion, “becoming”, and must be lived to be understood. This is identical to the production of practical knowledge of nature, which we have to experience, to understand the complex interrelations (Ingold 2011:153-5). Generation of knowledge is being done by telling stories. In this “storied world“ everything moves and nothing is fixed. Encountering brings no

³ The stories of Daws mother, scaring birds out of the house and hiring a shaman to purify, of women empowerment and microcredit. Of starting businesses and obtaining certificates. Of being stuck in villages, because of lack of citizenship. About studying and government study funding. The stories never end.

collision, but interweaving. Thus, encounters bring storied knowledge, a process that never ends (Ingold 2011:141-3).

Locals implicitly possess the knowledge; they have an integrated classification of knowledge. For them this is a memorization achieved by stories, local knowledge, that was integrated “along the way”. Not by science. Ingold (2011:142): *“It is through wayfaring and not transmission that knowledge is carried on”*.

For the researcher it is necessary that knowledge, data that is gathered from cultures, is imported into concepts and schemes to be able to analyze local knowledge. A transformation from place (cultures) to space (science). A differentiation can be made (Nadasdy in Ingold 2011:155) in “distillation” (linking each separate event to the narrative context) and “compartmentalization” (isolation of events in separated classification schemes). Integrated knowledge is pushed into a vertically integrated system, that inverts the ways in which life is lived into categories. Ingold argues, to the contrary, that knowledge is forged through histories of wayfaring. Ingold’s conclusion therefore is: *“To unravel the meshwork, and to reassemble the resulting fragments on the basis of their intrinsic similarities and differences, is to destroy the very meaning and coherence. Rather than treating science and culture as equal and opposite, ranged on either side of an arbitrary division between space and place, and between reason and tradition, a better way forward -I suggest- would be to acknowledge that scientific knowledge, as much as the knowledge of inhabitants, is generated within the practices of wayfaring”* (Ingold 2011:155). To my opinion this is where anthropology and ethnography join hands, and science and culture meet.

From concepts and theory, I will now introduce you to the world of Akha. In the next chapter I will position the Akha people within the greater hilltribe community, and describe Akha history. I will explain the unique character of Akhazang and its vital role in daily living.

Finally, I will present parts of daily dwelling in the traditional villages, and unravel village organization to be able to compare this with life of the urban Akha in a later stage, as to point out that the actual state of transition, marks an era of disruption, insecurity and detachment, threatening existence in modern times.

2. Hilltribe People, Akha People, Akha Vision, Akha Life and Akha Authorities.

2.1 Hilltribe People.

The Akha are one of 38 different hilltribe minority groups in Thailand, that occupy the Greater “Golden Triangle” region, the hilly borderlands between Thailand, Laos, Myanmar and China, a historical crossroads of cultures and trade flows, fault line between political power systems, a “zonas de refugio”. Thailand's hilltribes only comprise for an estimated 1.4⁴-2 percent⁵ of the population, some 915,000-1.1 million people living in the northern territories, whereas the Thai majority of 66 million (2012 est.) mainly occupies the lowlands. The largest minority groups are the Karen (350,000) and the Hmong 150,000), who outnumber the Lahu (100,000), Akha (80,000), Yao or Lu-mien (45,000), Lisu (40,000), Kachin, Dara-ang, and Lwua or Lawa. The Lawa are regarded as indigenous to northern Thailand. The Thai arrived subsequently, probably in the thirteenth century. The other groups are later migrants. The Karen were first to migrate to Thailand in significant numbers about 200 years ago, the Hmong on a larger scale over the past seven decades, primary from China (Renard in Hares 2009:383). Akha history in Thailand started probably 160 years ago. The different hilltribes have no common linguistic base due to their different historical geographics, although in some places Lahu language is used as a “lingua franca”. When mastered, Thai is the main means of intercommunication. The Akha ethnic groups are made up of several ethnic sub-groups⁶ and other associated groups with clans and lineages. The different ethnic sub-groups within the main Akha group rarely mix amongst villages⁷. Languages can differ considerably.

Originally the hilltribes settled in the remote mountains to escape dominance by stronger tribes, war or slavery. They lived -and still live- in ethnic homogeneous villages, scattered over the hillsides, but preferred their own specific altitudes.

⁴ Toyota cites the 2002 Tribal Population Survey (Toyota in Grieger, 2012:14)

⁵ Pervé 2011:11

⁶ Main groups are the Loimi, Ulo and Phami Akha. Each group is easily identified by their distinct traditional costumes.

⁷ The traditional village of Ban Apa in the Chiang Rai region, where I carried out fieldwork, consisted of a Loimi-Ulo mix, born out of a former relocation of two separate villages.

2.2 Akha People.

The Akha (divided over 320 villages) are known as the “khon bon doi”, the people of the mountaintops. They used to be the ‘khon pa’, specialists of the forests, where they hunted and gathered food and plants. Their preferred altitude is up to 1,500 meters (5,000 feet), which enables them to grow rice, corn, soybeans and raise livestock (pigs, chicken, ducks, goats, cattle, and water buffalo). They used to grow opium as an additional crop. Opium production probably started from the second half of the nineteenth century, as Akha planted opium in gaps in the forest, on limestone derived soils (Surgeon 205:128). Although opium cultivation might have been the main motive for government intervention and state demarcation, raising the subject now prominently, seemed undue. But this becomes questionable examining a news website titled:” Third Army opens operation center to eradicate poppy fields, to survey and operate in eight Northern provinces” (December 2012 issue of Chiang Mai News). Rights to land are considered traditional and established over many generations. Their traditional agricultural methods are called “slash-and-burn” or “swiddens”, which makes them leave their villages and clear new fields every few years. This type of agriculture has contributed to the Akha's semi-nomadic status, as villages move towards new farmland with each successive burn cycle. Newly arrived migrants, population growth and Thai lowland farmers looking for new upland fields, set pressures on land. New scientifically developed insights on ecology, new cultivation techniques and fertilizers and new restricting forestry laws, make the Akha change their old ways. They adopted new types of subsistence farming. Although primarily subsistence farmers, the Akha have long been involved in cash cropping and trade. A few decades ago cotton and opium poppies were the principal cash crops. More recent cash crops are chilies, soybeans, cabbages, coffee beans and tomatoes. Increasingly, the Akha find themselves in the business of tourism. Of all the hilltribe peoples, the Akha remain poorest and most deprived.

The number of Akha hilltribe people in Thailand is estimated between 69,000 (Pervé 2011:11) and 80,000 (IMPECT)⁸. The Greater “Golden Triangle” region is home to up to 2 million Akha (accurate numbers are not present), the vast majority of which live in China and are called Hani-Akha. The Akha are relatively new to Thailand, first arriving from Burma in

⁸ IMPECT, Chiang Mai-based organization of Inter Mountain Peoples Education and Culture in Thailand.

1903, but the numbers sharply increased in the 1960s due to deteriorating security and political and economic situation in the country. (Although earlier Akha migrations in 1860 are claimed. Grieger 2012:14).

Grünfeld (1982:18): *“The task of reconstructing the Akha past is formidable for they have no script and hence no written history. Instead their knowledge is preserved in more than 10,000 lines of poetry, which for centuries have been transmitted orally, generation by generation, along an unbroken chain of masters and pupils known as phima’s. The vast corpus of verses that they recite contains the wisdom of the Akha. It is composed in different periods and constantly added to. The repertoire of poems has no fixed order or overall design, but contains the totality of Akha traditions, “the Akha Way” or Akhazang. It spans almost the entire range of their experience, recording the exploits of their ancestors from the mists of time to recent generations, together with a mass of precepts and instructions on the right way to live”*.⁹

History of Akha¹⁰ is the story of a journey of repeated migrations from the second century B.C. when they left East-Tibetan mountains for China’s Yunnan province, where they supposedly split up and settled for many centuries and prospered. Disasters forced them to take refuge in the mountains some thirty generations ago in the thirteenth century, probably when Kublai Khan invaded China and crushed their state (Sturgeon 2005:44).¹¹ Ever since, the Akha have been driven at the mercy of stronger groups. Late nineteenth century under the conflicting influence of the two colonial powers, the British in Burma and the French in Indo-China, the Akha moved farther south¹² one branch into Burma and the other into Laos. The

⁹ Swedish linguist Hansson recorded and translated many verses allowing scholars like Von Geusau to trace the origins of Akha traditions.

¹⁰ The Akha have no written alphabet, it is a completely oral tradition. Many songs, some thousands of years old, tell the story of the worlds creation, its animals, birds and plants. The Akha believe writing things down would “fix the world in” and to them that means it would die. To the Akha, the world isn’t fixed in by writing things down, but rather formed of relationships and interrelationships. Their traditions and rituals are called *Dehvq Zahl Shil Zahl*, which means “to be the living materials”. AFECT manifest.

¹¹ Kublai Khan incorporated Yunnan into the Chinese empire where governors appointed by Beijing were ordered to civilize (“cook”), the “barbarians” and instruct them in proper techniques of agriculture. These groups were known as *shu*. During the Yuan Dynasty (1297-1368) two documents from the early fourteenth century, one from Marco Polo and one from the Chinese scholar Li Jing describe barbarian groups in Yunnan. Oral history was always passed on by Akha Phimas, who are experts in verbal memory, but every male is expected to learn the genealogy of his ancestors on the male side for the past 65 generations back to the earliest forefathers “when men and spirits lived in harmony” (Grünfeld 1975:22). Alting von Geusau composed the Akha genealogy until generation 59, but it was unfinished still posthumously published in 2003.

¹² Because they were graded most primitive, sheng (“raw”) of all barbarians, depending of their form of livelihood, unwilling to be civilized (Diamond 1995:100).

majority of Akha from Burma flowed into Thailand after World War II because of civil war. By the 1950s this country had become one of the last refuges in which the Akha and the other hill peoples could live in relative peace.

The Akha in Thailand, with eight subgroups, are members of the Tibeto-Burman ethno linguistic group (along with the Lahu, Lisu and Karen Pwo and Sgaw). The Hmong and Yao are from Austro-Thai descent. A 1977 survey by Chiang Mai's governmental Tribal Research Center (TRC, predecessor of TRI) labeled about seventy percent of the Akha in Thailand animist while the remaining thirty percent were said to be Buddhist (Kunstadter in Grieger 2012:15). Since the 1970s Akha have been converting to Christianity in increasing numbers resulting in an estimated five percent animist and ninety-five percent Christians or multi-religion practitioners.

Often the Akha are labeled as both distinct and special, as well as maladaptive and inflexible, by functional paradigms. In general, more recent researchers have now challenged and left the functionalist paradigm of societies as discrete bounded groups each with a distinctive culture. Ethnic group identity is variable in social relations and is not determined by a genetic component (Leach in Toyota 2003:304). Leach claimed that *“any particular individual can be thought of having a status position in several different social systems at the same time”*. He pointed to the importance of understanding folk taxonomies of local figurations of ethnic groups, because they help us to explore the multiplicity of ethnic identities and the cultural differences they mark in the region. The Thai-Burman-Chinese borderlands in this case have become known as a “showcase of constant shifting, changing ethnic boundaries, with uncertain memberships and markers” (Keyes and Lehman in Toyota 2003: ibid).

Moerman (1965) further turned anthropologists' attention to native peoples' own definition of group affiliation and speaks of: *“Folk constructs of ethnic labels and how they use them”* (Moerman in Toyota 2003: ibid). Toyota: *“Since then the tendency of ethnographic studies of the region has been to focus on self-ascriptive, collective definitions of ethnic identity. And this characterizes recent accounts of the Akha”*.

Specific research on Akha identity increasingly shows awareness of the dynamic nature and adaptability of their ethnic identification (Alting von Geusau 1983, Kammerer 1986, 1989 and Tooker 1988, 1992).

Akha-ness from an insider view is incredible flexible and open¹³. Important is the issue why people who claim to be one and the same in one context, are able to portray themselves as distinct from each other on the basis of ascribed ethnicity. Fundamental in this is Akhazang Cosmology or Cosmvision, the heart of the Akha cultural system. Hidden inside is the “indigenous notion of identity”. “Zang” is not a religion.¹⁴ Though it has oral narratives, morality, ethics and sacrifices, it has symbols, nor religious laws, no clergy, no sermons, no veneration of gods and no public services. ”Zang” contains mythology. Like in Western sense, there is no notion of faith or belief system. Still “zang”, for the Akha, is something eminently social, which puts it far away from individuality and Western notions of private belief. Authors like Alting von Geusau, Kammerer and Tooker, doing research on Akha, make accounts for the acceptance of shared meanings and the common understanding of the Akha cultural system¹⁵.

2.3 Akha Vision.

Akhazang, the Akha guiding philosophy is often called “animist”, though researchers explicit this because of the denotation “belief in spirits”. Alting von Geusau: *“Akhazang is a system of ritualized behavior formulated by Akha ancestors”*. The Akha must be considered as *“practicing ancestor worship combined with a rice fertility cult. Akhazang is a philosophy, way of life, series of customs, etiquette and ceremonies as well as traditions as handed down by the fathers. Akhazang does not promote feelings of guilt, like in many religions. Discreet behavior is highly esteemed, to do good is a main goal. There is a fundamental idea of*

¹³ Alting von Geusau (2000:134): “Several originally non-Akha groups entered the Akha “ethnic alliance system” these include poor marginalized Tai and Chinese, “mountain people” such as the Lahu, and “forest people” such as the Wa. These became Akha through attaching themselves to the ancestor system and accepting Akha customary law. The Akha call this *padaweu* , or “adoption” of a group or person into the Akha-alliance-system by inter-marriage or in the past, as *jakh’a* (bonded servant). This did not happen in a “class” context, however, but in a “family” context, leading to integration. There are particular places in the genealogical system where a group or person can attach him/herself”.

¹⁴ Generally religion is an organized collection of beliefs, cultural systems, and world views that relate humanity to the supernatural, and to spirituality. Many religions have narratives, symbols, and sacred histories that are intended to create meaning to life or traditionally to explain the origin of life or the Universe.

¹⁵ “Zang” is at the same time being pragmatic and practical and making no distinction between sacred and secular. “Akhazang” is: “an authorized Akha cultural system developed by a succession of sixty-four generations of patrilineal ancestors during their long journey from the Tibetan borderlands into China, Burma and Thailand” (Alting von Geusau in Toyota 2003:305). Kammerer (1986:67): “behavioral rules, including ritual procedures, and as orally transmitted ceremonial texts”.

compromise, flexibility and adaption. Akha Cosmology advises: compromise to make something acceptable in order to survive. Remain flexible so that you can adapt to majorities and other outside pressures”.

Akhazang, with its main ingredients: to do good and to follow the examples and ritualized behaviors of the ancestors, to be able to anticipate under new circumstances, has great impact on daily life in the village. First of all in the number of rituals that have to be performed according to the ancestors.

The Akha are leading in this:

How Akha was given “zang”.

Long ago every people, Shan, Thai, Chinese, Lahu and Akha were given their rituals by Apoe-mi-yeh, the creator. Everyone except the Akha man came to him, carrying a loosely woven basket. Returning home, much of the newly received “zang” was lost through the holes. Only the Akha man, with a tightly woven one returned home, without losing a single piece. And so the story explains why Akhazang is “numerous and difficult” (Kammerer 1990:280).

I encountered a display of twenty-one distinct Akha rituals in AFECT’s¹⁶ compound in Chiang Rai, some of them performed a number of times every year. They vary from a swing ceremony (*Yehl kuq aq poe*), to village gate rituals (*Lawl kahq duq-eu*), egg toasting festivities (*Qump shuivq Qump mil aq poeq*) and fertility rites (*Cehl Jil ce-eu*). Rituals and rules determine village life.

2.4 Akha Life and Akha Authorities.

After building the house in the proper way (with respect for the spirits), it is divided in two zones, the same way the world is divided into two zones, one for men and one for women. The village, the forest and its trails are man territory, the house and its surroundings and the fields are women space. The men usually cook the meat dishes for a meal, occasionally do some floor sweeping and animal feeding, but the women run the household. Each stage in the preparation and cooking of rice is the women’s domain, as is everything to do with cloth,

¹⁶ AFECT (Association for Akha Education and Culture in Thailand) based in Chiang Rai has a health section (AHA-MEC), a women project, elders project, a community-based tourism network (Akha-CRT), a media section (Hani People broadcasting Station China) and a newspaper (Fadoi Tribal). At the time of my visit Singaporese students were working on a computer center and Akha website.

cotton-picking, embroidery and mending garments. The village is formed by a number of patrilinear and patrilocal “extended families”¹⁷.

