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AKHA ZANGR

The Akha System of Sustainable Development and Its Conflicts with Thailand's Development Process

A thesis presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
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ABSTRACT

This thesis assesses Akha “zangr” (“way of life”) as an indigenous system of development relevant to Akha development in the highlands of Thailand. It uses the principles of sustainable development studies, incorporating empowerment, gender, environment, health, education, justice, equality, poverty and participation as a framework for the assessment. This is the first study to examine Akha zangr as a system of sustainable development. It follows on from the description given by Alting von Geusau (1999) of Akha zangr as a “system for the sustainability and continuity of the Akha as a marginalised people”. It is an attempt to empower the Akha community by giving credit to their knowledge and system of development as a modern rather than traditional system relevant to the 21st century.

In Thailand there are nine ethnic groups officially recognised as indigenous to the highlands, each with a unique language and “zangr” based on strategies for survival and development in the highland environment. This thesis describes their common experiences of the Thai development process. Consequences include political and social exclusion from participation in the development process, their unjustified label as “problem makers” in Thai politics, and the inaccurate assessment of Mountain People as ignorant and backward. Disastrous impacts of foreign development in the highlands include deforestation, poverty, human rights abuses and a loss of cultural independence and knowledge for minority ethnic groups.

Thailand's development process is examined based on increasing economic growth. Discussions focus on the industrialisation period initiated in the 1950's until the present day that, on paper, closely follow trends in international development thought. Thailand's policies of sustainable development have so far been ineffective in reducing environmental degradation from rapid economic growth and instead exclude local people from participating in the management of the environment. The assessment concludes that Thailand's top-down national economic growth policies have failed to improve the quality of life for

the most disadvantaged people in Thai society and instead have caused massive environmental degradation, increased poverty, inequalities and the disempowerment of individuals and the community.

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ACRONYMS

ACT	Akha Churches in Thailand
AFFECT	Association for Akha Education and Culture in Thailand
AITT	Assembly of Indigenous and Tribal Peoples of Thailand
BPP	Border Police Patrol
DAPA	Development and Agriculture Project for Akha
DPW	Department of Public Welfare
EIU	Economist Intelligence Unit
FAO	Food and Agricultural Organisation of the United Nations
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GNP	Gross National Product
GRP	Gross Regional Product
IBRD	International Bank for Reconstruction and Development
ICPD	International Conference on Population and Development, 1994, Cairo
IMPECT	The Inter Mountain Peoples' Education and Culture in Thailand Association
MOE	Ministry of Education
MOPH	Ministry of Public Health
MPCDE / SEAMP-HRI	Mountain People's Cultural and Development Educational / South East Asian Mountain Peoples' Highland Research Institute
NESDB	National Economic Social and Development Board
NFPP	National Family Planning Project
NGO	Non Government Organisation
OEPP	Office of Environmental Policy and Planning; Ministry of Science Technology and Environment
RFD	Royal Forest Department
TAT	Tourist Authority of Thailand
TDRI	Thailand Development Research Institute
TRI	Tribal Research Institute
UNDCP	United Nations Drug Control Program
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
WHO	World Health Organisation

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

This thesis examines Akha zangr as an indigenous system of development providing a suitable framework for Akha development in the 21st century. It explores how Thailand's development process has, through increased access to economic wealth, technology and infrastructure, moved into the highlands and covered Akha zangr with many of its own processes of development that are less sustainable in the highland environment. It discusses conflicts between the Thai development process based on increasing economic growth and the development processes of ethnic groups living in the highlands, and examines specific impacts on Akha zangr. Foreign development has not paid any attention to the indigenous systems of development existing in the highland environment for centuries and has effectively excluded indigenous groups politically, economically and socially from the Thai development process. Foreign¹ development has failed to improve, overall, the quality of their lives. Impacts include a massive loss of cultural knowledge, change in social status from relatively egalitarian to the lowest class of a foreign culture, human rights abuses, massive increases in the gap between the rich and poor, increasing inequalities, environmental degradation, and for some, an increase in absolute poverty. Marginalisation has increased for many people who were not provided with basic human rights such as citizenship, access to land, and a continuation of indigenous education, before foreign development commenced.

INDIGENOUS DEVELOPMENT

It has been a long journey for development studies, originating in the West, to come to the point of acknowledging that development is more than increasing economic wealth. From years of observing the negative impacts of development disasters on the least advantaged groups of society it has finally come up with some holistic principles of sustainable development, emphasising the importance of conservation, education, gender, equity and empowerment in

¹ In this case "foreign" means originating from outside the highlands.

the development process. It is ironic that indigenous communities have followed many of these principles for centuries yet the Western concept of development has taken away their self-determination, community methods of sustainable development and forced them to become part of less sustainable societies. Now development research has the potential to give back power to indigenous communities by giving indigenous systems credit as modern frameworks for alternative, sustainable development.

Akha zangr has the potential to increase knowledge within the discipline of development studies, emphasising the significance of indigenous systems of development and the ability of indigenous people to effectively meet their development needs. Akha zangr can also learn from knowledge within the development discipline, especially as indigenous systems must move to accommodate rapid political and environmental changes for Akha society. Sharing knowledge and discussions between cultures is an important part of the global development process, so that all people can improve the quality of life, their understanding of other cultures, and hopefully take measures to ensure that future generations can enjoy the same.

Development is a concept specific to culture and this thesis shows the vast difference between the national development policies of Thailand and the system of development of the Akha. In this relationship the balance of power is held by the Thai Government that “owns” the resources in the highlands of Thailand and attempts to manage them according to its concept of development, based on increasing economic growth. The Mountain People have made their homes in the highlands for centuries where systems of development have evolved specific to culture and environment. Their rights to resources are not recognised and their needs for a better future fall in second behind the Thai Government’s drive for its own development.

For decades, agents of foreign development believed they had the answer to improve the lives of indigenous people. However, due to imbalances in power and resources, conflicting development objectives between cultures, interference often had the opposite effect. Dominant cultures’ control of

development has biased research and literature, that is mostly produced by people with access to higher education in one of the world's dominant languages, consequently representing the ideas of some of the most privileged groups in the world. This bias favouring dominant cultures is likely to proceed until indigenous people gain support to continue indigenous processes of development and the right to negotiate their futures. Loomis (1999:8) comments that the Western world assumes intellectual dominance in the development arena yet indigenous people are, more and more, challenging this assumption. His observations are correct in regards to the practical application of alternative systems of development. Indigenous people are not waiting for the literature to acknowledge that effective indigenous development processes are effective models for alternative development.

This thesis exposes the classic "development" scenario, where development is imposed by a more powerful culture on a less powerful culture with the pretext that their lives will improve as a consequence of this process of foreign development. In Thailand the threat of invasion by Britain led to the initiation of modernisation policies, undertaken by Thailand to avoid total colonisation, by force, of its country. This pressure has continued in the 21st century in the form of economic power that threatens to withdraw investment if Thailand fails to perform to the expectations of a global market. The West did not value sustainable systems of development until 1987 when global impacts of economic growth policies started to appear. The world economic powers have not admitted that societies based on less technology and lower levels of consumption and production are far more sustainable than economies based on increasing economic growth. It continues to exploit these communities in order to increase its own markets and wealth. This theory is proved by the experience of the ethnic groups in the highlands of Thailand that followed far more sustainable systems of development than Thailand's foreign policies of economic growth.

Indigenous communities continue to be excluded from development processes because their inclusion requires increased costs or releasing control from foreign development groups. Akha education should cater to the needs of

indigenous people who do not have Thai as a first language, while encouraging the learning of their native language. This requires a special curriculum and teacher training, perhaps even a bilingual education system. The Akha do not have political representation or the economic power to push for Thai provision of these services. When indigenous peoples do receive extra support (remember, they are participating in an entirely different cultural system) they can be very successful. For instance, since the 1984 Hui Taumata (Maori Development Summit), the refocusing of mainstream government programs on overcoming Maori disadvantage, and the increase in the number of educated Maori professionals, the pace of Maori economic development has accelerated noticeably (Loomis 1999:9).

In the past more aggressive cultures controlled areas with a combination of force and economic power. Little has changed. Now it is economic dominance and legal control of resources that forces the submission of less powerful groups in society. There is a misconception that indigenous people do not want to participate in the development of more dominant societies; this is not the case with the Akha. The Akha want a better life for their children, but the services offered by the Thai government are insufficient to provide their children with equal opportunities as other children in Thailand. The Thai Government is creating dependence through its policies of economic expansion, yet their effectiveness at meeting Akha development needs is far less than indigenous systems of development. More dominant cultures expect less dominant cultures to join their systems, perhaps based on the assumption that homogenous societies are easier to manage. Chapter five shows this is clearly the desire of the Thai government, yet it doesn't adequately resource the Akha in this integration process. Chapter six reflects that adapting the indigenous development system to meet the objectives of the dominant development system and the indigenous development system is a more effective policy for development.

The development process of Thailand is directed by the international community and is based on economic growth, while the Akha indigenous development

process was based on Akha zangr², incorporating cultural values, community and a sustainable existence in the highland environment. The Thai (dominant culture) development process has moved into the highlands of Thailand clashing with the Akha (a minority culture) development process. The development of Thailand places pressure on land that the Akha depend on for subsistence living, forcing them to change their lifestyles and become part of Thai society in order to survive. Changes have occurred rapidly and many Akha do not have the skills, the resources, or the support to help them adapt to this new situation.

There are nine officially recognised tribes living in the highlands of Thailand, all of which have been evolving in the highland environment for centuries. Before the Thai government moved its policies into the highlands, there was no official recognition of the legal status of the highlanders as citizens and their rights to land were not acknowledged. Previously, their rights to living and access to land were gratuitous because lowlanders did not desire land in the highlands, and loyalty from the highlanders was necessary to secure arbitrary State boundaries. This started to change in the early nineteenth and twentieth centuries when the map of Asia was drawn for the first time, imposed by the Western powers forcing legally recognised borders, and converting some people into ethnic minorities (Keyes 2002). Since then foreign development in the highlands has caused increasing conflicts between the Thai government and ethnic groups over highland resources. The Thai Government has conveniently projected the image of highlanders as problem-makers in order to justify its complete control over the area and make it easier to achieve its goals.

Lack of citizenship and reduced access to land are the fundamental causes of real poverty, human rights abuses and inequality for the ethnic groups in the highlands. As land pressure in the highlands increases it is necessary for highlanders to seek employment outside their villages and a new dependence on Thai social services, such as education and health, is created. These

² The Ulo Akha use the word zang to describe everything about being Akha. It encompasses all knowledge one requires to live as an Akha person, including history, morals, law, customs, manners, interactions between people, beliefs, medicine, rules for conducting ceremonies and rules for daily living (Choopah 2003). Akha zang can be translated into English as 'way of life'.

services are inadequate to cope with the needs of the ethnic minority groups and marginalisation is compounded. It is clearly demonstrated that the Akha have been developing for centuries in terms of knowledge, politics, law, spirituality, employment and medicine. In this thesis, it is argued that Thailand and international development agencies used poverty in the highlands as an excuse to benefit their own development processes resulting in, overall, increased poverty for ethnic groups in the highlands. In the case of the Akha it is shown that the Thai development of the highlands has been so unsustainable that it has encouraged many Akha villages to change their 'zangr' in order to cope with increased poverty.

It is argued that the highlanders could have continued to improve the quality of their lives with fewer negative impacts if their legal status had been ensured before development was initiated and more attention had been given to indigenous systems of development. The lack of value given to Akha zangr has resulted in a loss of cultural knowledge through the replacement of the Akha indigenous education system, loss of cultural pride and the rejection of culture by the young generation. Akha zangr does not have to be entirely rejected in order for the Akha to gain skills to survive as integrated members of Thai society. It is not too late for Akha zangr to be incorporated in the Akha development process, through education and technology, and for it to contribute to the pool of knowledge within the Development Studies discipline. Development should support cultural models of development and protect them against the resource needs of rapid economic development rather than push them into a market economy based on foreign concepts of development.

If development is a cultural concept based on improving the quality of life, in order for agents of foreign development to improve the quality of the lives of the Akha they must first understand the Akha cultural concept of development. The indigenous development process is the key to understanding this cultural concept. For Akha, this process is based on Akha zangr, a holistic concept that incorporates knowledge, law, morals, etiquette, community values, and history. Foreign development has failed to even acknowledge that an indigenous development process exists and instead has based intervention on its own

cultural concepts of development such as cash incomes, the elimination of opium growing and the introduction of poor quality foreign education.

Thailand's development is a powerful economic force moving through the highlands. Foreign development has made it more difficult to survive off the highland environment as more people compete for resources. It replaces indigenous systems and slowly takes over the highlands. On paper, Thailand's national development plans, produced by the National Economic and Social Development Board (NESDB) in conjunction with international advisors and consultants, are moving in parallel with international development thought. Plans incorporate infrastructure, education, health, sustainable development, people's participation and community empowerment: however they fail to reflect the harsh realities in the highlands of Thailand that are a direct consequence of Thai Government interference in the area. Everything concerning "development" from Thailand's perspective has been for its own benefit, causing disempowerment and a loss of self-determination for the Akha. National statistics do not differentiate between ethnic groups, distorting the success of Thailand's development and the location of poverty.

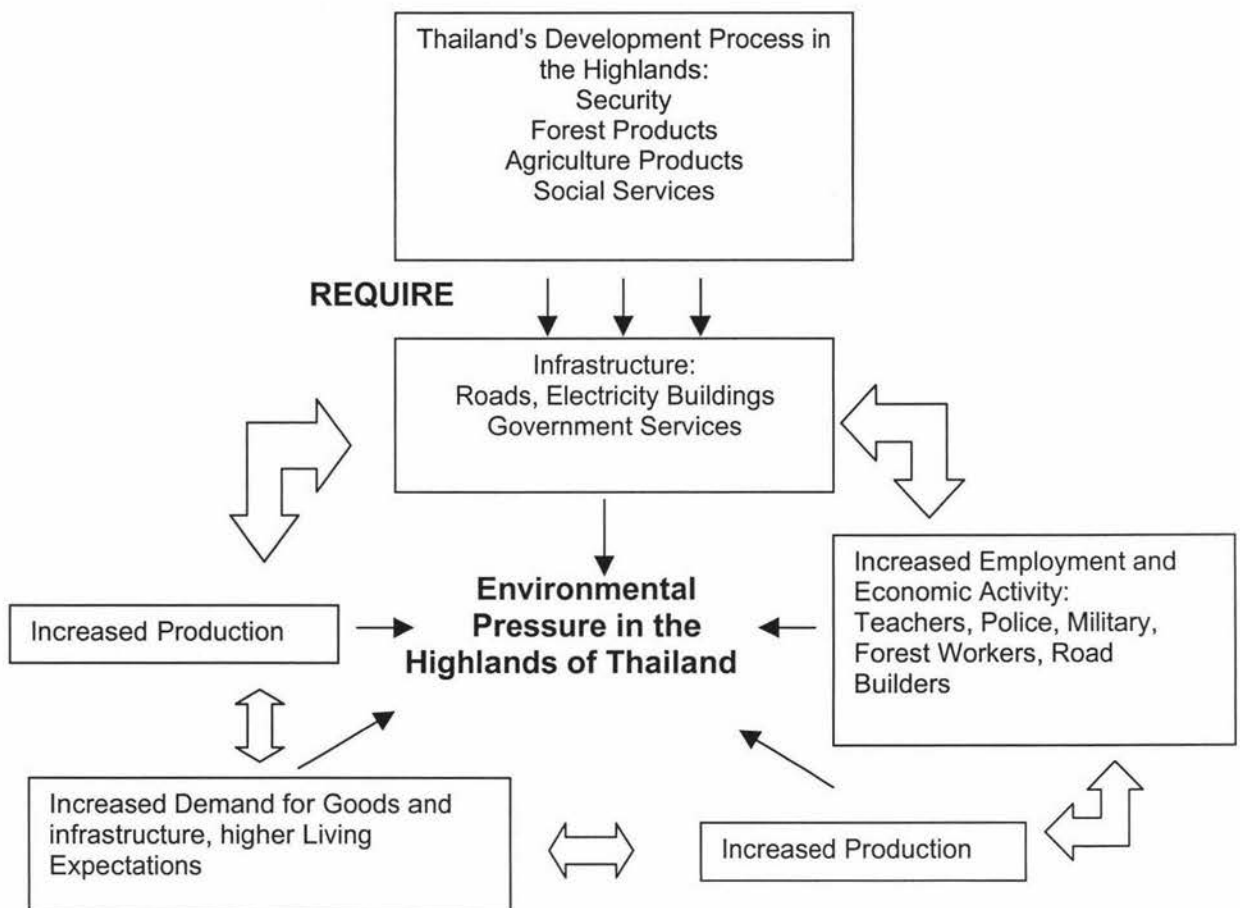
Thailand's development process has followed the West in its process of industrialisation where environmental exploitation and economic growth policies drive the economy away from self-sufficient communities and towards commercial industry controlled by the powerful few. The highlands of Thailand are an economic resource for the Government of Thailand for forest products, agricultural production and tourism. In the past the highlands of Thailand were not an attractive economic investment, apart from the extraction of forest products (especially teak), due to the lack of infrastructure, the ecologically sensitive nature of the land - including lack of water for irrigation - limited cultivable land and the lack of technology to farm in these areas (Faichampa 1990:153). Thailand gains access to technology, consumption increases and land in the lowlands becomes scarce, the highlands of Thailand become more attractive to investors and lowland Thai people seeking land for agriculture and improvements to highland infrastructure make them more so.

A development cycle is occurring in the highlands of Thailand (Illustration 1.1). Initially the extraction of forest products, under the authority of the Royal Forestry Department (RFD), required the development of roads (infrastructure) for transport. Over time, development activities increased in the highlands and, together with the improvement of infrastructure, caused an increase in civil service employees, such as schoolteachers, Public Welfare Department staff, forestry workers and non-government workers for road building and other projects (Kunstadter 1983:28). The presence of these workers has contributed significantly to the increase in population in the highlands and caused an increase in demand for goods for economic production and personal consumption, services, and more infrastructure. The result is an increase in production in the highlands and more pressure placed on an ecologically sensitive environment. Chapter four of this thesis explains one, how indigenous people have been unfairly blamed for environmental destruction in the highlands and, two, their exclusion from accessing the benefits of increased economic activity in the highlands.

The development of the highlands has resulted in an increase in Akha migration to the lowlands. As villages are opened up through development programmes, tourism and increased involvement in the market, Akha observe the lifestyles of Thai people, tourists and government workers. They see material wealth and they want the same; they don't want to work in the field everyday. Young Akha people see their parents, who are mostly illiterate and with a low level of Thai language, struggle to find work for low wages in a society that does not value their culture. They observe Thai society from their televisions and want to move to the city. Young Akha people are becoming Thai in the cultural sense, learning Thai language, Thai etiquette, Thai songs and Thai history. They are increasingly exposed to mass media, none of it Akha (Renard 2001:56).

If we say that the Akha have experienced underdevelopment as a consequence of the Thai development process we are ignoring the fact of the Akha adapting, and have survived as a minority culture on the fringes of society for a millennium. Their development process has been interfered with but it has not

Illustration 1.1 Development Cycle in the Highlands of Thailand



stopped, it continues to adapt to its changing environment and try to meet the needs of Akha development. Survival of the Akha depends on their adaptation to a new society; if they don't change they can't support themselves and their families. The ignorance of outsiders about Akha zangr has increased the barriers to Akha development, causing uneven development, the weakening of indigenous systems, poverty, marginalisation and loss of important cultural knowledge.

Apart from the Thai Government, Christians and the United Nations Drug Control Program were significant agents of foreign development in the highlands who, with the backing of international economic, social and political power, are guilty of imposing foreign concepts of development on highlanders under the pretext of improving their lives. Impacts include an overpowering of indigenous development processes and increasing inequalities between communities, as some villages are targeted for "development" and others are

not. The motive driving these efforts is fundamentally to change the ethnic groups so that they fit into external processes of development. If agents were sincere in helping the Akha, agents would have discovered before now that what the Akha people wanted was to follow Akha zang rather than the market system and Christian “zang”. The wishes of the Akha do not arise from ignorance, rather they are based on their trust in a highly dependable system that fits with their cultural values and that has been in place for centuries as a mechanism for survival in the highlands.

Resources available for development initiatives coming from outside Akha communities are far greater than resources available for indigenous development. For instance, the Government has funds, manpower and technical knowledge set aside for development, as do international development agencies and churches, but the Akha lack a pool of resources. Resources for indigenous development are limited, making Akha following Akha zang poorer than Akha following other “zang”. More resources are required to strengthen the indigenous development process and time is running out - the pace of development in Thailand is moving very quickly while Akha development continues to move slowly. Exclusion from the Thai development process hinders this process even further as barriers to education increase inequalities.

There is some positive work going on in Akha communities that follow the natural indigenous development process. Examples include producing and distributing information relevant to Akha people in a format the Akha can access, fighting for human rights such as citizenship and access to land, promoting Akha culture through education, preserving traditional knowledge by recording and translating ancient Akha recitations of zang, teaching Akha people to read and write Akha, helping the Akha gain skills for survival in Thai society, networking between Akha in China, Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam, and supporting Akha to gain quality education so they can assist in indigenous development work (MPCDE/SEAMP-HRI 2003).

It is unfair to say that foreign development was entirely bad as some benefits have occurred indirectly. For instance, some people have been granted citizenship, allowing them to participate in the development of lowland society. If they can afford a good education it is possible to find good employment in the lowlands, they can use modern Thai medicine and can use the new infrastructure in the highlands for businesses, including guesthouses and trade. Cars can be brought up to the village, many houses have electricity and some Akha have learnt to read and write Akha language.

And finally, it is necessary to note that not all is negative in the relationship between the Akha and the Thai Government. In the past, the Akha and the military (the first instigators of development in the Akha communities of Thailand) were wary of each other and purposely hid their real selves from each other in order to avoid clashes. Many Mountain People in Thailand have understood that change in their lifestyles is inevitable, while the military understand that not every Mountain Person is a drug trafficker or a threat to security. For the purpose of improving the situation in the highlands of Thailand, trustworthy village leaders are trying to find trustworthy Government people and work together to find positive solutions (Boonyasaranai 2003). Positive movements are much more productive than mere criticism of failed movements.

METHODOLOGY

The “modern” world has a never-ending appetite for increasing economic growth. The continual advancement in technology causes more and more areas of the earth to be exposed to foreign development processes through infrastructure, education and media. Consequently many minority cultures no longer have the choice to remain isolated, autonomous and sustainable, and their indigenous development processes can be severely altered. A study of the Akha system of development was chosen to show that indigenous patterns of development are fundamental to improving the quality of life for the Akha. It is alarming that after more than 50 years of “development” of the highlands, the indigenous development processes of the ethnic groups in the highlands have

still not been researched. Supporting indigenous systems of development is fundamental to development.

Usually minority cultures are expected to switch their development process to the more dominant development process based on the assumption that their lives will improve as they can increase their material wealth and access foreign social services such as education health and employment. The more-or-less forced participation in the development process of a dominant culture instantly places the minority culture in a disadvantaged position as they lack the experience, language, support and skills to participate as equal members of the foreign society. This process has been taking place for centuries and still many people do not understand that people from minority cultures effectively are foreigners in the new society yet they are expected to fully participate in it. Rather being understood, minority cultures are often labelled “ignorant” and “stupid” because their knowledge and values do not fit with the knowledge and values of the more dominant foreign society.

In 2001, I spent eight months living in Thailand while studying full-time, by correspondence, my Post-graduate Diploma in Development Studies. From 2002 to 2003 I spent 12 months researching the Akha while living in Northern Thailand. I also was a volunteer worker at the Mountain People's Cultural and Development Educational South East Asian Mountain Peoples' Highland Research Institute (MPCDE/SEAMP-HRI), an indigenous Akha organisation, from March until July 2003. During these periods living in Thai society while mixing with Thai and Akha people, I observed, experienced and researched Thai and Akha societies.

Lack of literacy and fluency in Thai made accessing information more difficult and time consuming and restricted access to information. However, over time I learnt Thai and a little Akha and many people could speak English and interpret information for me. In the village it is more important to speak Akha as this is the language spoken by everyone and as the older Akha do not speak Thai, speaking Thai excludes them from communication. However, in the lowlands

speaking Thai will give you access to more people as many Akha in the lowlands speak Thai.

Initial information about the Akha was accessed through an Internet search and literature search in the Chiang Mai and Chulalongkorn (Bangkok) University libraries. Reading Thailand's English newspapers, the Bangkok Post and the Nation over a 2.5-year period, was also important. There was a lot of literature on highland development in general but not so much reliable information on individual cultures living in the highlands. In terms of information on Akha culture there are very few writers. A Masters thesis may be very effective at comparing two villages or highlighting themes in Akha culture but it takes more than a lifetime of research and living with Akha people to understand their culture. However, anthropologists and their research contributed a lot by providing insights to Akha culture that I could never gain on my own in such a short period of time.

Currently there are no Akha from Thailand that have ever written academically about their culture in English language. In fact, while some Akha speak English, there are very few Akha who have the ability to read in English the things that have been written about them, let alone critique it. There is limited study of Akha subgroups so research does not necessarily account for variances between groups. Part of the value of doing this thesis is to bring attention to these issues and make a modest contribution to understanding them. But much more should and needs to be done to ensure that minority cultures are supported in the rapidly changing environment of the global world.

Culture has not been an important part of the development process in the highlands of Thailand. This means that data collected for development purposes often does not reflect the reality in the highlands and important statistics based on ethnic groupings, apart from population, gender and literacy, do not exist. Villages are still very remote so it is impossible to collect these statistics on your own. It is almost an illusion of data: the more you look, the less there is. The lack of statistics made it difficult to support ideas gained from talking to experts or observations during fieldwork.

I contacted the Ethnic Studies Department at Chiang Mai University, which employs Mountain People to research issues in the highlands. They are a central contact for many people and passed on to me contacts for Akha organisations, development organisations in general and individuals working with the Akha. I visited many organisations and talked to many people working with the Akha and, of course, the Akha themselves. The more I read and spoke to people, I realised that often the knowledge people had in their heads gained from working and living in the area for a long time was far more useful than what could be found in books. Some information was highly sensitive and could not be included in research for its potential to harm individuals or communities and disrupt the positive work people are doing in the highlands.

One of the best lessons for fieldwork that I gained from Development Studies was the bias, discussed by Chambers (1997), of so many rural development projects. This was very significant for the Akha in Thailand. Many people contact existing organisations, they are then pointed to a village that has been visited and studied many times before. Access to a village is very appealing to people who do not know the highlands of Thailand and feel overwhelmed about how they are going to get access to villages without knowing Akha language. Unfortunately this contributes to the bias in research - the most accessible villages get researched and the situation of other villages is not fully explored. Development is about change so it is important to visit as many communities as possible to get an idea of how they have been affected by foreign development.

In order to avoid this bias, after spending 10 days in a village to learn the basics of Akha language, I visited another very remote village in Northern Thailand then went looking for the Akha in Myanmar and Laos with two friends. Although the study of the Akha outside Thailand is beyond the scope of this project it was very useful to see the impacts of foreign development on the Akha. After my return I focused my fieldwork back on Thailand. Throughout the year I visited many villages with Akha friends, with people working with the Akha, development organisations in the highlands and with other foreigners working in nearby villages. When entering a village I tried to take note of the surrounding

environment, visit as many houses as possible, observe and help the women working by carrying wood and preparing food, and go walking with the children. At every opportunity I would attend ceremonies and observe normal life in the village. A video camera helped by recording activities that were later explained to me by Dr Leo Alting von Geusau and his wife Deuleu Choopah. The more villages I went to, the more I realised that each village has had a different experience of development and that general statements about all the Akha communities in Thailand, such as about the increase in absolute poverty, were difficult to make. Impacts of development varied significantly from village to village. The remoteness of villages and lack of accurate data on the entire Akha community, still remains a huge barrier to improving highland development.

THESIS STRUCTURE

Chapter Two examines the development process of Thailand since the 1960's through a brief, mainly economic, analysis of changes in the agricultural, manufacturing and service (tourist) sector, noting the impact on National debt and the economic crisis of 1997. It moves on to discuss social transformations in Thailand, including population changes, urbanisation, employment, social security, education and health. The final analysis assesses the impacts of development and the challenge of sustainable development, nominating the environment, poverty and inequalities as key issues for Thailand's future. This section argues that Thailand's top-down policies result in poverty for the poorer people in society and disempowerment of local communities. It also suggests that increasing economic growth by turning forest into land for commercial agriculture is a higher priority for the Thai Government than ensuring that the least advantaged groups in society are provided with basic needs.

Chapter Three introduces the ethnic groups in the highlands and notes that history and the mountain environment have caused very different patterns of development to emerge from highland and lowland cultures. It discusses Thai cultural and political perceptions of Mountain People, which form the basis for the Thai approach to development in the highlands. Forestry, opium, security and welfare are examined as reasons for Thai development of the highlands. It

analyses the effect of foreign development, based on economic growth rather than sustainability, on the highland environment to show how development pressures Mountain People. Then it discusses the impacts of development on ethnic minorities in the highlands commenting on a reduction in socio-economic status, forced participation in Thai society, loss of cultural knowledge, human rights issues, increasing inequalities, political, economic and social exclusion and increasing social problems. Finally it notes conflicts between the Thai development process and the ethnic development processes especially in regards to citizenship, land and education.

Chapter Four introduces the Akha, their location, history and background, and the concept of Akha zangr as a system of sustainable development. It introduces the idea that the Akha have been following indigenous patterns of development for over a millennium. It shows that democracy, gender, justice, equity, continuity, peace, and the environment are well-integrated parts of the Akha development process.

Chapter Five assesses the impacts of foreign development on the Akha development process and discusses the relevance of Akha zangr to the future of Akha Development. Impacts specific to Akha zangr include a lack of written language resulting in a loss of cultural knowledge and information. It also notes how the Akha development process has adapted to accommodate the Thai development process. The key point is that the Thai development process has marginalised the Akha. For development to occur it would be much better to follow the indigenous patterns of development.

Chapter Six concludes that Akha zangr is a more effective alternative development model than the foreign development models. By supporting the Akha indigenous development process both Thai and Akha people could improve their quality of life by ensuring the continuation of ethnic diversity. This fits with objectives laid out in Thailand's ninth National Development Plan calling for community empowerment and a return to self-sufficiency.

