



Chapter 1 INTRODUCTION

1.1. Introduction

Burma has had a close socio-political relationship with Thailand for centuries. One example of this relationship is the significant migration movement between these two countries. The migration movement from Burma to Thailand, especially the refugees/displaced persons¹ flow fleeing from the military government in place since 1962, and the flow of illegal workers seeking to escape the economic hardships of the 1990s, has been remarkable for its size.² We should consider, however, that the existence of migration movements in this area is not new, and the migrations were already taking place even before 1962. All of northern Thailand, especially those areas that share the border with Burma, has experienced constant inflows of hill tribes, ethnic minorities, and other local people from Burma. This was a matter-of-fact movement before the international border was clearly demarcated,³ but, even after the demarcation in the 19th century, there had been voluntary migrations of traders and various ethnic minorities. There were also involuntary migrations of war captives and slaves in its earlier phases, then followed by movement of refugees and

¹ Thailand does not use the term "refugee" to label the people who escaped from danger in their home country, but officially uses the term "displaced person" instead. This is due to the fact that Thailand is not a signatory of the 1951 Convention and 1967 Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees, which defines the term and rights of refugees. The Thai government and officials avoid using the term "refugee" to avoid giving the impression of being bound by these instruments. But these people are generally recognized as refugees. The term "refugee/displaced person" is used in this paper to label the group called "refugees" by the international community and "displaced persons" by the Thai government. See Vikit Muntarbhorn, "Displaced Persons in Thailand: Legal and National Policy Issues in Perspective" *Chulalongkorn Law Review*, vol.2, 1982, p.8.

² It is reported that 334,123 Burmese migrant workers were estimated to be in Thailand in 1994, which amounts to 63% of the total number of undocumented migrant workers in Thailand. There were 80,418 refugees and asylum seekers in the same year. Supang Chantavanich, "People on the Move: Issues and Areas of Potential Research for Transnational Migration in Thailand and Asia", A paper presented at Seminar on Asia in the end of century, 23-25 April, 1996, p.2.

³ In the 15th century, the territory of Lanna included Kentung in the Shan State of Burma, northwest of the Salween, and also reached as far as Jinghong in Sipsongpanna, now a territory of China. This induced free movement of people in this area. See Chao Tzang na Yaungwa, "Politics of Burma and Shan State: Effects on North Thailand and Thailand", *Political Science Review*, No.3, 1982, p.98.

migrant workers in later period.

The Tai Yai people is one of the ethnic groups composing a large part of the human flow between Thailand and Burma.

The Tai Yai people, often called the Shan in English,⁴ are one branch of the Tai ethnic groups which inhabit numerous places, including Yunnan in Southern China, the Shan States in Burma, and Northern Thailand, namely, Chiang Mai, Chiang Rai and Mae Hong Son. Despite their wide population distribution, they are minority groups in each country. Their language belongs to the Tai language family and is not mutually intelligible with Standard Thai, but can be somewhat understood by speakers of *Kammuang*, a Northern Thai dialect.⁵ Culturally, both Northern Thai and Burmese cultures have influenced the Tai Yai; it is not difficult to find similarities. Most of the Tai Yai immigrants settle in Mae Hong Son, the only province in Thailand where the Tai Yai composes the majority of the provincial population.

The human inflow from the Tai Yai community on the Burmese side, mostly in the Shan State or farther north, to Northern Thailand has occurred since, at latest, the end of 18th century to the beginning of 19th century.⁶ These populations included traders, war captives, and traditional refugees.

In the contemporary context, two cases of Tai Yai migration into Northern Thailand are well-known, both of which might be the causes of the "headache", as this migration is

⁴ "Shan has traditionally been the name used by Burmese when they call the people who speak Tai-related language... the name spelled Shan has broadly been used by Westerners when they call them in the British colonial period. Seeing by the result, they seemed to the people who spread the word, Shan, to the world." Michio Takatani, "Shan no Yukue (Who Are the Shan?: An Ethnological Perspective)" *Tonan Ajia Kenkyuu (Southeast Asian Studies)*, Vol.35, No.4, 1998, p.40. (in Japanese)

⁵ William Smally, *Linguistic Diversity and National Unity: Language Ecology in Thailand*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), pp.121-122.

