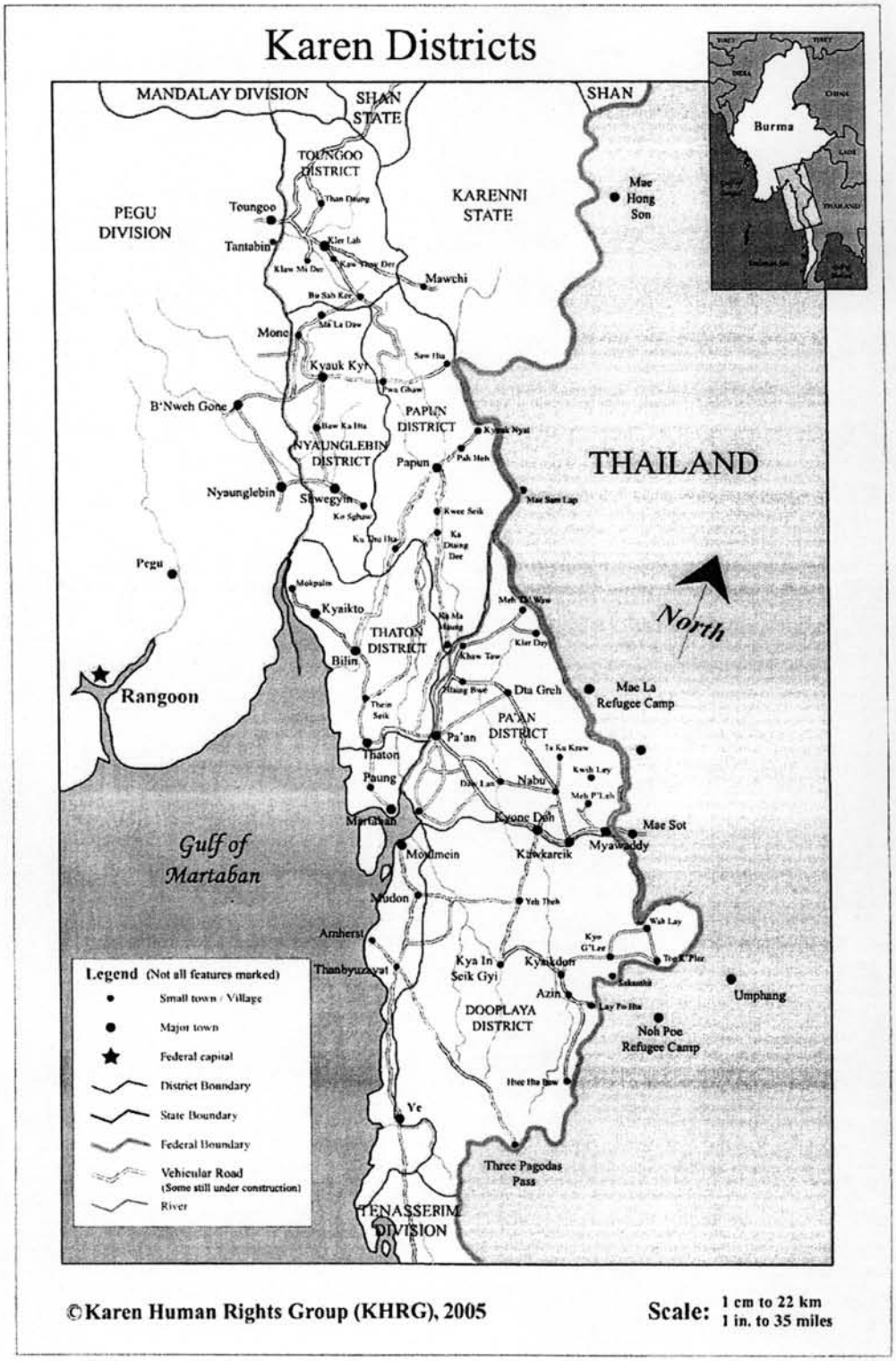
CHAPTER V

BORDERLAND FILMSCAPE 2

This research into the field of digital films reflects the bi-polarity in the discourse of globalisation's effects. Two main arguments prevail therein: One holds that digital modalities and its wide-scale availability constitutes an opportunity of the "margins coming into representation" (Stuart Hall, 2000: xx), while the other argues that the ensuing dynamics trigger a more complex network of its management and regulation.

In this study of the management and regulation in the field of digital film productions from 2003-2006, the Northern borderlands have been selected as a focus region. This chapter and the previous describe the multi-layered processes of regulation of this field by studying structures of local production environments. These are understood to be positioned within the larger structure of national and global forces which regulate formats and narratives. If the margins come into representation, and if this means empowerment is analysed on the basis of Bourdieu's findings of symbolic, social, cultural and economic capital invested and accumulated.

Figure 6: Karen Districts



5.1. Background of the video productions

In contrast to the previous chapter, the two digital films discussed here, are self-representations: a film by a Karen video team in Mae Sod about internally displaced people in the North of Karen State and by an Akha living in Chiang Rai city about his home town Baan Saen Chareon. Their selection was based on similarities of their histories in regard to forced migration and long-standing co-operation with international organisations and individual volunteers. Both the Akha and Karen are trans-national people with the Akha /Zagniq living in Laos, Yunnan Province (China), Burma and Thailand, while the Karen people live in Burma and Thailand as well as in non-Asian countries.