Summary

This introduction summarised the movement of the Thai development process into the highlands where minority cultures are located. There has been a large amount of foreign assistance for development in the highlands over the past 50 years, however development programs have failed to secure the human rights of ethnic minority groups who were living there before development commenced, resulting in their exclusion from the development process. Increasing security, controlling ethnic minorities and economic development are priorities for the Thai development process, rather than improving the lives of the highlanders. This chapter also summarised the methodology used as a basis for this research and outlined the structure of the thesis. The following chapters take a more detailed look at the development process of Thailand, its economic expansion into the highlands, the impacts on the environment and its ethnic groups. The Akha culture is introduced and Akha zangr is assessed as a viable system of alternative, sustainable development and encouraged as a framework for future development work directed by the Akha. Conclusions show that conflicts between the cultural concepts of development have resulted in the development of Thailand at the expense of the development of the Akha.

Chapter 2

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THAILAND

Since the 1960's Thailand has experienced rapid change from an agricultural society to an industrial society and, in terms of economic growth, its development has been very successful. With this "success" has come the capacity through increased infrastructure, technology and industry to exploit even more resources, that were once undesirable, for economic gain. Some people have done very well from this process. However, others have been politically and socially excluded from the development process, inequalities have increased - along with exploitation of the environment - and for some, poverty has worsened. While increased exploitation of the environment contributes to economic growth, it also contributes to urbanisation and pollution, causing increases in both urban and rural poverty. This chapter focuses on the key characteristics of the Thai development process, highlighting regional contributions to development and effects on poverty and tribal people.

THE MODERNISATION OF THAILAND

Thailand is bordered by Malaysia, Burma, Laos and Cambodia and is one of the countries in the Mekong Quadrangle. No part of Vietnam or China touches Thailand but both countries can be entered within 100km of Thai territory. (Appendix A: Map of Highlands in the Mekong Quadrangle). The Tai¹ moved into mainland Asia in the seventh century and founded the first important Thai State at Sukothai in the thirteenth century (Hafner 2000a:134). From the middle of the 14th century, Thailand functioned as a great rice growing and trading state (Kaplan 1981:52). Thailand's location, its endowment with natural food resources and its political policy of welcoming foreign trade and advisers have been fundamental to its development. The modernisation of Thailand was a direct consequence of the British invasion of Burma (annexed in 1852), the French in Indo-China, the British in Malaya and the forced opening of Japan by

¹ Tai identifies populations speaking that language and Thai refers to country and its citizens (Hafner 2000b:434).

the United States directly threatening the traditional isolationism of the East (Dhiravegan 1974:13).

King Mongkut (IV) (1851-1868) understood that Thailand would have to follow Western patterns of development and make concessions in order to retain its independence and avoid colonisation. He initiated modernisation policies in 1857 by signing a new set of treaties with the Western Powers (Panjaphongse & Tiensong 1972:6). Part of this process involved the assistance of technical experts from abroad to advise on the administration of the country. At one time as many as 84 foreign advisers were on duty in Bangkok (Panjaphongse & Tiensong 1972:6,7). Successful negotiation of the Bowring treaty was largely due to King Mongkut's desire to open the country to Britain, resulting in an unequal treaty favouring British markets (Dhiravegan 1974:14). Stability and the development of a more colonial government secured Thailand as a buffer state between the British in Burma and the French in Cambodia. Economic growth made it possible for British interests to prosper in conditions of law and order and eventually to control 90% of Siam's foreign trade (Dhiravegin 1974:22).

King Mongkut (IV) introduced a tax system to increase revenue (Hafner 2000a:134). With his son Chulalongkorn (1868-1910) they constructed irrigation canals, built ships, railways and highways, and gave Siam a postal service and system of telegraphs in 1875. They expanded exports of rice, tin, teak, and rubber and encouraged Chinese immigrations to labour in the mines and do commercial work in the city, work scorned by the agriculturally-minded Siamese (Panjaphongse & Tiensong 1972:7,8). King Chulalongkorn (V) took responsibility for reorganising the political administration system of Siam to closely resemble those of British and Dutch colonies. Prior to this there was no navy, no railroads, no roads and no medical organisation (Dhiravegin 1974:28). The absolute monarchy was overthrown on 24 June 1932, brought about by the People's Party, however the King has continued to play an important role, most notably in the welfare of Thailand, until the present day (Panjaphongse & Tiensong 1972:10). Logs, rice, tin, sugar and gunnysacks contributed to

national income prior to industrialisation (Thailand Development Research Institute 1986:252).

THE INDUSTRIALISATION OF THAILAND

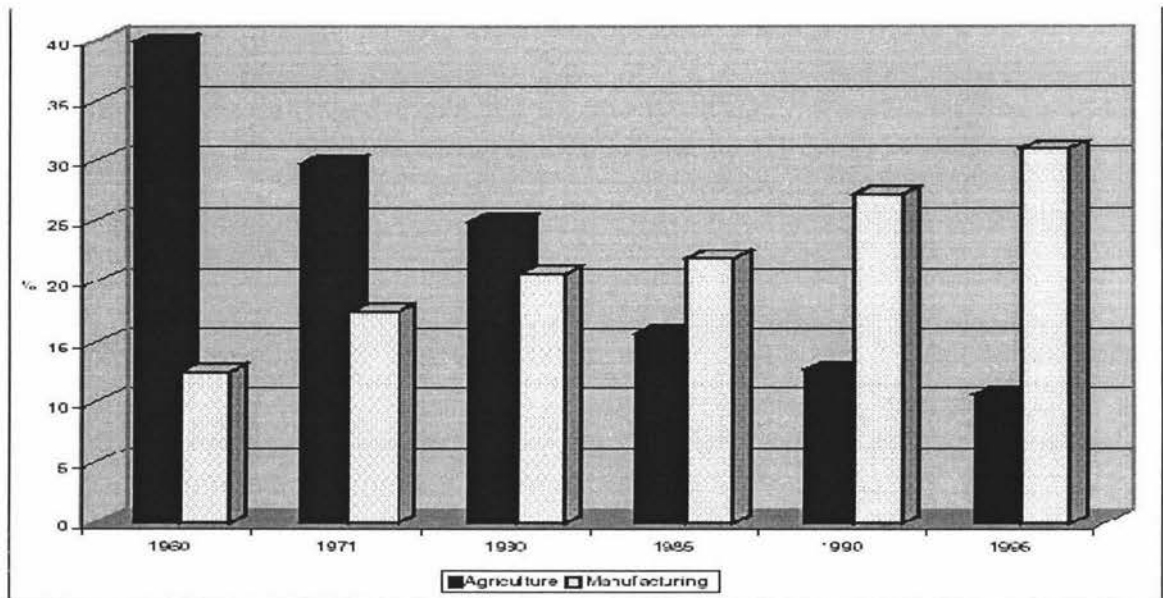
Prior to the 1960's Thai villages were practically self-sufficient, Thai people had plenty of rice and their diet was enriched by fish, salt, fruits, vegetables and spices (Panjaphongse & Tiensong 1972:7).

With modernisation underway in Thailand, the process of industrialisation commenced with the implementation of national policies aimed at changing the economy from a mostly self-sufficient agricultural economy to a manufacturing economy. Industrialisation began in the 1950's and was boosted by the country's first national five-year plan issued by the National Economic Social and Development Board (NESDB) of Thailand in 1961 (Chandravithun 1997). Prior to policies of industrialisation, the economic development of the country was based chiefly on the production and export of rice: the decline in its importance became noticeable in the mid-1960's (Motooka 1978:272).

The international community was influential in initiating the industrialisation process in Thailand, with agencies such as the United Nations and the Asian Development Bank advocating more rapid exploitation of natural resources under the pretext of alleviating poverty (Kummer 2000:25). International development assistance from the United States and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD) was used to expand infrastructure, and rising international market prices stimulated agricultural expansion (Hafner 2000b:454). Thailand's debt grew and capital was invested in the manufacturing and service industries. The initial phase of Thailand's industrialisation was based on import-substitution industrialisation (ISI) policies, followed by its current phase of export-oriented industrialisation (EOI) policies, initiated in 1972 with the enactment of the Investment Promotion Act (Rasiah 2003:180). Manufacturing expanded through incentives for foreign and domestic investment, and its contribution to Gross Domestic Product (GDP)

rose significantly during the ISI period (Phananiramai & Hewison 2001:115,116). (Graph 4.1).

Graph 2.1 Percentage Contributions to Thailand's GDP 1960-1995 (selected years)



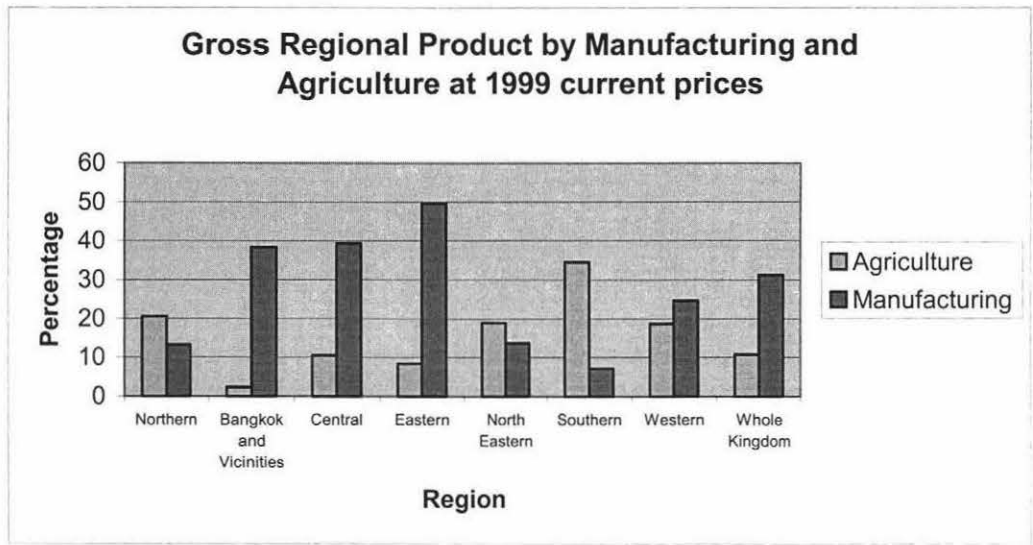
(Phananiramai & Hewison 2001:117)

The success of the Thai economy has tended to be measured economically, by growth in GDP. Over the years 1961 to 1999, Thailand's GDP has increased from around 64,000 million baht to 4,632,134 million baht, around 38 times (NESDB 2001a). This involved an average per annum growth rate of 7.9% in the 1960's, 6.9% in the 1970's, and 7.8% in the 1980's (Krongkaew 2003). High growth rates indicate the rapid pace of the industrialisation of Thailand. What they fail to show are the dramatic effects this had on society through the changes in political, social and cultural systems supporting the growth, the impacts on natural resources required to fuel the growth, the transfer of power from local communities to government, the increase in inequalities and human rights abuses of the most vulnerable groups in society.

Development has impacted very differently on Thailand's regions. Graph 4.2 shows that industrialisation has caused manufacturing to dominate Thailand's Gross Domestic Product. Development policies have favoured manufacturing,

causing a much greater rate of growth than agriculture. The manufacturing sector draws on resources from rural areas. Wealth and services are concentrated in urban areas and have been poorly distributed to rural areas, increasing the gap between urban and rural development. Analysis shows that forests have been turned into land for commercial agriculture and agricultural employment is decreasing. The cost of Thailand’s development process is disproportionately paid by the poor in rural areas, causing poverty to worsen in some areas. Graph 4.2 shows that agriculture still dominates Gross Regional Product (GRP) in the Northeastern, Southern, and Northern regions.

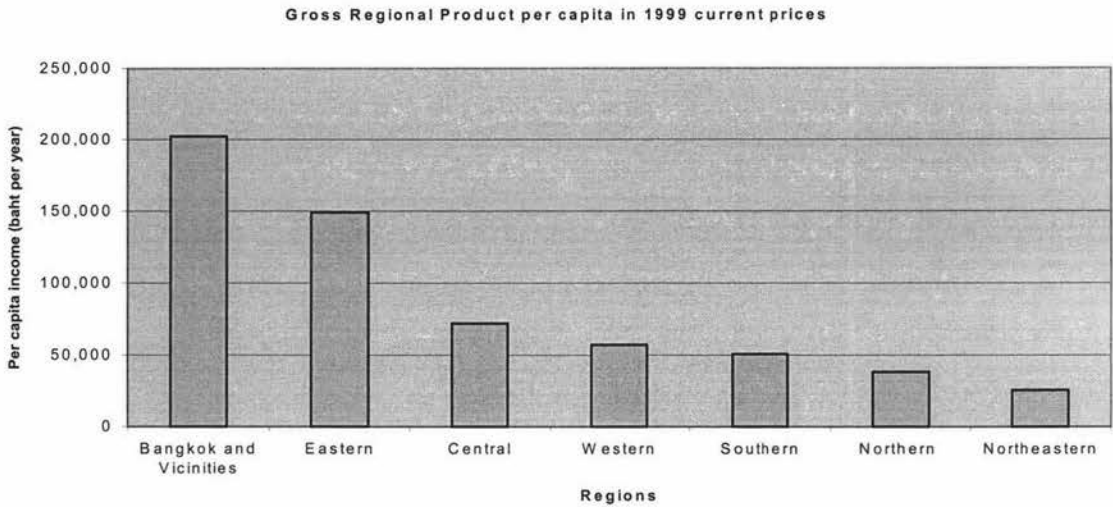
Graph 2.2



(NESDB 2001a).(Appendix B: Gross Regional Product in 1999 at Current Prices).

The significance of urban bias in Thailand’s development process is depicted in Graph 4.3 showing GRP per capita for each region. The regions with the lowest GRP per capita are also the agricultural dominant regions of the Northeast (25,721 baht per year), North (38,332 baht per year), and the South (50,728 per year) (Appendix B :Gross Regional Product in 1999 at Current Prices). While the regions with the highest GRP are the regions dominated by the manufacturing sector, Bangkok and its vicinities (202,332 baht per year), Eastern (149,049 baht per year), and Western (71,939 baht per year). Low wages are associated with agricultural work: in 1999 79% of agricultural workers earned less than the minimum wage, compared with only 21% in the manufacturing industry (World Bank 2001b:36).

Graph 2.3



(NESDB 2001a). (Appendix B: Gross Regional Product in 1999 at Current Prices).

Economic growth policies are formulated in Bangkok and concern over the negative impacts of economic growth on society are reflected in the country's five-year plans produced by the NESDB. Seeing the massive consequences that uncontrolled economic growth had on the environment, the sixth NESDB plan introduced the need for sustainable development; the seventh Master Plan (1992-1996) included provisions for sustainable growth and people's participation. The eighth NESDB (1996-2000) embodied a people-centred approach to development (UNDP 1999:158). Thailand's ninth five-year plan advocates a return to "sufficiency economy" philosophy. "The philosophy of sufficiency economy, based on adherence to the middle path, is advocated to (a) overcome the current economic crisis that was brought about by unexpected change under conditions of rapid globalisation, and (b) achieve sustainable development." (NESDB 2001b). Many economists doubt whether the NESDB development plans amount to much more than paper plans, or at best to a series of good intentions (Rigg 1997:119).

The following discussions challenge the perception that economic growth alleviates poverty. While Thailand's national income has greatly increased during the past 40 years, benefits are often gained at the expense of the poorer, most vulnerable groups in society. A more balanced approach to development

would require greater investment in education, health, land rights and human rights and more realistic environmental protection incorporating the community in the management process. The UNDP (2003:64,68) acknowledges that development brought both material gains and disempowerment, and that the judicial system fails to protect ordinary people, highlighting the need for the protection of human rights and empowerment in the development process. The world emphasis on economic growth as a measurement of success, over and above justice and community empowerment, needs to be seriously redressed to avoid increasing poverty.

Agriculture

Throughout the industrialisation period, agriculture has supplied the manufacturing sector with employees, food and raw materials for processing. Agriculture declined from 90.5% of the country's exports in 1960 to 22.6% in 1990 (Krongkaew 2003). However in 1999 agriculture contributed 10.73% of the country's GDP, and remains a significant part of the Thai economy (Appendix B: Gross Regional Product in 1999 at Current Prices). An analysis of the agricultural sector is an important tool for assessing regional inequalities and environmental impacts of industrialisation. It also points to internal migration patterns as cities grow in population and size, drawing labour from the countryside. This section looks at the diversification of agriculture, increases in land under cultivation and change in agricultural employment. Employment and urbanisation are discussed in more detail in the next section on "Social Transformation".

Before the 1950's almost 90% of the population was dependent on farming for most or all of their income (Hafner 2000b:449). The change from an agricultural economy to a manufacturing economy required decreasing employment in agriculture, in order to provide employment for the manufacturing industry. Applying technology, such as tractors, machinery and fertilisers, to agriculture increased agricultural production. Land under cultivation also expanded by 2.5 times (Hafner 2000b:438). Agricultural products were diversified and exports

other than rice included cassava², maize, tapioca, kenafe, rubber and sugar (Motooka 1978:273). Agriculture also contributed to a growing industry of manufactured frozen and canned goods.

The commercialisation of agriculture had major impacts on the environment as the harvest area for rice, rubber, maize, cassava and sugarcane all increased. From 1977 to 1986 the harvested area for major rice crops increased from 48.3 million to 57.5 million rai, and from 2.7 million to 4 million rai for second rice crops (TDRI 1986:24). From 1977 to 1986, the harvested area for rubber also increased, from 6.8 million to 8.8 million rai, and production increased from 394,000 to 773,000 tons. In the same period the harvested area for maize increased from 7 million to 12 million rai and production increased from 2.7 million to 4.9 million tons. For cassava the area increased from 5.2 million to 7.5 million and production from 11.8 million to 15.3 million tons. The sugarcane harvest area increased from 3.1 million to 3.4 million rai while production actually decreased from 26.1 to 24.1 million rai (TDRI 1986:25). Some of these crops, such as rubber, exploited land that was previously used for subsistence agriculture and reduced the ability of people to feed themselves directly from the environment. The increase in land under cultivation was at the expense of Thailand's forests: forested area decreased from 53% in 1960 to 25.3% in 1998 (Table 2.1).

Forestry

Forest reserves are important to Thailand as a major source of national wealth and provide important foreign exchange earnings (Kaplan 1981:58). Forests have a high commercial value for tree species like teak and dipterocarps that are valued on the international market (Kummer 2000:26). They have also become a source of income for the government as tourist resorts and tourist attractions. The importance of Thailand's forests for the national economy was recognised in the first NESDB five-year plan stating that 256,000 sq km, or 50% of Thailand should be kept as national forest, at that time there was about

² The European Economic Community purchased 85% of Thailand's cassava for cattle feed (Hafner 2000b:450).

273,000 sq km or 53% remaining forest (TDRI 1986:27). The plan allowed for a possible decrease in forest cover to 40%, subsequent plans, 2, 3, 4 and 5 aimed to reserve forest land at only 40% (TDRI 1986:63). The fifth NESDB five-year plan imposed a logging ban in 1985 and proposed to increase forest area to 40%; 15% for protected conservation³ forest and 25% for economic forest (Hafner 2000b:467).

Despite government plans to reserve forests the remaining forest continued to decline as late as 1998 (Table 2.1). Thailand continues to make unrealistic plans in regards to its forests and, under the management of the Royal Forest Department (RFD), Thailand aims to increase its area of forest to 50% of the country by 2016. Of this 50%, at least 30% will be designated as conservation forest and 20% will be designated as economic forest (Office of Environmental Policy and Planning 1997:10). This plan is unlikely to be achieved as issues underlying deforestation have not been addressed, neither have previous targets of 40% been reached.

Table 2.1 Forest Area in Thailand 1961-1998

Year	Remaining forest (rai*)	Remaining forest (sq km)	Remaining forest (%)
1961	171,017,812	273,628	53.3
1973	138,578,125	221,725	43.2
1975	128,278,755	205,246	40.0
1976	124,010,625	198,417	38.7
1978	109,515,000	175,224	34.2
1982	98,875,000	158,200	30.5
1985	94,291,349	150,866	29.4
1988	89,877,182	143,803	28.0
1989	89,635,625	143,417	28.0
1991	85,436,284	136,698	26.6
1993	83,470,967	133,553	26.0
1995	82,178,161	131,485	25.6
1998	81,076,728	129,722	25.3

* Note 1 rai = 0.16 ha. 100 ha = 1 sq. km

(Lakanavichian 2001:119).

³ Conservation forest is composed of headwater source areas (first class watersheds, national parks, wildlife sanctuaries, non-hunting areas, reserved park, arboretums, botanical garden and reserved areas for specific studies. The commercial forest or productive forest is composed of forest reserves, plantations areas, community forests, private tree farms (forests) and timber concession areas (TDRI 1986:67).

The following chapter discusses the reality of these plans in the highlands of Thailand and shows that Thailand's top-down economic policies can have serious impacts on the environment. Also it shows that national conservation plans take forest and land from tribal people. Conflicts between development interests and conservation have occurred in Thailand and will continue to increase in the future as land areas become more intensively used and the number of competing demands for any given area increases (TDRI 1986:92). In the highlands, tribal people have started to work together to demand their rights to manage the forests. The North of Thailand, where the tribal groups are located, remains the most densely forested area in the country, suggesting that the participation of tribal people in the management of the forests is a more sustainable method of forest management. Deforestation is now one of the challenging issues facing Thailand (Hafner 2000b:450).

Manufacturing

Manufacturing expanded through incentives for foreign and domestic investment. While export-oriented agriculture remained dominant, development plans and investment promotion laws directed resources to industry. Local manufacturers gained protection, and foreign manufacturers were able to establish behind protective barriers. Textiles and garments were the biggest contributions to Thailand's value-added manufacturing between 1970 and 1991. Jewellery and food processing gained international competitiveness through their resource support evolving from import protection (Rasiah 2003:180).

A switch from import substitution to export orientation policies boosted the manufacturing industry, and improved commodity prices. Internal fiscal and trade reforms were introduced in the early 1980's favouring foreign and local industrial enterprises producing for export (Hafner 2000b:455). In the last decade improved commodity prices and a 40% annual growth in manufacturing exports led to a 30% annual growth in total exports (Hafner 2000b:454). Apart from increasing GNP, impacts of manufacturing for Thailand include dramatic changes in employment opportunities, increases in the number of factories and

processing plants, increase in industrial pollution and increasing debt. Thailand has many incentives attracting foreign investment in the manufacturing sector, including industrial facilities, a cheap, unskilled, easily trainable labour supply, infrastructure such as roads, airlines, port facilities, and water and power supplies (Hafner 2000b:455).

Tourism

International tourism accounts for 8.7% of all of Thailand's exports, and travel (including domestic) comprises 54.3% of all commercial service exports, making tourism a high priority for the Thai Government (World Bank 2002:376, 230). As the body responsible for promoting tourism, the Tourist Authority of Thailand, (TAT) is very effective. In 1993, 5,760,533 foreign tourists visited Thailand for an average stay of 6.94 days, a massive rise since 1960, when 81,340 foreign tourists visited Thailand for an average of 3 days (Cohen 1996:5). From Europe, North America, Australia and Asia, Bangkok is approximate to the great circle lines that are the shortest and most economical for air navigation (Phanjaphongse & Tiensong 1972:2). Thailand benefits from many tourists on their way to Burma, Laos, China, Vietnam, Malaysia and Cambodia, accessible by Bangkok's road system or airports.

Thailand has a variety of attractions for the visitor including natural, historical, ethnic, cultural and vacation attractions. The most formally defined natural attractions are the 77 national parks, and from 1978 to 1984 the number of visitors to national parks increased from less than 1 million to 4 million (TDRI 1986:85). "Historical attractions include the several major Cambodian and Thai archaeological sites. Ethnic tourism developed predominantly in the North in the 1970's and developed into jungle trekking tourism. Other ethnic groups such as the 'Sea Gypsies' and similar former hunter-gatherer groups also became minor attractions of ethnic tourism. Cultural attractions include Buddhist temples, festivals and folk arts. Some festivals have been created just for tourist consumption. Vacation attractions are primarily the sea, sun and sand located in the South of Thailand" (Cohen 1996:9-11).

Tourism is nominated by the Office of Environmental Policy and Planning (OEPP), under the Ministry of Science Technology and Environment, as one of the factors contributing to environmental degradation in Thailand (OEPP 1997:22). The most significant environmental impacts of tourism can be seen on Thailand's islands that once supported local communities in a sustainable manner. Islands are far too small to support massive increases in populations from tourism. Cohen (1994:152-154) discusses the environmental degradation arising from the tourist development cycle where beach resorts are promoted as "paradise" with all modern comforts and recreational amenities, but the very process of modernising islands destroys the natural environment that formed the basic attraction for tourists. As one beach becomes "developed" as a consequence of tourism, tour operators start to transport tourists to islands further away. This cycle continues, and more and more islands are changed in landscape, economy and society. In 1993 1.77 million tourists visited Phuket, about 9 times the island population (Cohen 1996:154).

Tourism impacts are massive, and a host of undesirable environmental and social impacts accompany contributions to infrastructure and national income. Social costs include excessive commercialisation and decline of Thai culture, increasing prostitution tourism and spread of the HIV/AIDS epidemic (Hafner 2000b:456). Impacts observed in villages in the North of Thailand include rapid changes from agricultural communities to communities based on tourism. With tourists comes an option for making money without having to work in the fields. Unfortunately, as one village observed, the tourism industry is not always reliable: if fields are not planted and tourists don't come it is difficult to find food to support families for that year (Higashide 2003). The benefits of tourism tend to be kept among a few members in a community, resulting in quite significant variances between incomes in a touristic area.

National Debt and the 1997 Economic Crisis

Industrialisation requires specialisation of labour, the diversification of production and trade in global markets. The terms "borrowing" and "investment" are increasingly used, as industry requires these to meet growth targets. An

adverse effect of economic growth is that as industry expands, so does the demand for imports, resulting in widening trade deficits (TDRI 1986:246). Currently Thailand's debt is 56% of its GDP, ranking 34th highest out of 98 countries. In 1997 Thailand's economy crashed: the baht dropped to 57 to the US dollar resulting in increased costs of foreign loans totalling US\$80 billion or 70% of GDP (UNDP 1999:118). As a result of borrowing and the economic crash in 1997, external debt grew from 1995 to 1998.

Even prior to the 1997 economic crisis the average growth in external debt, directly related to the process of industrialisation, increased 66.4% from 1980 to 1994 (World Bank 2003). The consequence of growth is that Thailand's debt continues to increase, so does its interest payments, taking money out of the national funds that could be spent on social goods such as health and education. National resources are depleted to pay these debts. In Thailand capital flows were liberalised in the 1990's so trade could flow freely in and out of the country (Bhaopichitr 1997). Interest rates were high so borrowing took place out of the country and capital was reloaned inside the country. This, as well as a currency pegged to the US dollar, increasing current account deficits and the mishandling of money into unprofitable investments, all contributed to the economic crisis (Bhaopichitr 1997). Thailand's rapid growth was aided through the private sector, through careless lending and borrowing and the accumulation of non-performing loans (Leinbach 2000:435).

In 1997 the Thai economy faced a crisis as investment was withdrawn from Thailand and the baht plummeted, highlighting the imbalanced nature of the Thai development process, which focused on increasing economic growth without the adequate development of human and natural resources to support its growth. It also points to the fickle nature of the global economy that invests in countries with the most competitive markets, a policy enabled by deregulated markets. Currency depreciation and capital flight led to recession and declining imports and increased unemployment (Leinbach 2000:435). The effect of the economic crash resulted in an increase in the number of ultra-poor people by 24.4%, the marginally poor people by 17.7% and the near-poor people by 5.8% (UNDP 1999:129).

Thailand is now an integral part of the global economy. Part of its attraction for foreign investment was its cheap manufacturing industry, relying on the exploitation of raw materials, cheap labour and unregulated markets. Countries that also supply cheap manufacturing industries surround Thailand. When prices rose without increasing quality or competitive advantage, investors withdrew from Thailand and moved to areas where prices were more competitive. Important Thai exports such as textiles and canned goods were losing their share in the world market, a result of competition from countries with cheaper labour costs like China and Vietnam. At the same time, imports of raw materials, capital goods and luxury goods did not decrease (Bhaopichitr 1997). The 1997 crisis is now attributed to the labour-intensive nature and the highly competitive price-sensitive international markets, the inability to restructure away from low-cost assembly industry toward higher-value production, the low level of basic education, the shortage of skilled labour, an inefficient bureaucracy and an insufficient infrastructure (Leinbach 2000:453). Some of these factors are discussed below.

SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION

Industrialisation has major implications for Thai society as employment and industry changes from agriculture to manufacturing. Impacts are felt in the whole of Thailand and a much more complex society has been created than the one built around the self-sufficient village community. As national policies take self-determination away from villages they must also take responsibility for providing social goods. Thailand's industrialisation process has taken power away from village units, forcing people to leave their homes to find money that is increasingly required to buy basic necessities, as the forest is turned land is turned into land for commercial agriculture yet agricultural employment decreases⁴. Most concerning are the increases in inequalities and poverty for many that have been marginalised by State economic policies. For these

⁴ Agricultural employment decreases while employment in the manufacturing and service sectors increase.

people State social services have so far been an inadequate replacement for self-sufficient village units.

Population and Population Change

Thailand's population increased significantly during the industrialisation period having major impacts on national income and the costs of providing social services. On the one hand large populations mean greater amounts of labour and bigger markets for the national economy; on the other, the costs of providing social services increases. In 1920 Thailand's population was about 8 million; this increased to 18 million by 1953⁵, 46.7 million in 1988 and 60.7 million in 2000 (World Bank 2000:50). At the beginning of the 20th century, when Thailand's population was only 8 million people, the Minister of Interior declared that five to six times the population was required to make the nation prosperous. This policy of increasing population continued until a World Bank report in 1959 stated that Thailand's economic development was being adversely effected by an excessively high rate of population growth and the Government recommended the dissemination of birth control (Panjaphongse & Tiensong 1972:34). Shortly after, the Government announced a National Population Policy and the Ministry of Public Health established the National Family Planning Project (NFPP).

The first seminar on population was arranged by the NESDB during 1971 (Panjaphongse & Tiensong 1972:42). Following the seminar, a five-year proposal was drawn up for the NESDB five-year plan (1972-1976). Population policy was based on educating married women about birth control and the integration of family planning activities with overall maternal and health services (Panjaphongse & Tiensong 1972:36). The TDRI (1986:16) projected population to increase to between 65 and 69 million by 2001. The fact that the actual population has only reached 62.3 million, below projected figures, shows the success of population control policies. The population growth rate is projected to drop to 1% in 2010 compared with a 3.4% per year average in the 1950's and 1960's (Hafner 2000b:439).