⁶ According to Vatikiotis, many of the inhabitants in Chiang Mai, Chiang Rai, Nan, etc. are descendants of Tai Yai people who were brought down from the Shan States on mass to re-settle depopulated cities of North right after the expulsion of Burmese in 1794. He originally cites this from *Phongsawadan Yanok* and D. Richardson, "An Account of Some of the Petty States Lying North of the Tenasserim Provinces; Drawn from the Journals and Reports of D. Richardson, Esq. Surgeon to the Commissioner of the Tenasserim Provinces" *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, Vol.58, 1936. Micheal R. J. Vatikiotis, "The Problem of the 'Burmese Minorities in Northern Thailand: An Historical Perspective" *Political Science Review*, No.3, 1982, pp.77-78.

viewed by the Thai government. One is the migration of the Tai Yai rebel armies, some of whom also are involved with the opium trade; and another is the migration of illegal workers who are fully violating Thai immigration law and can be found at construction sites, orchards and fields, and service industries all over Northern Thailand and Bangkok. But these are not all of the significant aspects of the Tai Yai migration to Northern Thailand. There is another aspect of their migration and another group of people, who are categorized neither rebel soldier nor illegal migrant labor (although they might sometimes overlap with these flows) and are living quietly with the local Tai Yai population in border area of Thailand. These people entered Thailand as refugees/ displaced persons triggered by the establishment of the military government in Burma in 1962.

Not only the case of Tai Yai people, but also most of other ethnic migration and immigrants from Burma, especially the ethnic groups which have communities along both sides of the border, tend to be absorbed into pre-existing local communities. This kind of settlement pattern has attracted less attention than others, because it has generally assumed that the assimilation with local people in these cases is not problematic. Such processes of settlement and assimilation, however, warrant some investigation, regardless of whether their assimilation are judged problematic or not because settlement process is an important phase in the migration system.

First, it can determine the immigrants' future direction. By living in the new settlement, immigrants cannot avoid contact with the host society. Contact with the host society means contact with "differences", which can bring conflicts and changes to the immigrants' lives. Supportive social relations help overcome these conflicts. Whether or not immigrants live their lives in host societies with comfort and security depends on what kind of social relations they have built up. This is where immigrants are forced to decide whether they will settle in this community or not, return to their home country or not, or move to another place or not.

Second, the settlement process is important not only for the migratory process of the immigrants themselves, but also for the next flow of immigrants. Whether there are social relations that ease the difficulties of immigrants, the specific kinds of relations, and how

these relations function can influence the decision-making of the potential immigrants.

Third, it may impact on the host society, because social relations are built upon interactions with the receiving side. There are potential positive and negative effects. And, most importantly, this is the stage on which direct interactions between the local hosts and immigrants take place, not the one between the central government which is far from the site where migration is actually happening. So this process ought to reflect the locality and produce the part of the migration process particular to that locality. This process does not allow simple generalizations.

The settlement process of the Tai Yai refugees/ displaced persons in Mae Hong Son is also a case showing such local peculiarity.

Mae Hong Son, located on the border, has a large population of Tai Yai refugees/ displaced persons from Burmese side. In Mae Hong Son, however, despite this official title as refugees/ displaced persons, the immigrants seem to be recognized by the members of the host society or by themselves in a different way than what outsiders would imagine so-called refugees/ displaced persons. This might owe to the following peculiarities of Mae Hong Son, which conditions the migration process itself:

- (1)The Tai Yai movement over the border has a long history of continuity. The flow of the refugees/ displaced persons is just a part of long continuing migration process. Because the movement has been uninterrupted, there might be strong linkages between sending and receiving societies.
- (2)There are established ethnic communities on both sides of the border, and hosts and refugees/ displaced persons share similar languages and cultures.⁷ This can have impacts on distinctive network formation of refugees in active interaction with the host society, creating less difficulty, both linguistically and culturally.
- (3)The immigrants who are recognized as refugees/ displaced persons are also absorbed into pre-existing Tai Yai communities without being held in the refugee camps. Assimilation is accelerated because immigrants are not regarded as those who should be kept separate from the rest of the community. They are living in the host society in the context of daily life, rather than living in a specialized space. Their position as ordinary villagers might also lead the immigrants to form wider

⁷ There might be some minor difference, even though their origin was same. There may be a transformation because the border has separated them into two countries for a long time.

social networks.