The *Dzoema* is the village founder-leader. His authority and influence in complex life and organization of the community are considerably and based on his knowledge of Akhazang. He presides over the council of elders (*Abaw-tsjhaw-maw*) who make the day-to-day decisions to solve problems and overcome crises. All the heads of families gather to agree on a course of action. The village is an egalitarian society where decisions are reached by mutual agreement, still there are some special functions. The *Dzoema*, responsible for initiating the ceremonies, leads and guides the village. His position passes from father to son. The *Buseh* is the formal leader who deals with authorities and government representatives, schoolteachers, policemen or forestry officials. The *Badzji*'s (blacksmith) role -partly practical, partly formal- is defined in Akhazang, he is masterbuilder and controller of ceremonial tools. The *Phima* is teacher, healer, reciter and specialist of Akhazang. He embodies the historical archive and is the spiritual leader, who is appointed by skill. *Neepa* is the name of the shaman, doctor, curer. The *Mizazayeh*, the “white skirted woman”, performs the annual ancestor ceremonies.

Grünfeld (1982:51): *Life in the village is a complex tissue of the unwritten rules of Akhazang. These govern the villagers' relations with each other, with animals, with the natural World and its powers; they specify the correct way of doing everything, from building a house to laying out a village, from planting the rice to serving a meal, from welcoming the new year to dealing with outside communities. For the Akha therefore there is no real distinction between the level of ritual or prescribed behavior and the level of secular daily life. They consider human activity to be intimately interrelated with the surrounding work, and their prime concern is that all such activities should be performed in the right way, at the right time and in the right place, so as to harmonize properly with the nature of the universe, and avoid disturbing its existing delicate balance”.*

The relationship between Thai and mountainpeople is troubled by a multitude of dichotomies. Incomprehension and lack of knowledge about the hilltribe people are the main reasons. The Thai nation-state, however wants to be representative of all peoples and takes an important initiative towards integration, the establishment of the Tribal Research Center (TRC). In the

¹⁷ Membership of “extended families is not based on communal living but on participation in the same ancestor-cult-center”. “Extended family” is a production group. Together the fields are being tended and harvested.

face of new political ideas and changing directions, giving priorities to different plans and the proclamation of new laws -in time- the mountain peoples' position changes dramatically. In the next chapter I will go to dichotomies, explain the government's role and look across the border to compare Thai and Chinese political dimensions (and their territorial representation).

3. The Akha and The Thai

"No Igoor!" (Thai denomination of Akha people). The woman shouts out loud in our faces. "Akha, Akha! We are Akha!" A young European couple is trying on a traditional Akha woman's headdress. I heard them talking about introducing the colorful hilltribe artifact as a gig on a party. They were bargaining with the Akha woman on the tourist night market, when this explosion of anger struck me and all the passersby. The sudden expression scared; fierceness of emotions showed great animosity. Showing such public resentment is rare, this may have emerged from frustration or from the ever existing dichotomies and (mountain peoples') precarious relationships with (the) outside (world).

-Fieldnote-

3.1 The Akha and the Thai

Thailand of the 1950s, as a safe haven where the Akha and the other hill peoples could live in relative peace, was not a situation that would last forever. The reason for that is the Thai nation-building project introduced in the 1950s, which revealed dichotomies that had been covered before and resulted from the existing lowland-highland contradistinctions. Amongst more, they concern frequently conflicting contrasts like: formal and governmental versus informal, individualism versus community and kinship, city versus village, culture versus nature, "Industria" and "Globalia" versus "Agraria". They also mark the differences between capitalism and subsistence, between the uses of script and print and oral transfer and those of modernity and tradition.

The necessity for positioning, demarcation and fixed settings, emerged during the second half of the nineteenth century¹⁸, when King Chulalongkorn constructed Thailand and Thai identity.¹⁹ As a reaction to western colonization of Burma and Indo-China, Bangkok elites

¹⁸ When King Chulalongkorn, threatened by British and French colonial endeavors, embarked on a series of "self-civilizing" projects in imitation of modern governments in the West, he abolished slavery, established property rights and instituted citizenship (Sturgeon 2005:49 and Anderson 1983:21 and 99-100).

¹⁹ By transforming an absolutist state into a nation-state (Wimmer 2002:75).

strengthened their territorial positions in late 19th century. The modern Thai nation-state was established by the return of Siamese elites, educated in Europe, who had developed ideas of territory, nation and race. The Thai race, “chat Thai”, was a new invented and imagined concept to gain legalized domination. The peoples of north, south and northeast Thailand, allied in dialects, mores and manners (but not identical), formed the fundament for mutually shared Thai-ness and Thai citizenship. The hilltribes of the north (the “*chao khao*”, McKinnon 2006:32), were excluded from “chat Thai”, but by fixating the borders around 1907, ended up as inhabitants of the new-established Thai state, based on race and ethnicity.

Before, in pre-modern Thailand, Tai kingdoms made a more fluid distinction in *Tai* and *Kha*, depending on the territory occupied. The peripheral areas (*Kha*), escaped control and domination by the urban power centers (*Tai*). Countrymen could freely move between spaces of citizenship and “wildness” as free servants or laborers with no bonds and no citizenship. Power and power politics played a subordinate role. In the new formed Thai state this changed: belonging and the right to become citizen were prominent. Exact and accurate definition became crucial in the new nation-state. Inclusion was defined by ethnicity and could be determined by physics, traditional costumes and linguistics. The nation-state demands hegemony, subordination and devotion of all citizens-subjects, situated and assembled inside a national territory, ruled by direct administration (Wimmer 2002:102). McKinnon (2005:37): “*The Thai citizen is marked by a distinct (if indefinable) Thai-ness, loyal to chat (race), sasana (religion) and mahakasat (King)*”²⁰. The citizen-subject is taught, through public propaganda, mass media and most importantly the school system, to self-regulate in accordance with that national subject position. Anderson (1983:101) calls this an example of *official nationalism*.

In chapter 4, I will point out that education and the school system (Feigenblatt et al. 2010 titled this “Weapons of Mass Assimilation” and Odochao et al. “Dominated Thinking”) play a crucial role in nation-building. On this point Gellner and Anderson state that standardized educational systems are a prerequisite for the emergence of a homogenized national identity. The Thai state, confronted with highlanders and their apparent “unmeltable ethnics” (Eriksen 1994:181) chooses for the more powerful options of strict control, compulsory schooling of

²⁰ The slogan “race, religion and King” was adapted from the British slogan “God and Country” by King Vajiravudh who also introduced the concept of the Thai nation and the concept of Thai race or “chat Thai” (see Renard 2000; Wyatt 1984).

Thai language and gradual citizenship. In state systems, in which subordinate minorities see themselves constantly controlled, and where they only have minimal influence and participation, resistance comes up, for people concerned are “not passive actors” (Siriphon 2006:65). The Greater “Golden triangle” region is dominated by lowlanders, the Han, the biggest and most complicated ethno-political construction of Khmer, Tai and Burmans. Since their emergence by migrating southward, hilltribes deliberately chose “disconnectedness”, by hiding in the mountains in homogeneous self-subsistence groups, with sporadic contacts with the outside world.

Because ethnic minority groups are not bounded, each having a distinctive culture, and living in secluded areas, close contacts and trade flows with the outside existed, on a non-dominant base. But the state has the desire to arrange and regulate: “*The state is the specialization and concentration of order maintenance*” (Gellner 2006:4) and “*The state is that institution or set of institutions specifically concerned with the enforcement of order*”. Weber (in Gellner 2006:3) defined the state: “*That agency within society which possesses the monopoly of legitimate violence*”. The modern nation-state favors the institutionalization of surveillance. Giddens (in Korff et al. 2006:72) argues that, in fact, the growth of state surveillance allows the reduction of violence in societies. Nation-building here is the combination of a project of cultural integration and of the institutionalization of supervision and control over resources (within the whole territory claimed by the state). It aims at inclusion and participation by collective representation in the national political system, resulting in recognition. Korff (2006:100): “If, following Taylor (1994), recognition is a major issue for minorities, then a public sphere is crucial for the integration of minorities”. But Thailand is a highly centralized society, where the impact of regionalist and minority movements on the political structure has remained very limited (2006:76-7). To play a political role on the national scale, requires going beyond the communal scale and uniting on an inter-ethnic and even supranational level (2006:85). Akha people, who live an isolated life in remote mountainvillages, who have hardly any contact with lowlanders nor adjacent hilltribes, lack the urge to engage in advocacy activities. The attitude is widespread among villagers that matters beyond the direct family level should be taken care of by others (2006:90).

Highlanders are confronted with State Welfare Programs, as well as Royal Agricultural Projects, which places them in an exceptional position, for they are governed by Thai law. Dominance, together with assimilation and state-autonomy, the threefold state strategy

administered to minorities, is enforced by law (Eriksen 1994:149).

The position of the hilltribes is unfavorable, their image is negative to many Thai, including officials. Government papers use the word “tribe” in official reports (Department of Public Welfare 1964:1), implicating racial and ethnic distinction between Thai and non-Thai, and having “a different”, aberrant language, culture, tradition and history. Hilltribe people are being associated with illicit agricultural methods causing ecological disasters, literacy, economic deprivation and backward hygienic. To this Sturgeon adds: “*Among hill groups, Akha were thought to have the most entrenched backwardness*” and “*..... Akha were close to hopeless in the realm of managing resources and becoming developed*” (Sturgeon 2005:202-3). Gellner (2006:65-6), in the context of nations and nationalism, adds to this: “*Failure to communicate, such as arises between entrants from an alien culture into an industrializing area, is one form of entropy-inhibition (though one which can often easily be overcome in a generation or so); but the obverse does not hold, and not all entropy-inhibitions are due to a mere failure to communicate. Those who are not due to a mere communication failure, and are remediable neither by assimilation into the dominant pool, nor by the creation of a new independent pool using the native medium of entrants, are correspondingly more tragic. They constitute a problem whose solution is not yet in sight, and which may well be one of the gravest issues that industrial society has to face*”.

Abjection is the general Thai reaction and connection is avoided. The mutual demarcation process is that of “contrasting” (Us-Them relationship) or “dichotomization” (Eidheim in Eriksen 1994:33). For interethnic interaction to take place at all, there must be some mutual recognition, inherent in the process of communicating cultural differences, otherwise ethnic identity will necessarily be neglected and undercommunicated in a situation of interaction. Such acknowledgement of differences can be labeled “matching” (We-You kind of relationship) or “complementarisation”, otherwise “undercommunication” and stereotyping (the use of ethnic stigma like primitive, backward and dirty) will be the result, and ethnic incorporation and assimilation will never take place. To avoid this, an important new initiative was taken by the Thai government, supported by the US, to promote mutual understanding and generate knowledge about the unknown northern territories and its inhabitants, the installation of the Tribal Research Center (TRC).

3.2 Tribal Research Center (TRC) and Tribal Research Institute (TRI).

In 1965 the inauguration of the *Tribal Research Center (TRC)* took place, under the auspices of the Ministry of the Interior²¹. It was actually the convergence of the needs and interests of three parties, namely the Thai state, foreign funding agencies and foreign academicians, who believed in the “applied research” paradigm (Buadaeng 2006:360), presenting instant solutions for urgent problems as they are, opium cultivation by hilltribe people and their susceptibility to communist mobilization. As explained in a 1965 USAID document cited by Wakin (1992:118): “Thailand is of enormous strategic importanceandThailand is formally committed to the side of the Free World despite its perilous location”.

Buadaeng (2006:360): “TRC was created in the specific cold war situation, when very few research institutions in conducting ethnic studies existed. The Thai state with the support from the US had seen the hilltribes to be increasing threads or “problems” for Thai society because of their opium cultivation and susceptibility to communist mobilization, so they adopted the TRC as a research and development tool to deal with the hilltribe problems”. It is at the time that “aid for development” was provided to the Third World by US agencies on the assumption, widely accepted that “if poor countries were not rescued from their poverty, they would succumb to communism” (Escobar in Buadaeng 2006:361).

Within this changing context all kinds of initiatives were made: a Welfare committee (resolving in the Department of Public Welfare, DPW) for remote areas and a Border Patrol Police (B.P.P.) establishing schools and distributing medical and agricultural equipment. The move to focus on hill peoples was also due to the policy on opium cultivation, outlined by the United Nations.²² A survey report by Manndorff (1967:535) recommended: intensification of settlement project activities, mobile development workers and the establishment of a Tribal Research Centre located in Chiang Mai. Professor Geddes, a New Zealander was responsible for refining the plan. He pointed out foreign anthropologists to conduct the studies. Each would be linked to a local national, who should first act as field assistant and then be given

²¹ As there were few professional researchers conducting research, that would lead to better understanding of the situation of the hilltribes, highland farming and integration of hilltribes, a first comprehensive and systematic survey was conducted by Austrian social anthropologist Manndorff in 1961-62.

²² “Although, on the international level, the United Nations organized the first meeting on drugs in an attempt to reduce opium cultivation since 1946, the opium ban in Thailand was only enforced in 1958 by General Sarit Thanarat, who came into power by a staged coup d’état” (Buadaeng 2006:362). Opium cultivation was largely reduced in 1984.

the opportunity for postgraduate study in anthropology. Each couple would be studying a specific tribe.

The TRC was thus the first official center to coordinate socio-economic studies in Thailand on northern hilltribes. Until 1971 (Phase I of TRC) gathering information on hilltribe communities was the main goal. Next (Phase II), studying agriculture and land use for the Royal Forestry Department and the Royal Project, were main goals from 1972-1983. State politics urged TRC to focus on HIV/AIDS, prostitution and labour (Phase III) from 1984-1995. In the early 1990s, most highland development projects were cancelled, because their utmost goal, to reduce opium cultivation and provide alternatives, was reached. Above all, communist activities had stopped since the 1980s: national and international security was no longer threatened. The hilltribe problem had been reduced to a social-economic one. In 1993, the TRC (Tribal Research Center) transformed to TRI (Tribal Research Institute), and was governed by the Ministry for Labour and Social Welfare. The hilltribes were to be seen as one among many groups of disadvantaged people in the northern and eastern rural regions of Thailand. TRI's role had changed from that of conducting basic and applied research among each hilltribe, to research assisting the national integration policy.

Meanwhile, ethnic organizations and communities had conducted their own research with the help of foreign funds, to serve their own development activities.

Buadaeng notes that TRI's role and achievement, as an institute, which was set up to serve the government's policy and implementation, deferred from those of other academic institutions and ethnic organizations in two main areas, namely the construction of the hilltribes' discourses in research and development (Buadaeng 2006:375-6). First, before the official term of "hilltribes" was used, many ethnic groups were called *chon chat* (nationality) and *chat* (nation) (Boonchuay 1950; 1962).

With the set up of Hill Tribe Welfare Committee by the state in 1959 the official definition of hilltribes was designed to include only nine hilltribe groups, Karen, Hmong, Lahu, Akha, Thin, Khamu, Lisu, Mien and Lua. They were portrayed in a negative way in the report of the first Socio-Economic Survey (conducted by Thai government and supervised by foreign anthropologists). Two points were always repeated: that the hilltribes were people, who were a problem to Thailand, and by nature, were totally different from Thai lowlanders and from each other (Manndorff 1967:534). According to the report: "These tribesmen differ considerably from the Thai population in their ethnic, linguistic and cultural characteristics. The hilltribes present a many-sided problem to the Thai government, on general grounds of public

policy and welfare (ibid.:4). The Thai, as a typical lowland population, have never exhibited any particular interest in settling in or developing the mountains through their 800 years of history in this country. As a consequence, the mountains have lain open to the immigration of peoples, who differ considerably in their ethnic and cultural characteristics from the Thai lowland population (ibid.:4).there are those tribes who have come into Thailand rather recently, like the Meo and Yao, the Lisu, Lahu and Akha. They definitely do not show any characteristic trend to assimilate with the Thai people or with other tribes, nor are they inclined to move from their mountain areas to lower regions (ibid.:13). Slash and burn agriculture is the economic foundation of hill tribes under discussion..... Evidently many of the problems which the hill tribes cause in this country -such as destruction of forests, opium growing, border insecurity, difficulties of administration and control- are to some extent connected with this very fact” (ibid.:14).