The Karen video "Shoot on Sight"

The refugee Karen community in Mae Sod has been recording evidence and conducting information for HR advocacy work including filmmaking in the borderlands of Karen State and Thailand since the early 1990's. The first video filmed with assistance of a Karen dates to 1994. The members of the video team have been living in and out of Mae La camp with frequent visits across the border for human rights abuse documentation, education and medical aid services. Support for their livelihood in the camp, which I visited in 2006, largely depends on international humanitarian aid organisations for basic food, health and other facilities. The school in Mae La camp offers courses up until grade ten. Members of the video team are bilingual and have been living in the borderland for more than a decade. I was asked not to disclose the identities of the video team especially since three of them have applied for a third-country transfer. This is not he first video produced, but its significance lies in the fact that since the last large scale offensive in 1997, systematic human rights abuses have been ongoing and worsened since 2005. At the same time of their announcement to move the capital city from Rangoon to Pyinmana, the SPDC launched a large scale offensive against Karen communities in northern Karen State's Toungoo, Nyaung Lay Bin and Muthraw districts. According to a report by Burma Issues (2005), the attacks are ongoing and Burmese soldiers are ordered to shoot on sight. Villages are being burnt

down, crops and food supplies destroyed, forced labour exerted and, in extension of their previous tactics, Burmese soldiers stay in the villagers hindering internally displaced people to retrieve the few food supplies stored. 27.000 people have been forced from their homes – mainly fleeing eastward hiding in the jungle or trying to cross the border into Thailand (2005: 8). These attacks are launched albeit for a ceasefire agreement between the Karen national Union (KNU) and the SPDC. Given that six hydroelectric dams are planned, with financial investment from mainland China and Japan, security zones are being established for their construction, infrastructure built and land secured. As villagers can not return and Thailand is limiting the flow of refugees, people are depending on dietary supplies from community based organisation which work cross-border.

The Akha video *Mirsaw Lwa-eu'*

Aju Dzoeqbaw's grandparents were born in Burma, but his father was born in the Doi Thung area, Baan Pa Kluai, on the Burmese border. The Akha community there was harassed by lowlanders and people taken away for forced labour when they arrived 46 years ago. Three Akha clans resettled to a place "where the lowlanders didn't want to go". Having heard that Mae Suai District was largely unsettled, they moved to the Doi Laan area, south of Amphoe Muang Chiang Rai.

Aju Dzoeqbaw and his family have been involved in radio broadcasting, research and multi-media recording projects since the 1980's. In part self-financed and partially with Dutch funding, his family established a diversity of projects in Chiang Mai and Chiang Rai provinces. These include educational, cultural research, legal aid, community development, empowerment of women, health, and trade etc. (see Appendix D.1). The family has been working with international scholars in cross-border anthropological and linguistic research and documentation projects. Abaw Buseu, Aju's father worked in a family planning project with international participation in the late 1970's. The family has travelled in Europe and mainland China to attend international conferences, Aju's sister lived in Amsterdam and London for a year. An Austrian filmmaker has documented the cross-border Akha community including the Dzoeqbaw family. The filmmaker, Aju, speaks three languages (Akha, Thai and English), and has

been involved in cross-border research projects, audio-recording of oral history, their transcription and has produced education material and music.

The Akha in Chiang Mai and Chiang Rai are largely Protestant or Catholic or adhere to several religious denominations. (Of the 170 families in Baan Saen Charoen, 70 have converted to Baptism, while in the neighbouring village, Baan Saen Jelo Mai, (*mai* means 'new', i.e. the original village split) everybody is Christian. The influence of missionaries on changing Akha ways of life is very strong and has a long history as they offered education, medical aid, food and clothes for free. Akha language courses are offered on the basis of the Bible translated from the English into 'Akha'[1].

Other contact with international organisations were mainly Japanese, namely a volunteer working at the Mountain Peoples for Culture and Development, an organisation founded by Abaw Buseu and supported by the Dutch Government until 2005. The Japanese government funded the PP 21st century, a conference for indigenous people's representatives, which was attended by 100 Akha leaders, to discuss issues of drugs, education, prostitution, citizenship and land rights.

[1] Christian missionaries were in Burma before arriving in Thailand after their expulsion. The New Testament was printed in Rangoon in 1968 and an English-Akha language version of the Old Testament was printed in 2001. (personal communication with Aju Dzoeqbaw)

5.2. The Peace Way Foundation / Burma Issues

Registered since 2002 as a non governmental organisation in Thailand, volunteers for the Peace Way Foundation have worked on issues concerning Burma for over a decade. Largely channelled into international advocacy work through "systematic documentation, analysis and dissemination of information to the internal movement and external support campaigns" (Leaflet: Profile of the organisation, p, 1), the Research and Documentation Project used to publish mostly print media. Visualisation through video productions was, however, considered more effective than newspaper reports and newsletters, and given that conventional broadcasting media have no access to Burma, Max Ediger, the former director of Burma Issues, initiated the Video Project in 1992 as a means to address the gravity of the situation in the borderlands. To tell "stories of people in Burma who have become displaced persons in their own land" (Ediger, 2002: 46), the organisation's first feature length video film was produced in 1993 with the help of the late Cynthia Jervis. She provided training and equipped with a large Sony video camera, two Karen and Cynthia went to film issues which had been identified in the Bangkok office in various communities along the border. Although Cynthia died of cerebral malaria before the film was finished, a Canadian friend of hers was able to help with the final editing, subtitles etc. *The Burma Deception* was "distributed to groups along the border and to the international community. In Canada it was used at a special film showing in honour of Cynthia and was also used for several TV news programmes (ibid: 2002: 47).