These factors are not so visible when we observe the phenomena at the governmental or national level, or when we are bounded by the given stereotyped categorization of immigrants. When we examine the issue at a local or regional level, the above-mentioned characteristics become clear. However, there are very few studies that deal with contemporary Tai Yai migration into Thailand and include the local context.⁸ Because the actors directly affected from the migration phenomena are the local hosts and the immigrants themselves, we should not ignore the local context of the migration. More studies on these types of settlement are needed.

The human flow of population from Burma continues, and as their stay in Thailand tends to be long term and, in many cases, permanent, it is necessary to understand relations between immigrants and host societies during the settlement process. This is a necessary step to understanding the migration situation that Thailand currently faces.

1.2. Objectives and Hypothesis

Because of its peculiarity of the settlement process and the existence of the certain stereotypes of the Tai Yai immigrants, the Tai Yai migration in the border area of Thailand should be researched. Although it is a large portion of the migration between Thailand and Burma, it has historically attracted the least attention because their assimilation process has been assumed to be easier. We should investigate the causes and consequences of this migration, as well as other factors conditioning the migration in this area, in order to understand the complete social situation created by influx of immigrants.

The main objectives of this thesis are: (1) to analyze the settlement and assimilation process of Tai Yai immigrants from Burma into Mae Hong Son by studying how the transnational community is formed on the regional level; and (2) to study the impact of

⁸ Very few studies on recent Tai Yai migration can be found. For example, Tadayoshi Murakami, "Tai Kokkyou Chitai ni Okeru Shan no Minzoku Nai Kankei: Minaraisou no Shukke Shiki wo Jirei ni (Intra-ethnic Relations among the Shan along the Border of Northern Thailand: A Case Study of Novice Ordination in Mae Hong Son)" *Tonan Ajia Kenkyu (Southeast Asian Studies)*, Vol.35, No.4, 1998. p.62. (in Japanese) and Wong Siew Yin Elaine, "Migration and Displacement-The Shans in Northern Thailand" Paper presented at the 4th ASEAN Inter-University Seminar on Social Development, 16-18 June 1999.

linguistic and cultural similarity of host and immigrants on their interaction, which is illustrated in their settlement and assimilation process.

Under such objectives, this thesis will examine the case of Tai Yai immigrants living quietly in the host society. The followings are the hypothesis underlying on this research: (1) degree of assimilation is affected by degree of relationships between new immigrants and the host Tai Yai community; and (2) the characteristics of the host society is reflected on the assimilation process.

Assuming that Tai Yai immigrants tend to be absorbed into pre-existing host Tai Yai societies, I use the term "assimilation" as the direction which heads toward integration, without implying horizontal changes from heterogeneous to homogeneous, but, rather, indicating how deep the immigrants creep into the web of networks. By conceptualizing the community as the web of social networks, the formation and function of immigrants' networks will be examined.

Although Tai Yai migration has a long history, the years 1962-1997 were chosen as the time span for this study. This is so that we may focus in detail on the contemporary migration process, especially on the people generally categorized as Tai Yai refugees/displaced persons. In the text, the term "post-1962 immigrants" is used to stand for these refugees/displaced persons in order to make an allowance for the local context of classification. The time length of this study was selected because we will be able to observe the transformations in the immigrant flow itself. We will consider whether the actors have changed over time, and whether there any changes in the situation in the settlement and assimilation process. The time period selected also makes it possible to follow the continuity, linkage, transformation and development of social relations, all of which are important factors in the migration system. None of them can be properly revealed without the use of a sufficient time frame.

The second chapter will discuss the situation in Burma in the 1960s, which caused Tai Yai refugee flow into Thailand, and the consequences of the event in Northern Thailand. In Chapter 3, I will discuss the history of Mae Hong Son (the setting for the migration discussed in this thesis), and the actors of migration, namely earlier Tai Yai immigrants as

hosts and Tai Yai refugees/ displaced persons after 1962 as newcomers. History frames the peculiarity of the place and the characteristics of the people, and thus the characteristics of migration. So it is necessary to discuss the history of the place and the actors that interact in migration process. In Chapter 4, the settlement of post-1962 Tai Yai immigrants will be discussed. Their community formation, social organizations, and networks will be examined. Chapter 5 examines the assimilation process of Tai Yai immigrants after 1962, based on the discussion in the former chapters. Some final conclusions are drawn in Chapter 6.

It is hoped that this discussion will bring some attention to the situation of immigrants in border areas, as well as to the importance of the local context in the migration process, which tends to be ignored or downplayed by leading authorities.