Buadaeng (2006:377): *“The term “hilltribes problems”, which was used to refer to the problems caused by the hill tribes namely insurgency operation, opium growing and trading, and forest destruction, had become an official discourse as it had been widely used in text books, newspapers and official reports and documents. The TRC/TRI’s research and development work focusing on only nine tribes, and not some other groups which also live in the highlands of Northern Thailand such as the Yunnanese, the Shan etc., had confirmed the definition of hill tribes as those who were deemed to have problems and thus needed more government attention and intervention”.*

As a government research agency, the TRI seemed to represent the government towards the hilltribe peoples, instead of the reverse, as was the original wish of Geddes, TRC’s first advisor and founder. Prasit and Panadda (2005:216) cited examples of terms with bad connotations on the hill tribes and their practices such as “*rai luan loi*” or shifting cultivation, “*kan nab thue phi*” or spirit worshipping. These terms were continuously used by the TRI amidst the criticism from highland ethnic organizations and communities, which, especially from the 1990s onward, began to use other terms to imply a non-biased understanding on their practices such as “*rai mun wien*” or rotational cultivation or “*rabob kwam chue*”, belief system. Also, the TRI was reluctant to officially change the terms they used to call hill tribes, which were often perceived as derogatory by the people designated, to autonyms or terms used by hill peoples to call themselves. For example, they continued to use the terms Meo, Musur, Igoor instead of Hmong, Lahu and Akha, respectively, which are increasingly used by academic and ethnic organizations and communities and the media.

Secondly (Buadaeng on development), the report recommended, among others, legalization of tribal communities and land granted. Eversince, many communities' claims, for Thai citizenship and for land use rights, have continued. TRI had in fact not seriously been developed to help tribal villagers solve the problems.²³ TRI's success was in giving academic advise and service to scholars, by providing consultation and information.

In the last three decades many institutions attached to universities have been set up, for instance at Mahidol University and Sirindhorn Anthropology center, both in Bangkok. Some young ethnic people have studied in colleges like the Social Research Institute and the Faculty of Social Sciences in Chiang Mai and return to conduct research in ethnic communities. The current trend in approaching ethnic studies is to go beyond the role of advanced researcher (Geddes' term), who represents the people, but to facilitate, encourage and empower ethnic people and communities to conduct their own research, to disseminate the result, and push forward for policy alternatives. Thailand's Research Fund supported projects, when local communities benefitted. Recent research also goes beyond studying a distinct community or tribe, but focuses on ethnic relations and comparison across locations and nations (multisited and supranational). In 2002 TRI was quietly terminated, its researchers and library dispersed. Reasons for its termination may be well explained by an official's words: "there is no need for further study on the hilltribes as they are now considered to have become Thai; thus "*chao khao*", the term for hilltribes which can be translated as "other people", becomes "*chao rao*" or "our people" (The Nation April 13, 2004). This passes over remaining problems such as the forest destruction by hilltribes and their poor livelihood conditions. Many researchers heavily regretted closure of TRI.

Dr. Pranit, who was a researcher of former TRI for almost twenty years, has been amongst my main informants and introduced me into the realm of the urban hilltribes, the slums of Chiang Mai. Now the city is where modern hilltribes, among them the Akha people, dwell.

One of the main reasons for the major urban migration flow, initiated some thirty years ago by pioneers, was the changed situation in the traditional villages, on the "bon doi", the top of the mountains.

²³ Some individual researchers at TRI started to work closely with ethnic NGO's and ethnic communities and criticized government policy. Chupinit (1989) connected opium reduction and heroin use and opposed relocation policy (Chupinit 1996). Somphob (1995) argued hilltribe land rights. Thawit et al. (1997) reported urban migration resulting from government restrictions.

3.3 Land Use and State-control.

Since Phase II (1972-83) in TRI-supported government policy for landuse, Royal Projects were implemented to grow alternative crops for opium cultivation and start reforestation (which became a major project by the 1990s). This ended free movement for all the hilltribes practicing slash-and-burn agriculture, except for the rice terracing Thais and Karen. Main reason is the environmental restrictions ordered by officials of the Royal Forestry department (RFD), banning slash-and-burning, logging and gathering of wood products , which practices they consider undesirable to the environment. Many Akha were forced to relocate. This put their world upside down.

A wonderful view.

“Khun Paul, you told me you enjoy the wonderful view of the opposite hilltops. Clearly, the view is wonderful, but so sour to us. You see the buildings near the hilltop? They belong to the Royal Forestry Department. This hilltop used to be our residence. This is where Ban Apa was situated before we were forced to relocate. We lost the hill, were we lived for decades, and where my wife and almost all the people of the village were born. Now we live on an unfavorable site and it takes hours on foot to reach our farming fields. We can hardly survive here”.

-Fieldnotes-

Huang (2005:1) writes about slash-and-burn cultivation: “*Scholars have debated its viability and environmentally friendliness in rainforest regions (Anderson 1993; Bates 2001; Fox 2001; Geertz 1963; Young 1998) and find it not damaging and critical for the survival of marginal tribal cultures*”. Others point to negative effects in soil erosion, destruction of vegetation, and as wasteful of natural resources. Disparate views exist and it comes down to who is in the position of decision-making: farmers, conservationists or economic development officials. Sustainability is the keyword (and used by all parties involved). At both local and national level the dilemma of forestry is related to conflicts of interest management or conservation and people’s livelihood. The paradigm is shifting from a sustainable yield as a main goal, to people-centered sustainable forest management.

As the Golden Triangle Region is both ethnically (as we have seen already) and biologically diverse (as I will explain), the pairing of the two in governmental responses is vital. Now, I will point out that governmental decision-making (to ethnics and biology) can differ widely in the region and can have immediate consequences for socio-cultural opportunities for peoples.

In the Golden Triangle a vertical human adaptation pattern exists. Thais and Shans farm rice paddies for subsistence in the basins, and Karen construct rice terraces in the valleys above. Further up the slopes are the Lisu, Wa, Miao (also called Hmong or Meo), and Yao (or Mien), who occupy the middle hills, where they plant seasonal crops such as dry rice, yams, corn, and sweet potatoes. They have a simple agricultural technology, and maintain short-term fallowing cycles with stable yields. Opium growth requires high elevations, about 1,000 meters above sea level, and historically this was one reason some of these groups maintained poppy fields at high elevations. At a still higher elevation are slash-and-burn agriculturalists: the Akha and Lahu, who rely on hunting to supplement their hill rice and other subsistence crops (Anderson 1993; Geddes 1976; Kunstadter 1983; Lewis and Lewis 1984; Young 1962 in Huang 2005:2). In places where low levels of productivity exist, opium used to be an attractive economic alternative. By 1980s opium production, environmental degradation as well as poverty (resulting in disloyalty to the state and receptivity for communist mobilization), was countered by Thai and international agencies by developing economically viable substitute cultivars, environmentally sustainable and locally acceptable. With limited success; poverty and environmental degradation persist (Geddes 1983).

Since 1984, increased state control on northern minority groups was regarded as necessary. Due to devastating floodings (1988), which were regarded to be the result of deforestation in the upper watersheds, conservation became the central forest management objective. The National Logging Ban of 1989 forbade logging in all the natural forests (Hares 2009:382). With it, the policy focus transferred towards community-based management (Poffenberger in Hares 2009: *ibid*). The result was that many activities in natural forests became illegal, collection of forest products prohibited by law. Ganjanapan suggests that forest policy had an underlying aim: controlling upland groups (Ganjanapan in Hares 2009:384). *“It can even be argued that strict restrictions on land use are also used as a means to pressure the people to move”* (Buergin in Hares 2009: *ibid*).

With the logging ban, the percentage of area designated for conservation almost doubled to 25 percent. Moreover forest policy defined that land with a slope of 35 percent or more could not be claimed by land-use certificates. This meant firm control, relocating settlements and halting forest clearing, with the emphasis on halting slash-and-burn cultivation. Because of strong resistance against relocations, alternative means of livelihood outside the protected forest were sought (Thai Forestry Sector Master Plan 1993).

For the period 2002-2006 people's participation and responsibility was promoted as a strategy

of increasing sustainability, a result of the Constitution of 1997. But lack of citizenship, a problem still acute among minority groups, that I will present at the end of this chapter, makes official inclusion in community forestry activities impossible for stateless people, who will almost automatically fall back into illegal swiddening activities.

Lack of information on hilltribe lifestyle and customs, due to the closing down of TRI, may have been an important reason for not being able to change Akha's ascribed initial bad image. Their non-script dealings and almost complete absence of decent communicational skills and contacts with the outside world (officials, media, the public, the Thai, politics), may have been debit.²⁴

3.4 Citizenship.

Now that we have encountered the main reasons for Akha's urban migration (politics on land use and ecology), we will face a related problem, the lack of citizenship.²⁵ (Sturgeon, 2005:13-4): *"People sense uneasy that government efforts are pushing them out of the hills to work in towns, where, with a hilltribe ID card, they cannot own a house or work, at any but low-end jobs"*.²⁶ The Thai government became aware of this problem. In 1956 the government initiates a Household Registration for all citizens and makes an important step forward to assimilation of so-called entropy-resistant groups (Gellner 2006:63 and 65-6). But highlanders can only obtain a "Temporary Household Registration" by possessing special "hilltribe identification-cards" (Suppachai 1999:3), which gravely restricts free movement.²⁷ *"Issued with temporary registration papers and cards identifying them as non-Thai, highland people were also under constant threat of expulsion"*(McKinnon 2006:38). Obtaining ID-cards becomes crucial for surviving in the modern era. Still many people of the minority groups lack Thai citizenship. *"In 1999, the government designated as aliens all hilltribe*

²⁴ Korff et al. (2006:87) argues, that some hilltribe groups are motivated to engage in the advocacy of their interests whereas among other ethnic groups such motivation is rather small. Some do not want leaders and have no hierarchical structure.

²⁵ The number of people without citizenship in Thailand is estimated between 900,000 (UNESCO's UNHCR 06/01/2011) and 2 million (International Justice Mission 11/12/2012), which means that among other things, they cannot graduate from school, cannot achieve an official degree or certificate, cannot travel and cannot get a legal job (illegal jobs are not paid properly, one cannot take legal action against abuse), and one cannot use public transportation, own land or lend money.

²⁶ In the 1990s, there were a number of coalitions of upland farmers, most notably the Assembly of the Poor, which organized large demonstrations and protests in front of government offices to demand security of access to land and trees (Pinkaw, Baker, in Sturgeon 2005:221).

²⁷ These cards are called Yellow 13 Digid ID cards.

people without citizenship papers” (McKinnon 2006:ibid). After a march for rights by activist organizations (“Assembly of the Poor”) authorities gave in and registered many more, adding an additional number. Several reasons contribute to the problem of incomplete registry: many uplanders live in remote areas, some of them have been unwilling to become Thai citizens, and the governments requirement for the proof of residence of the paternal grandfather, has made it difficult for all people to apply (Renard in Hares 2009:385). After 2006 many ID cards, only granting gradual citizenship, were obtained. Many of these cards still prohibit traveling. Although she lived in the village for many years already, the lady of the Akha house where I stayed in the mountains, could not leave the village to go to the nearby market. ID cards are checked by the police at numerous roadblocks in the Northern provinces.

Moreover, continuous illegal immigration from neighboring countries (mostly Karen and Shan from Myanmar), made the government reluctant to grant citizenship to the upland minorities. A new discourse was created: the new non-Thai hilltribes. Refugees from abroad or illegal immigrants were excluded and immobilized. While citizenship and included mobility is granted for the group first mentioned, the latter has no right to enter, nor travel, and there is no opportunity to disappear in the “wilds” of the forest. Only opportunity for them is illegality and invisibility beyond the state’s gaze. Resolving in the city is what remains. This group has its own illegal wayfaring.

Nevertheless, the government identified the need to settle the migrating upland groups for improved control and to integrate them into society. Therefore, residence-permits and hilltribe ID cards were permitted as the first step to citizenship. These documents, however, provided no land rights for their bearers and labeled them as not-true Thai, versus true Thai citizens (McKinnon 2006:40).

Thus, relocated from the homegrounds and provided with (gradual) citizenship, many people stream into the city. In the cities the Akha lack “cityskills”. They are the “*khon pa*”, specialists of the forest, instead of “*khon muang*” citydwellers, and have to learn and gather experiences first. They cannot read and write, do not master the Thai language, are seldom used to wage-labour and end up in the slums, where they start to live permanently. They lack kinship networks, safety of Akhazang and the protection of the spirits. Entering urban realms is disruptive. Detachment lurks.

In the next chapter I explain peoples citywayfaring, by highlighting economics, education and religion and inquire into pioneers’ historic wayfaring in the slums of Chiang Mai City, before I argue newly acquired life strategies.

4. Citylife

Citylife for the hilltribe people is directly linked with earning money and making a living, both economic activities. Lack of skills in an urban environment, makes these engagements struggleful and troublesome. To overcome arrears, education can serve as an instrument to enlarge economic chances. Questionable is whether the school system is sufficiently equipped, for dealing with existing dichotomies between majorities and minorities in the Thai state. Can it decompose existing social inequalities? To find out, I made my way into the slums of Chiang Mai, where most of the urban hilltribe people live. Multiple manifestations of religious hilltribe activities can be observed in the city, as well. They may be used as instruments for positioning and survival, as I will point out at the end of the chapter. I will start with economics.

4.1 Economics

Hilltribe people in the city seem to live an invisible life. There is only one place, where they expose themselves in public. This is the markets. Biggest and most well-known market, frequented by tourists and foreigners, is called the Nightmarket.

At the end of the afternoon activity starts at Chang Klan Road. A crew of workfolks transport dozens of mobile stalls to their market destination. From the small Sois (sidestreets) on the northside of Soi McDonalds, the mobile stalls are being pushed or pulled by motorized transport laborers. They take care of strict positioning by number on Chang Klan Road, forming a small crossing along Loi Kroh Road and Soi McDonald. As an afternoon ritual, this elaborate activity takes place every day. Every night many hilltribe businesspeople occupy the stalls on both sides of the streets and form the daily shopping paradise for tourists. Adjacent to Chang Klan Road, three big roofed markets are situated, on both sides of the street, the Nightbazaar, Kasorn an JJ market. Additional, there is a big market space for temporary stalls, flanked by restaurants and specialized shops, called Anusarn (among them Akha-run shops like the Phing Phing Sisters' ethnic handicraft shop). A new Akha element here is the Doi Chaang Coffee shop, a tiny pearl in a huge Akha owned coffee chain.

In this big mix of nighttime stalls and shops, only one group of hilltribes has made themselves clearly visible, so that they can be easily recognized: The Akha people (women) in their traditional costumes and surrounding themselves with the special sound of toads croaking. As the ultimate wayfarers of the nightmarkets, they practice their selling and bargaining skills every night, without hesitation. They carry Akha (and other hilltribe) handicraft products and display commodified Akha-ness. They are recognizable participants, loved and hated by tourists at the same time.

Bucha.

Bucha is the name of a souvenir seller at the Nightmarket. She carries the usual stuff, bracelets, toad instruments, bags with intricately embroidered Akha patterns, and hats. She wears three hats at a time. When I ask her about that, she explains: "You see, I am Akha, but I can wear the others just the same. All the hilltribes are one family, we face the same problems". I ask her about the invariable sound of toads croaking that encircle Akha roads: "I have never seen you selling that piece". "No, but we sell, and to that, it is our signature. With it, we never tire". She smiled and took her time to teach me some Akha words. Never tried to sell anything. She'd already noticed the artifacts I carried around shoulder and pulse, coming from the right people.

-Fieldnote-

There is another market where hilltribe people are visible and recognized by the products they sell, handicraft artifacts in the brightest colors, mostly bags embroidered in all sizes and patterns, patchwork and jewelry. Costumes and headdresses or hats, are popular exotic features here. This is the Sunday market near Thapae Gate and Square, the heart of Chang Mai City. Every weekend tourists frequent this more "sophisticated" Walking Market, that also includes Ratchadamnoen Road, Chang Mai's main street. This is a clean modelmarket, showing Thailand's modern image. Here modern stall owners work on their notebooks in the quiet hours, read their I-phone info's and show no particular hilltribe features, they display the image of just one big hilltribe family. During weekdays they have a regular job. This high-end weekend market is extra (big) business. The last big market, where hilltribe people do business, is the huge daily Warorotmarket in the northeastern riverside area. This is mainly a food and flower market. There is one exception to the rule of invisibility.

In a sidestreet leading to Thapae central square, I discovered another small roofed regular market manned by hilltribewomen. From the clothes they wear and the products they sell, I could distinguish them all being from the Hmong tribe. They wore colorful skirts with distinct patterns. To study the hilltribes, is also to study their distinct patterns in costume decoration.