⁵ Keen 1983:301

Urbanisation contributes to decreasing birth rates. Higher costs of health, education, transport, food and clothes make it more expensive to have large families in the city than in self-sufficient, almost cash-less societies where children contribute to the welfare of the family from an early age. Thailand's education and access to birth control is an effective policy for population control.

Table 2.2 Population of Thailand by Region 2001

Location	Population 2001 Total Number	% of Total Population	Pop. Density 1998 population per sq km
Kingdom	62,308,887	100.0	121
Bangkok Metropolis	5,726,203	9.2	3,658
Bangkok Vicinity	3,802,688	6.1	614
Central Region	2,984,711	4.8	180
Eastern Region	4,241,974	6.8	116
Western Region	3,623,638	5.8	84
Northeastern Region	21,493,681	34.5	127
Northern Region	12,124,425	19.5	71
Southern Region	8,311,567	13.3	118

(UNDP 2003:126-129).

Education

Education is fundamental to the industrialisation process as it opens up to children a wider horizon than the local village; it enables them to read and hence become more productive in the work they take up; it enhances the use of healthier lifestyles, and the acceptance of family planning, and the acceptance of new ideas; and it helps prepare children for non-agricultural occupations; socially, it leads to a challenging of tradition, erosion of traditional authority, and an influx of new ideas (Hugo 2000:77). However, when education is not implemented properly it can increase inequalities, cause low self-esteem and lack of confidence, and exclude poorer people from accessing the benefits of development. Thailand's low level of education is partly to blame for the disempowerment of communities and individuals during the industrialisation process. Communities had never experienced such a changing society before

and were not forewarned about the impacts industrial changes would have on their lives. Individuals needs came second to the development priorities of the State.

Prior to the establishment of the Ministry of Education in 1889, all education was conducted entirely in the Buddhist monasteries. State education was introduced by Rama V, King Chulalongkorn (1868-1910), son of King Mongkut. King Chulalongkorn's son Rama VI, King Vajiravudh (1910-1925) established Chulalongkorn University in 1917 (Panjaphongse & Tiensong 1972:10). The development of education occurred by adapting monastic school buildings to national educational needs and providing materials (Dhiravegin 1974:37). Education followed the philosophy of King Chulalongkorn that all people of Thailand should have equal opportunities to education, both the poor and the wealthy.

In 1998 Thailand spent 4.5% of its GDP on education and the average years of schooling were 6.5 (World Bank 2002:84;96). Overall levels of illiteracy were 6% for women and 3% for men in 1990 (World Bank 2002:100). The Northern region of Thailand has the highest percentage of the population with no formal education at 7.3% (UNDP 2000:Annex 14). Education has favoured urban areas. In the 1960's there were virtually no secondary schools outside Bangkok and a few large provincial towns (Booth 2003:180). Under chapter three of the 1997 Constitution, article 43, it states that "every person shall enjoy an equal right to obtain at least 12 years of basic education, for which the State shall provide quality education without charge" (Phananiramai & Hewison 2001:122). Table 2.3 shows the current mean years of schooling for Thai children. Mean statistics do not highlight the bias in accessing education that is highly dependent on family income, however, they do show the big difference between the average years of schooling in rural and urban areas. It is highly significant that four out of the five bottom provinces with the lowest mean scores are in the North of Thailand where the majority of the ethnic minorities are located, and that four out of the five top provinces are located in the Metropolis and its perimeters. Although the costs of implementing a national education system are extremely high, the following chapter suggests that it is poorly trained and

monitored teachers, rather than a lack of funding, contributing most to low levels of education for tribal people.

Table 2.3 Mean years of schooling in Top and Bottom Five Provinces

Top Five Provinces	Years of Schooling
Nonthaburi (Metropolis & perimeters)	10.3
Bangkok Metropolis (Metropolis & perimeters)	9.6
Pathum Thani (Metropolis & perimeters)	8.8
Phuket (South)	8.4
Samut Prakan (Metropolis & perimeters)	8.4
Bottom Five Provinces	
Narathiwat (South)	5.9
Chiang Rai (North)	5.8
Tak (North)	5.8
Nan (North)	5.8
Mae Hong Song (North)	4.5

(UNDP 2003:92).

Primary education is compulsory, hence it is considered the Government's duty to provide quality primary education to all. As a result, the tuition fee in public primary schools is very low and schooling is free for those who cannot afford to pay. In addition to highly subsidised tuition fees, textbooks and other equipment, uniforms, milk and lunch are provided for people who cannot afford it (Phananiramai & Hewison 2001:131). In general, the quality of education, even at primary level, is highly dependent on area. In rural areas there are fewer primary schools; if the nearest school is of low quality, a good education is dependent on sending the child to a private school or paying for board and food at quality schools further afield.

Entry to good schools is very competitive and may require additional payments by students and parents. The children from lower socio-economic groups generally attend the lowest quality primary schools. "Since subsidisation in terms of charging low tuition fees applies to all students regardless of their economic background, places in high quality schools and universities are limited. Hence admission is very competitive and children of the poor in rural

areas have a lower chance of being admitted" (Phananiramai & Hewison 2001:132). Scholarships, Buddhist and Christian schools are also available for less advantaged people where fees, food and board are free.

One of the ways in which less wealthy people gain access to education is through remittances. This is where one or more members of the family work and give money to other family members so they access education, often at the cost of improving their own education. In Thailand where the family is still more responsible for social security than the State, if one family member gains good employment, benefits are likely to be passed on to other family members. The need for quality education has been emphasised by the reduction in agricultural employment, the unpleasantness, low wages, migrations and exploitative conditions often associated with unskilled non-agricultural work, and the instability of Thai markets. The attitude towards education is a reaction to a rapidly changing society where education is important for future non-agricultural employment as a way out of poverty.

Education is a significant factor in supporting the continuation of Thailand's development process. The 1997 crisis revealed the fickleness of high economic growth based on an uneducated labour force and rising prices, emphasising the need for education to support rapid economic growth. Education can be provided by the State or on-the-job training. Education levels have increased significantly since the beginning of the industrialisation period. However, in order to reduce inequalities Thailand needs to concentrate on providing and monitoring quality education to all children, especially for the poorer, less advantaged sectors of society. Tribal people require special education targeting their needs as those whose first language is not Thai, so that they can participate equitably in the development of Thailand. Education should empower individuals and communities, and could provide Thailand with a more sustainable form of development that is not so dependent on cheap labour.

Employment

Employment has changed significantly during the industrialisation period with the commercialisation of agriculture, and investment in the manufacturing and service sectors. The percentage of the population employed in agriculture has declined from 82.4% in 1960, to 66.5% in 1990 (Krongkaew 2003). More recent statistics provided by the World Bank (2000:58) show that Thailand still has a labour intensive agricultural industry employing 50% of the male population and 47% of the female population, compared with the UK (2% and 1% respectively), and the USA (4% and 1% respectively). From May 1999 to May 2000 employment in agriculture decreased 1%, manufacturing increased 9.3%, construction increased 8.8%, commerce increased 1.8% and service jobs increased 3.2% (World Bank 2000b:20). This has massive impacts on people in predominantly rural areas; as population increases there is a declining number of jobs in the agricultural sector, pushing more people into non-agricultural employment.

Reduction in agricultural employment has huge impacts on working conditions as education becomes more important in securing better job opportunities. Thailand's relatively uneducated labour force became the backbone of the manufacturing industry. Table 2.4 shows that a large portion of the labour force has a low level of education, with 81.76% of workers having primary education, only 13.04% with secondary education and 5.2% with tertiary education. Some terrible working conditions and employment options exist for unskilled, uneducated people who have migrated to the city for the first time in search of employment. Cohen (1996:270-272) comments that the opportunity structure facing unskilled immigrant women (predominantly from the Northeast) in Bangkok has contracted. As the price of necessities rise continually in the metropolis, wages on the depressed labour market remain low. Many maids, factory workers or unskilled labourers earn less than 1000 baht a month from which money is sent home for parents and siblings. Many turn to hawking and peddling or prostitution to increase their incomes. Unskilled men also face increasing prices and lack of employment opportunities. With industrialisation has come a significant increase in the employment of children and women with

total female employment increasing from 6 million in 1960 to 12 million. (Chandravithun 1997).

Table 2.4 Selected Characteristics of the Thai Labour Force in August 1992

	Total	Male	Female
Total labour force (in thousands)	32,906	17,726	15,180
Labour force participation rate (percent)	78	84	72
Unemployment rate (percent)	1.4	1.3	1.5
Seasonally-inactive rate (percent)	0.2	0.1	0.3
Share of employment by sector (percent)			
Agriculture	61	60	62
Manufacturing	15	17	13
Services	24	23	25
Employment status (percent)			
Employer	2.4	3.5	1
Government employees	6.4	7.5	5.0
Private employees	25	26	23
Self-employed	28	37	17
Unpaid family workers	38	25	54
Labour educational attainment (percent)			
Primary or lower	82	79	85
Secondary	13	16	10
Tertiary	5.2	5.0	5.4
Monthly wage (baht)			
Wage rate of private employees	3,262	3,654	2,741

Source: 1992 Labour Force Survey (Phananiramai 1995).

The perpetuating of low wages comes with the logic of the global economy that channels investment to the lowest wage locations, favouring places where there are no workers' rights (Rigg 1997:35). What is lacking is not the number of people looking for employment but the number of skilled people who can drive the economy out of low-skilled manufacturing industry and into a period of quality production with competitive advantage. Unfortunately there is a large group of society who are exploited, a massive group of people involved in the sex industry, many people suffering health problems and pollution from poorly managed cities and rising inequalities. In 1999 nearly 75% of all workers with less-than-primary education earned less than the minimum wage: in contrast,

fewer than 2% of workers with university or teacher-training qualifications fall into this category (World Bank 2001b:36).

Poverty perpetuates exploitation as people seek any kind of employment to get food. This is quite significant in Thailand where poorer, less educated people, children, refugees or Mountain People without citizenship will fill many of the lower-paid jobs. They work illegally and their rights to a minimum wage⁶ are not protected, encouraging exploitative conditions. The Government estimates child workers number 1.5 million; unofficial estimates are 4 million (Hugo 2000:80). Illegal employment is not a new phenomenon in Thailand where even with high unemployment rates "many of the jobs occupied by foreign workers are shunned by the Thais and some enterprises remain in dire need of foreign labour" (UNDP 1999:128). Cheap labour is an important factor in increasing economic growth, as labour is required for road works, national infrastructure projects and for factory work; labour is cheaper than machinery. Economic growth has not improved the quality of life for many of Thailand's uneducated workforce.

Urbanisation

Urbanisation occurs with industrialisation as jobs move out of the agricultural sector and into manufacturing and service sectors. These industries tend to explode in urban areas due to the access to services, higher populations of consumers, development of infrastructure, communications, and supporting industries, such as finance. Urbanisation brings many management problems for Government such as in providing clean water, health services, disposing of waste from increased urban populations and intensive industry, air pollution, slums, crime and congestion. Urban populations have increased from 15.1% in 1970-75 to 20.2% in 1990-95 (World Bank 2003). Massive urbanisation is taking place around Bangkok and its vicinity, which has 16% of the population, or almost 10 million people (UNDP 2002:Annex3).

⁶ The minimum wage is US\$1,159 per year; at an exchange rate of 42 is 4,000 baht per month (World Bank 2000:66)

Migration is an important part of the industrialisation process to fill newly created jobs outside the agricultural sector. For some people the city offers the chance to make money and many migrants move to Bangkok for employment. Unfortunately some of them do not find employment and end up part of the urban poor, living in slums or in the streets. Migrants to Bangkok and the Bangkok vicinity have mostly come from the Northeastern region of Thailand (Krongkaew 2003). The high levels of poverty and rapid deforestation in this region are directly related to this phenomenon. Prior to industrialisation, land use in Thailand was often not legally recognised by the Government. As access to land is reduced and the cost of food and basic necessities increases, people must migrate to find employment.

Health

In 1998, Thailand spent 1.9% of its GDP on health (World Bank 2002:84). The Ministry of Public Health (MOPH) provides services ranging from large provincial hospitals to smaller district hospitals, with clinics at the sub-district level. While MOPH's services are far cheaper than those of the private sector and usually of good quality, health expenses continue to be a major concern for the less wealthy. MOPH also provides training for village health workers (Phananiramai & Hewison 2001:128). These services conform to Article 52 of the 1997 constitution that states: "Every person shall enjoy an equal right to standard health care services. The indigent person shall receive health care services from public providers without charge in accordance with the provisions of law" (Phananiramai & Hewison 2001:122).

A universal healthcare scheme was launched under the Thai Rak Thai governing party on 1 October 2001 (Economist Intelligence Unit 2003:19). The program aims to cover people without health insurance by charging only 30 baht per hospital visit. Unfortunately the introduction of almost free health services has caused a massive drain on existing health resources resulting in much higher waiting times to see medical practitioners and a less efficient public health system. The annual budget given to the public health ministry usually amounts to 70-80 billion baht, while the costs of the new healthcare

scheme, plus the existing Medical Welfare Scheme for state officials, and the Social Security Scheme for paying private employees, is going to be well over 100 billion (Economist Intelligence Unit 2003:19). Another option for Thai citizens is to pay insurance to use the services of private doctors and hospitals.

Doctor per capita ratios favour Bangkok metropolis with one doctor to 793 patients, followed by the Eastern region with one doctor per 3,084 patients. By far the worst doctor-patient ratio is in the Northeast with one doctor for 8,311 patients (UNDP 2003 133). (Table 2.5). With increased pressure on public healthcare comes higher incentives for people to seek private medical treatment where waiting times are shorter. Bangkok, with the best doctor-patient ratios and the highest income per capita in the country, has by far the best access to health services. Rural regions suffer even greater restrictions in access to healthcare because of low incomes and remoteness combined with low doctor-patient ratios. One study found that programmes could provide free medical care to only 28% of the poor, while 20% of funds actually went to the non-poor (Phananiramai & Hewison 2001:135,136).

Table 2.5 HIV/AIDS Patients and Doctor per Capita by Region

Location	Total HIV/AIDS Patients Jan-Sep	New HIV/AIDS Patients Jan-Sep	Persons per Doctor 2000
Kingdom	201,268	5,088	3,433
Bangkok Metropolis	21,280	766	793
Bangkok Vicinity	14,094	398	3,245
Central Region	8,417	314	4,249
Eastern Region	19,849	752	3,084
Western Region	14,241	457	4,373
Northeastern Region	33,487	657	8,311
Northern Region	*70,851	*1,189	4,501
Southern Region	*19 049	*455	5,194

(UNDP 2003:132 *The figures in the UNDP table for Total and New HIV/AIDS Patients in the Northern and Southern Regions has been incorrectly totalled, this table reflects the true totals).

Development in Thailand has caused an overall increase in life expectancy from an average of 55.9 years for males and 62 for females in 1964 to 70.2 for males and 74.7 for females in the year 2000 (World Health Organisation 2000:181). The nation is suffering serious threats from HIV/AIDS with the total number of AIDS patients from 1984-2002 recorded at 201,268. The highest number of

cases are reported from the North with 70,851, followed by the Northeastern region with 33,487 cases. The North had almost two times as many new AIDS patients than any other region (UNDP 2003:132). AIDS poses a serious threat for Thailand where levels of education are low, living and sanitary conditions can be poor and overcrowded, and public health services are under resourced.

Another health concern is the incidence of malnourished children. While percentages fell steadily from 17.8 in 1989 to 10.5 percent in 1994 these incidences are more likely to occur in rural areas, with the highest rates occurring in the Northern regions of Mae Hong Son (15.9%) and Nan (15.2%) and the Northeastern regions of Khon Kaen (13.9%) and Buri Ram (13.4%) (UNDP 2003:91). The existence of malnutrition in a country that was once known as a self-sufficient country where everyone had enough to eat is directly related to the impacts of top-down economic growth policies on the environment and lack of human rights in the development process. Health is a major challenge for the future of Thailand.

CHALLENGES FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Thailand's rapid change from an agricultural to industrial society poses many problems for the Government of Thailand as it continues to increase economic growth and, at the same time, tries to manage adverse environmental and social consequences of economic growth on society. Adverse effects have been described above as increasing national debt, deforestation, increasing inequalities, poor working conditions, low levels of education, poverty and health. International development thought encourages policies targeting the poor to avoid costs of economic growth falling most heavily on the most vulnerable groups in society. However, Thailand's high foreign debt, and per capita Gross National Income of US\$2,000 per year, point to limited resources for human capital development. A large population, combined with increasing urbanisation, increases the costs of Thailand's development for the State. More money is required to provide services that have become crucial to securing a better quality of life in Thailand. So far, the aim of the Government to reduce

poverty through economic growth policies has not resulted in reduced poverty for the most vulnerable groups in society.

The environment is one of the most difficult areas facing the Thai Government as processes underlying rapid growth fail to support sustainable development policies. Increasing exploitation of the environment can directly increase incidences of malnutrition as forests are turned into land for commercial farming and people find the environment less capable of supporting their nutrition needs. It is a fact that Southeast Asia's environmental 'crisis' is a direct result of the economic policies that have been pursued (Rigg 1997:35). The question is whether Thailand can effectively implement national plans emphasising participation, community empowerment and a return to self-sufficiency in order to support its massive levels of growth and improve the quality of life for all its people.

Inequality, Poverty, Marginalised People

The major reason economic growth is being pursued so vigorously by most Southeast Asian countries is viewed as the best means to eliminate poverty (Kummer 2000:25).

The depletion of natural resources most adversely affects the poor who do not have the resources to go beyond their immediate habitat in search of food and are powerless to protect their interests against the interests of more economically powerful parties. In contrast, the more wealthy have access to investment and transport, can extend their search of food much further than their immediate environment and can increase wealth from economic growth policies. As far as traditional agriculture is concerned, Thais regard yields of paddy rice as the primary index of food security (TDRI 1986:4). During the industrialisation period, the country's total annual rice harvest increased from less than 10 million tons in 1966 to over 18 million tons in 1982. Yet at the same time a high proportion of children under five suffered from protein and calorie malnutrition - 54% in the North and 60% in the Northeast (TDRI 1986:4).

An increase in rice harvest has not resulted in an improved standard of living for all of Thailand.

Table 2.6 shows changes in regional income from 1998 to 2000. Bangkok has the highest income with a household average of 26,831 baht per month in 2000. During the period 1998-2000 the Kingdom's total income declined by 6.09%; however Bangkok, experienced an increase in income of 4.04%. During the same period the agricultural regions of the Northeastern, North and South, experienced the largest decreases in per capita income. These figures show agricultural regions are paying a higher price for Thailand's growth policies than anyone else in the Kingdom.

Table 2.6 Household Income by Region 1998-2000

Location	Household Income 1998 (baht/month)	Household income 2000	Household income change % 1998- 2000
Kingdom	12,765	11,988	-6.09
Bangkok Metropolis	25,790	26,831	4.04
Bangkok vicinity	19,262	18,509	-3.91
Central Region	11,473	12,464	8.63
Eastern Region	12,178	11,991	-1.53
Western Region	12,461	12,849	3.11
Northeastern Region	8,411	7,604	-9.58
Northern region	9,502	8,422	-11.37
Southern Region	11,368	11,012	-3.13

(UNDP 2003:142,143).

Poorer people find themselves misplaced by economic policies that require increased land for commercial production. One of the problems exacerbating this in Thailand is the lack of official recognition of land use, human rights and the process of disempowerment of the community by national growth policies. Only 12% of agricultural land has legal title documents while 40%, or more than one third of household land holdings, have no form of documentation. Mean farm size has declined since 1975 and almost 60% of households in some areas of the Central Region and Upper North are landless (Hafner 2000b:464). Not only were small farmers excluded from the economic boom, but as a result

of the 1997 economic crisis they were poorer than they were at the start of the 1990's (Fossberg 2001).

Poverty is difficult to measure. National income statistics do not show the differences between regions in the quality of life, nor the status of human rights. However, they can highlight inequalities in poverty according to occupation and region. The agricultural sector represents the largest proportion of poor people in Thailand. In 1996 farmers made up 18.8% of the poor, followed by disabled workers at 15.8% and retired workers at 13.5% (UNDP 1999:35). The poverty⁷ map released by the NESDB shows most poor villages are located in the Northeast (39.1%) and the North (35.9%) and only 7% in the South (Phanayanggoor 2003). The Northeast region has had the lowest average household monthly income per capita from 1988 (665 baht per month) to 1996 (1,855 baht per month). The second lowest income per capita area is the North with 932 baht (in 1988) and 2331 baht in 1996 (UNDP 1999:27). According to World Bank indicators (2002:70) 18% of the population live below the poverty line - 15.5% from rural areas and 10.2% from urban areas.

The Northeast is the most geographically unfavoured region in Thailand with many ecological problems including poor soil. The short monsoon season brings heavy flooding in river valleys but the dry season is long with water shortfalls. The prevailing vegetation is sparse grass (Kaplan 1981:57). With a population of almost 21 million, the Northeast is the most populated region (UNDP 2002:annex 3). Many stories from the Isaan people closely reflect the stories of the ethnic groups in the highlands of Thailand, with environmental degradation, migration out of villages to seek work, low wages, eviction from land, illegal occupation of Thai land, political marginalisation, malnutrition and powerlessness (Ekachai1990). "Less than half the area receives sufficient rain for agriculture so an average of 2 million people leave their homes every year to find work" (Ekachai 1990:22).

⁷ The calculation of poverty used by the NESDB (New Method) is based upon nutritional criteria, income required to satisfy nutritional needs and minimum requirements for shelter, clothing and medicine (UNDP 1999:30).

National statistics do not differentiate between ethnic groups, so the true incidence of poverty among ethnic groups is hidden. The North of Thailand is home to 80% of Mountain People and in 1987 a survey revealed Mountain People and minority ethnic group families received an annual income of 243-751 baht per month (2,921-9,015 baht per year) compared to the average in Northern Thailand of 1,113 baht per month (13,353 baht per year) (Ministry of Education 1987:8). The lack of surveys on ethnic minority groups suggest they have been left out of the development process entirely. Even though the Thai Government, backed by the international community, has chosen to implement economic growth policies as a means for alleviating poverty the reality is that for many of Thailand's least advantaged groups in society, poverty has worsened as a direct consequence of economic growth policies. "Increases in inequality in different Thai provinces have substantially offset the potential poverty gains from growth" (Fossberg 2001).

The costs of economic development have been unfairly placed on the poorest groups in society and on rural areas causing increased poverty in some areas. Tribal people have failed to be given special attention in the Government's national development plans even though they are the lowest socio-economic group in the country showing that Thailand's development policies do not target the poorest groups in society. The wealth of Thailand is concentrated in urban areas, especially Bangkok, increasing gaps between the rich and the poor and between rural and urban areas. If high economic growth rates remain the primary objective of the Thai Government uneven development will continue to occur and the costs will continue to fall most heavily on the poor in rural areas.

Summary

Thailand's development into an industrial society occurred rapidly as a result of considerable pressure from the international community. It has had serious consequences for the environment and the most vulnerable groups in society, especially tribal people. Negative impacts include the marginalisation of minority groups from political processes, increases in absolute poverty for many, especially in rural areas, and increased inequalities especially between

urban and rural areas. The industrialisation process involved transforming self-sufficient villages into businesses aimed at producing commercial industry, thereby disempowering communities and creating dependence on trade. Thailand has failed to provide social services for the most vulnerable groups in society, instead providing services around urban areas. The next chapter focuses on Thailand's development of the highlands in the North of Thailand, examines the impacts of rapid economic development from a tribal perspective, and evaluates the consequences of top-down economic policies on the socio-economic conditions of tribal people.

Chapter 3

ETHNIC GROUPS IN THE HIGHLANDS OF THAILAND

This chapter examines the Thai development process in the highlands of Thailand, introduces ethnic groups living in the area and outlines impacts of foreign¹ development on ethnic groups' development. Foreign development processes have failed to acknowledge existing indigenous development processes in the highlands and have led to more people migrating to the highlands along with security and economic activity. Ethnic minority groups have been socially and politically excluded from the Thai development process, their socio-economic status has been lowered, their need for social services has increased, environmental exploitation has increased, and for some, absolute poverty² has increased. This chapter discusses the reality of top-down national development policies on the minority ethnic groups in the highlands. The following chapters discuss the Akha development process, based on Akha zangr and impacts of Thai development on Akha development.

INTRODUCTION TO THE MOUNTAIN PEOPLE OF THAILAND

For centuries there has been a clear distinction between people living in the mountains of South East Asia, and people living in the lowlands. It is generally thought that the settlement of upland areas occurred as more populous civilisations came into the region and pushed the less populous, original inhabitants up to the highlands (Kummer 2000:8). Different habitats of the uplanders and lowlanders caused very different livelihood systems, based mostly on rice agriculture³, to evolve. In the past, more difficult terrain for rice growing in the highlands deterred lowlanders from moving into the highlands. The highlands of Thailand belong to the mountain range in the Greater Mekong sub-region and, before State boundaries were drawn, provided a buffer between lowlanders settled in Thailand, Myanmar, China, Tibet, Laos and Vietnam (Kummer 2000:8). (Appendix A: Map showing highlands in the Mekong

¹ In this chapter the term "foreign" refers to development that is foreign to the highland environment and includes Thai and all other external forms of development.

² Absolute poverty refers to people's ability to meet their basic needs.

³ The Mlabri are the only ethnic group that are hunter gathers, not rice growers.

Quadrangle). More dominant ethnic groups, such as Tai, Laos, Burmese and Chinese, preferred to settle in the lowlands. Mountain People developed education, agriculture, justice and employment around survival in village hamlets in the highlands, a process quite different to lowland cultures with larger populations, infrastructure and access to trade. This chapter focuses on the experience of highlanders living within the borders of the Thai State.

Seventy percent of Northern Thailand is covered with mountains and the highlands (areas with a slope of more than 40% incline⁴) cover 77% of the total northern territory (Faichampa 1990:152-3). This is home to most of the officially named “Chao Khao⁵”, the Hill tribes, Mountain People, or Highlanders of Thailand. Cultural knowledge, language, preferred heights for living, farming and history varies considerably between ethnic groups (Table: 3.1). In Thailand there are three main language groups represented in the highlands: the Sino-Tibetan (Tibeto-Burman), Austro-Thai and Austro-Asiatic (Mon-Khmer), showing different cultural origins of the ethnic groups.

Each tribe has their own name, different to the name they are referred to in Thai, in many instances Mountain People object to being called by their Thai name as some carry derogatory meanings. (Table 3.1). For instance, Thai people refer to the Hmong as “Meo”, meaning “barbarian” and the Mien and the Akha object to the Thai variations of their names. Not all Thai names are derogatory - the Lahu are referred to as “Mussur” meaning “hunters” in Thai (Lisu Lodge 2003).

Bhrukasasri (1989:6) recognises 23 tribal ethnic groups in Thailand although only nine tribal groups are currently included on Thailand’s official list⁶. Many of these contain subgroups within them with variances in cultural practices and

⁴ Thailand’s Royal Forest Department classifies highlands as land higher than 500 meters above mid-sea level (RFD 2003).

⁵ “Chao Khao” is the official Thai term for Mountain People and can be translated into English as “Hill tribe”.

⁶ Mlabri are sometimes recognised due to their small number and unique status as food gathers rather than rice cultivators.

Table 3.1
Characteristics of the Ethnic Groups in the Highlands of Thailand

Name*	Language Group	Preferred Altitude	Time of Migration	Origination	Agricultural System	Population In Thailand 1999 (Tribal Research Institute 1999)	Population as % of tribal population	Sub groups*	Characteristics
Karen (Kariang, Yang)	Sino-Tibetan	Low	18th century	Burma	highly productive paddy rice growers	374,242	46.2	4 major sub groups: Skaw Karen or White Karen, who call themselves and other subgroups Pga-gan-Yaw. Pwo Karen or Plong, also known as White Karen Pa-O or Taungthu, also known as Black Karen. Bwe or Kayah or Karenni or Red Karen (Tribal Research Institute 2003).	Matrilineal; chief has great power; some groups believe in the Messiah; have very strict laws (Lisu Lodge 2003).
Hmong (Meo) "Meo" is considered a derogatory term as it means "barbarian" (Lisu Lodge 2003)	Austro-Thai	High	late 19th century (Rigg 1997:151)	Western China, probably Mongolia (Tribal Research Institute 2003)	Pioneer of primary-shifting cultivators (Tribal Research Institute 2003)	122,768	16.3	Hmong Njua (Blue Hmong) (black Meo) (Flowery Meo) (Striped Meo). Hmong Daw (White Hmong). Hmong Gua M'ba (Gua M'ba Meo) (Tribal Research Institute 2003).	Good at adapting. The largest Hmong settlement is in Minneapolis, Minnesota, USA. During the Vietnam war, many Hmong people fought alongside American troops against the communist forces of Laos. They were courageous and disciplined fighters and many thousands were rewarded with U.S. citizenship (Lisu lodge 2003). Patrilineal, and polygamous, Hmong religion is a combination of pantheism and shamanism with the emphasis on ancestor-worship (Tribal Research Institute 2003).
Mien (Yao) "Yao" has negative implications (Lisu lodge 30 Aug 03)	Austro-Thai	High	late 19th century	Yunnan (China)	cultivation of dry rice and corn	42,551	5.7	White Hmong Blue Hmong Green Hmong Red Hmong Striped Hmong	Use Chinese characters to record traditional songs, migratory histories, legends, and the names of ancestors. The Yao are regarded as pantheists and ancestor-worshippers, and the influence of popular Taoism is evident (Tribal Research Institute 2003).