1.3. Methodology

1.3.1. Conceptual Framework

The migration systems approach is the main theoretical framework used in this thesis. Each chapter and all topics in this thesis directly or indirectly reflect the factors that this approach emphasizes.

Introduction of the systems approach to the field of migration studies dates back to 1970, when Mabogunje suggested the possibility of using the approach for the study of rural-urban migration. By defining a “system” as a “complex of interacting elements together with their attributes and relationships”,⁹ the systems approach emphasizes that migration should be conceptualized and analyzed as a system which includes both sending- and receiving-sides and accompanied relations and interactions in order to capture the dynamics of migration.¹⁰ This has been advanced in studies of international migration by Fawcett and

⁹ Defined by Mabogunje (1970). See Hania Zlotnik, “Empirical Identification of International Migration Systems” in *International Migration Systems: A Global Approach*, ed. by Mary M. Kirtz, Lin Lean Lim and Hania Zlotnik. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), p.19.

¹⁰ Mary M. Kirtz and Hania Zlotnik, “Global Interactions: Migration Systems, Processes, and Policies” in *International Migration Systems: A Global Approach*, ed. by Mary M. Kirtz, Lin Lean Lim and Hania Zlotnik. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), p.2.

Arnold and Portes and Böröcz in the 1980s.¹¹ Analysis of international migration from either a sending- or a receiving-country perspective, which has been the main stream of international migration studies prior to the introduction of the migration systems approach, has a shortcoming. It often fails to convey the dynamics associated with the evolution of the flow, from its origin through the shifts in its composition and volume, and of the policy and structural conditions at origin and destination that shapes migration. Thus, the migration systems approach, a dynamic perspective that includes these factors, has been required to accurately explain the changing trends and patterns of contemporary international migration.¹²

In cases of international migration, a system consists of groups of countries exchanging relatively large numbers of immigrants, and immigrants and other flows linking the countries together into a system.¹³ Castles summarizes that the migration systems approach sets out to provide a conceptual framework that examines all dimensions of the relations between emigration and immigration countries. The model recognizes the close links between flows of people and other flows; for instance, of capital, commodities and technologies.¹⁴ The model also emphasizes that such flows arise out of historical linkages such as colonization, military presence, political influence, trade or cultural penetration. Moreover, the links within a migration system can only be understood within a broader political, social, demographic and economic context.¹⁵ Each migratory movement should be seen as the result of interacting macro- and micro-structures in a system.

Macro-structures include large-scale institutional factors, such as the political economy of the world market, inter-state relationships, administrative structures, and practices used

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid., pp.2-3.

¹⁴ For related discussion, see Arjun Appadurai, "Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy", in Mike Featherstone ed., *Global Culture: Nationalism, Globalization and Modernity*. (London: Sage Publications, 1990) p.296., cited in *Ido no Minzoku-shi (Ethnography of Migration)*, ed. by Shinji Yamashita, et.al. (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1996), pp.3-4. (in Japanese)

¹⁵ Castles, op. cit., p.3. See also Figure 1, p.112.

by states to control movements. Micro-structures includes informal networks and the practices built up by migrants and communities to cope with the consequences of migration. Informal networks bind not only immigrants but also non-immigrants together in a complex web of social roles and interpersonal relationships.¹⁶ These macro- and micro-structures are linked at all levels.

Network is an important concept in the migratory process. Lomnitz defines "network" as the structured set of social relationships between individuals¹⁷. Gurak and Caces conceptualize "migrant network" as a set of non-institutionalized relationships that revolve around some organizing principle underlying the network.¹⁸ Networks are not limited to those which can be found in the micro-structure, such as kinship networks, reciprocal networks, geographically bounded groups, etc. While strong ties can be found in these above-mentioned networks, weak ties, sometimes made in the micro-structure and connecting informal networks to the macro-structure, make the range of the network wider.¹⁹ Various forms and directions of networks can be found in the migration system; these include the relationship between migrants and members of the receiving society, of the receiving and sending societies, of new immigrants and old immigrants, and of immigrants and the society of the origin. As viewed from this perspective, the migratory process can be conceptualized as the set of various social networks with strong and weak ties.