I learned from pattern books, in ethnic shops or handicraftshops, like BPP's (Border Patrol Police). Inside their building I read the inscription on a plaque:

“Established according to the King's wish in 1965. The King donated 10,000 baht from his own wealth to make a start and opened the hilltribe handicraft shop in 1972 himself. The BPP works to promote the sale of hilltribe handicraft products from manufacturing workplaces”. Reinforcing the hilltribe economies is one face of the Border Patrol Police's “development for security” programs in the remote areas of northern Thailand. Here they display themselves as development welfare workers. Other aims are expanding state surveillance and instilling national loyalty among the border populations.²⁸

I think the reason for non-Akha hilltribes to stay low profile is, that they feel ashamed working in the streets. To have a shop is respectable, it needs planning, discipline and structure. Selling bracelets at the market, some respondents told me, is like begging. The Akha, deprived and uneducated as they are in many cases, do not seem to bother and transform their hilltribe-ness in proudly commodifying their colorful Akha-ness. They are a familiar image in the nightly Citystreets of Chiang Mai and Chiang Rai. Tourist-centered activities are an important Akha issue. Working in the tourist industry remains a major income source for Akha people in the city, as well as in the countryside. In the village, extra income is generated by the accommodation of tourists, delivered by touragencies, who are attracted to trekkings, are eco-minded and love village atmosphere. Selling handicraft products remains big business to them. The city is the main concentration center for products. Many shops have entered the city. Rural homemade handicrafts flow to these shops.

Economic hilltribe behavior in the city reflects the lowland-highland dichotomy and can be further analyzed by using “Agraria, Industria and Globalia”-concepts. Traditional hilltribe people, dwelling in the remote villages in the mountains, live in an agricultural society, Agraria. Daily life is dependent on the agricultural calendar, religion and in the case of the Akha, Akhazang, is the major meaningful framework, ruling over planting and harvesting, building houses, killing animals and raising offspring, life and death, in short: all human behavior in time and place. In Agraria, illiterate parents pass on knowledge to their children, basic necessities are scarce and daily rhythm is determined by day length. Now going down

²⁸ The Thai Border Patrol Police was organized in the 1950s with assistance from the United States Central Intelligence Agency. Although technically part of the Royal Thai Police, the BPP has always enjoyed a great deal of autonomy within the national headquarters as well as in its multifaceted field operations. The royal family was a principal patron of the organization. This traditional relationship benefited both the palace and its paramilitary protectors. Many BPP commanders were former army officers.

from the mountains is like entering a new and unknown world, *Industria*. Industrial society relies on sustained and perpetual growth, on expected and continuous improvement (Gellner 1983:22). Compared with agrarian society, *Industria* is mobile and egalitarian, professions are specialized and the school system standardized. Literacy is universal and nature is domesticated. This is the real-life dichotomy urban hilltribe people experience. In *Globalia*, the age of globalization and crossborder flows, everything is even more accelerated and time-space compressed. Nature, representing the hilltribe villagers' wealth, is mere a commodity for making profits. This is a world of friction, a hard lesson, to be learned every day. In this world of difference hilltribe people -almost invisibly and silently- try to make a living.

Indistinct modern hilltribe people have a variety of jobs, most of them low-end jobs, with no education needed, in transport or construction, roadwork or restaurant kitchens. Many try to run a business. The kind of shops that hilltribe people own, in the Chiang Mai City area, are in most cases bars, clothes shops, fruit and food stands and souvenir shops. Many make handicraft products in their homes and sell them on markets. In the night circuit most of them are managed by Thai. Even when the real owner is hilltribe. Thai people are appointed for dealing with police or other government officials. Most of the hilltribe entrepreneurs lack education and are not confident in dealing with the Thai. A Thai manager is needed in a business or shop. Hence, the state failed to standardize. The process of *Industria* in Thailand is incomplete. The task the educational system in *Industria* is entrusted, is to turn out worthy, loyal and competent members of the total society (Gellner 1993:63). Language is a problem, since many hilltribes learned only basic Thai in the village schools or not at all. This is not sufficient to be successful in *Industria*. Hilltribe businessmen prefer to deal with their own kin or tribesmen. They will associate with their own people only. Even when they have already lived in the city for a long time and are wealthy and successful, they have their own life styles. Communication problems remain common.

Working as a tourist guide for Thai-run companies, is a popular economic hilltribe activity. A thorough knowledge of foreign languages is required, some have. This enables them to work in the tourist business and yield a fixed salary and the chance of tips. Here some young generation hilltribe members surpass *Industria* and achieve *Globalia* skills, foreign languages, like English, Japanese and Chinese, by self-learning. More and more hilltribe girls are attracted to the big city to work as a bargirl. They consider it an easy way to make money or maybe see this as a gateway to a better and more prosperous life, by taking chances to marry a

foreigner or rich Thai. Grieger (2012) investigated Akha barboys' activities in Chiang Mai.²⁹ Many hilltribe men and women work in the numerous massage shops, that are so common in Thailand's cities. Here, they rival with an enormous potential of poor Isan girls (from the eastern provinces), who seek their deal of improvement in the big cities as well, to support their families and nourish their children in the villages. Others study for certificates and work in Spa's of high-end hotels, part-time for insurance companies, and in coffeeshops or restaurants. I met hilltribe people who combined up to four jobs.

Some work in hilltribe foundations or western NGO's and will be given educational opportunities in schools and universities, if they are lucky. After graduation, they will work full time for the foundation and have a steady job. Hilltribe people going to university, have been specially selected and granted scholarship by NGO's or private organizations or persons. One of the few Akha people, who graduated on university is Mister Lee. I met him. His story is remarkable and brings important effects for a big Akha community.

The story of Mister Lee.

Lee Ayu Chuepa, founder of Akha Ama Coffee, a fair-trade coffee, runs a cooperative business with 32 other families. Lee was born and raised in Mae Chan Tai in Chiang Rai, an Akha village at an altitude of 1,500 meters. "I had never been to the city as a kid", he says, "but I told my parents I wanted to study". First he studied in a temple in Lamphun, where he learned to speak Thai and some English. He turned out to be a smart pupil and was sent to university, financially supported by IMPECT, (Inter Mountain Peoples Education and Culture in Thailand Association). "It was the challenge of my life. I had to support myself, had to confront language barriers, and integrate into a bigger kind of society". Lee became a member of various groups and organizations in Chiang Mai, including UNICEF. "I wanted to do something for society, but I didn't know what". He went to study English at Chiang Mai Rajabhat University, the first ever achieving this from his village. He started to work as a staff member of Child's Dream Foundation, an international NGO. But Lee had a dream of his own, and after receiving a social entrepreneurship grant he started Akha Ama Coffee in 2010. The idea was to support the farmers of his village, because he knew they were not receiving a fair price for their coffee. He also wanted to change monocropping, demanded by the big companies. "Monocropping is dangerous. Price fall makes the farmer suffer, they should better have multiple crops all year round. The farmers were working 365 days a year, still had no money. They lacked negotiation skills in contacts with city traders. My parents lived just by nature, they didn't even understand the concept of money. Still they needed money, when

²⁹ Like myself, he finds extraordinarily little ethnographic data on the urban Akha. "I read everything I could about the Akha to try to understand their lives and culture and apply those findings to my study. However, much of the data was simply old or irrelevant which made cultural explanations appropriate or difficult. [data] has limited relevance on my respondents' lives today". He notes that: "Further, the literature on the Akha is quite discrete and largely does not address sexual issues. Much of the literature focuses on Akhazang, belief systems, and identity" (Grieger 2012:19). This is where I largely agree with him.

the Akha children were ordered by law to have primary school basic education and school fees had to be paid for. Farmers needed hard cash". His goal became to give all the children a better education, so family economy strengthened. Now sustainable agriculture and multiple crop farming (they interplant the coffee with peach, plums, persimmon, rice and many different vegetables), have generated a good income for his village. Lee helped to enhance production skills, bought coffee processing machines and marketed the coffee. "When I go back home now I see people smiling, kids playing. If we relied on just selling the cherry coffee bean to middlemen we got 15 baht a kilo (0,40 euro), if we roast it ourselves we can get 500-1,000 baht (12,50-25,00 euro). We sell for 450". He is a hilltribe role model now.

Here we see an example of a former member of Agraria, entering Industria via generic training, becoming an entrepreneur, producing commodity and money flows in Globalia, and returning his success in reinforcing and reeducating his village members (and kin) in Agraria. More successtories exist, hilltribe people who succeed by using special qualities, making smart moves, having creative ideas, but they are exceptions. These stories of successful hilltribe people lead us to the role education plays in hilltribes' lives.

4.2 Education, Learning and the School System.

With the historical Thai lowland-highland dichotomy, other contrapositions are incorporated, such as city versus nature, open society versus closed and modernity versus tradition. Over the last decades this has had repercussions for the different Thai minorities entering from Agraria into Industria and Globalia. The lowlanders entrained with new developments, whereas hilltribe communities, by closing up and retreating from society, remained ignorant of the powershift taking place in Industria. People coming down from the hilltops, streaming in the cities, passed over Industria and were confronted with the new standards and practices in Globalia.³⁰

They missed the *"Vision of a society which has become dependent on both cognitive and economic growth"* (Gellner 1983:23), ever-growing and ever-progressing, a society of perpetual growth. *"Industrial society is the only society ever to live by and rely on sustained*

³⁰ In his lectures in the Globalization Course on Utrecht University October 2012, Dr. Raven expressed his "Raven Thesis", in which he highlights the mechanisms of modernization on a global level: in Globalia, market fundamentalism rules in a network dependent knowledge and service economy, where ecological crisis is impending. Altogether, a risk society, where hilltribe people feel alien.

and perpetual growth, on an expected and continuous improvement” (Gellner 1983:22).

Compared with agrarian society, which is static with a nature based rhythm and in many cases hierarchical authority, this society is mobile and egalitarian.

Any kind of function needs a specialist, which has great implications for school education in Industria. Here Gellner finds an interesting paradox: although specialization is the ultimate goal, major part of training in industrial society, consists of generic training. The educational system is the most universally standardized (Gellner 1983:26). This is so different from the one-to-one or inter-community training, that is practiced in Agraria, where communities only need few specialists, and skills are passed from father to son, mother to daughter. In Industria, exo-training is the magic word and exo-socialization, the production and reproduction of men outside the local unit, the norm.

Here is the point, where Gellner links state and culture, because from this moment on, man is committed to industrial society (based on cumulative science and technology), and cultural (school-transmitted) homogeneity is demanded. This pushes a nation to become a nation-state. For the Akha, who never embarked on this train, this is an existential threat. They are figuratively from another era. Even the two great innovations of most agrarian populations, in agrarian age, they lack: centralized government and the discovery of writing.

Literacy and numerical, technical and general sophistication are prerequisites for Industria. Members must be mobile, possess generic training, must communicate constantly along distant lines, and be explicit, while they depend on written messages. Replaceable individuals are needed and produced by an educational infrastructure, the state wants and provides. The state is strong enough to control this function, which is crucial for the state’s economic emerging. This notion is alien to the illiterate, kinship-based, traditional Akhapeople, guided by Akhazang. Thai law made education mandatory in 1978.³¹ Low culture must be commuted into high culture.³² Still, low priority was given to the “disparity in quality between the urban and rural schools” (Thongthew 1999:118), which makes the state incomplete. Pitiyanuwat and Sujiva (2001) mention main differences in policy intentions between three types of secondary

³¹ The structure of the Thai school system from 1978 has been 6-3-3: six years of elementary school which is compulsory, three years of lower secondary school and three years of upper secondary school. In 2000 compulsory school was extended with three years to meet needs in technology development and advanced agricultural methods (Thongthew 1999:118).

³² “In industrial age only high cultures in the end effectively survive. Folk cultures and little traditions survive only artificially, kept going by language and folklore preservation society” (Gellner 1983:113).

schools: a university model school, a private school and a public school.³³ Feigenblatt et al. (2010:304) points to differences in educational goals for urban and rural schools.³⁴

Accordingly, he calls education for hilltribes “informal”, “concentrated on subsistence in the mountains”, and “staffed with young, central Thai, interns” (Feigenblatt et al. 2010:305).

Historically, a fundamental difference exists between Eastern and Western learning strategies. As Asia favors *model emulation*, by exemplary behavior, imitation and practicing and mastering the adequate performance of rituals, the western world prefers systems of *conceptual elucidation*, conceptual learning to give meaning to the world.³⁵ Eastern (Akha) truth is found in history (the ancestors), Western, in the future. For Akha, the future is the time yet to come, and Akhazang has opinion nor grip on this. Experiences of the ancestors comprise the past, and not the future. Although the future is that what is feared most, Akhazang is the story of a journey, and with it, the story of reaction.

This history-future dichotomy is apparent in the peoples’ attitude to education.³⁶ To meet the future, Bangkok, the lowlands, implemented a Westernized school system, based on King Chulalongkorn’s sociopolitical system with the three pillars of religion, monarch and nation at the core. Feigenblatt et al. (2010) argues, that education became a tool for the government, to extend control over the population. Primary and secondary education was integrated with tight control over religious practices and strict censorship of the media. Today, mainstream Thai education consists of two grades, primary grades called “Pratom” and secondary grades, “Mattayom”. They are divided in lower primary (first-fourth grade), upper primary (fifth-sixth grade), lower secondary (seventh-ninth grade) and upper secondary (tenth-twelfth grade).Nine

³³ The schools emphasized different policy intentions: the public school emphasized order, discipline and social development; the private school focused on religious conduct; and the university model school was primary concerned with intellectual activities and critical thinking. All schools had civic values integrated with coursework, extracurricular projects and activities (Pitiyanuwat and Sujiva 2001:93).

³⁴ Additional cultural and political goals for rural school, enhanced to the teaching of useful skills for economic purposes.

³⁵ “Raven’s Thesis” was introduced in lectures on Utrecht University, The Netherlands, answering the question: Why Europe? Dr. Raven uses four arguments: 1. Culture and the “Way of navigating in the world” makes a difference, 2. The difference of learning strategies in the east, the west and the Arabic world, 3. The (Christian) concept of Nature and 4, Capitalism emerges in a competition between city-states. Number two is apparent in the village-city dichotomy that encompasses Akha perception.

³⁶ In 1978 elementary education aimed at providing basic knowledge and skills as well as maintaining literacy and computational abilities. Practical experiences were emphasized and good citizenship under the democratic system with the Monarch as Head of State (Thongthew 1999:119). By 1994 education has to anticipate to five phenomena emerging in Thai society: industrialization, technologicalization, democratization, regionalization and internationalization (Sinlarat in Thongthew 1999:120).

grades are compulsory since 2000.³⁷ Since 1995 the “child-center” system was integrated. Students attend classroom regularly and conduct independent research. Before, students were passive learners without analytical skills and self-questioning strategies. Students in rural areas receive long-distance learning through video lessons from model urban schools. Computers are used on a limited scale. *“Greater educational opportunities were viewed as important by the Bangkok elite as a way to jump on the modernization bandwagon”* (Wyatt in Feigenblatt et al. 2010:301). People were seen as tools for economic growth; children learned to become efficient and obedient workers. And this all for the good of the nation, meaning Bangkok. Basics are morals and religion. Feigenblatt calls this “mass assimilation”, which is done by a combination of Buddhism, civics and distorted history lessons (Feigenblatt 2010:302). A history that ignores the history of other ethnic groups, who are, from a religious point of view, animists. In the case of the hilltribes, education’s role was both cultural and political. “Mattayoms” cannot be found in the villages, so secondary grade schoolchildren are forced to leave the countryside to seek further education in the cities. They live in dormitories and only return to the villages during weekends. In the villages primary public schools are built, staffed with Thai interns, for teachers consider upland jobs inferior, which can influence ardency and motivation considerably.³⁸

Moreover, the curriculum was nationally approved, therefore hilltribe children were taught a history in which they are invisible; they are taught Thai language rather than their own dialect. They learn about Buddhism, which is foreign to them. This results in assimilation into the dominant national culture and alienation from their own history and people.