The equipment purchased for the film's production was thereafter also put to use to produce training videos for internal use with the aim of fostering prospective documentation projects. A KNU photographer and contemporarily BI videographer and coordinator of the video project took video footage to make a film about the Four Cuts policy, and much of the evidence of HR abuses in a civil war zone was used, according to the same report, "by individuals and groups who needed to raise awareness about the true suffering of the people of Burma" (ibid.). Issues of postproduction were, however, not tackled until five years ago. The project coordinator continued to film and edit with the help of a VCR adding a musical soundtrack, or using slow-motion. More

importantly, the series of attacks on borderland communities in the mid 1990's, strained documentation efforts and blocked information flows. For long, the transportation to Bangkok of audio recordings of eyewitness reports, photographs and footage documenting human rights violations in the various war zones, was a success in itself. Transcriptions of audio and video tapes mainly served as the basis for print publications. Lack of trainers and post-production equipment and the multiple duties of the project coordinator seem to have been reasons why no more films were produced in the next years. Since 1997, an audio-visual database for photographs, video footage and artwork was initiated in the Bangkok office. Reportedly, news agencies and funding partners of BI used footage occasionally, namely AP in 1997 and CNN in 1998. The latter was a successful effort of Witness, a not-for-profit organisation based in North America. Founded after the Rodney King incident (2002), in which an eyewitness' video recording proved crucial as evidence speaking for the accused, musician Peter Gabriel, the Reebok HR Foundation and The Lawyers Committee for HR reportedly were inspired by the idea of "placing video cameras in the hands of human rights activists around the world" (Gregory, 2006: 196). Explaining why it wasn't sufficient to merely provide cameras, Gregory writes: "Activists needed training to operate cameras; in particular, they wanted strategic guidance on where the audiences were for the video they shot and how to incorporate video into their attempts to influence those audiences (ibid.). Witness thus not only provides grassroots organisations with training and video equipment to record human rights violations, but aids with the post-production, advocacy plans and distribution.

> "Our cooperation developed slowly from delivering the footage from inside to Witness to slowly taking over parts of the post-production process here, and now the Mae Sot team works entirely independently, besides being given advice on advocacy issues. The three year phase of cooperation with Witness is now over."[2]

According to the new video project coordinator, the trainings since 2001 introduced various editing styles. "But it was important to learn." For their first co-

---

[2] Personal communication, Research and Publication Project Coordinator, Betty, June 26th, 2007

production *No Place To Go* (2002) advocacy related issues were also discussed. It is Witness' stated objective to channel "untold stories and seldom heard voices to the attention of key decision makers, the media, and the general public" to catalyse lasting change (Witness n.d.). To this end, Witness makes use of satellite transmission networks and film distribution companies to guarantee the flow of information from borderlands to 'mainlands'; their network includes global broadcasters such as CNN, ABC, CBS, PBS, and BBC as well as film festivals (ibid.). Witness charges for archive material supplied to broadcasters and the media, but the fee is nominal, according to Betty, and revenues are transmitted to the local partners' account. Witness does not fund the audio-visual documentation projects it helps set up, but might help core partners in project proposal writing etc. In this way, a jointly submitted proposal with BI received a grant from the Open Society Institute, and since, Witness project manager Sam Gregory has been able to regularly give trainings and advocacy related advice in the Mae Sot video project office. In the distribution sector, Witness was responsible for dissemination of digital footage and/or edited films especially amongst UN agencies, major global broadcasters and international film festival organisers, while ALTSEAN[3] cooperates with BI for the films' dissemination in Southeast Asia, and a mailing list network of individuals and relevant organisations functions to this end as well as additional advocacy campaigns and events. The Alternative ASEAN Network on Burma constitutes of HR and social justice NGOs, political parties, representatives from the media and academics as well as student activists working to strengthen "strategic relationships among key networks and organisations from Burma, ASEAN and the international community; implementing innovative strategies that are responsive to emerging needs and urgent developments; and inspiring and building confidence for empowerment among activists, particularly women, youth and all ethnic groups of Burma"(ibid.). To contribute to efforts to achieve democratic transitions in Burma complies with the goals of the Burma/Southeast Asia Initiative of The Open Society Institute, which administers programmes worldwide and has been funding Witness' work and BI's video project and the documentation unit in recent years. The private foundation was created by George Soros in 1993, whose initial work was in Eastern

---

[3] ALTSEAN was formed at the conclusion of the Alternative ASEAN Meeting on Burma held at Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok, in October 1996.

Europe and the former Soviet Union, since 1984, "to help countries make the transition from communism" (The Open Society Institute, n.d.). Among the wide scope of objectives they specifically support independent media and works "to build alliances across borders and continents on issues such as combating corruption and rights abuses" (ibid.). The Burma Project is but one of their global projects, which, since 1994, is "dedicated to [...] helping the country make the transition from a closed to an open society" (ibid.). Grants are provided for training and education for future democratic leaders, and multiethnic initiatives of "grassroots organizations dedicated to the restoration and preservation of fundamental freedoms, including political, economic, environmental, and human rights for all the people of Burma, regardless of race, ethnic background, age, or gender" (ibid.)