Douglas and Caces sum up the functions of the migrant network from a review of the literature to include: "buffering migrants from the costs and disruptions of migration; insulating migrants from the destination society and maintaining their links to the origin society; determining, to a degree, who migrates from communities and households; influencing the selection of destination and origin sites; conditioning the integration of migrants in the destination society; serving as channels for information, other resources, and

¹⁶ Douglas T. Gurak and Fe Caces, "Migration Networks and Shaping of Migration System" in *International Migration Systems: A Global Approach*, ed. by Mary M. Kirtz, Lin Lean Lim and Hania Zoltnik. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992). pp.150-151.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p.152.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp.161-162.

normative structures; and shaping the size and momentum of migration”²⁰. These are both adaptive and selective functions, and play important roles in the maintenance of a migration system.

The role of the migrant network in community formation is commonly analyzed. “Communities are defined by the web of connections among individuals”²¹ when viewed from a social network perspective. The web of the immigrant connections can show the direction of the formation of the particular forms of ethnic communities. Gurak and Caces mention that “there has been some tendency for scholars to conceptualize ethnic communities in terms of networks and dynamic process of change” and such “a conceptualizing can be interpreted as a logical extension of viewing migrant network as an early phase in the process of emergence of an ethnic group in a new context”.²² This thesis, however, does not aim to directly demonstrate ethnic community formations, but studies the function of the network in the community formation process and its relation to the assimilation process.

By utilizing such concepts, the migration systems approach attempts to consider the whole spectrum of population movements in order to elucidate the interactions between different types of migrant flows or different types of migration status. Kritz and Zlotnik write on this point that:

With respect to migration, *per se*, several types of flows generally coexist within the confines of any given system and consideration of the processes that differentiate them or maintain their distinctiveness is an integral part of the system approach. In studying specific systems, the use of flexible classification of migrants may be necessary to reflect the variety of movements in existence or their evolution through time.²³

This is useful in its analysis of complicated migration phenomena, which do not allow the simple classification of immigrants, such in the case of migration in Northern Thailand.

²⁰ Ibid., p.153.

²¹ Ibid., p.162.

²² Ibid., p.160.

²³ Kritz and Zlotnik, *op. cit.*, p.5.

1.3.2. Research Process

Research Process and Methods

This thesis is a descriptive cultural study, which is one of the strategies in qualitative research.²⁴ In order to collect the data necessary for analysis, an intensive field survey was conducted in a village in *Amphur* (district) Muang, Mae Hong Son province. Four visits, up to four weeks in duration, took place between January and December, 1999. Interviews were the main source of information. The experiences of immigrants are diverse, and thus it is not optimal to use the same general questionnaire. Personal interviews, both formal and informal, were conducted in order to obtain data on their migration experiences. Guideline questions include: from where, when, with whom, and why they came to Thailand, and why they chose to come to that particular village. At the same time, it is expected to pick up unexpected data by letting informants talk freely about their migration experiences. The first thing to be reminded is to recognize the diversity of the migration experiences as the reality. Data regarding network formation, such as kinship relations, friendship relations, and neighborhood relations were also investigated during the interviews.

Constant observation of their lives in the settlement was recognized as necessary. Generally, the networks have “footholds” or “connecting points” of relationships, or places where people who built the network gather, for example, temples, meeting places, schools, homes, and fields.²⁵ Visiting such footholds is also one way of getting information.

Historical data and general information on Tai Yai and Mae Hong Son was gathered from library research and a collection of oral sources. An interview with the village headman and seniors in the village became an important source of information for the history of the village.

Data collected from interviews with Tai Yai migrant workers in Bangkok were also utilized. The interviews in Bangkok were conducted firstly in January 1998 at a temple in Lardphrao, and secondly in February 1999 at a temple in Sathu Pradit.

²⁴ See Gretchen B. Rossman and Sharon F. Rallis, *Learning in the Field: An Introduction to Qualitative Research*. (Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications, 1997), p.17.

²⁵ Yasuo Hirota, *Esumishiti to Toshi (Ethnicity and city)*, (Tokyo: Ushindo, 1997), pp.10-11. (in Japanese)

General Information on the Research Site

The village is located just 3 km north of the town of Mae Hong Son, along the road from Mae Hong Son to Pai. The village belongs to *Tambon* (sub-district) Paang Muu, *Ampher Muang* in Mae Hong Son province, which has 80 years' of history.