This forms constant dilemmas: How to learn the language needed (Thai) and not to forget Akha? How to learn the modern Thai ways and not unlearn Akha skills and rituals? How to live “good” in two worlds? Odochao et al.(2006:117) noticed, that children could not relate anymore to their elders or respect them. He says: *“I began to understand that the problem with the gap between generations really comes from the modern education system, that our children have been exposed to. In our culture the family is the basic unit. You have the head of the household and the ancestor spirits. The teaching occurs in the family, with all members,*

³⁷ In 1993 the new Education Act was proposed. According to this Act, all children who graduate from elementary schools must proceed to another three years of schooling at secondary level. This policy is to keep all children in school longer in order to prepare the manpower to staff the higher echelons of the commercial and manufacturing sectors. Before less than fifty percent entered secondary and higher education (Thongthew 1999:120).

³⁸ My respondent mentions cases of unhappy teachers lacking motivation and being absent for three days in a row. Because of this quality problem people send their children to dormitories (mostly run by Christian organizations) who provide access to highschools.

*including the spirits. In school they learn subject by subject. At home they cannot relate to their parents. Young people returning home from the lowland highschools acquire some ways of behaving, that are not suitable in our culture, aggression, violence. They lack respect to elders. A better education system might be, to combine the modern and the traditional education systems”.*³⁹ It all depends on the state’s choice for Thai education to minorities and national identity.

Village classrooms.

In the hills of Mae Salong area, I visited two village schools for Akha children, aged four. At the first one, I was invited by the female Thai teacher, to come in the bright and clean room. The children were playing on the tiled floor. Spoken language was Thai. Looking around, I saw familiar instructional tools in abundance and I was struck by the systematic planning schemes and structural efficiency and neatness. The teacher’s approach was friendly and resolute, when she made the children show their knowledge to me. Their skill in the English alphabet and numbers was impressive, for four year olds. The teacher admitted that her English had reached its limits here.

*Next school was managed by an Akha female teacher in uniform, a rare breed. This village was certainly more prosperous, had newly build stone houses, but the school was old and dark inside. Inside was a mess. The children took advantage of my visit, leaving the helpless teacher behind. For me, it seemed the right moment to leave. Three of my hilltribe respondents in the city, complained about the village schools: “I only learned the A, B, C there. Nothing more”.*⁴⁰ -Fieldnotes-

Remarkable thing is, that the Thai state does not have the monopoly on education, which is customary in most other countries. Other organizations take their share and offer education, especially in the rural areas. Hilltribe people also attend schools from the Missionaries, Buddhist temples and NGO’s. Sometimes this occurs by absence of Thai schools, sometimes this takes place in the weekend or evenings for education in local languages and customs. It is a strange phenomena to see “outsiders” provide education and the Thai government conceding.

³⁹ Both Gellner and Anderson point to the fact that a standardized education system was a prerequisite for a homogenized national identity. In a culturally diverse society a system should be developed that carries equality as well as difference. Eriksen (1994:181) argues that: “Some countries insist on a homogenous educational system, some have introduced home-language instruction in the government schools, some have state-supported minority schools, and some encourage a shared educational system which stimulates tolerance and knowledge of other groups in society”.

⁴⁰ Numbers about education of Akha people: No formal education 55 percent, only primary school 31 percent, cannot speak Thai 38 percent, cannot read Thai 60 percent. Those over 40 years old have a very limited use of Thai, with 90 percent unable to converse in Thai language (Asia Journal of Public Health May-August 2012).

Still, what the Thai government wants the minorities to do: assimilation into Thai society and adapting to Thai regulations and customs. Assimilation into a Thai society, that is so pervaded by religion.

4.3 Religion

Thailand is a Buddhist country.⁴¹ Buddhism is prominently present. Chiang Mai displays of a myriad of Buddhist temples. Nevertheless, multiple hilltribe-linked religious representations in the streets are hard to neglect, billboards, bible gatherings and dormitories.⁴² And just outside the citylimits, I noticed Akha conventionhalls, Akha learning-centers and Akha-orphanages, which were all Christian-operated. In religion, I found another dividing line in Thai society, threatening state-sponsored assimilation.

Baptist Service.

Some make drawings in their Holy Bible. Some are devoted to writing down closely what the reverend proclaims, as to pass it on later. But everybody is happy to sing, hear the band play and witness the boys and girls perform their rehearsed songs. We join in together. And when the ceremonies are over, we sit down on the room's matted floor for a meal and a drink together, chatting, and enjoying the gathering.

-Fieldnote-

Kammerer (1990) devotes her research to Christian conversion and mentions a widespread share of people converted to Christianity among hilltribes, especially Karen, Hmong and Lahu. The Akha are an exception, but she notifies a “rapid growth”.⁴³ “Yet, whereas in the 1950s and 1960s missionaries bemoaned their lack of success in converting Akha, by the 1980s some missionaries were anticipating a “mass movement”” (Kammerer 1990:277). She estimates that “one-fifth to one-third of the approximately Akha villages are fully or partially Christian; Protestants outnumber Catholics” (Kammerer 1990:279). The Akha owner of my homestay in the traditional Akha village of Ban Apa, estimates that more than ninety percent of all Akha converted to Christianity. Why conversion? To me, this seems a matter of

⁴¹ Of the Thai citizens ninety-five percent are Theravada Buddhists.

⁴² During a “religious weekend”, I attended hilltribe services in the Seventh Day Adventist’s church on Saturday and in Baptist church the next.

⁴³ Kammerer (1990:282):”.....contributing to the initial Akha reluctance to embrace Christianity is the absence of a key motivation for conversion found both among Karen and Hmong: the quest for literacy”. Tapp (in Kammerer: *ibid.*) continues: “Both Karen and Hmong associate the return of literacy with the appearance of the millennium, which for Hmong is also connected with the reappearance of their king”. The Akha myth about lost literacy lacks a messianic message, that brought masses of Karen and Hmong to Christianity.

strategizing, which I will explain in the next chapter. Strategizing is an important way for hilltribe people to cope with modernity.

After having highlighted the social infrastructure, surrounding the Akha, we want to know more about their social position. Within the citylimits, first we have to find them. For a better understanding of their living conditions, we have to follow them into the slums.

4.4 Social Situation and the Slums.

Cities, as we have seen already, are places where friction is, and where negotiations rule daily life. But the city is a chaos and a threat for the unskilled.

Cities and money are inextricably linked. Cities are places where material things are important and wealth is the aim of many. Money provides prestige for the individual, leaving society at bay. Money can overrule morals. Money is a western notion.

In the Akha world, networks are based on personal relations, mutual trust and moral living. Rituals are instruments to live a better life. The family is the reflection of society and everybody has a role and place in it. To do good and live the life the ancestors have suggested, is the main goal of the Akha. The world of money has been almost unknown to the hillpeople before they entered the city, so was wage labor. In the city east meets west⁴⁴, Agraria (The Akha) meets Industria (the Thai and their way of life) and Globalia (the global economic and technological flows).

Getting to know the mores of the city in modernity, relates to a liminal phase⁴⁵ of being, in which opportunities are probed, chances examined, inquiries are made, and spaces explored. Akha people are in a transitional state between separation of the village and not yet being incorporated in the city. Finding accommodation is a problem in the crowded agglomeration. Where best spaces are taken, paths lead to the slums, where the invisible live. Some live there for a while, some forever.

⁴⁴ *"Money is to the west, what kinship is to the Rest"* (Marshal Sahlins 1972, 2012) .

⁴⁵ In the threefold structure of rites of passage, Van Gennep (1960) distinguishes a liminal phase. Turner (1969:95), exploring liminality, notes that in the transitional state between two phases, individuals are "betwixt and between". They do not belong to the society they previously were a part of and they are not yet corporate into the new society. Liminality is an ambiguous period characterized by humility, tests and communitas, the unstructured community where people experience liminality in togetherness and social equality (Turner 1969:132).

The slums of Chiang Mai are hard to find. They are hidden in the unattractive folds, to where Mister Pranit conducted me. First of all there is *Hua Fai*, a heterogeneous community. This is former no-man's-land, where hilltribe people built their shacks, with wood panels and plastics, on and alongside a stenchy river, southeast of Chiang Mai's center. People live here permanently now, some are residents for twenty-five years already. They are tuktukdriver or waste-recycler, some own a foodstall or do laundry, maybe some are the sellers of flowers, wrapped in old newspapers, on Warorot market. Attached to their doors, I recognize signs of multiple beliefs.⁴⁶ Along the dirt roads full of puddles, I see spirithouses, erected to honour the spirits of the slum. I will not run into mountain spirit houses; those spirits don't dwell here. There is one way to escape from here, that's over the path of success.

Family Majeu, a story of success.

Sawasdee khrap. Mother and daughter Majeu unlock the gate and invite me in, again. Thirty years ago they were with the first pioneers to enter Chiang Mai to make a new living. Daughter Ameu, age 35: "Studying is so important. I went to Thai primary school and after that high school. We did not have the money, but someone gave us. After school, together with my father and mother, I worked on handicraft we sold in the Nightmarket. When the business stagnated we had a problem, but my father argued that business in Bangkok would be better because of all the tourists. He bought a spot on the big field for 500 baht, but he only owed 700 and the bus ticket cost him 150, so there was just 50 baht left. He went alone. First day with the family, was a lucky day. A farang (foreigner) bought a silver adorned Pami-Akha headdress for 50,000 baht, it was our lucky day. We gave him a children's headdress for free. Then my father had a golden idea: selling at Bangkok's Chatuchak weekend market (biggest in Asia). Every Friday, after school, I hurried to the bus, accompanying my father. Saturday morning five o'clock we arrived in Bangkok, opened the shop, stayed somewhere for one night and drove back to Chiang Mai. The Sunday night we arrived five o'clock in the morning, just in time to fresh up and prepare for school. I was seven years old then, but it made us prosperous enough to leave Hua Fai slums and live here in Sanlum Yoj". And indeed, the house was big and beautiful, but the floor was covered with newly produced handicraft products. "This is transported to Bangkok, we have a transport company now, bringing handicrafts of many hilltribe people to Chatuchak. But we still sell in Chiang Mai, on the Sunday Walking Market".

-Fieldnotes-

Sanlum Yoj is the name of another slum Mister Pranit showed me. It is situated southwest of Chiang Mai very close to the Airfield. The atmosphere is much better, with trees and little gardens and proper houses. A good place to live. Here the prosperous hilltribe people live. In a heterogeneous community they try to imitate villagelife. Akha, Lisu and Lahu are neighbor

⁴⁶ Among them: Buddhist amulets, pictures of meditating famous monks, Chinese new year's glittergarlands and pictures of Jesus .

and family as well.

I asked Ameu about citylife; if there are any objections for living in the city. And what about protection from the spirits? Ameu (living in the city for thirty years): *“We have no spirithouse, but we feel protected. My grandfather gave us some objects, who protect us from evil. My father carries them, I don’t really know. This is our strong believe. Every new-year we take the object to prayers, this is really important to us. You must always do the good things the ancestors taught us, to have good things in return”*. I told her I knew of a Lisu family that got into trouble living the citylife. *“They estranged from the villagepeople, who saw them as rich and neglecting the rituals. They turned ill. To restore trust, a ceremony had to be organized”*, she answered.

Oldest, and very special slum, is Kanthoke Paradise. Initially I thought, it was my own discovery, but it was mentioned in the only article, I could discover on urban hilltribes.⁴⁷ It explores Akha (and Lisu) people’s pioneering in the city of Chiang Mai in 1982. Vatikiotis (1984 Vol. II) describes the first residents (of Kanthoke Paradise) being brought down by the Border Patrol Police on behalf of a group of Thai entrepreneurs *“wishing to employ them as local tourist attractions”*. The idea was to settle a number of people from each “tribe” in a recreated highland village setting. This situation still exists today.

Inside Kanthoke Paradise.

In the slum (Kanthoke Paradise) I talk to Mrs. Amaran again, my respondent, about her life here. It is my second visit and a lively conversation unfolds. Her daughter and all the cousins take part in it. They are interested in the questions, I am in the answers. We talk about schooling, WattanaThaiPayop Highschool, their hilltribe vernacular, the villages where I have been and the hilltribe organizations that I know (IMPECT and AFECT). I drink the bottled water that was served to me. What I hear is, that six years ago, the slum together with all the houses, had to be removed from the Old Cultural center, to here. Amaran’s voice sounds regretful; before she lived in a house with enough space for twenty people, now she can hardly home four. She came to this place when she was two. Every night she performs the “Hilltribe Show”, together with her neighbors from other tribes, in the nearby Center. Actually, that is her steady job, they don’t pay rent. Others combine this with a job in town, during the daytime. I mention the name of Anya. She is the daughter of late Dr. Leo Alting von Geusau, the Dutch researcher on Akha culture. I called her yesterday. One minute later, Siriphan, the Hightech Akha, shows me her Smart-Phone. “This is Anya”, she says, “and you are going to meet her tomorrow!” “How do you know?” “Facebook is everywhere!” (Anya is her Akha-cousin. It’s a small hilltribe world).

-Fieldnote-

⁴⁷ Vatikiotis, M.J., 1984 “Ethnic Pluralism in the Northern Thai City of Chiang Mai”. It is an unpublished PhD. Thesis I discovered in Dr. Alting von Geusau’s private library.

Kanthoke Paradise is the name I attributed to a tiny plot of land adjacent to the Old Cultural Center. Residents were specially selected to work in the Cultural Center and live next to it. Their work was in the tourist business amusement and consisted in performing a hilltribe dancing show to the visitors, dressed in traditional costume.

The Hilltribe show is a caricature of the hilltribe peoples' lives. When the speaker announces the "chao khao", he repeats the old stereotype of people from another world, wild and strange. For this performance the public has changed place. Earlier that night, dinner was served, accompanied with delicate and refined Thai dancing, on the indoor stage of the Kanthoke Restaurant. This contrasts the hilltribe's performance in an adjacent barn, on a mud floor. The rural and raw was displayed by way of commodification of otherness. Nothing had changed the last twenty-five years. Performing in this show is rewarded by providing a place for hilltribe people to live and have a steady salary in the city. They pay no rent and built their houses in the vicinity. Six years ago the village had to move. The woman complains: "*Things got worse. Before, I owned a house that could contain maybe twenty people, now only four. It is a cramped shack now*". This I can confirm. She does not mention about the stench from the riverbed, the rubbish and the leaking roofs. She is an optimist, who takes life as it is.

"I came to this place at age two. I've lived here for thirty years". Every night she presents a show for tourists, together with other hilltribe people. "*We live together with five hilltribes, Lisu, Akha, Hmong, Karen and Lahu. We are like family*". Many of the residents have daytime jobs in the city. Outside the walls, one proudly showed me his pickup truck with the letters: "Rescue team, Chiang Mai City". All children attend Thai schools.

Vatikiotis (1984) conducted research on ethnic pluralism in Chiang Mai. He gives detailed insight information in pioneer urban settlement and reflects on cultural differences and emerging hilltribe life (specifically about Akha and Lisu), in urban environments.⁴⁸

Vatikiotis depicts of five reception centers for newly arrived migrants, two of them hotels, a hilltribe center and a night bazaar. And there is the Old Cultural Center. The first residents were brought here by the Border Patrol Police on behalf of a group Thai entrepreneurs, wishing them to employ them as local tourist attractions. The original settlers soon gained extra income, by selling handicrafts and seeking other work during the day. This attracted relatives, and language schooling activities. Residential dispersal is a common feature of

⁴⁸ Although almost thirty years have passed since this publication, no other data are available on urban settlement in Chiang Mai.

hilltribe social behavior in the city, the author notices, segregated social activity is another, with wide kinship affiliations. An important role is played by members of the Phami-Akha subgroup, he denotes “brokers of Akha ethnicity”. He depicts Phami-Akha as patrons of Chiang Mai’s Akha population.⁴⁹

Initial settlements of hilltribe people mentioned by Vatikiotis are all situated in the south and southeast area of Khamphaeng Din, between the outer earthen wall and the main city walls. The names are Phuak Chaang, Ban Mae Kha, Ban Pratum Kharn and Ban Hua Fai. The latter is the one where I interviewed some families. They have lived there on a permanent basis, for more than twenty-five years. Before being successful in the long-distance trade on Chatuchak Weekendmarket, the Majeu family also lived here.