5.2.1 *Shoot on Sight* (2006, 13'48")

By: Burma Issues in association with WITNESS

> "The Karen are descendents from the Mongolian people. [...] In the beginning the Karen came from Htee-Hset-Met-Ywa (Land of Flowing Sands), a land that bordered the source of the Yang-Tse-Kiang River in the Gobi Desert, which is located in China and Mongolia. From there they started to look for green pastures, migrating Southwards and gradually entering a land now known as Burma in about 739 B.C." (2007: 11)

Besides this reference to their possible geographic origins, the publication accompanying the digital film says nothing about Karen religious practices or their culture; it does not speak of traditions. Doing so would mock the situation of the people who are subjects of the film. If elsewhere such research is viable and campaigns encourage film productions to be screened at film festivals with the objective to alter misperceptions, some borderland people are discriminated against to the extent of near annihilation. To address the borderland and its people is not merely a question of highlanders and lowlanders or ethnicity; the region's legacy of global trade relations, colonial exploitation, anti-communist combat and other warfare is enmeshed today in

transnational capital transfers further extracting resources regardless of the people inhabiting the land.

The collaboration between The Peace Way Foundations' Research and Publication Project, the video team and their documentation unit, who conducted extensive interviews mainly throughout 2006 in the areas of the offensives and collected supplementary first hand information, made possible the report and a versatile compact disc. As its subtitle 'The ongoing SPDC offensive against villagers in northern Karen State' indicates, the area documented is off limits to any other video unit or research team. And as the coordinator of the video team pointed out, their work is often obstructed by landmines and basic food shortage. The all Karen team consists of two coordinators with four videographers (images from New York are by a North American), three editors, a translator and the narrator (overseas Karen). The script for the film was, however, a joint project between the video team and Sam Gregory from the advocacy organisation Witness (USA). It is dedicated to those who refuse to let the oppression take away their freedom.

The film immediately plunges into a forest in Eastern Burma, where barefooted people carrying baskets filled up to the rim, are hurrying along. The narrator tells us that at least 20.000 ethnic Karen are currently fleeing the worst attacks since ten years by the SPDC, whereas the total number of displaced people in the last 20 years is 1 million. The camera follows the group of Karen, who pass by a woman breast feeding her child, and as she looks up at the camera for the split of a second the screen turns black. Her face reappears as in a still photography in black and white as a gun suddenly starts firing ending with a blast and darkness. Next, we hear birds chirping and a village up in the forest burning – a series of moving images and sound flash up and fade away: people fleeing, a dead body (pixelised so as to not be recognisable). With a close-up of an amputated leg a man starts wailing in pain, the camera pans over his body to his face, which fades out and returns in black and white only to fade out again. His wailing continues as a blood-red map of Burma slowly appears against a black background all the while people are vaguely distinguishable in the centre of the screen to be on the move. "Shoot On Sight: The ongoing military junta offensive against civilians in eastern Burma." The sound bit hasn't changed, as we realise the man, whose leg is being amputated speaks while he is being operated on. We hear them talking in Karen. After

this one minute introduction, the editors zoom into the image of an official map of Burma (in white) and its neighbouring countries (in grey). The closer the zoom, the more distinguishable the red dots on the Burmese map. "Three Thousand villages in eastern Burma have been destroyed, forcibly relocated or abandoned in the last ten years. Nearly one every day..." (-00:01:43) The narrator's voice is calm, and pronounces the words (not intentionally - English it is her third language) so that they linger on as the map is tilted suggesting 'We're landing', slowly fades out and we find ourselves on the sight of a burnt down village...the pan continuously moves on in the same direction as it started from the map to show us a pile of debris household containers. Then we see the group of young Karen fleeing – including a mother with her baby – this time filmed from the front, i.e. not as if we were fleeing with them as in the beginning. As we are told of the over half century of repressive policies, internal conflict and widespread human rights abuses causing the refugee flows, the screen is subdivided into disparate smaller sections with moving images of a mother holding her child, an opium field, a body carried on a pole, and a bird's eye view of a village in the mist of a forest, etc.

> "The continued violence and instability poses a threat to regional peace and stability in the heart of Southeast Asia." (00:01:38 - 00:01:48)

Whence we stand in front of the tall United Nations building in New York where flags are peacefully wavering in the wind against the backdrop of a clear blue sky. The UN Security Council and Burma's fellow ASEAN members are called to action here, literally by the ASEAN Inter-parliamentary Myanmar Caucus (AIPMC), members of which, notably a former senator of Thailand, are seen at a meeting discussing regional security issues caused by the Burmese military regime.

Watching images of what seems an endless row of people carrying heavily loaded baskets crossing a river on a wobbly make-do bamboo 'bridge', the narrator explains that since November 2005 a series of deadly offensives were launched against ethnic Karen villages. These attacks continued throughout the rainy season and triggered the displacement of at least 20.000 people, and "leaving villagers with no opportunity to attend their crops." (00:03:58)

In the first four minutes, the film has achieved to make all its major points. The remaining ten minutes show eye-witnesses and provide their accounts of the offences and their consequences: A school teacher, and two villagers are interviewed telling how they had to flee after Taw Kho Mu Der village and Htee Koh village were burnt down. (We see the villager looking for remainders of his belongings, which he lost entirely since he had to carry his sick son, and could not take any goods.) The narrator adds that this is one of the world's worst disaster zones, where child mortality equals certain parts of Africa with one out of every five children dying before their fifth birthday. These deaths were direct consequences of the poverty and a people constantly on the run fearing forced labour, forced relocation, execution and rape ("with cases widely documented in this area"). Every such sequence with particular information about this part of Eastern Burma, is linked to the next by a personal sequence during which we either observe or listen to somebody other than the narrator. The school teacher continues her account, we see an IDP (internally displaced person) camp with no comment but a few children's babbling. A man who replies to the question what difficulties he is facing: "I worked in my rice field, but the Burmese have destroyed it. I have to ask my son to find rice because we don't have any. He is out here, but I don't know if he will find any." Returning to a burnt down village scavenging for food in hidden food stalls, moreover, is taking the risk to step into a mine. And we get to see and hear a close-up of how that feels. Given all this, and since they've rebuilt their homes and communities several times in the past few years, people "now have to flee outside Burma". Without comment but the sound of many children, a third map shows the Thai Burmese border and its refugee camps notably Mae Ra Ma Luang, where "3500 villagers have decided to flee. "While animated arrows and other symbols indicate the area of attack (close to the new capital of Burma, Pyinmana, i.e. Mae Hong Son province in Thailand). Then we see the children, whom we have heard all along, in a boat cramped together. This is the end of part 2 of the film. Before concluding, a retrospective account notes on 40 years of brutal repression, ¾ of a million refugees, ½ million more displaced people in Burma and 1 million living as undocumented migrants in Thailand alone. Compared to 1997, "when Burma joined ASEAN", 210.000 refugees and asylum seekers were in neighbouring countries. While the film shows the initial group of people in the forest fleeing, the narrator recalls the poverty and abysmal health