The village area includes land on both sides of the Pai River that runs through the middle of the village. However, there are no households on the west side, just *Rai* (field) and *Naa* (rice field). People who work the fields on the west side use a wooden bridge, but, in the rainy season, it is taken away to prevent it from being broken by the rapid currents of the Pai River. In November, before the rice harvesting season, it is reconstructed by the villagers' cooperative labor.²⁶

There are 232 households on the east side (July 1999). This includes 165 households formally registered with Thai citizenship, plus 67 households without Thai citizenship. Most of the households without Thai citizenship are composed of Tai Yai immigrants from the Burmese side of the border. Three households are composed of Karen immigrants. About 20 of them have pink cards, and another 20 have blue cards.²⁷ Ethnically, most of the population of the village is Tai Yai, and we can say that the village as a whole is basically a community of Tai Yai people. Most of the villages in *Tambon Paang Muu* are composed of Tai Yai people. So the contacts between villages are frequent, and we can find many cases of intermarriage with neighboring villages, especially Nammaa Pin and Sop Soi, located just next to the village. Usually, one village has at least one temple, and the contact between the temples is active, as Tannenbaum shows.²⁸

There are two main roads leading to the town of Mae Hong Son from the village, and they can be used all year around. There are *Son-Tews*, *Tuk-Tuks* and motorcycle taxis as the

²⁶ See Map 1, p.116.

²⁷ The Thai government has issued some kinds of ID cards for the displaced people with Burmese nationality. The cards are classified by their colors. For example, white cards are for ex-Koumintang (KMT) soldiers, yellow are for Burmese Communists, pink are for Karen and Tai Yai, blue are for hill tribes and purple are for refugees. See Murakami, op. cit., p.63.

²⁸ Nicola Tannenbaum, *The Role of Buddhist Temples in Regional Integration: An Analysis of Community-Temple Networks in Amphur Muong, Maehongson Province*. A Final report submitted to the National Research Council of Thailand. 1989.

means of transportation from the market in the town to the village. There are two main routes going to the border; from Nai Soi to the Kayah State and from Ho Mong to the Shan State via the northern villages of Huai Pung and Tung Doi. Villagers still use these routes for shopping, visiting relatives, or trading in the Tai Yai community on the Burmese side.

Not only the villagers, but also immigrants from the Burmese side use these routes to come and go. Recently, the influx of the Burmese immigrants (mostly ethnic Tai Yai) to the village has increased remarkably. The village headman reported to me that there has been a remarkable increase in immigrants from Burma during the following periods: post-1965, post-1973, and during the 1990s.²⁹ Most of the immigrants work as wage labor at construction sites, and in service industries, rice fields and orchards. They are paid day by day, usually about 50-80 Baht per day.

Recently the village headman established a group of the newly arrived Burmese immigrants called "*Palang Mai*" (new power), which is responsible for checking the migrant population and handling the issues concerning the immigrants. The registration of the new population has been practiced for three years now. The date of arrival, the name of the head of household, and the number of household members are recorded. One person is selected as a leader of the *Palang Mai*, and that person will be responsible for everything concerning migrants from Burma in the village.

The following factors led to the selection of the village: (1) a large population of Tai Yai immigrants from Burma in the village; (2) the existence of "*Palang Mai*", the organization of the immigrants for themselves; (3) the geographical location of the village (close to the town and with good access to the border); (4) the existence of immigrants from the earlier phase since around 1962.

As mentioned earlier, the village has a large population of Tai Yai immigrants from Burma. According to the village headman, the village has a relatively large population of Burmese immigrants. When asked the reason why the immigrants choose to live in the village, they answered as follows:

²⁹ Interview with the village headman.

- Convenience: there is a river to supply water for growing rice. Also, it is easier to find a job because of the location close to the town of Mae Hong Son.
- Policy of the village headman: there is no discrimination against immigrants.
- The existence of the village regulations and the well-disciplined village society.

The policy of the village headman can affect the attitudes of the villagers towards the immigrants. His policy is based on the concept of human rights and tries to get rid of the discrimination against immigrants in the village. The villagers also seem to treat immigrants as residents of the same village rather than as outsiders who should be kept separate or isolated. This causes more active interaction between host and immigrants, and may contribute to the creation of neat networks between them. I expect to observe these "neat networks" in the good relationships of the villagers and immigrants. However, at the same time, we also must be remarked that we cannot always expect this kind of condition. Because not all of the villages in Mae Hong Son have such village headmen, the case I studied is rather a rare case. As far as I could contact, I did not meet many village headmen like him.