Like Kanthoke Paradise, slums are communities. “*Closed communities are supposed to be separate worlds*”, Baumann argues (2011:61). They are fenced to assure security for the insiders. Fences divide the continuous, into an inside and an outside. By seeking security the other isolates himself voluntarily and hides in oblivion. In this case the hilltribe community members strip themselves of “face”.⁵⁰ Because of uncertainty about the future, their social position and existential insecurity, they isolate in “uncomfortable places” (“mai saduak”). As in Kanthoke Paradise, they can be fired and expelled from the complex. Or suddenly be relocated to a another place like six years ago. New building Projects might force them to leave unofficial dwelling voids like Hua Fai slum. Invisibility, absence of rights and association, makes the people strangers and places them in a weak position in the city. By staying inside the safe walls, stereotyped images of the “chao khao”, the others, remain, and integration will never be successful. As long as the dancers in the Kanthoke Hilltribe Show are still introduced by the speaker as, “the others”, no progress can be made in the process of “humanization”, better mutual understanding, and higher esteem.

⁴⁹ Being the wealthiest, they provide employment and organize urban based petty trade enterprise. “Structurally they can be seen as nodal points at which different sets or fields and social relations intersect” (Cohen in Vatikiotis 1984). Internal ordering is apparent. Phami tend to affiliate more closely with Yuannese, Shans and other trading minorities. Marriages are multiple. Result of Phami dominance and affiliation is that Akha community is neither held together by a broad range of communal cultural activities, nor by a voluntary association or other institutional means enforcing common norms and values. Individuals are bound together by their common economic activity. Summarized: “Individual demand for private gain prevails over social demand for common welfare” (Furnivall in Vatikiotis 1994). Successful family Majeu is of Phami-Akha descent.

⁵⁰ Once stripped of “face” the weakness of the other invites violence naturally, according to Baumann (2011:59) referring to Jews, Gypsies and homosexuals and the Tutsi-Hutu conflict.

Summary

The Thai government's first hilltribe policy, was installing TRC/Tri in 1965, motivated by the opium problem in the northern provinces. Hilltribe people depended heavily on opium income. Policy was to halt opium and create alternatives for a stable livelihood in order to make integration into Thai society likely and possible (statement of Dr. Bhruksasri, director of TRI 1976). But when opium cultivation was eradicated and intentional integration failed, hilltribe affairs was handed over to the Welfare Department and the focus pointed to health and social welfare. With it, interest in hilltribe integration faded. TRI was closed in 2002 and education was the magic word for the nation-state. The nation's aim was to establish a universal high culture among all Thai citizens. But minorities missed the train before, and were reluctant to join in, for fearing loss of their own culture. Thai government, confronted with severe economic crises and political controversies,⁵¹ highlights national recovery and consensus. Moreover the government is concerned about safety-risks.⁵² The small hilltribe minority in the north (1 million in a country of 67 million) is of minor importance in national power-politics.⁵³ The hilltribes have no representation in parliament and are not politically organized. Resistance (like in the South of Thailand) is not reported recently⁵⁴. Representing no threat for national unity, means no special attention or aid needed. Desirable condition, is a state of pacification in the north by strict surveillance. Integration has failed, but adaption and assimilation is still hoped for by the government. As sparsely government aid is provided, NGO's and missionaries are allowed to help. People have to rely on their own agency and use their own survival-strategies.⁵⁵

⁵¹ Political controversies form a deep void between the rural and the city in the years 2000s, culminating in red shirt and yellow shirt supporters rioting in the streets of Bangkok and a shut down twice of the international airport.

⁵² In the south provinces bordering Malaysia violent clashes are reported on a daily base between Muslim separatists and Thai army troops. Attacks are multiple and images of captured insurgents are shown in TV journals.

⁵³ East Thailand, called the Isan, a rural area inhabited by 22 million ethnic Isan people of Tai descent represents a much bigger (economic and political) problem to the Thai government.

⁵⁴ The only reported dramatic turn was in 1998, when thousands of angry lowlanders blocked acces roads to Hmong communities, burned a Hmong market and removed a Buddha statue. This event was used to support the eviction of the hilltribe population from national parks.

⁵⁵ Here the Akha are surely disadvantaged compared to other hilltribes. Describing Akha, one needs superlatives: the most remote of all, the less educated, least prosperous, furthest from modernity. When the Karen drive cars, the Akha ride bikes, where Karen own land, the Akha have no property, where Karen engage in development and advocacy activities, Akha are reluctant, where Karen act smart, Akha wayfaring is awkward.

5. Akha Strategies.

Flexibility is inherent to Akhazang: “*There is also a fundamental, permeating ideal in Akhazang of compromise, flexibility and adaption*” and “*Remain flexible so that you can adapt to majorities and other outside pressures*” (Alting von Geusau in Grieger 2012:17). This resembles the long journey of Akha, during which quick responses were eminent. Distancing themselves from the lowland powers was a deliberate calculation the Akha made.⁵⁶ Even so conversion and shifting identity, as we shall see next.

5.1 On business in the city and beyond.

The urban hilltribe seems to be an unperceived phenomena. During an interview I had in a NGO, I heard: “*Village people come to earn money in the city, and go live in a remote town*”. It sounded slightly negative, from an assistant executive. So I concluded: “*Sounds like a job*”.

You might compare commodification of hilltribe culture through tourism, by way of exploitation of traditional life, culture and rituals, with a policeman’s work. In the morning he dresses like an officer and acts like one in his daily routine. After work he changes cloths, and, in no way is the same man. He is a father, a husband, a son. The job is done. This is identical to the villager. When a trekking group arrives, the Akha is there, and ready to present his Akhaface. He performs his job and gets rewarded. He has a family to take care of. Is this different from the policeman. Is this wrong? This is called strategy. This is, making a living.

Sylvain describes Kalahari Bushmen’s strategizing. To survive and derive rights, they use culture as an instrument in their strategic essentializing. Here, identity politics joins with market demand in ethno-tourism (Sylvain 2005:403-6). Akha people also provide this ethno-tourism. Tourists can do trekkings and have (home-)stays in Akha villages, to experience “hilltribe-ness”. Existential essentialism is expressed in the marginality of the village where an ethnic façade is displayed.⁵⁷ (Akha are no exception, Karen Padaung, for example, exercise

⁵⁶ When benefits could be obtained, for example employment in agricultural substations, opened by the government, Akha villagers got along well with their ethnic Thai co-workers (Tooker 2004:263).

⁵⁷ This is an important means of income, in impoverished villages, tolerated by Thai government. Trekking Agencies provide a compulsory trip to the B.P.P. office beforehand, for registration and fees. No trekking without registration.

“longneck” strategies). In the villages (as in the city’s Old Cultural Center) Akha’s own distinctive culture, the patterns and beliefs that make up their moral identity, goes unnoticed. Kinship is one of the cores of their existence. So, as soon as possible, people return to the villages in weekends, during festivities, meetings, or to attend ceremonies. Kinship is what binds. When there is no tribal kin around (in the city), hilltribe people form new extended lineages, workforces, neighborhoods, and settle together (likewise in the slums), where heterogeneous hilltribe communities are formed. Remarkable strategy is the need to employ Thai personnel in the city. Hilltribe businessmen feel insecure in dealing with Thai customers and officials, because of poor schooling. Still business with “their own” people is preferred. The new trend is that hilltribe people feel confident to open shops in the center of Chiang Mai near Thapae Gate. Before business was centered in the hilltribe settlements (slums). For Akha hilltribe women, stepping outside their community for a strategy of rural-urban marriage of Thai men is very rare, the Akha marrying only ethnic spouses.⁵⁸ When asked, one respondent pointed to the fact that Akha-foreigner marriages are most common, just like Thai-foreigner marriages are.

As the city is an area of transformation, two things must be highlighted. First, the migrant hilltribe member is redefining the way, in which city life alienates from village communities and local customs.⁵⁹ Second, they revitalize the relationship with other villagers and spirits to acknowledge their changing identity. This is an act of reconciliation. A family can do so in a practical ritual called *La-heuh-la-nji-mob*.⁶⁰ A wayside shelter is constructed and a ritual is performed in order to establish themselves as trustworthy and loyal people. It is performed by a shaman and some offerings are made. The ritual is performed in accordance with the indigenous conceptions of honor and shame. Besides good health and high spirits, honor is gained by working hard and conducting in a generous manner. Shame is avoided by meeting with the expectations of the others and carrying out social obligations. The ritual is practiced on two occasions: First it is performed in different periods of life, in order to generate social status in the community and to make others acknowledge the economic and social ability of

⁵⁸ In ethnically related regional neighbor China rural-urban marriage has been a major (and fully accepted) strategy factor for women to ascend the social ladder.

⁵⁹ In the eyes of the villagers city life is not the life that has to be lived according to the ancestors’ rules. Rituals are being neglected, ceremonies abandoned, spirits offended. This has repercussions for the village. Villagers have the fear of being punished by the bad habits of their city kin. Mistakes made in the city have to be recovered in the village by doing reconciliation ceremonies as described.

⁶⁰ Jatuworapruk (2000) describes this ritual for the Lisu people, who call this *Salalu*. The ritual I describe here, was organized by a Lahu family. Asking my Akha host, he recognized the ritual as being generally practiced among hilltribe people, with slightly different performances.

the household. Second, in situation of social crisis in life, low annual yields and serious illness (and aging parents).

The ritual.

When Ameu took me for a ride to the waterfalls, I suddenly gazed some exceptional wayside activities and I asked him to stop his motorbike. Near a small construction, some young folks were gathered. I watched a shaman and his assistant perform a series of rituals, behind a freshly cut bamboo shelter. All kinds of adornments covered the place, palm garlands, plaited banners, bamboo pedestals and candles. The shaman laid spells, the youth, some carrying babies, threw handfuls of uncooked rice. Later that afternoon I visited a nearby village. To my surprise, the same shaman entered a house, where people had gathered. Next thing was portions of food been handed out to the people, who seemed very delighted.

-Fieldnote-

But there is more to this, Dr. Pranit explained. He speaks of *cultural paralysis*, when in the villages not all rituals can be performed by the assembled community anymore, and social structure fades.⁶¹ So old rituals are being redefined. Revitalization of rituals can hold new power contents, to cope with cultural crises caused by adapting modern lifestyles in the city.

5.2 On Images.

We have seen that mountainpeople still perform hilltribe shows, like they did twenty-five years ago. (Kanthoke Show). When bad images remain unchanged, integration will never occur. Better living conditions do not come easy, and they do not come spontaneously. Active imagebuilding is needed. Stories like Mister Lee's Coffee revolution, can provide goodwill and information on Akha, in public spheres.⁶² Media are important means of transmitting information. AFECT is aware of this and is working on a computerized newscenter and website in the Chiang Rai area, with support from Singapore. Since there is no Akha government or representative council, it is problematic to streamline information.⁶³ Image

⁶¹ My respondent: "Some rituals are only valid and powerful when performed by the complete village. Absence of people, residing in the city, makes the spirits unhappy and makes people feel incomplete. Moreover, nowadays it is hard to find witchdoctors. Before, each village possessed several. Now they have to be hired from abroad".

⁶² Several times I was told Mister Lee's story, as an example of smart entrepreneurship and good Akha development. The Bangkok Post titled him in his article "*Working class hero*". His Akha Coffee was selected in a prestigious European coffee championship in both 2010 and 2011.

⁶³ Advocate for Akha people and founder of MPCD (Mountain People's Culture and development's Project) and IMPEC (Inter Mountain People Educational and cultural Center), late Dutch Anthropologist Von Geusau,

building is also needed for Akha slash-and-burn cultivation, which is considered harmful for ecology. Interdiction of this swidden cultivation is one of the main causes for Akha deprivation.

Akha farming abilities have been underestimated and their understanding of ecological processes misinterpreted. A remarkable insight in Akha cultivation practices is given in the comparative research by Sturgeon on Akha politics and land use in Thailand and China (*Border landscapes*, 2005), who discovered, that their practices revolved around complex upland environments, that varied greatly in elevation and microclimate. She points out that: *“Beyond their understanding of ecological processes, Akha farmers manipulated their complex environments to meet daily needs, respond to emergencies, maneuver around state extractions, and to produce for markets. In fact, farmers refashioned their landscapes as a means to negotiate with both state agents and border patrons. Akha took advantage of the complexity of their land uses and regeneration pathways to deal with state administrators, traders, and diverse political figures. This ability to adjust complicated land uses over time in response to local needs, state plans, and border possibilities is what I call landscape plasticity”* (Sturgeon 2005:8). Thus the forest to the Akha is a social space, embracing both past and future.

Sturgeon experienced these farmers’ knowledge and practice of a processual landscape and highlighted controversies taking place, between their understanding and the state vision of set property rights on mapped landscapes, with the aim of annual production. The farmers could *“imagine their landscape differently and plan the transition to a new mosaic of land uses”* (Sturgeon 2005:9). Farming meant strategizing on a landscape and planning fifteen to twenty years ahead. Landscapes became *“sites for maneuvering and struggle”* (Sturgeon 2005:ibid.). The official meaning of forests shifted considerably over the last decades in Thailand. In the 1930s, forests were dangerous realms where primitive people lived. By the 1960s, forests had been transformed into state economic assets to be exploited. As of the early 1980s, forests had again be recast, this time as environmental resources to be protected. In the time since, forests have acquired an enormous symbolic weight as national treasures belonging to future Thai generations. Akha (the hilltribes) were considered non-Thai, criminal users of state resources and separated from the forests, which belonged to the Royal Forestry Department. In China however, the Akha were classified within the Hani minority nationality, one of fifty-

archived Akha knowledge in his Chiang Mai home library. With the support of Singapore volunteer students AFECT is building a media center and Akha website.

five officially recognized groups, who became citizens (but not Han) as of the 1949 revolution. The socialist polity was to improve Akha culture and land use and included the imposition of property rights and land use regulations. Agricultural expert knowledge was provided, while the meaning of forests in China, from the 1950s onward, continued to be as subsistence resources. As a result the forested land in China still belonged to villages and households (Sturgeon 2005:202-3).

Sturgeon (2005:9) argues that in Thailand, as of 1997, in each village the possibility for using flexible, plastic landscapes was being undermined. First, state politics for agriculture and forestry had separated cultivated fields from areas of woods (limiting the practice of shifting cultivation. Second, policies had designated property rights in land and trees and third, development projects had introduced the intensive production of fewer crops on smaller land areas. In Thailand, during the last decade, this meant that “*the loss of land, the reclaiming of both forest and farming land [by the Thai government], nearly eliminated Akha flexible land uses*” (Sturgeon, 2005:13).

Whereas we saw that the Akha farmers are linked to bad cultivation practices, Karen hilltribe farmers have sculptured their image and identified themselves as indigenous people, who are experts in sustainable cultivation and ecology and thus entitled to secure landrights.

<i>'Au hti ktau hti mei gei,</i>	<i>'If you use the water, care for it</i>
<i>au kau ktau kau mei gei,</i>	<i>If you use the soil, care for it</i>
<i>hpai qu hkoo si sei tgei,</i>	<i>Clearing the field, don't fell all the trees</i>
<i>hpai q hkoo si wa tgei,</i>	<i>Don't cut down all the bamboo</i>
<i>sei mei lau oo wa lau hpei,</i>	<i>If the trees and bamboo are gone</i>
<i>pba kau wi ba kau cei'.</i>	<i>We will be without water and rice and starve'.</i>

Sung by a Karen elder from Mae UmPhai (Pga k'nyau, "Knowledge on Rotational Farming", 2006:49).

The Karen have introduced their own term for slash-and-burn cultivation, “*rai mun wiang*”, and elaborated their own agricultural theories, by which they try to emphasize the rotational nature and environmental friendliness of their traditional cultivation system (Hares 2009:388).⁶⁴ Like strategies on land use, strategies on religion, have their own logic.

⁶⁴ Karen farmers even published a book, in cooperation with AFECT (Pga k'nyau, *Knowledge on Rotational Farming in Northern Thailand*, 2006), enriched with interwoven cultural features to increase the awareness of authorities. Both the Karen and the Lawa wanted to show officials their ability to live in harmony with the environment. I received the book as a gift from a respondent's family-member.

5.3 On Practical Religion.

We have seen that Akha cosmology, “Akhazang” (Akha customs), is highly complicated and highly demanding, both extensive and expensive (for the impoverished Akha, who need many artifacts and animals for offering). For this reason Akha traditionalists are seeking replacement “zangs”. For this they choose Christianity rather than Buddhism, because:

“Conversion to Christianity by Southeast Asian mountain minorities is simultaneously a claim to difference from a claim to equality with valley-dwelling Buddhists” (Tapp in Kammerer 1990:285).⁶⁵

Here Christianity is used as a replacement, to continue *to be different* from the dominant Buddhist majority, and still be devoted to a similar, human-oriented, “zang”, in this case “Ye-su zang” (Jesus customs). So Akha Christianity does not fit in the many science models of religions in contact situations, “coexistence”, “compartmentalization” and “syncretism”. Instead, Akha Christianity is characterized as a “replacement” of rituals: *“Jesus customs substitute for traditional customs”* (Kammerer 1990:287).⁶⁶ A practical substitute.