situation of the people and says: "The people of Burma ask that the region and the world recognise that international action is needed to ensure an end to human rights abuses and adequate humanitarian aid and a political solution." (00:10:50 – 00:11:07)

This call is supported by a congress woman from the Philippines and a member of the Indonesian parliament, both ASEAN Inter-parliamentary Myanmar Caucus members.

> "I would like to see a stronger ASEAN. An ASEAN with more teeth, more like a tiger: Fighting for democracy, fighting for human rights. Ensuring that it takes an active hand in trying to seek some kind of a binding solution" (00:11:13 – 00:11:28)[4]

But the Karen school teacher speaks the last word in this film. Referring to the suffering and dangers, she says: "We hope that the United Nations can find ways to help us. We want them to help us as son as possible." The film then returns to the refugees in the forest still running, and the videographer/we follow(s) breathing heavily to keep up.

In an interview The Peace Foundation's research and publication project coordinator, explains: "Yes, we have a very detailed video action plan. It is primarily concerned to define the most urgent topic, and the worst situation [to be video-documented]. Then we decide on the message, advocacy strategy and thus the story line. Sometimes, however, the camera team is already inside, or for other unexpected reasons not able to shoot according to plan. In *Season of Fear* we focused on the areas under attack. These were the same areas as the ones in *Shoot on Sight*. In fact, it is the follow-up. We call for increased humanitarian aid and lobby also in ASEAN countries, as the latter video makes clear that the situation affects neighbouring countries, too". "Previously, we lobbied amongst the international community, only", she adds.[5]

There is no doubt that *Shoot On Sight* is a very professionally made film, and that this is due to a great extent to the help of the transnational capital invested in production

---

[4] Hon. Loretta Rosales, The Philippines

[5] Personal communication, Research and Publication Project Coordinator, Betty, June 26th, 2007

and post-production equipment and transnational staff from Witness. Asked about his experience cooperating with Witness project manager Sam Gregory, the Karen video project coordinator admits that, since 2001 production and postproduction experts have given valuable advice for their films, although editing styles differed. "But it was important to learn [these]", he adds. "[Sam] told us not be too creative or artistic in our editing, to remain honest when working in HR issues. For example he advised us not to use footage from place B, when the story told concerned place A, even though the event might have been identical in both places. Slow-motion and music throughout an advocacy video do not add to its credibility, he said. Sometimes, we wanted to add images which he found too graphic [the amputation of the land mine-victims leg in *Shoot on Sight*]. If we showed too cruel scenes, we'd loose our audience. And, no talking heads, even if we thought the topic was important. Without footage … no re-enacting of certain scenes, that wouldn't be sound."[6] Concerning the specific issues mentioned, I noted that the leg amputation scene, although not including the shots the Karen team would have liked to include, negotiations led to another tool of emphasis through a hardy audible augmentation of a computer generated sound-bit, when the wound is treated. The use of original sound recordings from interviews is not only well placed throughout the film, it is also fair to the audience in that the interviewers question is included in one case. Indeed, it would be incredible to hear the villagers 'naturally' tell each other that they are looking for food, because they don't have any. The fine line between 'documentary' and 'cinema realité'[7] seems appropriate given this film is an advocacy film. Besides the narrator, who could take over such a role of a 'Voice of God' who can explain everything is only used to add information the Karen in eastern Burma can not tell. Journalistic features are also included when village names appear as titles and through very good usage of animated maps. Although other teams from the research and documentation project produce such maps, their sensitive integration into moving images requires training. These are useful tools, not software gimmick, limiting voice-over and thus creating an effect of immediacy. The Karen speak to us during 34 percent of the film, and external support from the ASEAN Inter-

---

[6] Personal Communication, June 26th, 2007

[7] A term coined in the 1960's, when a social reality genre in French independent film was popular and participants' opinions were solicited.

parliamentary Myanmar Caucus adds up to eleven percent, i.e. the narrator's voice is heard during 55 percent of the films only. The audience has time, 'to see for itself' and thus get closer to being an eye-witness.