Lahu (Mussur)	Tibeto-Burman of Sino-Tibetan linguistic family.	High	late 19th century	Tibetan Plateau (Tribal Research Institute 2003)	pioneer swiddeners (Tribal Research Institute 2003)	60,940	4.1	Lahu Nyi (Musur Daeng). Lahu Na (Musur Dam). Lahu Shehleh (Musur Na Muey). Lahu Laba. Lahu Phu. Lahu Shi. The main subgroups are further subdivided into smaller groups (Tribal Research Institute 2003).	The Thais call the Lahu tribe "Mussur", which means 'hunters'. largely a hunting community until a lack of game and a shortage of primary forest forced them into a more agricultural means of existence. Short history as farming people the Lahu language has almost become a "lingua franca", spoken throughout the other hill tribes, since, amongst the Lahu, hiring out labour to other hill tribes has become common. (Lisu Lodge 2003).
Akha (E-Kaw) Find the term E-Kaw derogatory.	Tibeto-Burman of Sino-Tibetan linguistic family.	High	19th century	Eastern border of Tibet	shifting cultivators	56,162	7.5	Main subgroups in Thailand are the Ulo Akha, Loimisa Akha, Phami Akha.	Detailed discussions in chapter four of this thesis.
Lisu (Lisaw)	Sino-Tibetan	High	early 20th century	Eastern Tibet (Lisu lodge 2003)		30,940	4.1	The Flowery or Hua Lisu The Black or He Lisu	Lisu headman has little power since the Lisu are fiercely independent people (Lisu Lodge 2003). Lisu practise solidarity, despite the lack of a political secular leader at village level (Tribal Research Institute 2003).
Lawa (Lua)	Austro-Asiatic	Low	7th-8th century AD	Thailand	Roational Shifting cultivation, wet rice terraces.	17,092	2.3		Recognised as the most conservation-minded land users in the highlands. Believed to be the first settlers in North Thailand (Tribal Research Institute 2003).
Khamu	Austro-Asiatic, Mon Khmer branch	High		Laos	subsistence agriculture supplemented by hunting, fishing and trading	10,567	1.4		Migrated into the country as labourers and worked either in the teak forests or in similarly isolated places. At the end of their contracts, they decided to settle rather than return to their native villages in Laos. The Khamu practise an animistic religion. In Laos, Khamu shamans are considered to be excellent magic-religious practitioners and are often invited to participate in Laotian ceremonies (Tribal Research Institute 2003).

Mal or Prai (H'tin and Kha Haw)	Austro-Asiatic, Mon Khmer branch	High			swidden farmers	46,302	5.4		
**Mlabri (Phi Tong Luang). Thai name refers to the yellow leaves sheltering their homes			At least since 1919 (Tribal Research Institute 2003)	Mongolia	Hunter and Gathers	Reports vary between 100-200 Mlabri in the world (Planet Internet 2003).			Cultural beliefs prevent the Mlabri from owning their own land. Work as labour for food and clothes (Planet Internet 2003).

* The name in parenthesis is the Thai name for the group, the name without is the name used by the tribe

** The Mlabri are included here even though they are not on the official list due to the special nature of the tribe.

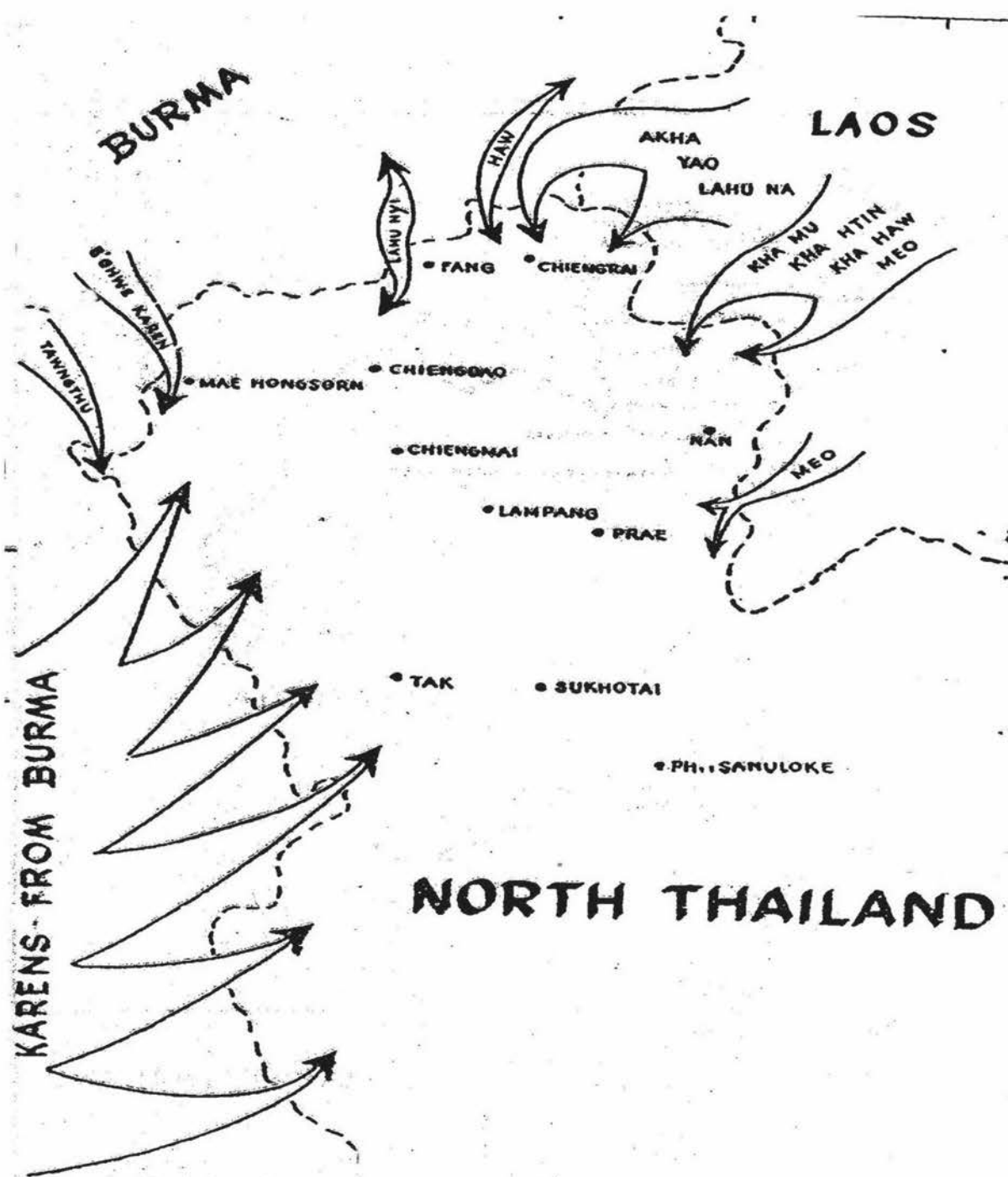
perhaps, languages. The officially recognised Hill tribes are the Lawa (Lua), Htin (H'tin, Mal, or Prai), Khamu, Meo (Miao, Hmong), Yao (Lu Mien, Mien), Akha (Ekaw), Lahu (Mussur), Lisu (Lisaw) and Karen (Kariang, Yang)⁷. Ethnic groups in Thailand can be found in the provinces of Kanchanaburi, Prachuap, Khiri Khan, Phetchabun, Phayao, Phrae, Mae Hong Son, Lampang, Lamphun, Loei, Phetchaburi, Ratchaburi, Suphan Buri, Kamphaengphet, Chiang Rai, Chiang Mai, Tak, Nan, Phitsanulok, Sukothai, Uthai Thani (Tribal Research Institute 2002). Officially, there are 914,755 Mountain People living in Thailand constituting a small percentage of the overall population (Tribal Research Institute 2002).

It is generally considered that Mountain People found at lower elevations, such as the Lawa and Karen, are considered indigenous to Thailand, Myanmar and Laos, and the Mountain People at higher elevations have migrated Southwards from the Eastern border of Tibet, China, Myanmar and Laos, within the last century (Food and Agricultural Organisation 2002). However, in this thesis they are all referred to as indigenous people as they have been living in the mountain ranges of the Mekong Quadrangle for centuries. The Thai highlands were actually settled first by Mountain People, not lowland Tai. The timing of migrations vary considerably, from the Lawa, who are considered the original inhabitants of Thailand, arriving in 7th-8th century AD, to the more recent migrations in the late 20th century (Table 3.1). The increase in migrations into Thailand during last century is directly related to unstable political situations in China, Myanmar and Laos (Map 3.1 Migrations of Mountain People to Thailand).

Mountain People preferring higher elevations practised swidden and shifting agriculture in order to maintain fertility in the soil. Swidden is of great significance in the highlands as it releases nutrients in the soil, which is far less fertile than the lowlands, before planting. Fields are shifted when yields decline and weeds make labour too difficult, then old fields are left fallow for vegetation to regenerate. This style of agriculture is more suited to low population

⁷ The names in parenthesis are Thai names, without parenthesis are the names each group call themselves.

Map 3.1
MIGRATIONS OF MOUNTAIN PEOPLE TO THAILAND



(Young 1962:x).

densities. When there is enough land available to leave a fallow period long enough for the forest to regenerate, swidden and shifting agriculture can be practised in a sustainable manner. The Karen and Lawa Mountain People settling in lower elevations tend to settle in one area and practice very sophisticated and disciplined methods of shifting cultivation, rotating fields rather than migrating (Keen 1983:296,297). Their development systems have strict rules to ensure the conservation of the surrounding environment and the regeneration of swidden areas.

In the past Thailand's rulers left Mountain People in the highlands and tried to gain their loyalty based on mutual personal relationships between those who demanded tribute and those who provided it (Laungaramsri 2000:49). In the 1950's the Thai Government started to develop the highlands by increasing border security and increasing economic activity, as more resources were required to fuel the process of industrialisation. This caused dramatic changes in the highlands including increases in highland populations, massive deforestation and the permanent settlement of villages. Thailand is the end of the highlands for Mountain People migrating South, and Mountain People have come face to face with the more dominant development process of the lowlands. They can no longer migrate to escape conflicts, having severe impacts on their development processes.

The Thai development process has never valued mountain development systems, and development priorities of the two groups tend to result in conflicts over resources. The ethnic groups tend to lose in these conflicts due to their lack of political and economic power. Development systems of Mountain People do not fit with new development situation in the highlands, and lowland attitudes have not shifted to accommodate highlanders in their development process. Mountain People face a lack of infrastructure, limited access to Thai citizenship, land settlement, lack of access to basic social services, such as education and health (FAO 2002). Mountain People's experience of foreign development has placed them as the lowest socio-economic group in Thai

society. Steep slopes and lack of labour, technology and infrastructure rather than cultural attitudes have restricted the level of development in the highlands. "Although 40% of the villages can be reached by four-wheel drive vehicles most of the roads are impassable during the rainy season" (Aguettant 1996:6). When Thai infrastructure made inroads, hopes were raised that development would reach villages (Alting von Geusau 1992:183). However, infrastructure provided a way for outsiders to remove resources from the environment and squeezed Mountain People in their villages. Foreign development commenced, legal rights failed to be recognised and many people became more marginalised than ever before. Mountain People started to feel powerless and less confident of their ability to solve their problems (Renard et al 1994:20). "At the bottom of the Thai social hierarchy, they are routinely put into stressful situations over which they have little control and with which they cannot cope" (Renard et al 1994:27). Alting von Geusau (1992:183) states that it is the process of integration that has marginalised Mountain People more than anything else.

The powerful force of Thai development has inadequately replaced indigenous development systems, increasing dependence, poverty and disempowering communities to deal with their own issues of development. It has failed to deliver services necessary for ethnic minorities to participate as equal members of Thai society. The process has been economic colonisation of the highlands, increasing national income for Thailand and using poverty and opium as justification for controlling ethnic groups. The following discussions examine the process of Thailand's development of the highlands and impacts on Mountain People, and assess the costs of not following indigenous patterns of development. Lack of citizenship status and lack of access to land remain the most significant factors contributing to poverty in the highlands.

Thai Perceptions of Mountain People

The Thai border became clearly defined in the late 19th century Thai nationalism emerged and Mountain People, whose loyalty had in the past been essential to securing more arbitrary borders, became classified as "khon pa", or "wild people" (Laungaramsri 2000:58-60). This is the first clear distinction between who was considered Thai and who was considered not Thai. With this came the

idea that Mountain People were foreigners and had settled within Thai borders⁸. Over time this classification was altered to “Chao Khao”, the official term for Mountain People, translated into English as “hill tribe”, introduced with the formation of the Central Hill Tribe Committee (CHTC) in 1959 (Bhrukakasri 1989:229).

In general, the Thai social process deals with rank and status rather than distinct individual personalities and fits with Thai sociologists' perceptions that primary Thai values are wealth, power, seniority and 'being the boss'. Hierarchy is important to Thai people: status symbols should be displayed and people should act according to their position in society (Mulder 1994:46). Mobility within the hierarchy is possible, especially through marriage ties, and people do not have to be born into their position in the hierarchy (Cohen 1991:21). This system of hierarchy has major significance for the ethnic minority groups as Thailand directs development in the highlands. Mountain People are looked down upon as the lowest class in the Thai system of hierarchy because they tend to be much poorer than Thai people. Thai people are not educated about Mountain People's culture and treat them according to their imposed position. These attitudes are racist and deeply affect Mountain People.

At the time the term “Chao Khao” was introduced, it was associated with perceptions that Mountain People were problem makers for the Thai Government, were backward and needed to be controlled by the State. The problems they are blamed for include deforestation, drug trafficking and security, yet these issues have worsened with Government intervention. The Government provokes negative perceptions of Mountain people by blaming the “Chao Khao” for all the problems in the highlands, even though there are significant populations of other groups living there, including the Khon Muang, Haw Chinese and Shan, and now Thai Government workers and military. None of these groups are categorised under this term “Chao Khao” as it is only used to refer to the nine officially recognised “hill tribes” (Laungaramsri 2000:65). The following discussions show that many of the problems in the highlands

⁸ This perception remains quite strong and Mountain People who are born in Thailand are said to be “from Burma” (fieldwork observations 2003).

cannot be blamed on Mountain People and that they have been used to justify government intervention in the area (Boonyasaranai 2002:2).

It is not true that Mountain culture has no value to modern Thai society. In fact it is very valuable for the tourist industry in the North of Thailand. Under the Tourist Authority of Thailand, Mountain People are shown to be attractive for tourists. Tour agencies promote trekking tours to visit "primitive" (this word appears frequently on signs advertising treks to visit Mountain people's villages) people living in their villages. On my first visit to Thailand in 1997 I discovered that you could go trekking in the mountains. Being from New Zealand, I believed the attraction of trekking was the nature, the mountains and the clean air. However, all the travel operators emphasised the hill tribes as an attraction for the trek - the image of "human zoo" sprang to my mind. Cohen (1997:15) records that in 1977 Mountain People's villages were virtually the only attractions stated in "jungle trek" tours and the jungle or forest was not advertised or pointed out as attractions for the tour. This has changed little. The North tourist industry still depends on the ethnic minorities as a means for attracting tourists.

It is interesting to note that the touristic image promoted by placing large pictures of the Mountain People on bus stops, around town, and on television announcing the diversity of Thailand actually had a positive effect for the Mountain People. For the Akha, when they came down from the Mountains to sell their goods in the market they saw photographs of themselves on bus stops, and for the first time felt that they had been accepted by Thai lowland society (Boonyasaranai 2003). Promotion of ethnicity in this regard is very superficial and does nothing to dispel the more powerful, destructive, negative image of Mountain People as foreigners and the lowest class in Thai society.

Thai education has not addressed the serious issue of racism. Almost every mountain school is taught by Thai teachers who pass on inherent racial attitudes that mountain cultures are inferior to Thai culture, reinforced by Thai media and society. Many ethnic minorities are ashamed to show their ethnic identity in lowland society for fear of being ridiculed (fieldwork observations 2002). Mountain People are expected to change their culture for Thai culture.

These perceptions of Mountain People are deeply entrenched in Thai culture and contribute to the failure of the Thai development process to improve overall the quality of life for the ethnic minorities.

THE THAI GOVERNMENT APPROACH TO DEVELOPMENT IN THE HIGHLANDS OF THAILAND

Prior to 1874 the North of Thailand was ruled by a number of autonomous princes rather than under one leader from Bangkok. Villagers, including non-Tai ethnic groups, paid tribute to the princes and in return they could occupy and cultivate land. The princes recognised village leaders in the hills as in the lowlands, they settled inter-village disputes and helped the ethnic groups in times of low harvests and other difficulties. From 1874 to 1953, after the Bangkok Government took control of Northern Thailand, relationships between Mountain People and the ruling authority of Thailand were largely neglected (Shinawatra 1985:40). This changed in the 1950's as Thailand used concerns over reduction in forest cover, damage to watersheds that irrigate the rice plains, opium production and security to justify their intervention in the highlands (translated by Bhrukasasri 1989:13 from Gen. Prapas Charusathira 1967:3-4). Significant technical and financial support was gained from the international community to address these problems. The following discussions note the increase in socio-economic problems since government intervention in the area.

Forestry and the Royal Forest Department

Thailand's initial interest in the highlands, apart from as a buffer zone, was the forest as an economic resource. The Royal Forest Department was established by King Chulalongkorn in 1896 and remains the Government department responsible for managing Thailand's forests. It has authority over almost all highland areas (Van der Meer 1981:194). Prior to the development of infrastructure the Government used teak from the highlands of Thailand as a major source of foreign revenue. During the 1880's and 1890's Britain controlled the teak trade, through the two largest companies, Borneo Company and Bombay Burma Trading Corporation (Isager 2001:102). Before World War II annual output of teak was 184,000 cubic meters, of which 82,000 cubic

meters was exported,; after World War II average annual output of teak was 215,000 cubic meters with 65,000 cubic meters exported (Banijbatana 1978:54).

To facilitate the transportation of teak from the North to Bangkok, the first railway between Bangkok and Chiang Mai was completed in 1921 under British supervision and loans (Laungaramsri 2000:99). Roads were also built to transport logs. In one example, the Thailand Royal Forestry Department was responsible for building a road to one Akha village in Mae Suai in 1978 for the purpose of transporting 40,000 logs between 1979 and 1984, to increase the economic wealth of Thailand⁹. The logged forest was replanted with pines and is now degraded more than the environments of villages that have been left to manage their own forests (Alting von Geusau 2002b).

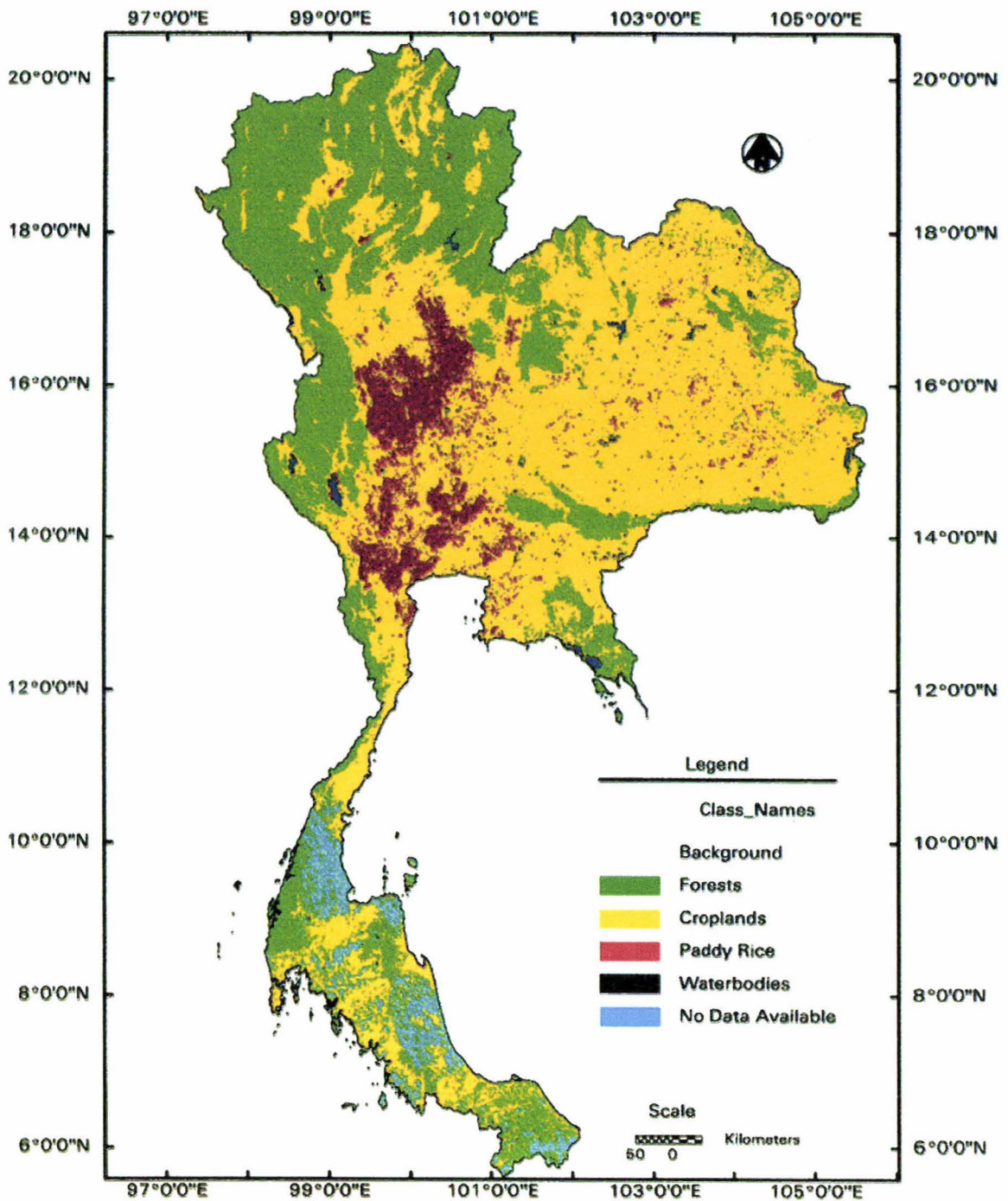
The forest is distributed throughout the regions of Thailand (Map 3.2). Continuation of the forests started to become threatened in the 1950's, with more people looking for land to farm, more entrepreneurs looking for logs to mill and land on which to stake out claims for speculative gains (McKinnon 1997:118). Cash crop production expanded greatly in upland and hilly areas and led to immense loss of forest cover. In many places, agricultural expansion was preceded by initial logging and the creation of logging trails by forestry concessionaires and illegal loggers, providing access for settlers and outlets for agricultural products (Hansen 2001:148).

The area of forest declined from 274,000 square kilometres in 1961 to 130,000 square kilometres in 1998. The accelerated destruction of Thailand's forests, especially from 1973 to 1978, is closely linked with the development of infrastructure including the road network (Thailand Development Research Institute 1986:8). Other reasons for continuing deforestation include "land speculation; low agricultural production; ineffective implementation of Government policies; and policies on basic infrastructure development; national security; tourism promotion; establishment of large scale mono-culture plantations for export; ineffective enforcement of natural resource management

⁹ This is an example of information that is not written down but gained by experiencing life in the highlands.

Map 3.2

Land Cover of Thailand : 1992/93



UNEP Environment Assessment Programme for Asia and the Pacific
Bangkok, 1996

laws and regulations; conflict between national forest policy and national land policy; ineffective implementation of the watershed classification system; and, non-systematic and non-standardised information on forest cover " (Office of Environmental Policy and Planning 1997:22).

Mountain People and their practice of shifting cultivation is blamed for causing deforestation (Hansen 2001:151). Yet the North of Thailand, where most of the ethnic groups are located, remains the most densely forested area, with 73,057 sq km, out of the total 129,722 sq km, remaining as forest cover (over half of the Kingdom's forest cover). Increasing migrations of Mountain People, resulting in an increase in the populations of the highlands, and irresponsible farming practices are likely to have contributed to environmental degradation but as Lakanavichian (2001:119) points out, forest cover has decreased remarkably since Thai Government involvement in the highlands. As the body responsible for managing the forests, the RFD must hold full responsibility for administration of the forest resources and related forestry issues. Increasing population pressure and Government-imposed restrictions have undermined traditional forms of shifting cultivation in most places (Hansen 2001:150).

Table 3.2 Forest Areas of Thailand by Region 1961-1989

Region	1961	1973	1976	1978	1982	1985	1989
North	72.6	71.0	64.0	59.5	54.9	52.6	50.1
Northeast	44.3	31.7	25.9	19.5	16.2	15.1	14.8
Centre	22.3	15.0	13.6	12.8	11.6	10.8	10.7
East	13.2	9.4	7.9	6.9	5.0	5.0	4.9
South	18.5	11.5	12.6	11.0	10.3	9.7	9.1
Total	171.0	138.6	124.0	109.6	97.6	93.2	89.6
% of Total land	53.3	43.2	38.7	34.2	30.5	29.1	27.9
Annual % change		-1.7	-3.6	-6.0	-2.9	-1.6	-1.0

Source: Office of Agricultural Economic, Ministry of Agriculture and Co-operatives (Krongkaew 2003).

The highlands are particularly sensitive in regards to forest issues. Currently there are no statistics available on land use by ethnic groups in the highlands of Thailand, so land use comparisons between groups over the years are not possible. To resolve this issue, and in response to the grassroots Community Forest Movement¹⁰, the RFD is currently compiling land use data in the highlands. Under a project run by the Forest Land and Forest Resources at Local Level of the Royal Forest Department. The 1998-2005 plan is behind schedule and due to finish in 2009. Under this plan, land is delegated case by case and the allotment of land according to individual and village is recorded at the RFD. This project takes massive amounts of resources and time for the Thai Government, and unfortunately, once finished is unlikely to reflect the real situation due to data collection barriers remaining in the highlands¹¹.

Sustainable development was introduced to the Thailand development process in the NESDB sixth and seventh plans. Through National Forest Reserves Thailand aims to protect 50% of the country as forest cover; of this figure at least 30% is designated as conservation forest and 20% is designated as economic forest (OEPP 1997:10). From 1989 until 1995 the official designation of conservation forests increased rapidly (Lakanavichian 2001:120). During the late 1980's, the Government unofficially allowed companies to clear forest and declare it "degraded", and therefore suitable for "reforestation" with eucalyptus plantations (Carrere and Lohmann 1996:237). Eucalyptus and pine trees are counted in the 20% economic forest set aside in sustainable development policies.

Opium, the UNDCP and Large-scale Highland Development

The highlands of Thailand are best known to most people for their place in the "Golden Triangle", a name coined by U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Marshall Green in 1971 that came to symbolise all of Southeast Asia's opium-related problems (Renard 2000:8). Opium seems to be an old, over researched issue

¹⁰ The community forest movement is discussed later in the chapter under "Conflicts between the Thai development process and the development process of ethnic minorities".

¹¹ Language barriers, remoteness and misunderstandings between villages and data collectors contribute to the distortion of data. The most accurate data is data compiled by the ethnic groups.

in regards to the Mountain People. However, the history of opium reduction still holds major significance for the Mountain People as it attracted large amounts of resources for developing the area. It resulted in increases in security, increases in infrastructure and opened up the highlands for Thailand's development process. Unfortunately it failed entirely to recognise indigenous people's development process and rights in the highlands. The solutions offered eradicating opium were linear, based on increased cash incomes, rather than holistic, and resulted overall in increasing poverty of Mountain People.

Although various Thai Government agencies had been established in the 1950's to develop the highlands and policies had been formed, "Thailand had no comprehensive highland development plan even as late as 1970" (Renard 2001:6). While the opium eradication initiative came directly from the King of Thailand, the Thai Government relied heavily on financial and technical resources from The United Nations Drug Control Programme (UNDCP) to fund its development initiatives. Resources were technical advice and funding; projects included crop replacement programmes and integrated highland development projects in the 1970's and early 1980's, and the eradication of poppies in 1984 (Renard 2001:xi). To deal with opium a United National Survey Team recommended a large-scale effort to provide for the socio-economic development of Mountain People (Renard 2001:7).

The UNDCP involvement in the highlands was entirely self-serving and followed its own development process that intended to "reduce heroin use in the United States from the source that was the Golden Triangle" (Renard 2001:8). Unfortunately, opium reduction programmes did not, and still have not, invested time and money in learning about indigenous development processes in the highlands. It was understood that opium was the only significant source of cash income for these people so before opium could be reduced they had to find alternative incomes for Mountain People.

Opium reduction programmes signified the initiation of large-scale development in the highlands. Infrastructure developed rapidly along with Thai-based social services and security. Opium was almost eliminated and Mountain People were forced to participate in Thai society without receiving adequate support for their

culture and basic human rights. The Thai Government used opium to gain international support to develop the area. It also continued to promote Mountain People as drug traffickers and the idea that, because of their connections with Myanmar and Laos, they harboured refugees. There was no rampant overuse of opium in the hills of Thailand before the development of a large market for Southeast Asian opiates in the West during the 20th century (Renard et al 1994:24).

Security and the Border Police Patrol

Security relating to Mountain People and the production of narcotic crops was Thailand's primary reason for initiating "development" in the highlands of Thailand (Aguettant 1996:7). In 1953 the Government established the Border Patrol Police (BPP) with the primary objective to secure Thailand's frontier against foreign infiltrators (Shinawatra 1985:41). The BPP Division saw the Mountain People as a threat to security so began to initiate relationships, which had been neglected since the late 19th century, with Mountain People. Communication problems were a significant barrier for the BPP as ethnic groups spoke their native languages and could not communicate in Thai language. The BPP recommended that the Mountain People receive Thai education so that communication could begin. They provided schools and basic training in first aid, agriculture and sanitation. In some areas the BPP still teach at the schools (fieldwork observations 2002).

One of the initiatives of the BPP was the introduction of a hill tribe radio station (108AM/1476MHz) in 1971 for the purpose of announcing Thai policies to Mountain People. This coincided with the communist insurgency in the late 1960's and early 1970's. At that time the Government recognised six groups of tribal people, the Akha, Lahu, Hmong, Lisu, Mien and Karen - and they chose their best students from the BPP schools to work on the radio station. The radio station allowed for each of the six ethnic groups to make announcements in their own language so villagers did not have to speak Thai to understand messages. The radio station is still in use today, with the addition of the Thai Yai ethnic group, and even though the Government runs it, NGOs use the radio

to announce cultural events, meetings and policy to Mountain People. It is an important medium of communication in the highlands (Morlaeku 2002).

Department of Public Welfare

In 1959, the Central Hill Tribe Committee (CHTC) was established in Thailand and, for the first time, a national policy towards the Mountain People was formulated. Responsible authority fell to the Hill tribe Welfare Division within the Ministry of Interior (Buergin 2000:7). The Department of Public Welfare, established in 1940, was designated the main co-ordinating agency responsible for all matters concerning the Mountain People, while hill tribe committees at central and provincial levels were to supervise activities. In 1961 the Government established the Division of Hill Tribes Welfare Operation Centre to conduct development projects among the ethnic minorities.

In 1962, the Thai Government cabinet issued objectives to the Department of Public Welfare. The first objective was "to have the hill tribes be Thai citizens with quality and able to help themselves" (Shinawatra 1985:72). To date, the Government policy towards Mountain People is based on the Cabinet decision of 6 July 1976, a long-term policy advocating Mountain People's integration into Thai society with full rights and maintenance of their cultural and religious practices (FAO 2002). Its main objective is to provide welfare until the point where villages are considered "fully developed" then are left to the appropriate department to take over. Services include agricultural extension, development of home industries and education (FAO 2002). In the past attempts were also made to resettle villages under the DPW. The 1999 DPW annual report stated its aim to "try to make its services accessible to the remaining 308,779 hill tribe people in 1908 villages who at the moment have no access to them". They currently provide welfare services to 465,537 Mountain People in 1838 villages in 20 provinces (FAO 2002).