Dani and the practical religion.

Dani’s village has been converted long ago. “But what about the spirits and the ancestors, will they agree? Is it still possible to live a good and useful life?” “Yes, no problem. Life has become more easy”. He tells about the many rituals the people have to perform in the house and on the fields. They are expensive and take lot of time. Making many offers a day, this is very demanding. “Christianity is different, with only a few heydays and celebrations”. Actually, life seems to have become more easy and now and then small traditional and Christian rituals are being merged. Offerings are there but are minimalized. This is tolerated and accepted. “So we are not in conflict with the spirits and protected by God like all Christians, because we live like Christians according to the Bible texts”. In the village I was showed the Bible and a Psalter, both protected by a black plastic cover. “Dani, do you often read from the Bible?” He smiles: “Not so much”.

-Fieldnote-

⁶⁵ Since 1965 there are Buddhist missionary monks, sponsored by Thailand’s department of public welfare of the Ministry of Interior and the Buddhist Sangha working for the Phra Dhammcarak Project, active among Akha and other highlanders. It was designed to support development and welfare programmes to bring about integration and prevent subversion by “alien ideologies”. The distribution of medicine and educational opportunities attract to becoming a Buddhist novice. Rather than lasting commitment to Buddhism, Wat Sri Soda in Chiang Mai became a secure start for ambitious Highlanders in the city (Keyes in Vatikiotis, 1984). It seems that only Christianity is successful in attracting Akha (Kammerer 1990).

⁶⁶ Though still a crucial component from the Protestant perspective is missing: faith. Akha is more concerned about performing the right rituals in the right way. This makes missionaries skeptical about Akha understanding of, and faith in, the Christian message.

As noted in this chapter, Akha conversion happened relatively late and has a special character. We can see it as a ritual replacement for complicated and demanding Akhazang. Most Akha converts are simply seeking a replacement that is cheaper and easier, more practical. To this a respondent told me: “Thai language is learned in Thai school during the week, but in the weekends all the students return to the village to attend Sunday school, like good Christians do. In the village conversions started long ago, this is not problematic. Everybody agrees. Christianity offers many practical advantages. Heydays are only Christmas and Easter, this is not like Buddhism, with many celebrations, festivities, duties, obligations and offerings”.

Some people practice a combination of multiple religions, just to be certain. This may all contribute, to an overall 24-hour protection, by all spirits, all Gods and Buddha’s available. Still there is an additional aspect to religion, that is never mentioned in articles: the achievement of community and union by believers. In the city the people find solidarity and support. In the village religion provides solidarity by rejoining.⁶⁷

I was invited by hilltribe people, on a three day religious Easter meeting in the mountains. Members of Baptist communities from villages and cities gathered⁶⁸. The host-village (numbering two hundred) provided accommodation and food for eight hundred people. Every morning a crew of villagers prepared the first of three hot meals after morning service. The villagers had constructed open-air buffet tables and a watersystem and worked in an improvised kitchen in the fields on firewood, food and dishwashing for the one thousand assembled. Morning was for church, the daytime for sportgames, evenings for songs and speeches. I observed and participated, and gazed a feeling of community, solidarity and servitude I seldom encountered, provided by sharing religion, together. Religion can also serve as a binding factor, for city and village folk alike.

While people make choices in religiosity, they can also change identity, and use it for their own advantage.

⁶⁷ Religious manifestations bring city folk back to the families in the villages. Families are rejoined and complete again. The heart still longs for the village, the home of the family and the ancestral lands. The notion of the village as the cradle is revived by religion.

⁶⁸ Including cityfolk from Chiang Mai, who came packed in the backs of pick-up cars.

5.4 On Shifting Identity

The phenomenon of translocal Chinese identity appears evident in the changing perceptions of ethnic groups in the border regions of Thailand, Laos, Burma and China. Officially, they cannot be categorized as Chinese, in the original country (being “Hani” in China), as well as the receiving one (being “Akha” in Thailand). The region is home to a long tradition of movement of flows, whether of trade or people. For a longer period opium was prominent and a binding factor. These flows of goods and humans established intricate interethnic social networks and linguistic skills. For Tai (Tai speaking Shan in Burma), Dai (Tai speaking people from Yunnan), Cin-Ho (Yunnan-Chinese) and Akha, interethnic relations were important, solidarity was evident and mixed marriages were frequent. Chinese entrepreneurship is generally recognized.⁶⁹ While Ong researched Chinese elites and flexible citizenship in Hongkong, Toyota addressed marginalized non-elite transnationals with contested identities (Toyota 2003:303) along the borderzones between China and mainland Southeast Asia. They survive by developing their own strategies for survival within a developing “imagined” Greater China: *“Seen in a wider perspective, they provide a valuable paradigm of how identities are shaped at crossing-points, intersections and on the periphery and through the internal and external imageries of ethnic categorization”* (Toyota 2003:304). Often they are forced to make a choice. Lehman (in Toyota 2003:311): *“Almost any minority group must come to terms with more than one (traditional) state civilization and a variety of other minorities, themselves differently treated by different states”*.

This became urgent in the nation-building process of the modern nation-state, when boundaries were drawn. But Chinese revolution changed the mobility of border minorities drastically.⁷⁰ Nationalist Chinese KMT military, slain in the battle with communists, together with their hilltribe entourage, crossed borders and developed strong ties with mountain people. Chinese nationalism (“Recovering the Mainland”-campaign, Huang 2005:2) empowered Chinese identity by providing Chinese education to the whole community. This group preserved Chinese high culture and lifestyle. Akha (business-) ties with Taiwan were

⁶⁹ Chinese migrant communities have become powerful in the region. Originally Chinese elites, dominate business and politics in Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand and Indonesia.

⁷⁰ Chinese communist threat became apparent with Mao’s rise. Thailand was seen as a western ally against communism and the border regions became a buffer zone and the borderline stopline to be closely guarded. Bordermovements became suspicious and had to be shut down.

encouraged and Akha students received Taiwanese scholarships. Ethnic ties with the “Hani” were revitalized.⁷¹

The still existing Chinese enclaves in Mae Salong area, are zones of high culture, among impoverished minority villages. This results in a new regional faultline: prosperous Chinese (factory directors) employing deprived, ethnically related, minorities (Akha tealeaf pickers) working as wage-laborers in the tea-estates (“hierarchical complementarity”, according to Eriksen 1994:34). These successful Chinese tea magnates represent successful Hani-Akha identity and empower Akha people. Moreover educational opportunities are offered for Akha and overseas links with “kin” renewed.⁷²

Chinese identity (Chinese language skills) could prove lucrative in engaging the new trend in regional tourism: Tourists from China.⁷³ With this new vision of future opportunities and challenges for the Akha people, we must conclude.

Conclusion

Policy on the northern minorities first came into power, when USAID documents accounted of the “enormous strategic importance” of Thailand (Wakin 1992:118). In the cold war situation, the Thai state had to be supported in their battle against the threads of opium cultivation and social-economic deprivation of the hilltribes, and thus their susceptibility to communism (Buadaeng 2006:360). When opium cultivation had been eradicated, national security was no longer threatened and the hilltribe “problems” had been reduced to a social-economic one, so, on July 1976, the Thai government officially declared, that its aim is, to integrate the hilltribes into the Thai Nation.

⁷¹ Akha in Thailand and Hani-Akha in China see themselves as remnants from one and the same origin. Every three years a greater Akha festival is organized, reuniting all Akha. Akha people meeting, always refer to their lineage clan in Akha geneology. Dr. Von Geusau instigated the festival and designed Akha geneology.

⁷² A young woman, my respondent in the Akha village of Ban Apa, seriously considered following her sister and accepting work in Taiwan. “You work hard and make long hours, but at least you earn a lot of money and maybe after five or ten years I can start a business here”. And an Akha youngster in the remote village of Bear Mountain, Mae Sai region suggested: “Shortly I am going to leave for Macao (China). I am going to be a barkeeper in *The Venetian* (a huge gambling casino for Hongkong-Chinese). Maybe we’ll meet again there. See you in Macao!”

⁷³ A strikingly new image in the streets of Chiang Mai this year: Chinese tourists in vast quantities. When I interviewed them they mentioned affinities with Thai food and customs. They showed no special relationship with hilltribe minorities, but it must be noted that this first wave are citypeople, who also declared not having affinity with Chinese rural minorities as well. But after this invasion of “high-class” Chinese tourists vast numbers of middle class Chinese will follow the pioneertourists who consider Thailand overall cheap and pleasant. They may appreciate rural life and seek opportunities to encounter “Chinese” hilltribe groups.

Bhruksasri, director of Chiang Mai's "Tribal Research Institute" explains: "*This policy states the government's intention to integrate the hilltribes into the Thai Nation in respect of their rights to both practice their own religions and maintain their cultures. The Government of Thailand wishes to help the hilltribes to become first class, self-reliant Thai citizens*" (Laar 1990:51). Thus hilltribes will remain independent entities, with respect for cultural differences, at the same time participating in Thai society. Main targets are welfare and local economy (Laar 1990:ibid). But intentions and reality are worlds apart. "National integration" is easily translated in "becoming ethnic Thai, use Thai language as a mother tongue, and accede to Buddhism". This is "*to transform former hilltribe villages into a normal Thai village*" (Krachang in Laar 1990:ibid), which means assimilation. The government's intentions were not successful. After eradication of opium, integration was not a major goal anymore. TRI, as an advisor and knowledge center was closed. Today NGO IMPECT still launches projects helping people obtain citizenship. Gradual citizenship is not full citizenship (for "*first class citizens*"). Furthermore, Thai government provides Thai education only. Few Akha students are successful students. If they are, this can be beneficial for an entire community (Mister Lee). Major means of income, agriculture via the slash-and-burn cultivation system has been misjudged and interdicted, as well as the use and dwelling of hilltop forests. Whereas China wields a policy of recognition towards Akha and their sustainable cultivation, Thailand imposes restrictions only. This deserves a governmental reevaluation, for the assimilation policy propagated, resulted neither in the social nor the economic improvements aimed for. It is obvious that, to Thai government, the hilltribes of the north are only of minor importance; bigger domestic (in the east and the south) and international problems have to be solved.

Impoverishment, marginality, detachment and alienation never resulted in resistance, because of the absence of advocacy activities and political representation.⁷⁴ Resistance and protest would have highlighted Akha's actual marginality on an international platform and urged the government to take more serious notion. (Just like in the 1960s when foreign initiatives called upon the Thai government to take adequate action to help the hilltribes and established TRC). The Akha, as a people, have been too passive, have sought isolation too long. They have neglected education and politics, as a means of empowerment. Confrontations with the Thai

⁷⁴ Indigenous peoples all over the planet make claims for cultural diversity and empowerment. The United Nations draft of the Declaration of Indigenous Rights was approved in 1989. Many indigenous groups mobilized, especially in Latin America. In Bolivia the multicultural nation was officially proclaimed and effectuated in law and daily practice (Postero 2007). In Thailand the hilltribes' voice is subdued.

and the government have been evaded. Meanwhile, the government miscalculated; the Akha did not feel the urge to melt or mix with the Thai. Now the government is stuck with a social problem.

In modernity the Akha still have to rely on their family ties and their personal agency only. With the movement down to the cities, cities become new frontiers for friction and negotiation. From the initial phase of trial and error, new trails are being blazed by the Akha in the city, where people have economical, social and cultural engagements.⁷⁵ Making a new living in the city, often conflicts with the village customs. New strategies have to come in power, in which solidarity (to Akhazang, Akha kin and hilltribe community) is still eminent. Strategies also encompass choices for religion, sustainability and supranational encounters (Chinese identity), bringing new prospects in a globalizing world. In such a world, where borders are in decline, the Akha will inevitably have to try new ways to find the balance, between changing and preserving, city and village.

⁷⁵ A major problem is, that bigger part of the consequences of modern trends of massive urban migration in Thailand, is still invisible, because of the lack of adequate research. Detailed research is needed.

Afterword

*“There’s a crow flying, black and ragged, tree to tree.
He’s black as the highway that’s leading me.
Now he’s diving down, to pick up on something shiny.
I feel like that black crow. Flying in a blue sky”.*

Joni Mitchell

“Faces we see, hearts we don’t know”.

George Foster

*“Participation implies emotional involvement;
Observation requires detachment. It is a strain”.*

Benjamin Paul

Methodology

In the field, I divided my time in a seventy-thirty percentage between city and village. Places of activity were the cities of Chiang Rai and mainly Chiang Mai, where the urban Akha go. The villages I stayed overnight were Ban Apa, Ang Lor and Wang Phra. All activities were self-directed, with no obligations to institutes, associations or companies. Chiang Rai served as a base for exploring traditional villages. Here I was able to compare village and citylife. Daily working scheme in the city consisted in morning writing hours, transcribing interviews, making plans, making appointments, doing observations and meeting people (in NGO’s, Associations, or private settings). In the villages I observed village life and participated, when possible and viable.

The best moment for writing ethnography, is instantly (the “writing momentum”), or, when impossible, making scribblings, extending them the very same day, archiving daily impressions and analyzing later from a more distant point. The overall idea: fresh impressions are “thickest”. Sometimes events succeeded so rapidly, I had to work twice as hard, the next day or in the night, in order to deliver fieldnotes “fresh and sparkling and rich in detail”.

Being in the villages, hanging round constantly and watching happenings, is essential. Doing so, I ran into various ethnographically interesting events and ceremonies (and made the vigilant dogs get more and more at ease). Reading all relevant articles beforehand, made me refined for touchy subjects and using the correct forms of addressing.⁷⁶ Constant learning, from locals “under way”, is essential for adequate researching.

⁷⁶ To address hilltribe people, using the words “chao khao”, “the others”, “the ones from far away”, would have been disastrous for achieving rapport and trust. “Khon doi”, “people from the mountains” is adequate.

Data Gathering.

Making a contact-scheme at home, made me realize, that my fieldwork activities are based mainly on four solid pillars. Many of my activities and encounters are linked with this quartet: two individuals as permanent respondents, and two Associations for hilltribe people (IMPECT and AFECT) for making connections. Two were planned in preparation, two of them were casual contacts, I could extend on site. Beside the pillars, I had many incidental respondents “along the way”. I tried to fit all my data in, once I had the greater concepts of my thesis: Wayfaring, Movement and Strategizing of urban indigenous people.

It has long been customary to divide the process of anthropological research into three successive phases: of observation, description and comparison. In practice this three-phase model offers “*a purified definition of operations, that are most often intertwined*”. (Descola in Ingold 2011:242). To me, and to more researchers, researching in Thailand meant more: participation. Tedlock (in DeWalt and DeWalt 2011:28) has argued that exploring the dynamic tension between observation and participation is critically important. Behar (in DeWalt and Dewalt 2011:ibid.) speaks of participant observation as an oxymoron.⁷⁷ I tried to work and live *with* the people, observing and engaging, to get into close contact with locals, hilltribe people, as well as Thai. Observing and participating in cities and villages meant joining people in their wayfaring, using various means of transport: planes, cars, buses, songthaews, tuktuks, motorbikes and bicycles. I drove dirt roads, made U-turns on the superhighways, spilled my tank with petrol-filled Coca-Cola bottles, and chased motorized Akha’s, just to live in their traditional homes. I attended churches and school, offices and parties, and waited for ceremonies to unfold. In the villages, I fished the river, drove the neighbor’s cows out from the meadows and helped the kitchen crew feed the hungry. I conversed with peasants and academics, dined with locals and saluted uniformed guards. Iron gates opened, private libraries unlocked, I considered Fieldwork my life.⁷⁸

With all the data gathered, I structured, reflected, compared and analyzed, because writing is active thinking. Besides a notebook for transactional and poetic writing (observations used for

⁷⁷ Because the ethnographer seeks to understand the native’s viewpoint, but not “go native”. And must -at the same time- be a “vulnerable observer”, ready to include all of his or her pain and wounds in research and writing, “*because this is part of what he or she brings to the relationship*” (DeWalt and DeWalt 2011:28-9).