In his article on transnational storytelling, Sam Gregory notes on the subtleties of navigating "compassion fatigue"[8] of an international general audience and the reporting rather than covering of human rights issues by the broadcasting media in the context of global morality market" competition as an obstacle for achieving media coverage. And, on the other hand, grassroots organisations' need to garner donor and activist support might require "reframing" in the context of funding strategies. (2006: 197-198). A striking example of the latter in *Shoot on Sight*, is when the Karen narrator ends with "The people of Burma ask..." (see above). The Open Society, the donor organisation of this operation project lists as eligible for their support "efforts by and for *multi-ethnic*, grassroots organisations dedicated to..." (*my emphasis*, see 4.1.3) . Given the vicinity of Karenni State to the Karen State area narrated in the film as 'Eastern Burma', the Karen coordinator of the documentation project in Mae Sot was quick to point out the newly established documentation teams in Mae Hong Son and Kanchanaburi province (2006), which he had trained during the last year. The two additional documentation centres will diversify the range of topics relevant to systematic and increasing HR violations. Mae Hongs Son will focus on documentations of opium growing, drugs and economic challenges on livelihoods in the area of Karenni State. Whereas Kanchanaburi lies across the border from Magui/Tavoy, and the focus of their advocacy videos will be on refugees, forced labour and forced relocations by the military junta. Such diversification does not imply novelty of the repression addressed, but a broadening of the dissemination of their advocacy videos to other audiences and eventually transnational action.

An entirely different strategy is currently being considered as border crossings are getting increasingly difficult, and documentation team members are a burden for the villagers in terms of physical security (land mines etc.) and food security. The villagers themselves are close to starvation, so why not train the villagers? They are based in the area, the Karen video project coordinator explains.

---

[8] A saturation with images of suffering in the media causing such an effect with the general public

5.3 SEA Mountain Peoples for Culture and Development

The Highland Research Institute of the Southeast Asian Mountain Peoples for Culture and Development (MPCD/SEAMP-HRI), established in 1985, officially recognised in 1993, grew out of an intricate network of organisations, field offices, affiliated associations and initiatives managed and implemented by borderland people in northern Thailand. Another main arm of the organisation is engaged in programs for education and culture under the umbrella of MPCD/SEAMP (1981/1989).

Their founding is inextricably linked with Abaw Buseu Dzoebaw, an Akha who was at the time working in a family planning project and the former Catholic priest and anthropologist, the late Alting von Geusau . During his fieldwork research in the late 1970's in Chiang Rai province's Mae Suai District, Baan Saen Chareon, Gesau was introduced to the village head and Abaw Buseu by the latter's daughter Deuleu Dzoeq baw. In his account of the genesis of the network of organisations, Dr. Leo tells of the negative impacts of Catholic Mission schools, and Abaw Buseu's determination to "do the same, but the other way round, that meant not to teach Christianity but teach the old Akha culture to the students" (AIS, n.d.). A hostel in Chiang Rai serving this purpose was supported by his daughter Deuleu, whose handicraft sales business was able to privately fund primary and secondary education for several families and village members. Funding initially derived from family and friends as well as the Dutch NOVIB, but in 1982, the SEAMO-Netherlands, a family initiative, was set up to raise funding for the coordination of the Akha/Hani[9] association and study projects. Its Chiang Mai office, SEAMP/MPCDE and the Akha Association for Education and Culture in Thailand (AFECT) were established in the late 1980's. Deuleu and her brothers and sister expanded the handicraft business, running several shops at Chiang Mai's night bazaar and later the Golden Triangle Peoples' Art and Handicraft. In consolidated efforts, the aim to create a new generation of Akha intellectual leadership parallel to and not competing with village leadership was pursued. With their growing understanding that local accounts were not the sole sources of Akha history, i.e. that Akha in parts of Burma, Laos, Thailand and China's Yunnan Province were

---

[9] In mainland China's south-western Yunnan Province, the Akha have been classified into two groups: Akha and Hani, but their genealogy is almost identical.

contributing to the wealth of their knowledge, intertribal student programs were set up by IMPEC (Inter Mountain Peoples' Educational Centre) (Deuleu *et al.* 1994: 13) with the help from the Dutch SEAMP. These examples set, village leaders of five other Akha 'clans' strong interest and support led to the further founding of two intertribal NGOs in the 1990s: IMPECT (Inter Mountain Peoples for Education and Culture in Thailand) and IMWECT (Inter Women for Education and Culture in Thailand). Deuleu Dzoeq baw became director of ABU[10], an Akha Women's Project/Cultural Center set up in Mae Suai, Chiang Rai province in 1994/5. Funding for the latter project was received through SEAMP-International Netherlands and NCDO/DGIS, Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs[11]. It's founding on request of Akha village women mirrored self-reflective discussions of Akha culture, which local village leaders readily admitted to be disadvantaging women, although their role as educators and thus knowledge transmitters was recognised as very important. The preconditions to "assist/empower Akha women" and to creating an environment favourable to their continuing this role, are clearly defined in terms of equal access to modern education, skill development, employment, primary health care, basic human rights and political status/power. The long-term research and analysis of Akha histories in the borderland disseminated in the various centres revealed that developments of that kind have been systematically obstructed by external forces. ABU's stated objectives and suggested tools not only express concern for inequalities of various forms of capital – economic, social, cultural and symbolic – but show an understanding of Akha customary law and traditional ecological, agricultural and medical knowledge as a continuously transformed asset:

> "To incorporate those elements of traditional Akha Culture, morality, traditional knowledge and skills that, in adapted and modernized form, that are economic assets for the women and their communities., in the modern education and training of both Akha women studying in schools and Akha village women." (ibid.)

---

[10] The official name of the registered organisation is MPCDE/SEAMP-Abu, The Akha Women Educational and Cultural Centre, for Equality, Health, Education and Culture. It received funding from the following donors organisations and individuals: Rotary International; Rotary Northbrook, Chicago; SEAMP International, Netherlands; The Richard Hua Foundation; Hannekke Roodbergen; Winnie Cain, Mesa, Arizona [www.hani-akha.org/mpcd/MPCD-SEAMP/ABU.html

[11] NCDO, (Nationale Commissie voor Internationale Samenwerking en Duurzame Ontwikkeling), Amsterdam, the Netherlands and DGIS, (Netherlands Ministry of Foreign / Development Cooperation), the Hague, the Netherlands.