Education

Education has the potential to alleviate poverty, yet the very fact that people are poor often reduces their access to it (FAO 2002). The underlying reason for introducing education in highland areas was not to improve socio-economic conditions, but to make it easier to control people in the area. This was initially recommended and carried out by the Border Police Patrol. Since then various agencies have been involved in the implementation of education in the highlands including the Ministry of Education, Public Welfare Department, the Royal Forest Department and His Majesty the King (Renard et al 1994:6). From 1933 until 1966, the Department of Primary Education set up about 80 schools for Mountain People (Renard et al 1994:5). About half the villages have a least one primary school that should cater for six years of primary education (Aguettant 1996:6). For secondary education, children must leave the village.

Education in the highlands depends on a significant amount of funding from outside the Government. His Majesty the King gave seven million baht to the Border Patrol Police schools set up in 1957, villages donated the labour and USAID and the Ministry of Education provided textbooks (Renard et al 1994:5). The Office of the National Primary Education Commission requested support from Thai-UN projects for 3 boarding schools in the highlands (Renard et al 1994:15). Children in such schools learn Thai and are more likely to go on for further study than students from the Ashrams¹².

The quality of education for primary school children in the Mountains is poor. Most of the teachers are Thai and have little understanding of mountain culture and no training on how to teach to children who are born speaking other languages. Teacher absenteeism is high and many see a job in the hills as a stepping stone to a better job away from the hills (Renard et al 1994:14). It is estimated that literacy for Mountain People is only 12%, compared with the national average of 84% (Aguettant 1996:6). People in lowland areas are more able to speak Thai than those in higher areas (Renard et al 1994:9). Overall,

¹² Ashrams were established by the Non-Formal Education Department's hill programs and implemented in over 500 villages. They served as village development centres in which the villagers could improve needed skills and allowed villages to determine the direction of the education (Renard et. al 1994:7).

Mountain People perceive lowland schools to be better than village schools (Renard et al 1994:14). In this area the Government is failing Mountain People; it is supposed to be providing Mountain People with the same rights as Thai children and but right to education is not being satisfied.

Health

The health of Mountain People is difficult to assess, as there are few surveys that record this information by ethnic group, because villages are remote, the provision and access of services is costly and difficult and Mountain People have not been adequately included in the Thai development process. One survey reveals that about half the children from one to five years old are underweight since the sudden invasion of modern markets into hill tribe villages as subsistence production is replaced by cash crops (Aguettant 1996:6). Health and economic impacts cannot be separated; the degraded environment impacts on nutrition and the ability to fight off disease (Reed 1997:100). In the case of the Guarani in South America, Reed (1997:101) observes that economic insecurity increases health problems, increases alcoholism and domestic abuse as well as violence between families and that in recent years there were dramatic increases in suicide rates among Guarani in deforested areas. Human health is directly related to the environment and socio-economic conditions.

Prior to foreign development, the major causes of mortality were infectious diseases such as malaria and smallpox, child mortality was high and so were birth rates. While population growth remains much higher than lowland levels, family planning has reached the highlands and combined with urban drift has led to population growth of 3.5% per annum compared with the national level of 1.6%. Only a small proportion of children have received immunisations compared with 63% of children nation-wide (Aguettant 1996:7). Child health needs more attention as the highlands change rapidly and parents are unprepared to cope. Pre-school children in the highlands have eight times greater rates of malnutrition than those in Bangkok Metropolitan areas (World Health Organisation 2000:192).

In the 1940's a vaccination program eliminated smallpox, while DDT spraying and treatment of malarial fevers became widespread, and infectious diseases were replaced by gastro-intestinal ailments in areas without clean drinking water (Renard et al 1994:18). There continue to be many incidences of malaria in the highlands. The issue of opium eradication is relevant. Painkillers are used frequently in Western medicine to relieve pain. Pharmaceutical medicine is expensive and difficult for Mountain People to access. Many people in the mountains suffer from malaria, dysentery, rheumatism, diarrhoea, pain, sleeplessness and depression. Some of these are common complaints in the Western world that were once treated by opium, a home grown remedy. Opium has been effectively eliminated and it is unlikely to be welcomed back into the village by Thai authorities however, it could improve the quality of life for some people if the law was changed to allow people to grow small amounts for medicinal purposes.

In 1987 Mountain people did not tend to use the doctor. A Ministry of Education report (1987:3) notes that the major illnesses were skin disease (28.08%), malaria (24.02%), tuberculosis (20.69%) and intestinal disorders (20.19%) of which only 3.47% was reported. It also records that 74% of the villages were provided with malaria control services and 32.37% were provided training for health volunteers; 57.21% received some form of basic health care (MOE 1987:3). This survey was not undertaken in remote or politically sensitive areas so does not accurately reflect the position of some of the most vulnerable villages in the highlands.

The high cost of delivering appropriate health services and the exclusion of Mountain People from the development process are likely to be continuing barriers for the provision of adequate health services. Due to the lack of access to foreign health care, many ethnic groups still depend on indigenous remedies. They provide their own medicine using products from the forest, but development has caused Mountain People to lose faith in their own methods of medicine (Renard et al 1994:26). Highlanders migrate to town in an unfamiliar environment causing increased health risks (Renard 1994:23). The opening up of the highlands has increased the types of diseases prevalent in communities such as HIV/AIDS, that highland medicine is not equipped to cope with.

New threats to health include the increased use of biocides freely available in the markets and the increased and increasingly harmful forms of drug use (Renard et Al 1994:23). Health issues in the highlands need serious attention and health surveys are essential to highlight current issues. If conducted through indigenous data collection methods data is much more likely to reflect the real situation in the highlands. Health education that supports indigenous knowledge and is carried out in the language of the ethnic minorities could make significant positive contributions to the health of highland villages. Full consent, full participation and consultation with Mountain People is essential to ensure the most effective health care is provided in the highland environment. The most remote and vulnerable communities need to be included in the distribution of health services. Presently it is very difficult to find any health information according to ethnic groups and their exclusion from the Thai development process has left them far behind other Thai nationals.

CONFLICTS BETWEEN THE THAI DEVELOPMENT PROCESS AND DEVELOPMENT PROCESS OF THE ETHNIC MINORITIES

Foreign development in the highlands has focused on strengthening the Thai economy and controlling the "problem makers" and has paid little attention to the needs of the ethnic minorities living in the highlands. So far development has concentrated on making the ethnic minorities like Thai people. In some areas this has caused major conflicts between highland and lowland development, most significantly in citizenship, land and education issues. Many young people are leaving their cultures for Thai society in order to find better lives for themselves.

Citizenship for Security vs. Citizenship for Human Rights

In 1976 the Thai Government's long term policy stated Mountain People should be "first class self-reliant citizens" (Chandraprasert 1997:85). This Government

policy was implemented with the aim to achieve permanent settlement¹³ of highland communities, increase security in the highlands and control opium cultivation in the area. Citizenship is the most pressing issue for 90% of Mountain People living in Thailand (Aguettent 2000:2). Mountain People need citizenship to ensure they have the right to move inside Thailand for employment or access higher education, healthcare, and land. On the surface it appears that on this issue the Thai Government and Mountain People agree - citizenship is fundamental to the development of the highlands. Granting of full citizenship was not necessary for the Government to achieve its security goals as this was done by the registration of households and tribal people. In 2002 there were still 377,450 highlanders classed as 'aliens' or illegal immigrants while awaiting the results of consideration of their status (Assembly of Indigenous and Tribal Peoples of Thailand 2002). Many non government organisation's (NGOs) have been working with Mountain People to help process the required documents. Lobbying for the granting of full citizenship have been carried on for years.

Thai law states that any person who has been living in Thailand prior to 1985 and all children born in Thailand are entitled to Thai citizenship.

There are three groups of people in Thailand who are waiting for citizenship.

1. People who are not registered with the Government. Registration took place through community history documentation and community surveys undertaken by the Government. Many people were missed in these surveys making it extremely difficult to prove that they have fulfilled the requirements to become a Thai citizen (AITT 2002).
2. People who have resided in Thailand since 1985. These people can apply for residency and their children can apply for citizenship.
3. Children born in Thailand. Many children were never registered with the Thai Government as being born in Thailand. In the past Mountain People did not go to the hospital to have babies, many have never been to a doctor and many do not speak Thai. Although parents may have been in Thailand for a long time they themselves may have no legal status and be unaware of the

¹³ For the members of a village to be eligible for citizenship they must be settled permanently and be officially recognised by the Department of Local Administration (Aguettant 1996:9).

process or the necessity to get legal status for their children (Morlaeku 2002).

To be considered eligible to become a Thai national, an individual must comply to one of the following conditions:

- (a) be under the supervision of a Government office
 - (b) have been verified and registered during 1969-1970
 - (c) have been registered on a house registration certificate by the ID Project in 1982
 - (d) have been registered during March-August 1985
 - (e) have been eligible during the period 1985-1988 for the Survey for the Hill tribe People in Thailand
 - (f) have been registered during the period 1990-1991 have been registered and issued an ID card for highlanders
- (Aguettant 1996:20).

The Thai citizenship process includes Thai Identity cards, representing full citizenship status, and also Blue ID and Green ID Cards with Red borders. Blue ID Cards are issued to people living in the highlands of Thailand who have had community history documentation issued. This was as a result of a 1990-1991 government highland survey. Green ID Cards with Red borders are issued to people who were counted in community survey documentation, a result of a 1999 government survey (AITT 2002). Holders of the Blue ID and Green ID Cards do not have any special rights, such as residency, while their status is being considered (AITT 2002).

In 1985-1988 survey the Government acknowledged that 528,597 out of 813,024 Mountain People were of Thai nationality, however only 247,647 out of those 528,597 or 46% of Thai nationals actually had possession of a personal identity card (Arguettant1996:22). Without a Thai identity card people can remain home without fear of arrest but they cannot access public services including health and higher education and risk being arrested if they move outside their homes. Not only do these people not have citizenship in Thailand but also they do not have citizenship in any other country. There is no uniformity

on legal status within families so that within one family there may be members with citizenship while other family members may not even be registered with the Government. Oppression, threats and detention have occurred to highland people holding Blue Cards and Green Cards with Red Borders (AITT 2002). There is a massive proportion of Mountain People affected by the citizenship issue. The matter became urgent when the Government declared that in August 2000 all people in Thailand without Thai citizenship were to be deported from the country. This resulted in a massive movement by NGOs and Mountain People, including protests and demands from Government to tell them the process for citizenship. This deadline was extended to August 2001 and again to August 2002.

A major reason that citizenship has not been granted is the slow and inefficient administration by the Thai Government. In practice only around 30,000 citizenship permits are granted to people per year (Morlaeku 2002). In April 2001 a total of 7,767 people in the following districts: Mae Suai 1,582 petitions (4,795 persons); Chiang Dao 920 petitions (1,859 persons); Fang 537 petitions (1,123 persons) - had submitted their petitions for citizenship and were still waiting to be processed after almost a year. Petitions had been processed by Government staff, community representatives and Non Government Organisations and considered to have both the documentation and assets required by the conditions established by the Department of Administration of the Ministry of the Interior. They only awaited authorisation by the District Head Officer (AITT 2002). Other reasons for the delay are the inaccuracy of government surveys and databases, the remoteness of many villages and the complicated process in applying for citizenship.

It appears in this case that the Government does not want to complete the process of citizenship by issuing Thai identity cards to the Mountain People and guaranteeing them rights as citizens. Registration has been completed and allows control over Mountain People without actually giving them rights as citizens or residents of Thailand. Justifiably, a lot of attention has been given to this issue since the year 2000. Mountain People, with the support of NGOs and international pressure have worked very well together and protested for their

rights. This issue is still unresolved but needs to be if Mountain People are to be included in the Thai development process.

Land for Economic Gain vs. Land for Sustainable Living

Development in the lowlands is forcing Thai people into the hills. Or, as Kummer (2000:26) points out, the poverty of lowlanders and the lack of access to suitable land for agriculture is forcing lowlanders to migrate North. The Thai Government "owns" the highlands, but Mountain People actually live there causing direct conflict over resources. On the one hand, Mountain People require this land for their livelihoods, on the other the Government wants to control the area for its own development process. In the past many Mountain People would migrate to avoid conflict. Unfortunately because of a lack of political, social and economic power, they often tend to be the losers in this conflict.

Mountain People lack political power and have difficulty in getting their rights to land legally recognised. Thai Government claims to resources have been legitimised in the name of ecology by the RFD (Hirsch1997:181). So far they have claimed 44% of the national territory forest as reserves, national parks and wildlife sanctuaries. Once land is termed "forest" no one can legally live there and the Government can do what it likes to the area under the guise of conservation. While some areas remain for conservation, many are turned into economic ventures for the Thai Government. For instance reforestation programs establish corporate claims to land for production for raw material for the pulp and paper industry; this is classified as "economic forest" (Hirsch1997:181).

The Government states its intention to achieve sustainable development in its national plans yet its policies are far from sustainable and they are unrealistic. By restricting subsistence agriculture to smaller and smaller areas the Government encourages people to encroach on Government land. Driven by hunger, humans will find food for themselves and their families any way they can, irrespective of the laws. Even after the Government has designated areas as national forest, deforestation continues at rates faster than reforestation. In

1989 there was a nation-wide ban on logging 6.18 million rai (1million hectares) of forest was destroyed within 3 years (1989-1992) (OEPP 1997:7).

Government regulations and existing structures facilitate large-scale commercial forestry, catering to fast-growing, market-oriented tree species (mostly Eucalyptus), over small-scale, even subsistence forestry activities carried out by rural communities (Faichampa 1990:142). Commercial forestry causes more encroachment because farmers sell land to the forestry companies and then move further into the forest reserves in search of new lands (Faichampa 1990:144). The RFD considered shifting cultivation, which begins by burning down much of the forest cover to provide nutrients to raise crops, a waste of timber resources and misuse of land that would be better used by growing tree crops (Renard 2001:5).

Thai Government development squeezes out Mountain People. Villages were removed in order to build a large house for a Princess in the Doi Tung area. Now the area is host to big government offices. The development of the area began with the building of a major road, increasing the price of land around the road. Investors started to come to the area and the Government began to develop agriculture and tourism (Alting von Geusau 2002b). National parks are an asset to the Thai Government for tourism revenue. Once land is designated a National Park the Government encourages development for eco-tourists. Tourism initiatives include spring and spa complexes, water sport recreation, herb gardens and safari zones to meet eco-tourists' increasing demand (Samabuddhi 2002). "The Thai Government has plans to turn two national parks into centres for mass tourism. The most controversial plan is to develop an international golf course, casino and conference centre inside a remote national park along the Laotian and Cambodian borders" (Kuronen 2002).

It has been very difficult for Mountain People to legitimise their claims to land and many villages find their access to land reduced. Since the Government took ownership of land the delegation of title has been and still is a big issue for the Government of Thailand. Up to 1985 only 12% of the 152 million rai of agricultural land carried title deeds; some 48% was covered by a certificate of utilisation or other papers and 40% had no legal papers whatsoever (TDRI

1986:5). In 1967 only 0.33% of the 56 million rai (90,000 sq. km) of land in the Northern region had land certificates and 11% had land possession registration (Kundstater et. Al 1978:22). In the North of Thailand, 33% of the villages are inside the forest reserves and 52% of land in forest reserves has no documents whatsoever (Faichampa 1990:13). The project under the RFD aims to solve this issue by registering land with the Government.

A more sustainable policy would include local people, who have a direct interest in sustaining forests for their livelihoods, in the management of forest resources. The Office of Environmental Policy and Planning (OEPP) recommends to "accelerate enactment of the Community Forestry Act and support decentralisation of roles and power of Government authorities by having local people and NGOs participate in forest resources management in the form of efficient community forestry; including supporting NGOs, local citizens organisations, and people, in participating in forest stewardship" (OEPP 1997:24).

The Community Forestry Act was the result of more than 10 years of negotiations between Government, local people and Non Government Organisations (NGOs) in a bid to give local people rights to have a role in the management of their forests. Last year it was passed through the Lower House of Parliament but this year, in March 2002, it was altered by the Upper House of Parliament by being ineffective in National Forest Reserve areas. The Act threatened the Thai Government's "sustainable development" policy of designating areas as National Reserves, evicting villagers (both directly and indirectly) and retaining their monopoly in the highlands of Thailand. If conservation of the forests was the priority of Government it seems there would be no conflict of interest, however it is clear that economic gain and direct control of Thailand's forests are priorities.

Indigenous Education vs. Foreign Education

In general, although schools have been established in most villages there is little attention paid to giving a quality education and educational attainment lags far behind lowland Thai (Kunstadter 1983:26). The conflict in development

objectives occur as Mountain People want quality education to increase their opportunities for employment in Thai society, and the Government objective is for Mountain People to have basic Thai language skills. Ideally Mountain People would opt for an education system following indigenous patterns of education, passing down cultural knowledge and language as well as learning the Thai curriculum. However, with the worsening of socio-economic conditions, Mountain People are being forced to sacrifice cultural knowledge for their children so that they have more chances of economic survival in society.

In one mountain school it was observed that there were three classrooms and four teachers. The day this school was visited the only person teaching was a foreigner who was volunteering his time. The other three Thai teachers, paid by the Thai Government, were sitting outside. The reason was given that this was the time for children to study before their exams. The children aged between 6 and 11 years were in their classrooms with their books open but without teachers during this study time (fieldwork observations 2002). They were very attentive when the volunteer was teaching. In another village primary school, an Akha girl, 9, who had been learning for three years, still could not read or write Thai language (fieldwork observations 2002).

The Thai education system for Mountain People is not working. Teachers in Mountain village schools receive a Government salary to teach children Thai education. Salaries range from 6,000 to 20,000 baht per month. It appears that they are not giving Mountain People enough education to participate in Thai society. This development issue extends beyond a lack of resources for education and shows that resources are not being effectively used in the development of the highlands. Thai teachers are not equipped for teaching Mountain People, they are not monitored well and their belief that Mountain People are low class is firmly entrenched in their thinking. There have been reports that teachers repeat comments to children such as Mountain People don't wash, they smell bad, they are stupid (fieldwork observations 2002). These comments passed on to young children give the impression that Mountain culture is inferior to Thai culture. It is very dangerous for children to be exposed to this, especially at such a young age when many villages are experiencing an increase in poverty as a direct result of Thai development.

For many Mountain People an indigenous system of education exists that incorporates cultural and environmental knowledge, essential for living in the highland environment. With this education comes security of belonging to a group where old people and young people are cared for. Indigenous education is being replaced by Thai education, as Mountain People understand the necessity for their children to find non-agricultural employment in Thai society. However, their desires for foreign education to improve the quality of life for their children conflicts with the Thai Government objective for education, to make Mountain People like Thai people. Massive impacts on the young generation include loss of cultural pride, loss of cultural knowledge, and fewer employment opportunities in Thai society.

IMPACTS OF DEVELOPMENT ON ETHNIC GROUPS IN THE HIGHLANDS

In the past, Mountain People believed that being dependent on outsiders was a threat to security, and there was a general resentment towards assimilation (Van der Meer 1981:197). This strong stance of cultural identity has been destroyed. Prior to development there was little contact outside the village as there were few roads. Life was based around the village community, cultural morals, law and beliefs and existence in the forest. In the last 30 years there have been significant changes causing the Mountain People to become a lower socio-economic group to the rest of Thailand. This is a direct failure of the Thai development process to meet the needs of the ethnic minority groups. Mountain People's development processes continue but they lack resources compared with the more powerful foreign forces of development. The national security issue in the North has lost its importance, and economic and social problems have become more apparent (Aguettant 1996:8). Significant barriers to what Thailand would call development, that is the cultural distinctiveness, isolation and economic marginalisation, remain in the highlands (Aguettant 1996:8).

The increase in Thai nationalism and Thai law exerting control over the highlands, mostly through claims over forest land, has led to a significant amount of human rights abuses in the highlands of Thailand. Thai law has been

set up to make most of the ethnic groups in danger of breaking laws. For instance 60% of Hill tribe villages are in areas where no crop production is allowed and 18% are in areas where cultivation is allowed, but limited to certain practices (Aguettant 1996:15). Human rights abuses often go unreported due to a lack of resources, lack of communication networks and fear of retribution. With a very low literacy rate, and lack of political representation, Mountain villages are easy to exploit. Laws effectively reduce the ability of Mountain people to sustain their livelihoods, resulting in further human rights abuses.

Forest is defined in the Forest Act of 1941 as "land area on which no one has any rights under the Land Act" (TDRI 1986:47). When land is designated forest, as almost half the land in the North of Thailand is, no one has any rights to it. Forest land includes National Forest Reserves. Any people living in National Forest Reserves, even if they were there before the area was declared a National Reserve, become illegal occupants, lose all rights to the land and in theory can be evicted at any time. However, in practice the residents may be allowed to remain there but they cannot expand the area of land under cultivation (OEPP 1997:25). "Thai law does not allow for ownership of land on the hill, the occupant of reserved land, protected forests and hill land has only the right of possession, legally inferior to true ownership" (Ratanakhon 1978:47).

Laws may not be strictly enforced until the Government requires land for its development purposes. The Royal Forest Department is assisted by the Royal Forest Police Department, responsible for enforcing forest laws such as encroachment on Government land. Punishments include imprisonment and heavy monetary fines¹⁴. The legal process is difficult for Mountain People to understand and once in jail it is difficult for them to get a fair trial. In some cases the RFD start enforcing relaxed laws in order to clear the area for development. Since October 2002 the Government has had plans to build a house for the Prince in Doi Chang. Doi Chang is about 1870m above sea level in the Mae Suai district and has been settled by Lisu and Akha villages for more than 40 years. The development of the area will not only affect Doi Chang but the

¹⁴ Fines of up to 120,000 baht have been heard of. In some cases offenses can be altered at the time they are recorded (Higashide 2003).

surrounding villages. If the project goes ahead the village consisting of more than 1000 people will be displaced. The Royal Forestry Department is now in charge of controlling the Doi Chang area and has begun arresting people for cutting trees (Alting von Geusau 2002b). The relocation of villages to unsuitable land may also occur in the name of conservation.

Lack of human rights and decreasing access to land for some villages¹⁵ has been accompanied by an increase in need for money, for education, health and basic goods. "Highlanders increasingly come into contact with the outside world and become dependent on market exchange" (Van der Meer 1981:198). In 1978 Suwanbuppa reports that Mountain People exposed to highland development projects wanted their children to have non-farm occupations. Such desires come from having been exposed to the different occupations (Shinawatra 1985:156). Money has become more of a necessity in the highlands in order to purchase goods that were once provided for within the village environment. The desires of Mountain People also increase as they see what Thai people have and, young people especially, want the same.

All villages in the highlands have a vastly different experience of development. Some have been allocated adequate land (although this is not necessarily legally protected) while others have not. This may have occurred through the understanding of the RFD process of allocation. For instance, during RFD replanting schemes, any land that was left fallow (a necessary method of maintaining soil fertility) was replanted and taken over by the RFD (fieldwork observations 2002). Villages that understood this could make sure that land was planted before the RFD approached. Some villages have benefited from the Thai development process in other ways, through education or access to health, however, in general the process of development has created massive inequalities between highland villages, between Mountain People and Thai people and between individuals in the villages.

Inequalities within villages have occurred as some people have citizenship status and access to employment opportunities and education while others

¹⁵ Not all villages have done badly from development, some have been allocated sufficient land, had citizenship cards and good Welfare services.

have none. There are few Mountain People involved in the political process in Thailand and their development needs are still not adequately considered in the Thai development process. Development in the highlands continues to be directed from Bangkok, even though plans call for an increase in participation at the local level. The lack of citizenship and social and economic power effectively excludes most Mountain People from the decisionmaking process and they continue to be blamed for problems in the highlands. The consequence is the continuation of policies that fit the Thai development process but contribute to the poverty of Mountain People.

The general perception of Thai about Mountain People in the 21st century is that Mountain People are not really Thai. The North of Thailand is full of checkpoints aimed at reducing the influx of refugees from Myanmar and Laos, and stopping the trafficking of meta-amphetamines. At checkpoints Mountain People are generally treated with more suspicion than Thai, and often ridiculed. Two Akha people were observed, with citizenship cards, speaking Thai to each other in front of the authorities to avoid suspicion. They had their luggage checked twice on the short public bus journey between Mae Sai and Chiang Rai, no one else on the bus was checked (fieldwork observations 2002). Many Akha prefer to speak Thai when in public so they will not be treated with suspicion or spoken down to by Thai people. Unfortunately one of the reasons Akha men stopped wearing Akha clothes outside the village was that they would be stopped by Thai officials to ask if they were Thai citizens or Burmese (Goodman 1997:98). This leads to some forms of harassment by the authorities and creates more difficulties than necessary when travelling.

The attitude of officials has altered little. Also, there are still barriers to the accurate collection of data in the highlands. In many cases data is inaccurately recorded in Bangkok offices where policies are formulated and Mountain People from their remote villages have little power to change this. Data may contain bias or be inaccurately recorded due to cultural misunderstandings and language barriers. There is no reliable source of data from the Government departments and statistics from the Ministry of the Interior, Ministry of Education, the Social Welfare Department, and the Royal Forest Department do not agree with each other (Boonyasaranai 2003). The village environment is

still like entering another country for educated Thai people visiting from the lowlands and the success of development in the highlands is almost an illusion created from outside. Statistics distinguishing the indigenous populations in national data are essential to showing the real position of the highlanders (McKinnon 1983).

Development has largely been a process of disillusionment, especially for older Mountain People. The generation gap is increasing as young people begin to understand Thai language and leave for the city at an early age while many of the older people have never even left their village. There has been an increase in social problems such as drug abuse, crime and prostitution. The Thai development process tries to hide these issues and offers token solutions to social problems without addressing the cause of these problems. For many, there is a loss of hope as the Thai development process becomes more powerful and self-determination is taken from villages.

The production of opium has almost been eliminated in the highlands of Thailand. However, the drug problem has worsened with the trafficking of meta-amphetamines and heroin from Myanmar through the highlands. In February 2003 the Thai Government launched a three-month anti-drug campaign. Some statistics from the campaign give us an idea of the drug problem in the highlands. "More than 400 drug dealers in the *North* have been killed [since the beginning of the campaign] while 14,445 others have surrendered.... A total of 77,385 drug users in the *North* had already reported to authorities" (Nanuam 2003). Mountain People are not the cause of the drug problem as suggested by the Government but many villages are caught in the middle of a major drug trafficking route and are vulnerable to consequences, including drug addiction and abuse, while most of the demand is generated from outside the mountains. Many Mountain People have replaced their independent status with dependence.

Positive Impacts of Foreign Development

In some cases impacts of development have been positive and Mountain People have integrated well into Thai society, gained good education or

employment and helped their families improve access opportunities through remittances. Some have been offered citizenship "with full rights to practice their own religious and cultural beliefs". In the past integration and access to lowland opportunities was not an option. Overall Mountain People are increasing their understanding of the Thai political and social system. Some people are looking at viable solutions to the development problem. NGOs have faced major obstacles in negotiations with Thai authorities that have no respect for outsiders trying to solve their problems. They have realised the best way to empower communities is to improve the capacity of local people to negotiate with Government (Boonyasaranai 2003).

Direct threats to livelihoods has resulted in some communal power being generated by Mountain People, supported by local NGOs and attracting international interest especially in regards to citizenship and environmental issues. This has given them motivation and experience to act against development ideas that are detrimental to their livelihoods. Unfortunately, their political and economic power is very small compared to the Government and even working together has not solved these issues. In the year 2000 there was a demonstration outside city hall in Chiang Mai where 10,000 protesters demanded that Thailand tell them the law about citizenship. This is a big turnout and an expensive exercise for people without access to resources, who have difficulties with Thai language, and who live a day or more from the city.

In March 2002 there was another demonstration which 5000 Akha attended. The protest was organised under The Assembly of the Poor, an umbrella organisation incorporating the voices of the Northern Federation of Peasants and the Assembly of Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Thailand. The protest took place in front of Chiang Mai City Hall and protesters camped out for a month. People demanded that the most basic human rights issues be addressed: to be able to use the environment in a sustainable manner for subsistence living and to be recognised as citizens. Eight demands were petitioned: number six demanded the Government address ethnic minority issues, including the two major issues of citizenship and legal personal status (Voice of the Turtle 2002). As a direct response to the Government's ultimatum that Mountain People without citizenship be removed from Thailand, Mountain

People have started to gather their own data in order to reflect the real position in the highlands.

Some very good research is being conducted with the objective of understanding of Mountain People. An excellent branch of the Chiang Mai University called the Ethnic Studies Department, located in the Social Research Institute, employs Mountain People to conduct research on issues relating to Mountain People and conducts research to educate Thai people and challenge their attitudes to Mountain People. The number of people involved in this work is limited due to resource restraints and lack of well-educated Mountain People, however it is an important step in increasing knowledge and understanding of Mountain People and empowering them.

Summary

This chapter introduced the concept that the Thai development process is foreign to the highlands of Thailand. Thai development has increased environmental pressure in the highlands, only superficially dealt with issues relating to sustainability and Mountain People, while continuing to unfairly blame Mountain People for problems in the area. This process has had severe impacts on the ethnic minority groups including political and social exclusion, increased inequalities and human rights abuses. While some have managed to fit into the Thai development process, often at the cost of their own culture, many have not. The following chapter will examine the Akha development system, based on Akha zangr and discuss impacts on Akha development to show that Thai development is not a satisfactory replacement for indigenous development processes.

Chapter 4

AKHA ZANGR

This chapter introduces the Akha people, their location, history and background, and Akha zangr (Akha "way of life"). Before the 1950's when foreign development, Thai and Christian, moved into Akha communities, highland development was based on Akha zangr. Akha zangr is more than a religion - it, offers practical laws and guidelines for all the social, cultural, political, economic, administrative and spiritual processes of the Akha. This chapter attempts to describe Akha zangr as a cohesive, practical, just and balanced approach to Akha development. Prior to foreign development, each community was equipped to handle their own affairs based on the rules of Akha zangr demonstrating that the Akha are very good at directing their own process of development. Foreign agents of development have failed to follow indigenous patterns of development, severely disrupting the continuity of Akha zangr and reducing the socio-economic status for the majority of Akha people. The next chapter discusses Akha zangr as a suitable framework for alternative Akha development and the impacts of foreign development on Akha zangr.