⁷⁸ “*As anthropologists, we do our best to participate in the works, questions, joys, and sorrows of our informant’s everyday life. Then we take a few steps back, to be able to reflect on what we have learned and experienced, again to step forward and participate. This we do daily in the fieldwork encounter*” (Finnström in DeWalt and DeWalt 2011:29).

communication), Britton, propagated the analytical note-book (in Wagner and Magistrale 1995). This is for expressive writing, adding interpretations to personal observations. Always, the aim was answering the question: *Why?*

For: “*Knowledge is the result of an active relationship between people and the objective world*” (Freire in Wagner 1995:45). Ingold will surely agree.

Appendix A: Glossary of Thai (T) and Akha (A) Terms.

<i>Abaw-tsjhaw-maw (A)</i>	council of elders
<i>AFECT</i>	Association for Akha Education and Culture in Thailand, NGO in Chiang Rai
<i>Akhazang (A)</i>	Akha's guiding philosophy, way of life, series of customs, etiquette and ceremonies as well as traditions as handed down by the ancestors. Discreet behavior is highly esteemed, to do good is a main goal. There is a fundamental idea of compromise, flexibility and adaptation. "Zang" is not a religion in the western sense, at the same time being pragmatic and practical and making no distinction between sacred and secular.
<i>Ang Lor</i>	traditional Akha village in Mae Salong area
<i>Badzji (A)</i>	blacksmith His role is partly practical, partly formal as defined in Akhazang; he is masterbuilder and controller of ceremonial tools.
<i>Ban Apa</i>	traditional Akha village in Chiang Rai region
<i>BPP</i>	Border Patrol Police
<i>Buseh (A)</i>	formal leader who deals with authorities and government representatives, schoolteachers, policemen or forestry officials.
<i>Cehl Jil ce-eu (A)</i>	fertility rites
<i>chao khao (T)</i>	the term for hilltribes which can be translated as "other people"
<i>chao rao (T)</i>	"our people"
<i>chat Thai (T)</i>	Thai race, was a new invented and imagined concept to gain legalized domination. The peoples of north, south and northeast Thailand, allied in dialects, mores and manners (but not identical), formed the fundament for mutually shared Thai-ness and Thai citizenship.
<i>Chatuchak</i>	Bangkok's weekend market, biggest in Asia.
<i>chon chat (T)</i>	Before the official term of "hilltribes" was used, many ethnic groups were called <i>chon chat</i> (nationality) and <i>chat</i> (nation).
<i>Dehvq Zahl Shil Zahl (A)</i>	"to be the living materials", traditions and rituals of Akha.
<i>Dzoema (A)</i>	village founder-leader. His authority and influence in complex life and organization of the community are considerably and based on his knowledge of Akhazang. He presides over the council of elders (<i>Abaw-tsjhaw-maw</i>) who make the day-to-day decisions to solve problems and overcome crises.
<i>Farang (T)</i>	foreigner

<i>Hani-Akha</i>	name of the Akha minority in China
<i>Hua Fai</i>	slum with hilltribe families
<i>Igoor (A)</i>	or Ekaw, Thai denomination of Akha people.
<i>IMPECT</i>	Intermountain Peoples Education and Culture in Thailand, NGO in Chiang Mai area
<i>Isan</i>	East Thailand's rural area
<i>jakh'a (A)</i>	bonded servant, "adoption" of a group or person into the Akha-alliance-system
<i>kan nab thue phi (A)</i>	bad connotations on the hill tribes and their practices of spirit worshipping
<i>Kanthoke Paradise</i>	name I gave to the slum adjacent to Chiang Mai's Old Cultural Center.
<i>Kha (T)</i>	the peripheral areas, escaped control and domination by Tai
<i>Khon bon doi (T)</i>	people of the mountains
<i>khon muang (T)</i>	city dwellers
<i>khon pa (T)</i>	people of the forest, specialists of the forest.
<i>Khun (T)</i>	mister
<i>La-heuh-la-nji-mob (A)</i>	practical ritual, a family can do. It is performed by a shaman and some offerings are made. The ritual is performed in accordance with the indigenous conceptions of honor and shame. A wayside shelter is constructed and a ritual is performed in order to establish themselves as trustworthy and loyal people.
<i>Lawl kahq duq-eu (A)</i>	village gate rituals
<i>Loimi Akha</i>	main Akha sub-group
<i>mahakasat (T)</i>	King. The slogan "race, religion and King" (Chat, Sasana, Mahakasat) was adapted from the British slogan "God and Country" by King Vajiravudh who also introduced the concept of the Thai nation and the concept of Thai race or "chat Thai".
<i>mai saduak (T)</i>	uncomfortable, inconvenient places
<i>Mattayom (T)</i>	secondary grades of Thai education, divided in of two grades, lower secondary (seventh-ninth grade) and upper secondary (tenth-twelfth grade).
<i>Mizazayeh (A)</i>	"white skirted woman", performs the annual ancestor ceremonies.
<i>Neepa (A)</i>	shaman, doctor, curer.
<i>Padaweu (A)</i>	"adoption" of a group or person into the Akha-alliance-system by inter marriage or in the past, as jakh'a (bonded servant). This did not happen in a "class" context, however, but in a "family" context, leading to integration.
<i>Phami Akha</i>	main Akha sub-group

<i>Phima (A)</i>	teacher, healer, reciter and specialist of Akhazang. He embodies the historical archive and is the spiritual leader, who is appointed by skill.
<i>Pratom (T)</i>	primary grades of Thai education, divided in lower primary (first-fourth grade), upper primary (fifth-sixth grade),
<i>Qump shuivq Qump mil aq poeq (A)</i>	egg toasting festivities
<i>rabob kwam chue (T)</i>	practices of belief system
<i>rai luan loi (T)</i>	bad connotations on the hill tribes and their practices of shifting cultivation
<i>rai mun wien (T)</i>	rotational cultivation of Karen hilltribe
<i>Salalu</i>	practical ritual, a Lisu family can do.
<i>Sanlum Yoj</i>	suburb of Chiang Mai with hilltribe families
<i>Sasana (T)</i>	religion
<i>Sawasdee khrap (T)</i>	Hello, welcome.
<i>Sheng</i>	peoples graded most primitive, (“raw”) of all barbarians, unwilling to be civilized by the Chinese.
<i>shu</i>	“barbarians”, ordered by Kublai Khan to civilize (“cook”) and instruct them in proper techniques of agriculture. During the Yuan Dynasty (1297-1368) two documents from the early fourteenth century, one from Marco Polo and one from the Chinese scholar Li Jing describe barbarian groups in Yunnan.
<i>Soi (T)</i>	sidestreet
<i>Songthaew (T)</i>	general transportation car, meaning two seats
<i>Tai (T)</i>	the urban power centers in the lowlands.
<i>Thapae square</i>	main square in Chiang Mai city
<i>TRC/TRI</i>	In 1965 inauguration of the <i>Tribal Research Center (TRC)</i> by the Ministry of the Interior was established and in 1993 transformed to TRI, Tribal Research Institute, governed by the Labour and Social Welfare Ministry .
<i>Tuktuk (T)</i>	small motorized means of transportation
<i>Ulo Akha</i>	main Akha sub-group
<i>Wang Phra</i>	“monk vortex”, Karen village in Doi Luang area
<i>Warorot market</i>	day market alongside the river Ping
<i>Wualai Road</i>	main road from the city of Chiang Mai to the airport
<i>Yehl kuq aq poe (A)</i>	swing ceremony
<i>Ye-su zang (A)</i>	Jesus customs as a replacement for Akhazang.

Bibliography:

Anderson, B.

2006 *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London, New York: Verso p240

Baumann, Z.

2011 *Collateral Damage: Social Inequalities in a Global Age*. Cambridge: Polity Press p182

Buadaeng, K.

2006 "The Rise and Fall of the Tribal Research Institute (TRI): Hill Tribe Policy and Studies in Thailand", *Southeast Asian Studies* 44(3):359-384

Chang, W.

2001 "From War Refugees to Immigrants: The Case of the KMT Yuannese Chinese in Northern Thailand", *International Migration Review* 35(4): 1086-1105

Crooker, R.A.

1988 "Forces of Change in the Thailand Opium Zone," *Geographical review* 78(3): 241-256

DeWalt, K. and DeWalt, B.R.

2011 *Participant Observation. A Guide For Fieldworkers*. Plymouth: AltaMira Press p278

Dorrestein, P.

1993 *Opgroeien in een Akha Dorp. Veldwerkverslag Culturele Antropologie Amersfoort* p153

Eriksen, T.H.

2004 *Etnicity and Nationalism*. London: Pluto Press p244

Eriksen, T.H.

2007 *Globalization, the Key Concepts*. Oxford: Oxford International Publishers Ltd. P176

Evrard, O. en Leepreecha, P.

2009 "Monks, Monarchs and Mountain Folks. Domestic Tourism and Internal Colonialism in Northern Thailand", *Critique of Anthropology* 29(3): 300-23

Feigenblatt, von O.F., Suttichujit, V., Shuib, M.S., Keling, M.F. and Ajis, M.N.

2010 "Weapons of Mass Assimilation: A Critical Analysis of the Use of Education in Thailand," *Journal of Asian Pacific studies* 1(2): 292-310

Fordham, G.

1995 *Whiskey, Women and Song: Men, Alcohol and Aids in Northern Thailand*. Environmental Sciences. *The Australian Journal of Anthropology* 6(3): 154-177

Gellner, E. *Nations and Nationalism*. 1983 London: Cornell University Press p152

Gillooly, K.A.

2008 "Opium, Power, People: Anthropological Understandings of an Opium Interdiction Project in Thailand", *Contemporary Drug Problems* 35: 679-715

Grey-Postero, N.

2007 *Now We Are Citizens: Indigenous Politics in Postmulticultural Bolivia*. Stanford: Stanford University Press p294

Grünfeld, F.V.

1982 *Wayfarers of the Thai Forest: The Akha*. Amsterdam: Time-Life Books B.V. p168

Hares, M.

2009 "Forest Conflict in Thailand: Northern Minorities in Focus," *Environmental Management* 43:381-395

- Harvey, D.
1990 *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing p378
- Huang, S.
2005 "The Articulation of Culture, Agriculture, and the Environment of Chinese in Northern Thailand". *Ethnology* 44(1):1-11
- Humphreys, R.
1999 "Skilled Craftswomen or Cheap Labour? Craft-Based NGO Projects as an Alternative to Female Migration in Northern Thailand," *Gender and Development* 7(2): 56-63
- Inda, J. X. & R. Rosaldo (eds.)
2008 *The Anthropology of Globalization: a Reader.* Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.
- Ingold, T.
2011 *Being Alive: Essays on Movement, Knowledge and Description*. New York: Routledge p270
- Jatuworapruk, T.
2000 "Ritual Performance and the Reproduction of Ethnic Identity: The Salalu ceremony of the Lisu of Northern Thailand. *JCAS Symposium Series The Japan Center for Area Studies Osaka* 255-272
- Jonsson, H.
2004 "Mien Alter-Natives in Thai Modernity," *Anthropological quarterly* 77(4): 673-704
- Kammerer, C.A.
1990 "Customs and Christian Conversion among Akha Highlanders of Burma and Thailand," *American ethnologist* 17(2): 277-291
- Kammerer, C.A.
1998 "Descent, Alliance, and Political Order among Akha," *American ethnologist* 25(4): 659-674
- Keyes, C.
2002 "Presidential Address: "The Peoples of Asia"- Science and Politics in the Classification of Ethnic Groups in Thailand, China, and Vietnam", *The Journal of Asian Studies* 61(4): 1163-1203
- Korff, R., Korff, V. and Manakit, P.
2006 "Patronage, Activists and Repression: A Comparison of Minority Conflicts in Northern and Southern Thailand", *European journal of East Asian Studies* 5(1):71-100
- Kunstadter, P.
1967 *Southeast Asian tribes, Minorities, and Nations*. New York: Princeton. Volume II
- Laar, L. van de
1990 *Thaise Bergvolken: Marginalisatie en Ontwikkelingsbeleid*. Doctoraalscriptie Culturele Antropologie Nijmegen p75
- Leepreecha, P. and Evrard, O.
2009 "Monks, Monarchs and Mountain Folks: Domestic Tourism and Internal Colonialism in Northern Thailand," *Critique of anthropology* 29(3): 300-323
- McKay, D.
2006 Introduction: Finding 'the Field': the Problem of Locality in a Mobile World. *The Asia Pacific Journal of Anthropology* 7(3): 197-202
- McKinnon, J.
2001 Questioning the Essence of Forgotten Nations. *New Zealand Journal of Asian Studies* 3(2): 189-195

- McKinnon, K.
2005 “(Im)Mobilization and Hegemony: Hilltribe subjects and the Thai State. *Social & Cultural Geography* 6(1):31-46
- Mills, M. B.
1999 “Enacting Solidarity: Unions and Migrant Youth in Thailand”, *Critique of Anthropology* 19(2): 175-192
- Mills, M. B.
2005 “Endangering Discourses of Displacement: Contesting Mobility and Marginality in Rural Thailand”, *Ethnography* 6(3):385-419
- Mogg, R.
2006 “Reclaiming the Golden Triangle,” *Ecos* 0(129): 8-11
- Nakashima, D. and Vaddhanaphuti, C.
2006 “An Education Rooted in Two Worlds: the Karen of Northern Thailand,” *International social science Journal* 58: 117-120
- Odochao, J.
2006 “An Education Rooted in Two Worlds: the Karen of Northern Thailand”, *International Social Science Journal* 58(187): 117-120
- Perve, E.
2011 The Hilltribes Living in Thailand. Chiang Mai: Siam Book Planet p147
- Pitiyanuwat, S., Sujiva, S.
2001 “Civics Education in Thailand: Three Case Schools”, *International Journal of Educational Research*, 35: 93-108
- Pollard, A.
2009 “Field of Screams: Difficulty and Ethnographic Fieldwork”, *Anthropology Matters Journal* 11(2): 1-24
- Shu-Min, H.
2005 “The Articulation of Culture, Agriculture, and the Environment of Chinese in Northern Thailand,” *Ethnology* 44(1): 1-11
- Siriphon, A.
2006 “Local Knowledge, Dynamism and the Politics of Struggle: A Case Study of the Hmong in Northern Thailand,” *Journal of Southeast Asian studies* 37(1): 65-81
- Sturgeon, J.C.
2005 Border Landscapes: The Politics of Akha Land Use in China and Thailand. Washington: University of Washington Press p255
- Thongthew, S
1999 “Education Developments in Thailand”, *School Effectiveness and School Improvement* 10(1): 118-124
- Tooker, D. E.
2004 “Modular Modern: Shifting Forms of Collective Identity Among the Akha of Northern Thailand,” *Anthropological quarterly* 77(2): 243-288
- Tooker, D. E.
1996 “Putting the Mandala in its Place: A Practice-based Approach to the Spatialization of Power on the Southeast Asian Periphery”. *The Journal of Asian Studies* 55(2): 323-358
- Toyota, M.
2003 “Contested Chinese Identities Among Ethnic Minorities in the China, Burma and Thai Borderlands” *Ethnic and racial studies* 26(2): 301-320

- Trapansuphakon, P., Kamphonkul, T
 2006 Pga k'nyau: Knowledge on Rotational Farming in Northern Thailand. Sansai: IKAP p71
- Tsing, A.L.
 2005 Friction: An Ethnology of Global Connection. New York: Princeton University Press. pp321
- Vatikiotis, M.J.
 1984 Ethnic Pluralism in the Northern City of Chiang Mai. Unpublished PhD thesis University of Oxford, Trinity Term
- Wagner, K.,Magistrale, T.
 1995 Writing Across Culture: An Introduction to Study Abroad and the Writing Process. New York:Peter Lang Publishing, Inc.
- Ward, S.
 2003 "On Shifting Ground: Changing Formulations of Place in Anthropology", *The Australian Journal of Anthropology* 14(1): 80-96
- Westermeyer, J.
 1982 Poppies, Pipes and People: Opium and Its Uses in Laos". Berkely: University of California Press pp336
- Wiewel, E. e.a.
 2005 Injection Prevalence and Risks Among Male Ethnic Minority Drug Users in Northern Thailand. *Aids Care* 17(1):102-110
- Wimmer, A.
 2002 Nationalist Exclusion and Ethnic Conflict: Shadows of Modernity. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press p319
- Witte, J.
 2000 "Education in Thailand After the Crisis: A Balancing Act Between Globalization and National Self-Contemplation", *International Journal of Educational Development* 20: 223-245
- 2004 "The Lord Will Provide," *Economist* 372(8387): 36-37