The existence of the organization of the immigrants can also be an important factor. Many of the Tai Yai immigrants settle in Thailand informally and individually. They look to relatives for help, and often do not have any registration. The existence of an organization in the village dedicated to helping the immigrants is rare. This organization can be the formal tie that connects the immigrants themselves, or it also can connect the immigrants and the host. It is expected to observe the model of particular network formation, which might not be seen in the other informal settlement patterns without any institutional or formal ties.

Due to its location with convenient access to both the town of Mae Hong Son and the border, the village has received a constant influx of Burmese immigrants for a long time. As far as could be confirmed, immigrants entered the village at different times; for instance, some came in 1962, the first year that the notion of "refugees/ displaced persons" was applied to Tai Yai immigrants, and other are very recent arrivals (less than one year). The location close to the border makes it easier for immigrants who have settled down in the

village to visit their village of origin past the border. These visits by immigrants can encourage new waves of immigration as information is spread from the host society to the origin society. Thus, these situations are not only useful to observe the phased development of the immigrants' networks, but also to consider the relations between host and origin societies, and the historical continuity of host, immigrant and origin society.

One additional factor in the selection of this village was that my interpreter has a personal connection to this village. The issues explored in this paper are sensitive, so such connections are useful to go into their society.

1.3.3. Limitations

The limitations that were expected in this research are as follows:

- This research did not employ the form of a comparative study, but rather is a study of a limited part of a large system.
- I selected a village and informants with whom the interpreter had a personal connection. While this was beneficial as more personal information was obtained, this data comes from a subsection of the society (those people who had a connection with the interpreter).

The goal of this thesis is not to summarize the general situation of the Tai Yai immigrants, but to present an example of how the host and immigrants interact in a case of the migration process in the border area. Of course, "the settlement process of Tai Yai immigrants" can include various patterns. For example, the new flow of Tai Yai "refugees/ displaced persons", who are closer to the normative notion of refugee and who are a group separate from the pre-existing historical flow which can be seen since 1996, they are affected by the large scale relocation program in the Shan State by the Burmese government. Some of the immigrants tended to head towards cities because they have to work and find jobs for their survival. A NGO reports that the Tai Yai immigrants are living at construction sites or farms in cities like Chiang Mai, where they can find jobs, and that these places are starting to resemble refugee camps.³⁰ Some immigrants who live in such shelters receive aid from

³⁰ Shan Human Rights Foundation, *Dispossessed: A Report on Forced Relocation and Extrajudicial killings in Shan States, Burma*. (Chiang Mai, 1998), April. pp.44-47.

NGOs. These conditions are different from the case discussed in this paper, in which immigrants are absorbed quietly by the village community. These cases should be examined at another time. This study is treated as a case study which analyzes a part of the whole migration system between Thailand and Burma, or between Northern Thailand and the Shan State, without failing to recognize the diversity of the immigrants' conditions. The findings of this case study might not directly be applied to all cases because the village selected as a research site has the proper conditions for the establishment of migrant networks by the existence of unique village headman and is considered to be a peculiar case. But it is possible to display one aspect of migration situation in Thailand which has wide variation. By providing raw data, it is also hoped that it would contribute to build a model of settlement process even including such cases which are thought to be exceptional.

Another limitation arises from the selection of informants. "Snowball sampling" was utilized.³¹ This method increases the number of the informants by using personal relations to select informants. This might cause an inclination of the data. This way of sampling is sometimes considered to be "opportunistic sampling" or "convenience sampling".³² However, its advantage in analyzing networks lies in the fact that such sampling makes use of the linkages of personal connections, and thus the sampling itself can be a source of information which shows the social relations of the informants.³³

The main problems which were expected during the course of this research were related to language and the sensitiveness of the issue. I could independently interview persons who speak Central Thai, but many informants could only speak Tai Yai or Northern Thai. This led to difficulties, especially during interviews with recent immigrants who could not speak Central Thai. At the same time, because of their illegal status in Thailand, most of the immigrants were reluctant to talk about their personal experiences with me, a stranger. This was especially true after August 1999, which marked the beginning of the intensive

³¹ For a details, see Ikuta Sato, *Fiirodowaaku: Sho wo Motte Machini Deyou (Fieldwork: Let's go out with books)*, (Tokyo: Shinyousha, 1992), p.104. (in Japanese)

³² Ibid., p.105.

³³ Ibid., p.108.

repatriation policy conducted by the Thai government. Thus, I required an interpreter who could understand Tai Yai and Central Thai and who came from the group of the immigrants, or at least had friendly relations with them.



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