AKHA ZANGR

For centuries Akha zangr¹ directed every facet of Akha life. It is therefore vital to understand Akha zangr in order to observe the indigenous development patterns of the Akha. Akha zangr can simply be defined as 'way of life' (Jupoh 2003). According to Alting von Geusau (1999): "Akha zangr is basically a system for the sustainability and continuity of the Akha as a marginalised people... with its many rules it is adapted to smaller communities, which are ecologically and politically vulnerable, and also would be easily prone to internal conflicts". Akha zangr encompasses everything to do with being Akha, including methods of passing on Akha history and knowledge, genealogy, laws, cultural practices, rituals, conservation, the legal system, medicine, morals, etiquette

¹ There are different dialects, or pronunciations of Akha language. Akha Zangr is also pronounced Akha ue Yang due to the different pronunciation of the Z and the Y in some Akha villages. The Akha in China tend to pronounce the Y rather than the Z. There are a number of Akha scripts in use and zangr may be spelt differently depending on which Akha script is used. Lewis and Kammerer spell it 'zah', Tooker uses 'zan' and Alting von Geusau uses zangr.

and education. Akha zangr at its simplest is stories told by to grandchildren, the way a meal is served, or how one relates to other people (Choopah 2003). The first teaching Alting von Geusau received about Akha zangr was that when one person meets another person for the first time they must act shyly (Alting von Geusau 2002b).

“Akha zangr means something like ‘way of life’, ‘way of doing things’, customs’ or ‘tradition’... ‘everyone has zangr!’ For example, Akha zangr is the Akha way of doing things, and Phala zangr is the Westerners’ way of doing things....zangr includes things that we would term religious practices, such as how to worship spirits², how to honour the ancestors and how to carry out rituals, but it also includes what we would call technological practices such as how to plant rice, how to construct a house, where to keep one’s domestic animals, or how to boil eggs. In addition, zangr includes rules for action, such as how to take rice out of the rice steamer, how to interact with your father-in-law, what kind of clothes you are to wear and at what age, or in what order you are to marry in relation to your siblings....behaviour may be correct or incorrect in relation to zangr”. (Tooker 1992).

Defining Akha zangr as ‘way of life’, rather than ‘religion’, is an important step in assessing its relevance to the development of Akha society and its appropriateness as an alternative model of development for Akha in the 21st century. Akha zangr is very difficult to describe because such a uniform, holistic concept based on cultural practice, as opposed to belief, does not exist in modern Western culture. It closely resembles a religion in the sense that religion tends to provide a large community with a common set of morals, values and guidelines for every day life. However, as Kammerer (1990:283) and Tooker (1992) comment, there is not necessarily a belief system behind the practice of Akha zangr.

Akha zangr (zah) was first translated into English in 1968, in Paul Lewis’ Akha-English dictionary, as: “customs, religion, way of doing things” (Lewis 1968:351). This definition carried with it the incorrect assumption that the

² The assumption that the Akha worship spirits is incorrect (Choopah 2003).

practice of Akha zangr was based on a system of belief, leading Christians to assume that Akha zangr involved spirit worship. This assumption is incorrect: the Akha respect ancestors and follow their guidance rather than worshipping them. They continue to care for ancestors through offerings and invitations during the year to the village ceremonies, ensuring the continuation of the generations and of zangr (Grunfeld 1982:26,27).

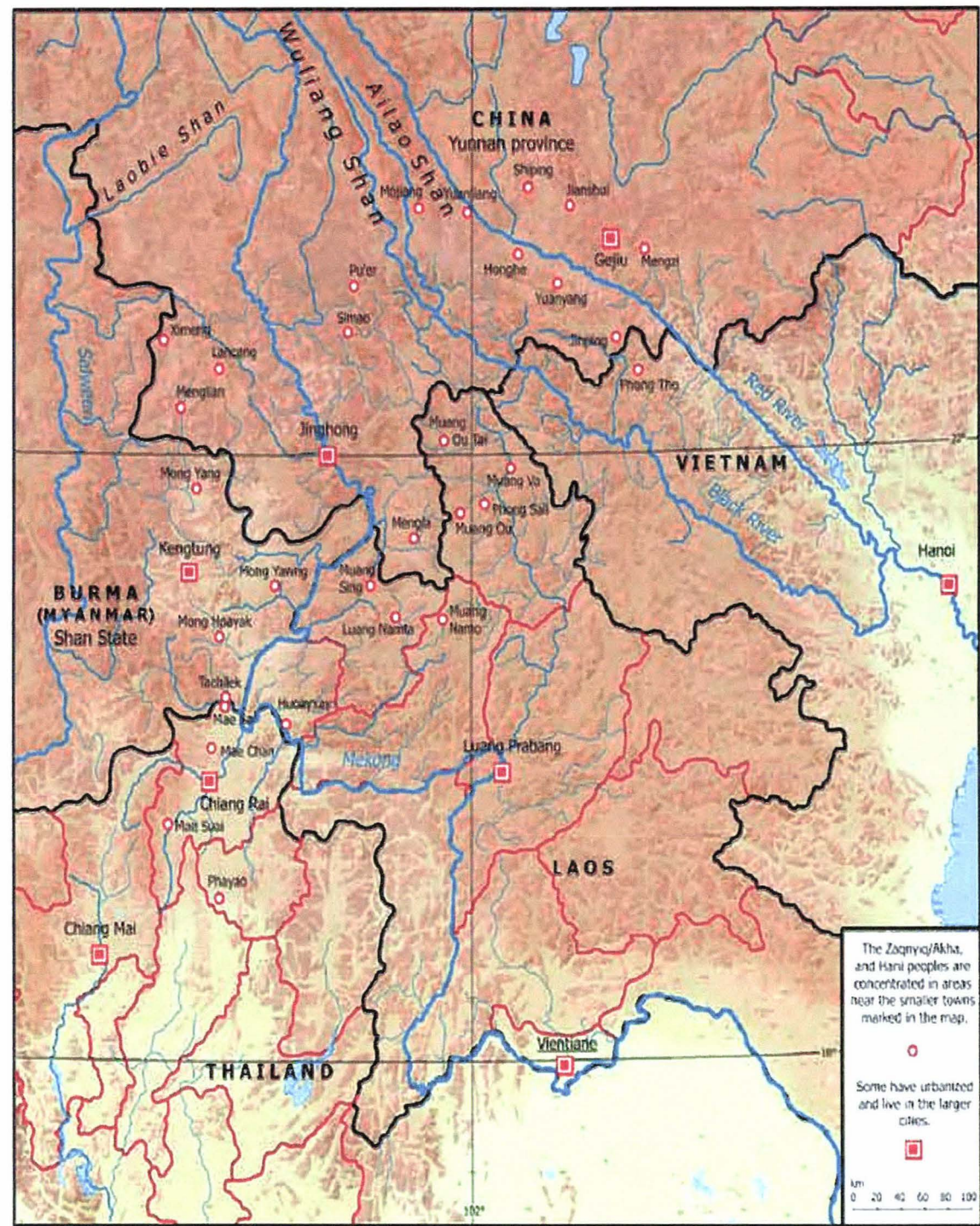
Population and Location of the Akha

The Akha are a trans-national minority split between Southwest China, Laos, Myanmar, Vietnam and Thailand (Map 4.1). Even though Akha populations are split between five countries, they maintain contact across borders, speak the same language (with slight variances between dialects) and feel solidarity as a whole. The Akha prefer to live in the mountains above 1000 metres. Akha is classified as a Tibeto-Burman language. The Akha have their own administration system based on Akha zangr, and, until foreign development moved Akha villages, they were autonomous from lowland States. Remoteness, language barriers, unique laws, customs, culture and migrations have contributed to the difficulty in obtaining accurate population data for the Akha.

At the beginning of the 20th century there were few Akha villages in Thailand. The Akha population in Thailand is likely to have increased quite significantly in the 1940's–1960's because of increased migrations out of politically volatile situations in China, Laos and Myanmar. Young (1962:1) observes that while official estimates for the Akha population had been placed at a few thousand, there proved to be many thousands more when all of the remote villages and hamlets were considered³. Kunstadter (1983:21) also found problems with population data: "Births are incompletely and tardily registered deaths are incompletely registered, with the deaths of infants probably least likely to be recorded, combined with the lack of a complete register or census of upland populations".

³ Often population figures were based on average household size, but household size can vary considerably.

Map 4.1 Location of the Akha



(Dzoeqbaw 2002:X).

Recent population statistics show massive increases in Akha populations over short periods of time. In 1988 there were 32,866 Akha; 49,903 in 1995; and 68,826 Akha in 2002 (Tribal Research Institute 2002). These figures suggest the Akha population has doubled in the past 14 years. However, it is more probable that as infrastructure moved into the highlands, more Akha villages were discovered and more Akha people became registered with the Government. There is also likely to be a surplus of births over deaths. Until the year 2000, official population statistics cannot be taken as correct due to inaccuracies. For this reason it is very difficult to compare population statistics over past years for the Akha and other ethnic minority groups in the highlands.

In year 2000 the Akha (and other ethnic groups in the highlands) started to compile their own population statistics, so that every Akha person in Thailand would be registered with the State and would eventually receive official status, residency or citizenship. In year 2002 the Akha population was recorded as 68,826 with a total of 273 villages (Tribal Research Institute 2002). Currently the most accurate statistics on Akha population are held at the Inter Mountain Peoples' Education and Culture Association in Thailand (IMPECT), as these are gathered by the Akha themselves. Thai urban population figures do not classify population according to ethnic group, therefore as more Akha migrate to town, their ethnic identity will not show up on population censuses. Urban migrations are likely to increase as more Akha leave villages in search of education and employment.

The overall Akha population is very difficult to estimate. Alting von Geusau records that the Akha population in China is estimated at 600,000–700,000 people, as official statistics only count those in 'areas of concentration' (Stewart Cox and Hall, 1984 quoted in (Alting von Geusau 2000b:125). Other estimates in China range from 130,000 (Ethnologue 2003) to more than 200,000 Akha in Yunnan alone (OMF 2003). Due to the political situation in Myanmar, population is extremely difficult to verify with estimates of upwards of 150,000 (Akha Society for Culture and Art, Kengtung 1996 quoted in Alting von Geusau 1993:125) to more than 200,000 (OMF 2003). The same problems occur in Laos where estimates are 92,000-100,000 and Vietnam with 20,000-25,000 (Alting von Geusau 2000b:123-127).

Migrations

The Akha are relative newcomers to Thailand, with the establishment of the first Akha village in 1903⁴ (Alting von Geusau 1983:246-247). Their arrival forms part of a long history of migration from the border of Eastern Tibet through the mountains of China, Laos, Myanmar and finally to Thailand. Migrations were fundamental to the development of Akha zangr as it allowed the Akha to develop under a system unique from other cultures. The location of villages was often hidden in the forests of the highlands emphasised by the following lines in one of the ancient recitations by the Pima at a funeral: the Pima is the Akha's ceremonial overseer, spirit-priest, teacher and healer. At an Akha funeral:

*"Oh, let's go home; don't let us leave our eyes at the market.
We lift our feet going to the market; don't let us leave our footprints behind"*
(Hansson 1983:285).

Migrations occurred for a variety of reasons. In the past, village migrations were fundamental to the swidden and shifting-style agricultural practises of the Akha, that were developed to fit with growing rice in the highland environment, which is less fertile and more difficult land to farm than the lowlands. Another reason the Akha migrate is to escape conflicts, and Akha history shows there has never been a warrior class or battles against neighbours (Alting von Geusau 1983:273). When faced with conflict it is customary for Akha to run away and hide in the forest, rather than fight (Choopah & Naess 1997:186).

Apart from reasons of agriculture and external conflicts, Akha migrate when Akha zangr is broken, in circumstances of sickness and overpopulated villages, conflicts within villages and marriage. Villages do not usually migrate together unless there are inauspicious circumstances (including illness) or conflicts. More commonly one or more families will migrate to escape problems surrounding the village, to find more fertile ground for farming, or to find new opportunities to increase their wealth. One or more families will either join another established village or form a new village. This style of migration, based on family rather than village, and the high mobility of the Akha helps explain

⁴ When writers refer to the Akha as an indigenous culture they are stating that the Akha are indigenous to the highlands in the Mekong Quadrangle, rather than indigenous to Thailand, Myanmar, or Laos.

Alting von Geusau's (1983:270) statements that "sharing and redistribution is centred much more on family and lineage than the village" and "Akha blood ties are much stronger than village ties".

The Thai policy of permanently settling villages, combined with increasing highland populations and the low supply of suitable agricultural land in the highlands have halted voluntary village migrations. The Akha village is changing rapidly from a self-sufficient community into one dependent on trade for basic necessities. In some ways Akha zangr, incorporating migration as a survival mechanism, has continued into the 21st century in the form of urban migrations. Modern migrations involve the Akha moving to cities in search of work and better opportunities for themselves and their families, and are essential for the survival of the Akha. More Akha people have been moving to the city for short periods in search of work. Remittances are then sent back to the village in order to pay for healthcare, education and necessities. These have become fundamental to alleviating poverty in the highlands. Remittances allow siblings to access education and provide parents with basic necessities such as medicine, food or clothing. A recent informal survey estimates 1,500 Akha currently live in Chiang Mai (Boonyasaranai 2003).

Urban Akha populations are fundamental in helping other Akha adjust to life outside the village. Moving to the city for the first time is like travelling to a foreign country, and the majority of older Akha people do not speak or read Thai. As people migrate to town to look for work they can find cheap short-term or long-term accommodation in Akha-owned houses. Accommodation costs can be as low as 200 baht (less than NZ\$10) per month (Higashide 2003). Akha housing areas have emerged as the Akha build houses on Government land in town, rather than individual lots, and rent them to other Akha people. Everyone in these areas can speak Akha. Many Akha live together in one house so it is not necessary to immediately integrate into Thai society - there is always someone to assist if need be. It is like a small urban Akha village. Without the support of other Akha, it would be much more difficult, and perhaps dangerous for the Akha moving to the urban environment.

Village Administration

Akha zangr has been carried, or passed on, by various roles in the Akha village administration system. The Pima is the chief of ceremonies and in the past his presence (the Pima is always a male) was vital to a village community and the continuation of Akha zangr. He is required at most ceremonies to recite the ancient words that have been spoken by Akha for as long as 1000 years and to ensure the ceremonies are conducted correctly. Pima roles include spirit-priest, teacher, healer and leader of most healing ceremonies and funeral rites (Alting von Geusau 1983:268).

In a traditional Akha village the Dzoema, founder of the village and leader of communal village ceremonies, is essential. He has the final say in judicial affairs and is considered the father of the village. The Baji is equally important: he is the village blacksmith responsible for making and fixing tools. His role is essential for the village economy. Another significant member is the Zau ma, the village tough man. There is also a Boemaw (who does not recite but is the rituals official) who is well trained in knowledge of Akha zangr and ceremonies, and the Nyipa (man or woman shaman) with a gift for healing and knowledge of herbal medicine. The Jeama is an older woman who wears a white skirt, past the menopausal ceremonies, is in charge of various ceremonies and also has knowledge of Akha zangr (Alting von Geusau 1983:268). Each role is important in maintaining balance in the community and the continuity of Akha zangr.

Akha zangr was an effective way of reducing violence, theft and other crimes within a village, as the breaking of law usually carried with it a monetary fine or the decision to kill an animal and share it among the village. It also ensured peaceful cohabitation within the village. Behaviour may be 'correct' (zan tsha-e) or incorrect (zan ma tsha-e), in relation to zan (Tooker 1992). Sever transgressions of zangr could lead to banishment from a village (Tooker 1992). Akha zangr is very strict and there are many incidences that can involve the Akha court. For instance, if someone slanders another person then the person being slandered can take the slanderer to court. The Dzoema is the judge, the elders are the jury. These main functionaries have several helpers including the Dzo za (small leader) and the Nanga, who are announcers, spokesmen,

attorneys and ombudsmen (Alting von Geusau 1983:268). One Nanga is the defence lawyer and one Nanga is the prosecutor. The punishment is usually a monetary fine and the ruling that the person is a slanderer (Alting von Geusau 2002b).

Akha zangr also guides the village decisionmaking process. Traditional villages are based on a democratic system. The decisionmaking body is the council of elders - males over 45 – 50 years of age called the Xama. The appointing of elders requires 90% of the entire villages' support and the council may change members depending on the issues being discussed (Higashide 2003). When those in authority make decisions, in theory they are representing at least 90% of the village population (Alting von Geusau 1983:268). Akha zangr was reasonably uniform between villages and the Akha did not have the need for a leader whose authority extended beyond his own village. Each Akha village was autonomous from all other Akha villages. When Akha followed the customs and laws of Akha zangr the adjustment to living in a new community was relatively easy. Now there is a big variation between the quality and style of leadership in Akha villages.

The Akha have continued developing their systems of organisation, based on democracy, even with many barriers to face such as isolated villages, lack of uniformity between villages, low literacy rates and lack of resources. Some grassroots organisations exist in Thailand and very important networks have been formed with Akha in Laos, Myanmar, China and Vietnam. Under the IMPECT organisation an Akha network was formed and a leader democratically elected. The Akha network consists of 108 Akha volunteers working as local leaders, representing around 190 Akha villages in Thailand (Morlaeku 2002). Akha villages in Thailand come in a range of sizes, from two households to large villages with more than 1000 people. If there is a small village they are unlikely to have their own IMPECT representative but will be visited by a representative from a nearby village. Up until December 2002 the Akha representative at the organisation IMPECT would only work on issues that the Akha network voted for as important⁵.

⁵ In December 2002, Meeju Morlaeku, the democratically elected representative for the Akha people, left IMPECT due to family commitments. The Akha network has since elected a new representative. This thesis has not evaluated this new leader.

In order of priority, in 2002 under the leadership of Meeju Morlaeku, there were four main areas of concern for the Akha people in Thailand voted for by the Akha network:

1. Citizenship
2. Land/Forest issues
3. Education & Culture
4. Human Rights

"The Akha work very well together on issues that they care about", in particular the issue of citizenship (Morlaeku 2002). Networks have also been formed at an international level with the International Hani/Akha culture conference in 1993 and another Hani/Akha International Conference held in December 2002⁶. A number of Akha organisations have formed over the years each with different agendas. The success of an organisation is dependent on many factors including whether or not it is supported by the larger Akha community, how effectively it represents the desires of Akha people and how it is supported by outsiders.

Akha Education and the Continuity of Akha Zangr

Akha use the metaphor 'to carry' zangr and the Akha creation mythology tells of the creator giving the Akha 'zangr' to carry (Kammerer 1989:62). This metaphor explains how they see their relationship to Akha zangr - that they must carry it throughout their lives and pass it on to the next generation. Akha zangr exists today because of this principle of continuity, based on the assumption that customs at all levels have been handed down by ancestors (Kammerer 1989:273). Up until the mid 20th century, Akha language was not written and the continuity of Akha zangr depended on the memories of the Akha people. The passing down of Akha zangr was conducted through the Akha education system and the apprentice system for important village roles.

⁶ The Akha share the same ancestry as the Hani who, with a population of around 1.3 million, reside in the Yunnan province of China (Ethnologue 2003). In the 1950's Chinese linguists discovered a linguistic link between the two groups and since then many cultural similarities have been found including shared ancestry, archaic texts, songs and mythology (Alting von Geusau 1983:143).

On a general level, Akha education is taught by the Pima, elders and parents and incorporates the teachings of Akha zangr, and lessons about herbs, soil, songs and skills required for work (Alting von Geusau 2002b). Education involves memorising genealogies and learning practical skills for agriculture, sewing, house building and cooking as well as village laws and cultural ethics rather than the study of reading or writing. Over time, all the education required to live as an Akha person is acquired through experiences gained living in an Akha community. For instance, when an Akha couple decide to get married they start to pay attention to the customs associated with marriage; the same occurs - when a woman becomes pregnant or when a house is built. For every important event a village expert passes on information about Akha zangr and performs the necessary ceremonies.

The establishment of the Akha 'genealogical and alliance system' and the foundations of Akha law are likely to have occurred around 960-1279AD, the only time the Akha seem to have lived in a [shamanic] chiefdom without invasions from other cultures (Alting von Geusau 1999:139). The genealogy system is an effective way of ensuring the continuation of the memory of Akha ancestors. In the past, all Akha children would memorise the name of their father and father's father etc., as far back as possible. To make this task easier the Akha tend to have two syllable names, with the last syllable of the father's name forming the first syllable of the son's name. The oldest Akha genealogies go back as far as 65 generations to the ancestor Sm'io (Alting von Geusau 2000a:x). Akha zangr specifies the method by which an outsider can adopt an Akha lineage (Kammerer 1990:282). For practical purposes, when one Akha meets another Akha both people recite their genealogy, and if the same ancestor is mentioned within seven generations they cannot marry (Choopah 2003).

A higher level of Akha zangr includes the several lengthy recitations of the Pima, Boemaw, Dzoema, Nyipa and Baji and the ceremonies they are trained to perform. These people's knowledge requires special, often technical training and a higher knowledge of zangr (Alting von Geusau 1999). Knowledge and practice was transmitted by memorising lengthy oral texts. Extensive training is required to become a Pima that includes spending 10 to 15 years living with a

trained Pima and memorising word-for-word the Akha 'oral texts'⁷ that have been passed down for over 1000 years (Alting von Geusau 2002b). Most of the traditional Akha zangr is found in the several recitations of the Pima or Boemaw ('oral texts'). The funeral texts alone fill several volumes and reaches more than 700 pages of text. There are also texts for stages of life, healing texts for disasters and texts related to several yearly ceremonies. The Dzoema knows several archaic texts related to his function as a judge and agricultural activities during the years. The Baji, or village technician also knows several archaic texts related to his function as a blacksmith and technical advisor when building houses, bridges, swings and water systems (Alting von Geusau 2000b:145).

For all positions knowledge is passed on to an apprentice from the younger generation to ensure information will continue for future generations. When written, this knowledge effectively forms an 'archaic oral text'. The language used in these texts is different from Akha language used every day. However comparing the words of different Pimas shows that these words have changed very little, if at all, over time (Alting von Geusau 2002b). Hansson (2002:XVII) states that while the language is certainly different to modern Akha language, she cannot be sure the language is archaic. Each line is built upon a rhythmic pair so that language has been manipulated or stretched to a certain extent to make it fit into the requirements of the metric pattern. Possibly this allows for Pimas to add text over time, by applying the same pattern to the language. However the Pima does not deliberately try to include new material: he sees himself as a faithful transmitter of memorised texts, not a composer (Hansson 2002:XVIII).

The continuation of Akha knowledge relies on it being memorised and passed on to the next generation. Foreign development has severely interrupted the Akha indigenous education system and the continuity of Akha zangr. Akha education is behind Thai education as it lacks support and resources and few Akha following Akha zangr can read or write Akha. Young Akha children are educated in the Thai system, and the Akha zangr specialists lose their apprentices. Young children leave their village at a young age, for employment or education, and miss the knowledge acquired while growing up in a village. A

⁷ The Akha 'oral texts' are the words that have been memorised by various Akha zangr

serious concern is that there is no way for young Akha people to access Akha cultural knowledge, except through practice. There is little recorded Akha knowledge in a format accessible to the majority of Akha people⁸. Christian people effectively introduced Akha literacy, but used it to pass on Christian knowledge, rather than knowledge of Akha zangr, interrupting the continuity of Akha zangr. Young people are caught in between two cultures as many are born speaking Akha yet grow up with very little knowledge of their own culture. They receive primary level education in Thai, watch Thai television and listen to Thai songs.

In response, Akha elders and outsiders have been recording, translating and writing Akha cultural knowledge. The translation and recording of these oral texts is very difficult. First, the recitations, which are mostly spoken by old Akha only during ceremonies, must be recorded. Even today many of the old Akha who have spent their lives in the village are very shy when speaking into a recorder (Higashide 2003). Once the recording is done it is extremely difficult to translate it from original Akha and write it in modern Akha. Recitations are poetic, making it even more difficult to find suitable translations. To find resources to support this work, and someone who has sufficient education (including Akha literacy, knowledge of Thai, English and computers), combined with cultural knowledge and time, who can understand ancient Akha, and who has a mind that can direct this work is very difficult. One person involved in translating the texts told me that he could spend hours with his father over the translation of one word from ancient Akha into modern Akha, because the concept exists outside his knowledge (Jupoh 2003).

Recording and translating these words forms a very important historical document. Dating the recitations has been taking place for a number of years and is very difficult. Some parts are dated back as far as 1000 years, other parts are 500 years or 300 years old. Although some words may vary between the newer additions to the recitations as migrations and experiences affect the Akha differently, most of the older recitations tend to contain exactly the same

specialists, word-for-word and passed down from generation to generation.

⁸ MPCDE/SEAMP-HRI has produced Akha language booklets, recorded Akha songs and produced an Akha archaic text. With limited resources they also have the enormous task of teaching Akha literacy.

words for all Akha (Alting von Geusau 2002b). An International Hani/Akha cultural revival movement has tried to adapt Akha zangr to modern situations starting from the study of the traditional meaning of the old texts before they are lost. These can be still be accessed in some parts of Northern Laos (Alting von Geusau 1999).

The following lines of a Pima text note the changing nature of money and the environment but the continuing tradition of Akha zangr:

*The lease of the buffalo changes,
The money purse changes,
Money comes and disappears,
The place where we plant is changing,
The place where we are allowed to live is changing,
But like the white ceremonial skirt of the old field-mother remains. Also
Akha zangr remains (Alting von Geusau 2000b).*

Flexibility Principle of Zangr

Oral traditions of Akha zangr advise taking a middle road and encourage flexibility and compromise for survival rather than confrontation (Alting von Geusau 1983:273). Akha zangr is not static and has developed over the years (Alting von Geusau 2002b). Flexibility has become increasingly important as Akha society is faced with rapid changes. One example of flexibility is the removing of severe taboos associated with sharing Akha zangr with outsiders, so that technology could be used to record Akha zangr recitations and avoid a loss of knowledge (Alting von Geusau 2002a:XI).

Another example of the flexibility of Akha zangr was a Pima meeting held in Saen Chareon village from 31 August–1 September 2002 (fieldwork observations 2002). The purpose of the meeting was to discuss how the number of ceremonies performed during the year could be reduced to make it easier for Akha to follow Akha zangr. Many people have left Akha zangr because of the “inability to keep up with the requirements of Akha zan, economic or political pressures, and lack of knowledge or a ‘forgetting’ of zan” (Tooker 1992). It was the first meeting to invite Pimas from all over Thailand to

discuss the preservation of Akha culture for future generations. At the meeting, no decision was made, but many issues were discussed and a Pima committee was elected to discuss the issue further. Attendance at this meeting shows the willingness of older Akha to meet together to discuss the future of Akha zangr. Also at this meeting, Akha women were allowed to speak - once tradition only allowed for men to speak. Again this demonstrates flexibility.

Cultural Identity

A number of people have commented on the strong cultural identity of the Akha. Kammerer (1990:281) notes that "the Akha seem to be less willing to shift their identities than many other highlanders". While they have contact with and often trade with other cultures they call themselves Akha thereby differentiating themselves from other ethnic groups. What defines the Akha as Akha is the belief that they are lineal descendants of a single apical ancestor, "Main Sky, Middle Sky" (Mmamg'ah), below which there are nine generations of spirits, before the first man S'mio appeared. They recognise that members of other subgroups are also Akha and can detail variations in practices between subgroups: however, all are descendants of S'mio (Kammerer 1989:270-71).

There are many subgroups that have variations in customary law and dialect. The three main groups in Thailand are the Ulo Akha (with a cone shaped hat), the Loimisa Akha (with a trapezium shaped hat) and the Phami Akha (with a hat like a silver veil over the head). Other groups include the Tan-kui Akha (with a tail over the neck shaped like an ant-eater), Law-sang Akha (with a rattan frame and tail of the law-sang flower), Udzang Akha (turban style), U-taw Akha (small, round shape) (Alting von Geusau 2000c). Due to resource restraints there is a lack of information available about the variances between Akha subgroups. Most of the information in this thesis comes directly from the Ulo Akha subgroup living in Thailand⁹. However, in the past, every Akha person followed Akha zangr (Jupoh 2003).

⁹ An interesting topic for research would be the variances of Akha zangr between Akha subgroups.

The identity of one's community determines to a large extent, if not completely, one's practices (Tooker 1992). Urban Akha are not necessarily practising Akha zangr because the structure is not there to practice it. Tooker also reflects that it is quite possible the Akha see the Christian zangr as a sub-ethnic marker within Akha zangr, similar to Akha sub-tribe differentiation. There are many other different types of sub-ethnic zangr (which divide Akha sub-tribes, lineage's etc.) There may be a strong case of zangr subsuming religion and there are cases where the Akha have come back to Akha zangr from a 'conversion' to Christianity when they have been able to fulfil its requirements (Tooker 1992).

Agriculture and Conservation

The Akha have depended on agriculture for a millennium and sustainable practices are essential to the survival of Akha zangr. To practice sustainability, conservation laws were incorporated in Akha zangr and strictly enforced by the Akha village legal system. Consumption was kept mostly to forest products. A lack of roads reduced the level of consumption beyond the village. Records indicate that the Akha once practised rice terrace farming in Southern Yunnan, until the conquest of the Tai Lue warrior, Ba Zhen in 1180AD, eventually drove the Hani/Akha, Palaung and others higher into the mountains (Li Fuyi 1946:7). In the highlands they ceased practising rice terrace farming and started practising mountain swiddening. Prior to foreign development influences, the Akha in Thailand were 'integral' shifting cultivators, staying in a village for a number of years and migrating when soil fertility became poor. For integral shifting cultivators, rice is a fundamental ingredient but they also hunt for birds or deer in forest and in the past, grew opium as a cash crop. Corn, chillies, maize, gourds, squash, beans, peppers, yams and taro are also planted in rice fields (Hanks 1972:32). Apart from swiddening the Akha keep pigs, cattle, buffalo, chickens and ponies. Forest products are gathered for household consumption, medicine, house building materials and so on (Bhruksasri 1989:11).

The Akha legal system enforced conservation by imposing monetary fines for breaking conservation laws protecting plants and animals in community forest. For example, one law in Akha zangr regarding swidden farming restricts the

cutting of trees to those higher than five metres in order to protect the diversification of species (Alting von Geusau 1983:272). Akha community forests are divided into many zones: the main division is between larger forest, and water-source areas. Water-source areas are most protected, and fines are imposed for cutting trees in this area as sources dry up with deforestation. For occasional tree cutting in other areas special permission has to be given. Steeper slopes, called *law xm* and *xaw dm*, are also more protected, as they are more prone to erosion. *Ga tsang* are strips where paths can be made without creating damage. Hunting is restricted to certain periods in the year and the hunting of pregnant and young animals is (or was) strictly forbidden (Alting von Geusau 1983:273).