Such awareness and principle goals of development positioned MPCD/SEAMP-HRI and MPCD/SEAMP-Abu at difficult junctions in their negotiations. For one, there is a traditional pressure in the borderlands from Christian interpretations of meaning and significance of Akha-zang. Conversion implies freedom from cumbersome responsibilities to maintain 'tradition', the preservation of which, on the other hand, constitutes the predominant focus of international scholarship. The complex network of relationships between the Southeast Asian Mountain Peoples organisation and sub-organisations in both Chiang Mai and Chiang Rai provinces (see Appendix D.1) has been tentatively addressed by Gesau as being the result of internal and inter-ethnic disagreements as well as being challenged by donors, "who didn't understand the situation"[12].

The abovementioned education programmes combined with cultural training and research contributed and benefited the preservation and documentation of Akha oral history and other knowledge. Media production, in particular, began in the late 1970's and 80's, as Deuleu Dzoeq baw, besides her many other activities, was and is involved with cross-border radio broadcasting programmes in Akha language ever since one of the radio transmitters in Chiang Mai got converted from being a North American military station into a radio station broadcasting programmes in minority languages, one hour of Akha programme daily. Gesau started audio-tape recording and video-taping (8 mm) mainly ritual texts recited by *pirma*[13] and shamans, but also songs. He fully acknowledges the ownership of such accumulated cultural capital, and issues of intellectual property rights when he notes that Abaw Buseu, "who started the project [...] became the centre of consultation of the Akha old-culture". Over the course of 23 years about 6-700 tapes of audio recordings from 72 villages were produced, and over several years workshops were held to verify their content.

The most significant publication accomplished in cooperation between local *pirma*, younger Akha scholars and Dr. Leo involved not only the transcription of these tapes,

---

[12] It seems, however, that not only Akha but also representatives of other ethnic groups did make use of scholarships.

[13] A *pirma* is a village teacher and reciter of texts during ceremonies

but also the translation of older *Oezar* ritual texts into modern Akha language[14] and English. Although it is unclear in how far there was agreement over the form of the *Oezar*[15], of which only ten copies were printed, it is stressed that a text had to be produced that was useful to a younger generation for adaptation of Akha-*zangr* (ethical values, morals, laws and customary regulations) in a changed environment. For a couple of years, the few *pirmas* living in Thailand held regular meetings to discuss follow-up activities to ensure preservation and transmission of their knowledge. Gesau, who passed away in 2002 claimed, that this particular project not only generated self-confidence amongst the generally stigmatized Akha in Thailand, but earned them symbolic authority over the Baptist Akha community, while research in Burma, Laos and mainland China for this project reinforced an international Akha/Hani cultural network[16].

In the following years, Higashide Noriko, a Japanese anthropologist and Akha scholar became director of the MPCD/SEAMP-HRI. In her report on the organisations' activities to preserve the intangible heritage of Akha culture, she, too stresses the significance of creating healthy environments for mutual understanding. On the premise that Akha-*zangr* promotes equal and fair relationships, she contends that adherence to such principles is incompatible with the prejudices Akha encounter outside the realm of their communities. Unless economic conditions can make ends meet, she argues, cultural patterns become sustainable, but the vicious circle of political, social and economic 'poverty' has yet to be broken. Efforts to this end are: "a) based on a restoration of Akha morals through alphabetic notation of the Akha language and publication of oral traditions in said language, and b) preparation of databases and culture centres for the time when future members of the tribe gain opportunities to learn about their own culture" (Higashide, 2004). In the field of specific media production projects, the establishment of a genealogical database for Akha and Hani ranks highest on the list, while plans are to further publish (in Akha, Thai, Chinese and English

---

[14] Since the Akha do not their own script, two competing schools of Christian missionaries (Baptist and Catholic) are rivalling over which one should be, finally, adopted.

[15] Literally *Oerzar* translates as "old words of wisdom". The book was edited by Alting van Geusau with external advisors/translators: Laura Varnham, Ilmari Hyvoenen and John Cadel.

[16] On the other hand, the participation of Akha scholars at an international conference in Amsterdam, where the Akha from Thailand critically compared their situation was that of Akha/Hani communities in mainland China, was followed up with threats from provincial authorities in Chiang Mai.

language) other *pirma/nyirpaq*[17] texts to hold training activities to use digital recording and film production equipment. During fieldwork research I visited two of the MPCD centres in Chiang Mai and Chiang Rai respectively to interview the current MPCD coordinator, composer, researcher and digital filmmaker Aju Dzoeqbaw, whose film *Mirsaw Lwa-eu* (2006) is discussed below.

5.3.1 *Saen Charoen Akha Mirsaw Lwa-eu* (2006, 52'27 min.)
By: Aju Dzoeqbaw[18]

The name of the film is identical with the name of a spiritual ceremony, literally: 'The Earth Spirit Place' Ceremony. The *Mirsaw Lwa-eu* is an important village ceremony held annually in the sixth lunar month and requires one male representative of each family in the village to participate. Although nowadays, I am told by the Akha filmmaker, women also participate, but that wasn't allowed in the past.