Foreign development has reduced access to land for most Akha villages, either as a direct result of permanently settled villages and decreasing soil fertility over time, or increased population and economic activities in the highlands. If a village is surrounded by a forest belt where hunting is allowed, their access to food greatly increases with hunting game, birds and wild fruit. If the surrounding area is agricultural land for other communities they do not have access to these essential nutrients. The Akha have become considerably poorer since villages have been opened up by development, a fact that is difficult to discern by researchers new to the area (Alting von Geusau 2002b).

Employment

The Akha have always used markets to trade for items such as salt, iron, buffalo and buttons. They grew cash crops like cotton, sesame, and peppers and traded with Indians for silver rupees and Chinese 'silver frogs' (Alting von Geusau 1983:265). Money could also be earned from selling deer or pigs hunted from the forest or more recently from opium. However, trade was minimal and almost all items were handmade and supplied from the forest. Employment is described in Akha *zangr* and while it contains rules for economy and business, most village employment did not involve a cash income (Alting von Geusau 1999). Rather, employment provided for personal and communal necessities required to survive and evolve in a mostly self-sufficient highland environment. Employment is in agriculture, growing mountain rice and

vegetables; or as the toolmaker, silversmith or women spinning weaving and sewing clothes; practising medicine or healing, building a house, hunting and trade.

As access to fertile land diminishes, costs for hospitals, clothes, transport and education increase. To compensate, the Akha have had to find a cash income from outside their village. In some cases Akha zangr has achieved continuity through employment, as village skills are adapted to find cash incomes from outside the village. Employment outside the village includes as radio announcers, builders, labourers, agricultural workers, tour guides, guesthouse owners, cooks, cleaners, teachers, Akha dancers, restaurant owners, development workers, shop owners and teachers. Due to a relatively low status in Thai society, a lack of knowledge of Thai society and lack of support and skills, exploitation and low wages may come with employment in the city. Dangerous professions such as prostitution and drug trafficking are more common, with grave consequences for the individual and the community.

For a toolmaker and silversmith, skills are easily adapted to a market economy, as skills are in demand outside the village. The Akha silversmith used to use coins to create women's hats, the most beautiful of Akha items. Coins are flattened with a hammer, cut to size, moulded, engraved and treated with chemicals to make them shine. No electricity was needed. In the past the Akha only worked with silver. Now a mixture between silver and copper is worked to make cheaper yet beautifully crafted items for sale, mostly to tourists, at local markets.

The form of employment that most visibly shows the Akha and Akha zangr outside the village environment is the handicraft business that was pioneered by Akha women. It encourages Akha women to wear their clothing outside the village and most handicrafts for sale have been adapted from traditional Akha designs. The beginning of the Akha handicraft business in Thailand correlates directly to the decrease in the wealth of the Akha. The Akha started to need money when their incomes decreased from opium eradication programs and foreign development. Women started to sell their head-dresses, which were, in the past, entirely made from silver. At the time, they also discovered trade in

antique Akha household items and clothing. Some items were very old and had been handed down by ancestors. When there were no antique items left to sell, the Akha started to make clothes and items specifically for sale at local markets (Choopah 2003).

Many of the older Akha in Chiang Mai were pioneers of the Akha handicraft business. In the past there was a lack of money and an item had to be sold before capital could be found to purchase the material to make a new item. Now there are many handicraft sellers and the difficulty comes from selling rather than in finding capital for new stock. Items are either made in the village, or bought from other tribes or from Myanmar, where labour is cheaper, and sold in the cities. Trade allows for people to develop new skills outside their village, and adapt to city life while at the same time retaining their cultural identity. The handicraft business has spread across Thailand and is an important adaptation to Thai society as women learn what life is like in the city, learn Thai and send remittances back to the family. Many Akha make handicrafts such as belts adorned with seeds and shells, embroidered bags and hats for sale at local markets. The increasing number of mostly women Akha selling handicrafts in cities has contributed to the increase in urban Akha.

The Akha handicraft business has introduced Akha zangr to outsiders. Today most tourists who come to Thailand will have their first encounter with an Akha person selling handicrafts in Khao San Road, Bangkok. One young Akha woman working in Khao San Road comes from a village 20km from Chiang Mai. She comes with three other women from her village and they share one room in a guesthouse for 190baht per night. Their wages vary between 0 baht – 300 baht for one night. She has three children back in the village with their father. She usually spends 20 days in Bangkok at one time then goes back to her village for 10 days (conversation with Akha woman 2002). Akha also sell handicrafts in Pattaya, Chiang Rai and Chiang Mai. Deuleu Choopah has a number of years experience in the Akha handicraft business and notes that in Myanmar, Akha women are starting to prefer wage-labour over handicraft production because sewing for long hours often causes sore eyes and dizziness (Choopah & Naess 1997:198).

Discussions have focused on the handicraft business as it both enhances and uses skills taught by zangr. However most Akha employed outside the village are not involved in handicrafts. Some sell Thai or Western style T-shirts or clothing, antiques, or buy and sell goods from other Mountain People all over South East Asia. Trade in Southeast Asia is facilitated as many older Akha speak other languages useful for trading across borders. Some Akha are involved in the tourist industry. Business can include owning a guesthouse or working as a tour guide or porter. The lack of citizenship in some areas has huge implications for employment of the Akha.

Status in Village and Society

Within Akha society many do not think in terms of class, nor wealth or status. However, a difference in wealth does exist in Akha villages and women are not equals of men (Alting von Geusau 1983:269). Many writers mention the egalitarian nature of Akha communities. In terms of traditional roles, there is no hereditary class structure meaning that there are no barriers to anyone in the village taking up a position of responsibility. Also, in the past it didn't matter if a woman married a poor man. She could borrow money and establish a field and a house. They could work together and everyone could see how much they loved each other by how they made the house and garden beautiful" (Choopah 2003).

Some parts of Akha zangr have the effect of redistributing wealth between the rich and the poor. Often, if Akha zangr is broken the offender must kill an animal and the feast is shared with everyone. There are many ways in which Akha zangr can be broken including a bitch whelping in the forest; a pig giving birth within the house compound; a pig giving birth to a small litter, just 1-2 piglets. "In these cases the poor tend to win more often than the rich, because the latter obviously own more animals" (Goodman 1997:66). The way an Akha village was established provided for all the needs of the individual and the community - education, healthcare and employment.

Gender

In the past the roles of the men and the women were entirely different (Alting von Geusau 2002b). Even today, men and women in Akha villages have different roles and sleep in separate areas, even if they are husband and wife. Women were responsible for planting and harvesting food from the field and taking care of vegetable gardens. The men were responsible for hunting and gathering food, such as insects, from outside the village. Now Akha women sell or buy goods at the market and have access to money and opportunities to increase their skills in Thai society. Women's knowledge of Akha zangr is in the area of motherhood, medical and food plants, agricultural practices, colouring and embroidery, methods of healing and songs (Alting von Geusau 1999). Akha society, as we know it today, is patrilocal. This means that once a woman is married, she must go to live with her husband's family. One Akha woman told me that this is the reason Akha women lose power to Akha men. This is in contrast with Thai culture, which is one of the few Asian cultures that is matrilocal, meaning once married the husband must stay for a while with the wife's family.

While gender roles are distinct in Akha communities, women are not considered lower than men. In some ways Akha zangr provides support for Akha women who seek employment or education away from the village. Akha zangr allows grandparents (grandmothers and grandfathers) to care for children while both parents work in the fields. Child-care also exists for Akha women who leave the village. Some urban Akha women have children and take them back to the village to be cared for by grandparents while they work. Grandparents may also care for children in the village while women are involved in the handicraft business.

In a traditional village Akha women were kept out of leadership and also out of the more sophisticated knowledge of Akha zangr (Alting von Geusau 1999). However Akha zangr appears to be flexible enough to incorporate women in the changing environment and there are no significant barriers to women becoming Akha leaders. An example is the democratically elected leader of the Akha, a woman working at the organisation IMPECT until December 2002, showing that

gender is not a barrier to leadership and other qualities are considered. Akha women have started to unite to ensure that they have equality in the indigenous development process and women, such as Deuleu Choopah, have demanded a role in the leadership of the Akha. Under the organisation MPCDE/SEAMP-HRI an Akha women's project was initiated to encourage the education of Akha women.

Development needs to pay attention to the gender relationships in society to ensure that development empowers each member of the village, women, men and children, and ultimately empowers the entire community. Development has the potential to dramatically alter the roles of men and women. In one village quite exposed to lowland society but still following Akha zangr, women have taken on the role of making roofs and floors (out of bamboo) for the houses, a role that men were responsible for in the past (Alting von Geusau 2002b).

Health

Akha zangr teaches medicinal knowledge of massage, herbs and shamanism. Prior to foreign hospitals all medicine was found in the forest and administered by Akha doctors (the Nyipa). The village Nyipa (shaman) can be a man or woman and has a gift for healing, knowledge of herbal medicine and the ability to go into a trance. The Pima also contributes to health with his oral texts for healing diseases and depression (Alting von Geusau 1999). Akha medicine is very effective at healing burns, scratches, cuts and much more. Many Akha still depend heavily on Akha medicine, due to the difficulties in accessing Thai medicine and the lack of attention Akha health has been given in the foreign development of Akha villages.

Health is directly related to environment and as the environment is less capable of supporting Akha diets, more chemicals are used in agricultural production and villages are more exposed to lowland society, mental and physical health is affected. Compared with other members of Thai society the Akha have far less access to health services. Health is a serious issue and there is need for a survey on Akha health to highlight the types of diseases prevalent in a 21st century village. Education is a key factor in promoting better health for Akha

people. Presently there is very little health information available for Akha people in Akha language, apart from traditional medicine and practitioners. This creates barriers to improving the health of the Akha. Information regarding the prevention of disease should be distributed to Akha villages in Akha language in a format they can access. The Akha radio station is one method of distribution, CD video is another. Although it may be costly, it is important to raise Akha health standards to the highest level possible in the 21st century.

So far the Thai development process has failed to provide an adequate health system for Akha people because it has not educated the Akha on the prevention of new diseases, and medicine is still difficult to access. Health concerns that fit with the national development agenda have been treated rather than addressing the health needs of Akha communities. For example, contraceptives have been introduced to fit with the national agenda of reducing population growth. Drug abuse has been treated with drug rehabilitation programs run by the Thai army that do little to address the psychological factors leading up to abuse. Health issues need far more attention in the development process, as the type of diseases, including HIV/AIDS, have increased in Akha villages, with the opening of villages to lowland society.

Summary

This chapter discussed the relevance of Akha zangr to the development of Akha society, encompassing systems of justice, education, conservation, economy and health. The continuity of Akha zangr faces major obstacles as Thai and Christian education fail to incorporate Akha knowledge in their systems, and resources supporting Akha zangr are limited. It attempted to show how Akha zangr has applied sustainable development in the past and could be used in the continuing development of the Akha people. A lack of consultation and participation of Akha people in the development process are reasons that Akha development is behind Thai development. The following chapter discusses positive and negative impacts of foreign development on the Akha development process and examines Akha zangr as a more appropriate framework for Akha development than Thai-based development frameworks.

Chapter 5

AKHA ZANGR: AN ALTERNATIVE DEVELOPMENT MODEL

This chapter discusses the impacts of Thai and Christian development processes on the Akha development process, noting both positive and negative impacts. It is argued that Akha zangr is important for the development of Akha people; it is a model based on meeting the needs of the Akha community, it is appropriate for Akha people. Foreign development has become an important part of adapting the Akha development process to fit with the rapidly changing environment of the Akha. However, it is foreign development, by placing pressure on the environment, which has forced Akha livelihood systems and lifestyles to change. Foreign development is less sustainable than Akha development in that it requires a far greater amount of natural resources to meet economic growth targets. The Thai development process has not improved the quality of life for Akha people and fails to deliver appropriate services to bring equality, in health and education, between Akha people and other Thai people. The Christian development process has severely interrupted the continuity of Akha zangr, which includes cultural knowledge, and caused a great divide between Akha communities. Akha zangr is examined as a more appropriate model of development. It has the potential to meet development needs by representing the needs of Akha people, promoting equity and empowerment, including women, and ultimately reducing human rights abuses in the highlands.

IMPACTS OF FOREIGN DEVELOPMENT ON THE AKHA DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

Past experience of tribal peoples and development has been characterised by disempowerment, caused by the implementation of government policies aimed at controlling tribal communities. The impacts can severely weaken indigenous development systems. For the Akha the process of disempowerment was initiated through policies that interrupted their livelihood systems. This was achieved firstly, by settling villages and interrupting the swidden and shifting

agricultural system used by the Akha, reducing access to fertile soil at elevations over 1000 metres. Secondly, economic disempowerment occurred with opium reduction programmes and environmental degradation, reducing the Akha's ability to get cash incomes. At the same time the need for cash increased. The failure to support Akha zangr to adapt to these new circumstances caused the Akha to opt for foreign (Christian or Thai) development processes to meet their basic needs.

Thai development processes increased poverty for many Akha by increasing environmental pressure in the highlands and excluding local people from the development process. Poverty reduces the ability of the Akha to practise Akha zangr. Thai education offers an opportunity to get out of poverty, as does Christian education, however it does not address the wider needs of the Akha people or ensure them the right to practice their cultural and religious beliefs. Development has caused poverty in the sense that there is less community control in the highlands than ever before, the poor Akha have become much poorer in comparison to rich Akha as money becomes a greater necessity in Akha communities with access to less fertile land, and many villages have lost their cultural knowledge. The Thai Government and the Christian Church are supported by national and international networks, giving them much greater access to technical and financial resources than the Akha following Akha zangr. They have failed to acknowledge the relevance of Akha zangr for Akha, causing an uneven process of development between Akha villages and weakening the indigenous system of development. The continuity of Akha culture is threatened.

Christian development is very effective in its objectives to provide people with basic needs such as education and health. However the long-term objectives conflict with the long-term objectives of Akha culture. The long-term objective of Akha people is development; this requires a continuation of Akha culture and knowledge. Prior to the long-term impacts of Christianity becoming clear to Akha communities, Christian development was the preferred option for meeting basic needs. The way missionaries approach villages tends to be non-confrontational, building on trust from Akha elders. They are aware that the best method of communication with Akha people is in Akha language. When

approaching Akha villages, missionaries were patient, often sleeping outside the village gates until they were welcomed into the village (Nightingale 1990). In comparison Thai authorities treated the Akha with suspicion and aimed to control them. Rather than learning Akha language, they wanted the Akha to learn Thai. They used the Border Police to teach Akha people Thai and the military to enforce no-opium policies. There was little effort made to understand Akha culture.

Christians provided an opportunity for the Akha people to be literate in their own language, they supported Akha people seeking Thai education and, quite significantly, they provided medicine. Christian-based organisations have access to support internationally and nationally under the umbrella of the Church. They created inequalities between those following Akha zangr and the Akha following Christian zangr. One Akha headman said he was happy working with Christian people until he saw that the benefits were distributed unevenly, favouring Christian Akha over the Akha following Akha zangr (Dzoeqbaw 2003). Uneven benefits encourage many communities to 'convert' to Christianity, as Akha zangr becomes more difficult to follow in the rapidly changing highland environment.

The long-term impacts of Christianity are enormous, effectively wiping out knowledge of Akha zangr in many villages, by eliminating Akha zangr practices. The Akha have a folk tale that tells of ancestors passing on zangr to Akha people in a basket. When other cultures were returning home with their basket of 'zangr', some fell through the holes in the basket; however, nothing fell from the Akha basket. The Akha use this story to explain why they have more customs to follow than other cultures (Kammerer 1996:324,330,331). Missionaries encourage the Akha to 'discard their baskets' in order to become Christians. The Akha-language New Testament in Matthew 11:28-29 (Bible Society of Thailand:36), declares "all people tired from carrying the heavy load on their backs, come to my dwelling place. I will give you rest" (Kammerer 1996:323). The Christian doctrine effectively causes the Akha people to discard Akha zangr. The discontinuity of Akha zangr has been represented by some very strong symbols; missionaries have participated in the burning of Akha ancestral alters (Kammerer 1996:330-331). The impacts are greater for a

generation that has been brought up following Christian zangr. Children have no knowledge of Akha zangr and acquiring knowledge of it is discouraged. "Discourse of OMF missionaries makes it obvious that they consider the traditional Akha religion to be evil" (Kammerer 1996:331).

Negative effects of foreign development on Akha society have united Akha to form grassroots organisations to petition the Government on citizenship and land issues and to control their own development needs, empowering them to express concerns about the future. The Akha have adapted communication technology to meet their needs for passing on vital information to remote Akha villages and collecting data. Observations of Akha reactions to negative development highlight Akha concerns over their futures and appropriate solutions. Some organisations promote tourism to accurately show Akha culture to visitors and avoid the misinformation provided by some Thai tourist operators. Some provide scholarships for Akha people to access Thai education; some focus on agricultural development programs; some fight for human rights; and others aim to preserve Akha cultural knowledge. Now that the desires of Akha people have been recognised, external support can strengthen the ability of indigenous peoples to meet their own needs, representing a bottom-up model of development.

Prior to foreign development the Akha had difficulties communicating to outsiders because of language barriers and long distances between highland villages and lowland communities (Jupoh 2003). Communication was mostly restricted to people visiting Akha villages, and even this was limited. With foreign development the Akha have increased their opportunities to communicate with the outside world assisted by the increase in Thai and English language skills and partnerships with outsiders. Communication allows for the Akha to show their true selves to outsiders, alter incorrect assumptions about Akha culture and raise understanding about Mountain cultures. Some people have used their skills gained from foreign education to help improve life for Akha people by teaching Akha literacy and fighting for human rights.

Over the years researchers from varying social scientist disciplines have invested their skill in learning more about Mountain people and the highlands of

Northern Thailand. Independent researchers have helped to channel Akha information to the outside world and increase understanding of Akha culture. Research has led to exposure of the negative impacts of foreign development that tend to be hidden from Thai society. Motives of foreign development have been challenged and the needs of Akha people have been raised. It has taken considerable time for Akha zangr to be recognised as a system for Akha development. Research needs to continue to highlight the areas of Akha development that have been disrupted by foreign development and exchange useful information with Akha people to assist in their development.

At this time resources for promoting literacy in Akha language are limited and efforts tend to be fragmented among organisations. There are a number of Akha scripts in existence (Higashide 2003). This problem is significant due to the massive amount of time, resources and expertise involved in writing Akha language. The existence of so many Akha scripts makes it difficult to progress with Akha literacy and highlights the fragmented nature of development efforts and the inefficient distribution of development resources within the Akha community. Akha language literacy is dependent on the availability of resources written in Akha language, and the production of resources in Akha must be accompanied by literacy in Akha language. At this time literature is dominated by Christian material, highlighting the need to support the production of literature relating to Akha zangr to create a more balanced approach to Akha education.

Without co-ordinated development efforts for all Akha people, inequalities are likely to continue. There are signs that independent Akha organisations are starting to network so that benefits may be distributed wider afield. Networks have formed beyond the village boundaries and have empowered the Akha community. Recently Mountain People's Cultural and Development Educational/South East Asian Mountain Peoples' Highland Research Institute (MPCDE/SEAMP-HRI) arranged a meeting between organisations to try to reach an agreement on Akha script. While this script is not necessarily going to

be the same as the one used in China at present¹, it is a very important step to progressing with Akha literacy and is the first attempt made to co-ordinate Akha literacy efforts (Higashide 2003).

Akha communities have gained many development experiences as attempts are made to adapt to the new highland environment. These experiences are important to direct future work and avoid repeating the mistakes of failed work. Experiences tend not to be recorded, although some may be highlighted in academic work. For instance, a variety of methods have been used to improve education for Akha people, including the establishment of hostels in the lowlands, scholarships, and village-run schools. These have had varying success. Networking is an effective way to share resources and knowledge within the Akha community and distribute resources more efficiently in Akha communities.

Foreign development has introduced technology into Akha communities that can help to realign Akha zangr with the needs of the contemporary Akha environment, including urban Akha. Prior to the introduction of modern technology, knowledge of Akha zangr had to be passed on by practice and memory. Technology can overcome this barrier to development as tape recorders, CD video, radio, television and computers can be used to pass on knowledge of Akha zangr without relying primarily on oral means. This is of great significance for the continuation of Akha zangr to the next generation and in reducing the gap of knowledge caused by foreign systems of development.

These days, young people listen to Thai music on the radio, as there are few Akha songs recorded; however, CD audio makes it possible to record and distribute Akha songs. The translation and recording of Akha songs and recitations is an important part of realigning the Akha education system to meet needs of the young people. Digital video can record and make Akha zangr interesting and accessible for the young generation and is an exceptional tool for Akha development. It also has potential to be used as a method for

¹ At the Hani/Akha conference 2002 a motion was made to hold an international meeting to reach an agreement on one Akha script for all Akha people. Lack of resources for the international meeting has caused its delay (Higashide 2003).

teaching Akha literacy. The Akha love to see themselves on video and listen to Akha music (especially important for the older generation who do not speak Thai). Akha who have access to technology can access cultural knowledge².

Akha villages are still very remote, and for many villages development has meant only an increase in poverty. Consequently it is difficult to focus development on all villages in Thailand. The poorer ones are often left out and development has occurred very unevenly. Some of the more remote villages are suffering higher incidences of human rights abuses, drug problems and poverty as a result of inadequate land (fieldwork observations 2002). Villages that are closer to Thai towns or the lowlands seem to have 'developed'³ more rapidly than very isolated villages. Young people are more involved in Thai society through education, and employment and more Thai behaviour and goods are brought back to the village. In these villages elders are, justifiably, concerned about losing their Akha culture. Near the Burmese border, Akha villages, still living traditionally under Akha zangr, are caught in the middle of drug and border wars and struggling to find enough food to live (fieldwork observations 2002). But researchers tend to look at villages that are more accessible, so the more remote villages' experience of development are missed.

There is only one group that truly represents all the Akha communities in Thailand, - the Akha network formed under the Inter Mountain Peoples' Education and Culture in Thailand Association (IMPECT). At IMPECT, the potential for a more balanced approach to development based on accurate data has emerged. The Akha part of IMPECT holds information on all the Akha villages in Thailand, including the names of all the people in the villages, leaders, houses etc. Some of the information is confidential and can only be released with the permission of the Akha network (Morlaeku 2002). Meetings

² Some Akha villages do not have electricity and can only access the radio. Many villages have access to CD video machines, however research needs to be undertaken to find out exact numbers.

³ Development following Thai development processes rather than Akha development processes can have severe negative social consequences. Some more isolated communities that appear less developed but that have control over their own process of development may actually be better off.

on issues such as citizenship provide a good opportunity to gather information from Akha villages. It is important to provide Akha people with information in Akha language so that all Akha people can have access to it. An Akha radio show, broadcast twice a day on 108AM/1476MHz, has greatly increased communication. This remains the most effective method of announcing meetings and discussing relevant issues (Morlaeku 2002). Empowerment includes providing information for every Akha person, so an awareness of issues, movements, services and rights associated with being an Akha person living in Thailand are raised.

In comparison to foreign development agencies, communities following Akha zangr have access to far fewer resources, including technical expertise, support, trained personnel and funds. Because foreign agencies are often better funded and supported they often move more quickly than organisations following the principles of Akha zangr. The fast pace of foreign development can leave indigenous organisations behind. In the meantime Akha zangr appears out of date and irrelevant to young Akha. Fighting for basic human rights takes resources for indigenous people that could be used for indigenous development. There are few resources for the Akha network to meet: the Akha at IMPECT receive funding of around 100,000 baht⁶ while costs run at 2 to 3 million baht (Morlaeku 2002). Costs include food and transport for leaders and volunteers attending meetings. Currently, as these costs cannot be covered by IMPECT, people attending the meetings pay their own costs. While this ensures that people only participate in projects that are important to their lives, it is a drain on limited resources available for Akha development and excludes poorer Akha from attending some meetings.

The continuation of Akha zangr depends heavily on making knowledge of Akha zangr available and interesting to a new generation of Akha and the outside world so that a culture is not lost to the pressures coming from economically based foreign development. Many young people leave the village to seek employment and lose interest and pride in Akha zangr, partly due to its seeming

⁶ IMPECT is funded by external sources. IMPECT represents six ethnic minorities and its current funding structure needs to be researched to find whether funds given to IMPECT for Akha people are used only for Akha people or for all the ethnic groups.

lack of relevance in this new world and lack of value that Thai society places on Mountain culture. There is little support for young people caught between these two vastly different worlds. They don't want to work in the fields like their parents but employment opportunities are few for people without education. Many young people abuse drugs as a direct result of lack of opportunities. The poor quality of Thai education and Thai prejudices against Mountain people contributes to this process.

Migrations that have distributed Akha populations over five countries mean development occurs at various rates. In terms of accessing Akha zangr this is a positive factor as technology can be used to record zangr that exists in its original form in Northern Laos⁷ (Alting von Geusau 2002b). Akha zangr is a flexible holistic concept that helped keep the Akha a sustainable culture for centuries prior to foreign development. The lack of understanding and slight misinterpretation of Akha zangr has caused threats to the continuity of Akha zangr for younger generations. Its significance has been virtually ignored as relevant to the sustainable development of the Akha. However, under the framework of development studies, it has been shown that Akha zangr encompasses all areas of Akha life and that many of the principles based on knowledge passed down from ancestors can be applied to the current development of the Akha. If followed, zangr can be an effective force in Akha development.

AKHA ZANGR AS AN ALTERNATIVE MODEL OF DEVELOPMENT

When asked what he wants for the future of Akha people Mr Piche Jupoh (2003) says he wants Akha culture to survive. Culture is part of us and destroying it destroys part of us. It is so important yet it has not been incorporated in foreign systems of development; this is a fundamental failure of foreign development. Indigenous models of development are more appropriate

⁷ The translation of Akha zangr is progressing very slowly because of limited numbers of Akha people with the skills for translation and writing on the computer, and because funds are severely stretched. MPCDE/SEAMP-HRI is the only organisation in Thailand presently recording oral texts.

for indigenous people because they reflect their values, they contain their history and they can move cultures, not just individuals, forward into the future. Foreign systems of development are destroying Akha culture. It is the year 2003 and Akha zangr is still primarily stored in the minds of the elders; its recording has failed to be an objective of foreign systems of development. When asked about the worst impact of foreign development on Akha people, Mr Jupoh (2003) replied that education has focused on what is outside the Akha community rather than inside the Akha community and damaged Akha zangr. Of all the criticisms that can be levelled at foreign development, for Akha people this is most damaging one. Akha culture belongs to Akha people - taking it away causes disempowerment.

Akha zangr is an appropriate model of development for Akha people as it continues development processes that have evolved for over 1000 years. It is a flexible, democratic system of development that incorporates conservation, education, community laws and values, allowing for the empowerment of the entire community, including men and women. Incorporating technology and unifying development efforts can help to support Akha zangr as an appropriate model of development in the 21st century. Even given significant interruptions to the continuity of Akha zangr, it can still be used as a model of development. It contains tried and proven systems for delivering healthcare and education to Akha people in their village environment.

It has been shown that economic development in Thailand has failed to meet the needs of tribal minorities. The Thai development process is urban-biased, providing a higher quality and quantity of social services to urban areas while remote areas receive the least social support. In the past Akha villages were mostly self-sufficient and their exclusion from the Thai development process did not interfere with their education, justice, health and employment systems. However, self-sufficiency has been replaced by dependence on the Thai system. The failure of Thai development to provide an adequate model of development for Akha people suggests the need for an alternative model of development. The following discussions assess Akha zangr as a more appropriate model for Akha development.

One reason Thai development has failed Akha communities is the high cost of implementing appropriate development in highland communities. Expense is partly due to the remoteness of villages making it difficult to access villages for the collection of data and distribution of services. Language is also a barrier, adding to the cost and making it difficult to gather appropriate information to measure the effectiveness of development. Another issue is that the needs of tribal people require special attention to bring them up to the same level as other Thai people. Thai is not their native language, literacy levels are low, and more support is required to bring them the same benefits of development.

As a bottom-up indigenous model of development based on the village unit, Akha zangr can reduce the costs of development in the highlands, provide an appropriate measure of Akha development and be a more effective tool for meeting the needs of Akha people. It is more expensive and time-consuming to initiate a foreign system of development; the replacement of processes that have evolved over centuries with foreign ones will be less effective than the adaptation of tried and tested ones. Akha zangr has an established administration system with village specialists for health, justice and education, and a system to uphold conservation and social order. As a model, this is ideal for meeting the development needs of Akha people in a highland village environment and distributing resources to remote villages. It is also flexible enough to incorporate the needs of urban Akha by distributing relevant information in Akha language. It would help eliminate unforeseen negative consequences of implementing a foreign system of development. Even though Akha zangr is more cost effective than the Thai model of development, it cannot move forward without financial and technical support. Presently there are very few resources for Akha zangr, and even the costs for Akha to meet together outside their villages are unaffordable.

If Akha zangr was agreed on as an appropriate model of development it could represent all the Akha communities in Thailand and create a more even, balanced approach to development than one focusing on a single aspect of development. A positive aspect is that it cannot be confined to the definition of 'religion' as there is not necessarily a belief or practice of worship associated with it; it could incorporate Christian Akha as a sub-ethnic group (Tooker 1992).

Akha zangr could help to focus development efforts on the entire Akha community; by representing all Akha people it has the potential to eliminate inequalities created by fragmented development efforts and distribute resources efficiently within the Akha community.

One of the failures of foreign development has been the uneven development of Akha communities. If Akha zangr is to be used as a development model it must be accessible to all Akha people; otherwise it has the potential to increase inequalities. Appropriate development should reduce poverty and promote equity. For Akha zangr to be equitable it needs to be accessible to every one. For this to be achieved every Akha person in Thailand, especially the most vulnerable ones, need to be provided with appropriate education and healthcare. Presently the most effective representation of the Akha communities in Thailand is the Akha network, established through the election of representatives responsible for channelling information to and from remote villages. For it to continue to be an effective network, women and young people must be represented. Akha zangr has proven that there is no real barrier to women in leadership. Human nature tends to lead people to distribute wealth among family members rather than village members. As an equitable system distributing resources to all Akha people, Akha zangr can reduce the impact of this characteristic of human nature.

There are many barriers facing the use of Akha zangr as an alternative model for Akha development, including the lack of education for Akha people. To this day there are fewer than ten Akha people in Thailand with university degrees (Jupoh 2003). One wish of Mr Jupoh is that Akha children get a foreign education and use their knowledge to support Akha people. Here is the key: Akha people want an education but they want to keep their culture. Christian education is dangerous for Akha children because it teaches them to disregard tradition and instils a fear about Akha zangr. To this day, education is used as a tool for teaching young Akha children about Christianity and discouraging knowledge and practice of Akha zangr (Jupoh 2003). For many villages, Akha zangr has been replaced by foreign systems creating some difficulties in restoring Akha zangr as a widespread model of Akha development. A significant loss of cultural knowledge and a large variance in village resource

allocations has occurred with foreign development (fieldwork observations 2002). The loss of cultural knowledge among Akha following Christian zangr means that time needs to be taken for them to 'understand' what Akha zangr is, rather than 'change' their zangr (Jupoh 2003).

Akha education is a high priority for Akha development as it allows for a more effective flow of information and communication; it empowers people and increases opportunities for non-agricultural employment in Thai society. In its present, mostly unrecorded state, Akha education covers basic life skills, morals, etiquette and cultural knowledge as well as specialist knowledge for every form of employment in a self-sufficient Akha village, including the legal system. Recording this information is important to provide resources for all Akha people about Akha zangr. It would also educate outsiders about Akha culture and help eliminate misconceptions. The recording of Akha zangr guarantee its continuity and take care of a big gap in Akha development. In the past there were many misunderstandings between highland and lowland culture because they did not speak the same language. Perceptions about Akha culture were recorded inaccurately (Jupoh 2003). As the Akha are empowered through education, they can then increase outsiders' knowledge of their culture. As more Akha are being educated in the Thai system they are fighting for their rights and issues are exposed.

Thai education is important for Akha children, however in its present form it is not meeting the needs of the Akha people and funding is being wasted. Introducing Akha-language literacy and Akha teachers would help children access Thai education system through their native language, a more effective method of education than one conducted entirely in a foreign language, and ensuring the continuation of culture. Other benefits would include the elimination of racism inherent in the Thai education system and allowing for more accurate information about Akha culture to permeate Thai society, as the Akha children would be encouraged to keep their confidence in their culture while receiving Thai education. The most positive impact of development is the "ability to communicate with the outside world"⁸ (Jupoh 2003). Some

⁸ Prior to foreign development the Akha were isolated, communication with outsiders was mostly restricted to visitors. Communication outside the village involved a very long walk.

organisations working on Akha education have significant experience in what methods are best for delivering quality education to the Akha people such as: MPCDE/SEAMP-HRI, IMPECT, Wakatake project, Akha Churches in Thailand (ACT), Development and Agriculture Project for Akha (DAPA), Association for Akha Education and Culture in Thailand (AFECT). By networking, organisations could work together to develop an overall plan for the implementation of Akha education, using appropriate technology and ensuring that education is made available to every Akha person in Thailand, particularly the most disadvantaged, so that inequalities are reduced. The Akha network will be an important tool for ensuring that every village is included.

Akha zangr is no longer uniform among villages in Thailand and systems monitoring the effectiveness of representatives may be required. In the past there was no exchange of money for village positions and no one was restricted in taking up one of these positions. This ensured that the people taking on these roles were doing so because of a skill or desire to represent the community. Money may distort these natural processes. One experience with development work using the leader as a caretaker of scholarship funds failed - the money never reached the students. This experience suggests that a system needs to be developed to monitor that village roles are not corrupted by money and truly represent the Akha community. The Akha community system could act as a control measure to ensure that funding is meeting the needs of the community. This may have been less of an issue if Akha zangr had not been weakened by foreign development systems as Akha zangr, through the Xama⁹, should represent 90% of the Akha village.

Akha zangr provides a health system, using forest products and cultural knowledge passed on through the village Nyipa. The opening of Akha villages to outside and increases in numbers of urban Akha, has greatly impacted on the Akha health system. It needs to be realigned to fit with current health needs. The recording of cultural healing practices, including mental health (the Pima has oral texts for people with depression) is an important part of this process. Indigenous health knowledge is appropriate for Akha people in the highland

⁹ The Xama is the community committee, see discussions on page 93.

environment. However, the Akha need access to foreign health knowledge as it would greatly improve the quality of life in the highlands. Through the Akha network, the Nyipa and the Pima, a database of village health problems could be compiled. Research into the most appropriate methods for healing could be discussed, recorded, and distributed to Akha villages in Akha language. Lack of literacy has been a huge barrier to the Akha people accessing information on foreign healthcare. Education would help to deliver cost effective health solutions and restore confidence in indigenous health systems. Health needs to target the most vulnerable groups in society.

Akha zangr has proved to be an effective way of protecting the environment through the Akha legal system and laws regarding the environment. The Akha have a vested interest in sustaining their environment, as it protects their future. The Thai Government has not resolved land issues in the highlands and negotiations will continue. It has been stated under Principle 22 of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development held in 1992 that "indigenous people and their communities and other local communities have a vital role in environmental management and development because of their knowledge and traditional practices" (United Nations 1992). Based on this statement Akha zangr has a special role in the sustainable development of the highlands of Thailand as an indigenous knowledge system. The recording of Akha conservation systems under Akha zangr would provide useful knowledge of managing the highland environment.

Akha customs are complex and costly. Many ceremonies require the killing of animals and great skill is required to carry out specific procedures, including during 13 yearly festivals. This requires the maintenance of traditional roles (Kammerer 1989:273). For Akha zangr to continue, in the past it could only be accessed by practice and relied heavily on memory as a means for storing cultural information. Modern technology provides an alternative method of storing Akha zangr and making it more accessible for future generations, including Akha following Christian zangr. Some Akha will still wish to practise the customs of Akha zangr, and their efforts should be supported as the caretakers of Akha zangr. It is significant to mention here, once again, that Akha practices do not involve the worship of any god or spirits (Choopah 2003).

Foreign development has eroded the traditional internal behavioural controls. In China Sturgeon (2000:17) notes that in some areas the villagers “have manipulated state regulations” to benefit themselves. State law replaced traditional law during the 1980’s, causing every household in Xianfeng to build a new house made out of wood in place of bamboo and thatch. The construction took most of the large trees in the collective forest. In the past the village organisation system protected forest around the village; when this authority was taken over by the State there was less direct control. In terms of social laws of the village, if there is no organisation system to uphold them there is less control. The Akha justice system is a way of dealing with Akha problems, though considerable work would need to be done to realign the justice system with the contemporary Akha situation. However, the fine system could still provide a suitable method of community control and also contribute to community funds.

Akha zangr fits in with Thailand’s national agenda for development given that the 9th five-year development plan calls for a return to self-sufficiency and community empowerment. Until now Thailand has been hiding the issues in the highlands to avoid exposing the significant problems that have arisen from increased activities in there. It is in the best interests of Thailand and the Akha people to bring development issues out in the open and work together, using an indigenous framework to bring an acceptable level of development to the highlands of Thailand. In fact, it is 50 years overdue. Already Thailand mines the value of ethnic groups with its tourist industry. If Thailand can truly create a multicultural society where the right to practice culture is supported, tourism will continue to be profitable for Thailand.

Akha zangr is effectively a model of community development that is unified by an overall philosophy. Akha zangr, with its many teachings on morals, laws, and etiquette, has made a significant impression as a philosophy that encourages kindness and hospitable behaviour. A Shan pastor, after evangelising to the Akha communities in Burma for 15 years, actually stopped working with the Akha because he believed that they didn’t need Christianity, that Akha zangr was an effective system for Akha people. The continuation of Akha zangr is

desirable not only for Akha people, but as a contribution to the world's storehouse of philosophy.

Some sceptics will say that culture is not relevant in today's society and Akha education is not appropriate because it does not improve the opportunities for Akha finding employment in Thai society. However, the world has seen a massive cultural revival in places that have been colonised over long periods of time, proving that cultural models of development remain relevant to indigenous people even after they have been educated in foreign societies. Recognising Akha zangr as an alternative model of development would show it is also possible to empower other ethnic groups by recognising their development systems. To improve the quality of life, development must meet the needs of the people. The right to practice and pass on culture is fundamental to development; it should be protected.

Akha zangr provides everything that is required for a successful model of development. First, Akha zangr needs to be interpreted into everyday Akha language in a format that is accessible to all Akha people. This does not have to be in written form given that video is available. Once it is accessible it could provide a framework for Akha development relevant to the 21st century, building on cultural knowledge. The principles of sustainable development as defined by the United Nations (1992) include: participation, equity, reduction in poverty, the promotion of indigenous people and women in management, the protection of the environment and the mobilisation of youth in development. Akha zangr follows most of these principles and is flexible enough to accommodate every member of the Akha community in development and retain its relevance for future generations. Like any culture, Akha zangr will evolve with every generation, especially as the community is opened up through transport and communications. However, if it is recorded it will never be entirely lost.

Summary

This chapter has shown that Akha indigenous development processes have for 1000 years proved sustainable in the highland environment: status and wealth was fairly distributed among the community and village laws and education

systems were developed. Impacts of foreign development on the Akha include loss of cultural knowledge, increases in inequalities between communities and within villages, and generally, a low status in Thai society. However, Akha zangr can adapt and incorporate some aspects of foreign development that are appropriate for indigenous development. There is a massive lack of support for Akha people: indigenous organisations have to cope with remoteness, lack of funds and manpower, and at the same time their workers have to support their families, while Christian and Thai development agents have access to national and international funding, resources and support. Akha development is best for Akha people and it can be used to achieve the objectives of Thai development - to improve education and health and even the national income of Thailand. The following chapter concludes the findings of this thesis.

Chapter 6

CONCLUSIONS

The Akha, a highland minority ethnic group, have survived into the 21st century because of their unique system of development based on Akha zangr. It is threatened by poverty resulting from Thai development in the highlands. Thai and Christian development has interrupted the continuity of Akha zangr and failed to recognise its relevance as the system of development for Akha people. Development is biased towards dominant cultures who have greater access to resources to support their systems of development. Dominant cultures who seek to increase economic growth are likely to infringe on the resources of minority cultures who do not have their rights to land recognised. Akha zangr is a system based on meeting community needs of mostly self-sufficient villages rather than increasing the size of the economy.

Development studies is an important tool for bringing the cultural concept of Akha zangr, from being classified by outsiders as a 'religion' into a system of development relevant to Akha development in the 21st century. Understanding of Akha zangr has grown over a number of years of observing the indigenous reaction to foreign pressures of development and listening to the Akha people and their concerns over the future. Akha zangr was first recognised in the field of anthropology, leading to an analysis of Akha zangr as a system of development within the framework of development studies.

Development has come from the perspective that economic growth will improve the quality of life but, by requiring an increase in consumption to support economic growth, it has placed enormous pressure on the world's resources. It has forced minority cultures to become part of this unsustainable culture by encouraging resources to be used for commercial gain. In Thailand forests have been turned into land for commercial agriculture yet agricultural employment is decreasing. This suggests that fewer people are controlling greater amounts of land, forcing individuals off land to seek non-agricultural employment. Indigenous systems of development need to be recognised and protected against the invasion of less sustainable systems of development.

Impacts of policies to increase economic growth are born disproportionately by the most vulnerable groups in society. The Thai development process, following lowland development patterns, is unsustainable in the highlands. It is based on increasing economic growth and changing the ethnic minorities' culture to Thai. The increase in land required to fuel growth has resulted in resource conflicts between less economically powerful groups of people, big business and government, causing increases in poverty for many minority groups. Negative impacts disproportionately affect the poor and include increasing problems, such as HIV/AIDS, pollution, poor working conditions, environmental degradation and malnutrition as a direct consequence of development. The ethnic groups in the North of Thailand are more disadvantaged than other groups in Thai society because of low literacy rates and social, economic and political exclusion from Thai society.

Severe negative impacts can occur because foreign development efforts have more experience and greater resources than minority cultures and have different development objectives. The development of Thailand has not resulted in development for Mountain People. It has reduced access to fertile soil, failed to recognise all people in the highlands as citizens of Thailand and is now threatening the continuation of Akha zangr. To exclude indigenous people and take their resources is ethnocide (Reed 1997:20). It is paramount that human rights, citizenship and access to land, are protected before foreign development commences. This study shows that without the protection of human rights increased poverty can result from development policies driven by economic growth.

The development process of indigenous people is often not considered because:

- "They have been portrayed as 'traditional' people clinging to the past who must change to enjoy the benefits of modern (western) society;
- they are literally marginalised or pushed into hinterlands of jungles, forests and mountainous areas, and typified as backward peasant

farmers or subsistence hunter-gathers in intimate contact with, and reliance on, nature;

- there is growing recognition that indigenous knowledge can contribute to the success of the project so knowledge is utilised for this purpose but analytic and scientific merit is not taken seriously;
- their contributions to the contemporary sustainability debate have been ignored because many groups are seen as obstructionist or idealistic;
- First Nations peoples have been reluctant to engage in dialogue for fear of losing control over their knowledge or becoming embroiled in abstract debates about issues that are for them a matter of survival.”

(From Loomis 1999:8-9).

These issues arise from ethnocentric attitudes that ‘my system’ is the best.

Language barriers and cultural differences contribute significant misinformation about minority cultures. Foreign development in the highlands was based on incorrect assumptions about Mountain people, that they were forest destroyers, opium growers, a threat to security and that they worshipped spirits. Inaccurate information continues to be the basis of development work in the highlands; still most Akha people cannot speak Thai language well. Foreign development commenced with the attitude that Mountain People’s culture should change to fit with a more dominant culture’s development process. They have been excluded from voicing their development needs allowing for the continuation of inappropriate foreign development and a weakening of indigenous development systems.

Development should follow indigenous patterns of development, which have evolved over time. Foreign development is an inadequate replacement for indigenous systems of development. However, as minority cultures are opened up by transport and communications minority systems of development may need to adapt to be relevant. To cope with the changing environment Akha zangr needs to be recorded in a format other than in memories, otherwise it will be lost. Mountain people need more support to adjust their development systems to meet the needs of the new generation as they face more barriers to development than other groups. Building on indigenous patterns of

development to improve the quality of life for all people is a much better approach to development than changing systems to fit with another culture's model of development.

Propaganda is a useful tool of government to justify their intervention in politically sensitive areas. The negative image of Mountain people by the Thai Government continues to exclude them socially from Thai society. Ill-founded perceptions can be altered by providing positive information on the Mountain People and highlighting the fact that their knowledge has led to the preservation of flora and fauna in the highland environment. A government can cover up issues relating to ethnic minorities when it controls media in the dominant culture and language excludes minority cultures from accessing information and presenting their side of the story.

A more open approach to development in the highlands could help to resolve issues, including corruption, human rights abuses and environmental degradation. Presently the Thai Government covers up highland issues. The Thai Government's attitude to development in the highlands is reflected in its national sustainable development policies. Rather than acknowledging the reality - that Mountain People were in the highlands prior to other Thai people – issues are hidden by development policies that increase National Forest Reserve areas and exclude Mountain people from accessing land. The Royal Forest Department objective to increase forests to between 40-50% have not yet been realised, suggesting that an alternative solution to sustainable development needs to be implemented. The preservation of Thailand's forests could be a more realistic goal with Mountain People participating in its management.

Development is a system made up of many processes. Recognising the development system of a minority culture can help to ensure a more balanced approach to development. Indigenous development may occur in a more even manner because as it evolves with people, in their environment over time, all the needs of the community can be met by the system of development. Minority cultures have their own systems because in the past they were responsible for

providing for all the needs of the community. That which has been incorrectly defined as 'religion' by outsiders may reflect a minority culture's system of development. Religion is defined as "the belief in a superhuman controlling power, especially in a personal God or gods entitled to obedience and worship" (Oxford Dictionary 1999:1015). Akha zangr does not require belief or worship but is a 'way of life'. As a holistic system of development, rather than a system of belief, Akha zangr can be a suitable model of development for all Akha people. Some models may be more appropriate than other models for development that alleviates poverty and promotes equity.

Development should alleviate poverty and reduce inequalities. Development studies provides a useful framework for reducing inequalities that may occur as a direct result of development processes. To reduce poverty and inequalities development needs to be implemented in a holistic manner to ensure that social, political, cultural, spiritual and economic processes continue to develop. Development should ensure the most vulnerable groups in Akha society have appropriate access to health and education and their needs are incorporated in the development process. The representation of women and youth is also important.

Ethnic minority groups know what is required for their development. Ethnic minority groups in Thailand have been struggling to voice their concerns over the future for 50 years. Consultation with these groups and supporting indigenous development patterns are important steps in empowering people and improving the quality of life in the highlands. A fragmented approach to development can increase inequalities within a community. Akha zangr is a way to promote a balanced approach to development. In a village where there is very little money, outside funding can cause imbalances. If indigenous channels are used to distribute resources then resources can be distributed more appropriately. The Akha have proven that they can work together with a democratic system representing almost all the villages in Thailand. If resources are channelled through the Akha network, as long as village leadership truly represents the community, then development will be much more relevant and effective for Akha people and fewer inequalities will occur.

Christian education can disrupt the continuity of ethnic minorities' culture by replacing indigenous knowledge and instilling the belief that indigenous 'religion' is evil. As an external funded foreign system of development it can increase imbalances in indigenous communities. The Akha 'way of life' is being replaced by the Christian 'way of life' due to poverty. Christianity has passed on development benefits in a biased manner to Christian Akha rather than those following Akha zangr, causing inequalities between the two groups and encouraging impoverished Akha communities to change to Christian zangr. This has severely weakened the power of the Akha community following Akha zangr.

The full participation of indigenous people in their development process is required for development to be effective. Until now the Thai Government has had difficulties in obtaining accurate data on Mountain People. The inclusion of Mountain People in this process would help to save money by using indigenous networks that reflect an accurate picture of the situation in the highlands and providing a better measurement of development. Until Mountain People are included in the data collection process and in political decisions they are unlikely to be accurately represented in Thai society.

Foreign education can empower ethnic minorities but it can also interrupt indigenous education systems and replace knowledge. Over time indigenous cultures have developed morals, etiquette and community law relevant to their culture. If an ethnic group does not have literacy, care needs to be taken to record all cultural knowledge before foreign education commences to ensure its continuation. The Thai education system is not effective in the highlands because of inadequate teacher training and inherent racism in many Thai teachers. The Mountain children require specialised education to meet their needs as speakers of other languages. This is reflected by the few Akha people with university degrees. The participation of Mountain People in developing curriculum could help improve education in the highlands. Appropriate education can also have a positive impact on health.

Recording cultural information is important for minority cultures. Low literacy rates are a barrier to Akha development. Akha-language literacy can help to record and continue Akha culture. Work recording Akha zangr will reveal the systems of the Akha people. Once recorded systems can be adapted to meet community needs in the 21st century with potential to improve life for the Akha and increase the world's understanding of them. It can help to educate Thai people about Akha culture and eliminate ill-informed negative perceptions.

The breakdown of cultural institutions by foreign agents of development means that many indigenous cultures have to work very hard to strengthen weakened institutions. However, indigenous institutions remain the most appropriate method for achieving indigenous development because they meet the needs of the indigenous community. For development to be effective it should ensure the continuation of indigenous knowledge combined with increasing skills to survive in a modern environment. Akha zangr provides an alternative model for development that can be adapted to meet the needs of the Akha in the 21st century. The Akha are more capable of directing their development, based on a millennium of development experience in the highland environment, than foreign agents.

Indigenous organisations lack the experience and resources of foreign development agencies. It is difficult for grassroots organisations to find ongoing support for the office administration costs (including salaries) of their organisations (Higashide 2002). This is also related to a lack of trained staff to ensure organisations are sustainable and a lack of expert support for organisations. A strong administration structure is essential to maintain effective and efficient projects. Bottom up decision-making processes are more time consuming than top-down decision-making processes. It takes a long time and significant resources for indigenous people to adjust to the changing environment and to be able to communicate their cultural concept of development to the outside world. Many of the Akha zangr specialists in Thailand are dying and taking their cultural knowledge with them, increasing the urgency to record Akha zangr (Alting von Geusau 1999).

The indigenous development process continues to evolve. This has led to the empowerment of some Akha people in Thai society and the redistribution of resources back to the community in the form of cash remittances, knowledge or increased opportunities. Some benefits of foreign development such as technology to strengthen networks through communication or for storing and passing on cultural knowledge have been used as tools for indigenous development. This will help to make Akha zangr relevant to young Akha people, essential for the continuation of Akha zangr.

This thesis is not a criticism of Thai people, but a criticism of both economic growth as an unsustainable method of eliminating poverty, and the replacement of indigenous systems of development with foreign systems of development. The international community has benefited from the development of Thailand by increasing its markets and supporting its own development agendas. Thailand does what it can to retain its independence. By giving money to Thailand to develop the highlands without addressing the human rights and basic needs of the highland ethnic groups, the United Nations has contributed to increased poverty of the Akha people. Human rights issues need to be addressed as a matter of urgency. Without these, any development efforts increase the disparities between the rich and the poor. The need for citizenship for Mountain people was identified in 1976 and is still the most pressing issue for most of the minority groups.

Summary

The continuation of culture is a sign of development. Foreign development has failed indigenous people by replacing their indigenous systems with their own systems. Foreign development has damaged Akha zangr, however technology and appropriate education can assist in adapting it to meet the needs of a new generation of Akha people. Akha zangr offers a more balanced approach to development with less emphasis on economic growth, and more emphasis on meeting community needs than the Thai model based on achieving rapid economic growth. Policies for economic growth have caused dominant cultures to infringe upon the resources of minority cultures, excluding them from

accessing resources and worsening their poverty. As economic growth continues to be high on the agenda of many governments, minority cultures need support to adapt their indigenous systems to meet the needs of future generations. Akha zangr is fundamental for the Akha to be Thai citizens with "full rights and maintenance of their cultural and religious practices" as stated in the Thai Cabinet decision of 6 July 1976.

"The recent recognition that there is a role for society and culture is significant, at least to the extent that it is likely to positively influence international development agendas and state policies' (Loomis 1999:9).

Appendix A
Highlands in the Mekong Quadrangle



APPENDIX B: GROSS REGIONAL PRODUCT AT CURRENT MARKET PRICES 1999 (Millions of Baht)

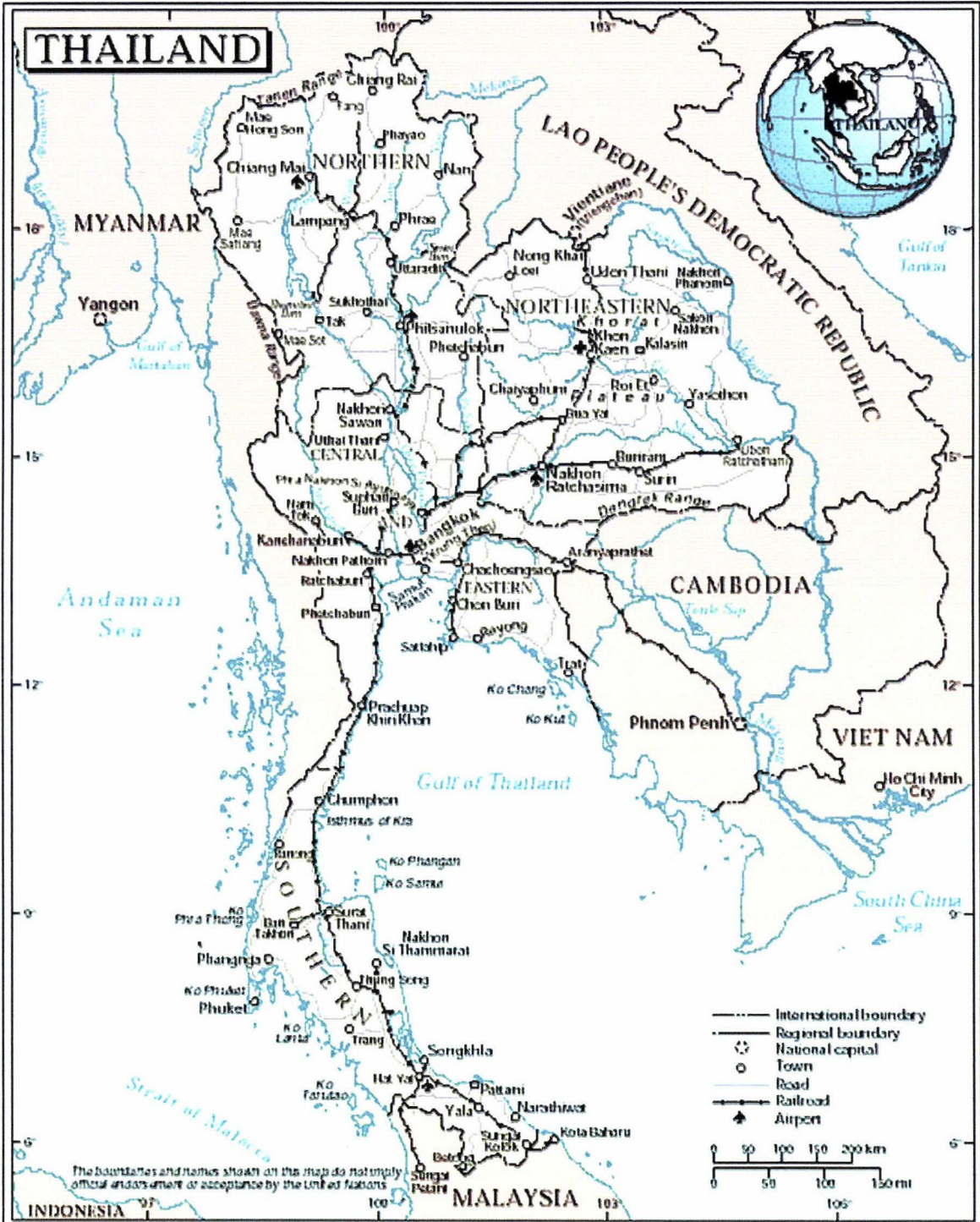
	Northern	% of GRP	Bangkok and Vicinities	% of GRP	Central	% of GRP	Eastern	% of GRP	North Eastern	% of GRP	Southern	% of GRP	Western	% of GRP	Whole Kingdom	% of GDP
Agriculture	88,366	20.56	54,401	2.42	21,964	10.49	49,195	8.37	101,775	18.93	144,589	34.54	36,859	18.73	497,149	10.73
*Crops	66,754	15.53	8,545	0.38	13,982	6.68	19,996	3.40	72,307	13.45	57,995	13.85	23,877	12.13	263,456	5.69
*Livestock	7,804	1.82	3,556	0.16	4,633	2.21	12,733	2.17	10,031	1.87	5,703	1.36	5,242	2.66	49,702	1.07
*Fisheries	2,398	0.56	14,247	0.63	924	0.44	12,214	2.08	3,101	0.58	60,490	14.45	3,942	2.00	97,316	2.10
*Forestry	892	0.21	0	0.00	10	0.00	83	0.01	562	0.10	4,038	0.96	35	0.02	5,620	0.12
*Agricultural services	3,711	0.86	281	0.01	1,012	0.48	964	0.16	6,399	1.19	478	0.11	871	0.44	13,716	0.30
*Simple agr.process products	6,807	1.58	27,772	1.23	1,403	0.67	3,205	0.55	9,375	1.74	15,885	3.79	2,892	1.47	67,339	1.45
Mining and quarrying	16,040	3.73	782	0.03	4,511	2.15	46,675	7.94	5,256	0.98	8,719	2.08	5,367	2.73	87,350	1.89
Manufacturing	56,862	13.23	864,283	38.38	82,507	39.40	291,068	49.54	73,375	13.65	29,964	7.16	48,495	24.64	1,446,554	31.23
Construction	21,803	5.07	70,613	3.14	8,360	3.99	13,200	2.25	27,372	5.09	16,736	4.00	8,249	4.19	166,332	3.59
Electricity and water supply	9,149	2.13	53,648	2.38	10,429	4.98	30,343	5.16	9,595	1.78	12,123	2.90	5,094	2.59	130,381	2.81
Transportation & communication	20,496	4.77	257,015	11.41	10,001	4.78	29,991	5.10	25,585	4.76	22,672	5.42	11,016	5.60	376,776	8.13
Wholesale and retail trade	69,431	16.15	402,857	17.89	28,080	13.41	49,230	8.38	101,837	18.94	57,941	13.84	33,810	17.18	743,185	16.04
Banking, insurance & real estate	16,025	3.73	97,482	4.33	5,292	2.53	9,533	1.62	18,690	3.48	11,139	2.66	5,947	3.02	164,109	3.54
Ownership of dwellings	19,309	4.49	44,403	1.97	5,588	2.67	9,290	1.58	22,769	4.23	15,084	3.60	6,659	3.38	123,102	2.66
Public administration & defence	34,301	7.98	58,917	2.62	11,627	5.55	14,526	2.47	47,823	8.89	25,232	6.03	11,676	5.93	204,102	4.41
Services	78,071	18.16	347,753	15.44	21,055	10.05	44,500	7.57	103,585	19.27	74,461	17.79	23,669	12.02	693,094	14.96
GRP.	429,853	100.00	2,252,155	100.00	209,414	100.00	587,551	100.00	537,662	100.00	418,661	100.00	196,840	100.00	4,632,134	100.00
Per capita GRP.(BAHT)	38,332		202,332		71,939		149,049		25,721		50,728		57,039		74,946	
Population(1,000 persons)	11,214		11,131		2,911		3,942		20,904		8,253		3,451		61,806	
GRP as % of GDP	9		49		5		13		12		9		4		100	

* Included under Agriculture

Extracted from NESBD (2001a)

Appendix C

Regions and Provinces of Thailand

Map No. 2055 UNITED NATIONS
October 1964Department of Planning Information
Cartographic Section

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Alting von Geusau, Dr. Leo (2002b): Anthropologist specialist in Akha culture
2002b Personal Communication, with consent

Booyasaranai, Ms Panadda
2003 Personal Communication, with consent

Choopah, Mrs Deuleu: Akha woman with knowledge of Akha zangr.
2003 Personal Communication, with consent

Dzoeqbaw, Aboe Busoev: Akha zangr specialist
16 November 2002, Interview with consent

Higashide, Ms Norico: Anthropologist specialist in Akha culture.
2003 Personal Communication, with consent

Jupoh, Mr Piche: Akha man with knowledge of Akha zangr.
15 October 2003, Interview with consent

Morlaeku, Ms Meeju: Akha Representative from IMPECT until December 2002
20 November 2002, Interview with consent

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Fact sheets:

- *Tribal population Summary in Thailand 1999*
 - *Tribal population Summary in Thailand 2002*
- Visits throughout 2002-2003

Fieldwork Observations 2002 - 2003

Fieldwork in Thailand, Myanmar and Laos: March 2002 – July 2003