The *pirmah* (reciter/teacher) and the *dzoeqma* (male village leader) meet at the latter's house and that's where the ceremony – and the film – begin:

(Song): **Aq kaq zaq ma - We are the Akha**

Yaw kawr lar-awq, yaw kawr lar-awq aq kaq zaq ma
Come quickly, come quickly, we are the Akha people

Yaw kawr lar-awq, yaw kawr lar-awq aq dui ha aq kaq zaq ma
Come quickly, come quickly, we are the Akha people

Sang bovq dzaw aq kaq zaq sangq bovq dzaw-awq
Akha people, please learn to write and read

Sangq bovq dzaw, sangq bovq dzawq aq kaq zaq muiq lar paq-ehr
Study, study; for a better life of the Akha

---

[17] As a medium, *a nyirpaq* has special skills, might go into trance and can foretell the future. He is also carrier of a wide range of knowledge related to Akha ritual practices. Not every village has a *nyirpaq*.

[18] When he obtained Akha citizenship his family name Dzoebaw was translated into Jupao. Akha names are not recognized in Thailand and therefore people often have two names, the same name sometimes translates differently. In tat way, his sister was given the surname Choopoh. In this paper I am conform with other publications in which he is referred to as Aju Dzoeqbaw.

Zmq taq mar, aq kaq zaq zangr xovq zmq ma
We will keep our culture, Akha people, we will keep our culture

Zmq taq mar zmq taq ma, aq kaq zaq zangr xovq maq ngehr
Keep our culture; keep our culture so we will never forget the Akha way of life

Maq noeq ngehr, aq dui ha aq kaq maq ngehr
We will never forget, we will never forget that we are the Akha

Maq noeq ngehr, mq dzer taw ir keuv xawvq-iq Aq kaq maq ngehr
We will never forget, even if we go to the end of the world, we will never forget the Akha

(Written by Aju Dzoeqbaw in the Akha village in 1985)

While the song plays, the camera pans from the sun, which is just rising, over the roofs of straw thatched houses to the place where everybody has gathered, i.e. in front of the *dzoeqma*'s house. Subtitles in Thai tell us the name of the village and number of households. Briefly, Aju Dzoeqbaw speaks from the off to explain the films' title, while we see a man sharpening and cleaning his machete and many more waiting for Saen Charoen village's *dzoeqma* to finish the preparations and finally depart for the forest, where the ritual ceremony is going to be held. The music stops when we see the *dzoeqma*, a young man with glasses and a woollen hat and the *pirma* (reciter), a man in his late 60's easily distinguishable with his red turban (made from a piece of cloth). Given their age difference, their social ranking is surprising, and, in fact, by mere power of the word, the *pirma* appears to have the say. Here, and throughout almost the entire film, the *dzoeqma* speechlessly prepares and performs the *Mirsaw Lwa-eu* ceremony.

This informal audio-visual introduction is followed by a longer second one as we follow the male representatives from each household and Saen Charoen's spiritual and administrative leadership, who walk at the very end of the long row on a narrow mountain path, out of the village gate passed the camera. The song, by a local Akha musician, tells of the Akha homeland, their relationship with the Dai people in mainland China and their ensuing migration to the South[19]. The march is briefly interrupted at a cross-roads, where other villagers join, a pig carried on shoulder poles, and we see a big

[19] Where the lyrics refer to problems encountered since the loss of land rights 'in the South', the editor has intervened and fast-forwarded this scene of their historic long migration.

wok (frying pan) and other utensils and offerings being carried for another four minutes. This time, the accompanying song *Ngar gaq-eu hgaq-o* 'Whom I Miss'[20] is sung by a female, who tells of a separation from her brother at the age of ten. In this way, the current situation of the community is contextualised through the rich oral history of the Akha during the first nine minutes of the film. Once the group has arrived in the clearing of the forest, where the land owner's spirit house is, ordinary community members make a fire and cut bamboo branches, tree leaves and other natural material to build a new fence around the spirit house, and to produce other ritual objects needed.

The *dzoeqma*'s responsibility lies entirely with the spirit house, which he cleans up for the ceremony. The song *Dzangr tav zaq saq*[21], while relating to the physical labour filmed, seems to be mocking the ceremony in preparation:

> "*Mq yehr mq shar maq caw ba le, Aq poeq miq yehr aq gar ir byov-eq?*"
> "Rain owner, sky owner they have not come to help us, where are the ancestors gone?"
> "*Dzangr tav uq yehr maq yehr, cehq ma bavq-awr aq gar ir le*"
> "It's not raining on the mountain, carry the hoe, where are you going?"

But however modernity alluring the lyrics of this song might be, it's composer and editor of the film interrupt its flow for the explanation of the significance of a particular plant dug out in the forest by a villager.

As long as the ceremony hasn't begun, this pattern of parallel visual and audio story telling is continued. Notably, the triple layered soundtrack system does not try to bring audio and video in tune. Instead, their function to better the audiences' understanding of the film and its subjects is underscored. The narrator's role in this film is reduced to a minimum: six short commentaries aid our understanding of the documented visual text – as is usual in this genre of film. Every instance of community members other than the ceremonial leaders speaking is picked up, however, to allow for additional information or jokes[22], while the music accentuates emotional colouring and

---

[20] This song is not written by Aju Dzoeqbaw, but by a Burmese Akha from Kengtung Province, another is written by a Chinese Akha, Yunnan Province.

[21] 'Poor Mountain People' written by Aju Dzoeqbaw in London 1989

[22] The editor decided not to cut those scenes or shorten the ones in which he was addressed or people joked about him.

creates dramatic tensions. Not that this documentary lacks a storyline. It is precisely because of the lack of narration channelling our attention combined with the filmmakers' fair depiction of each community members' contribution to the ceremony, which creates suspending tension throughout the film: An elder might be shown long enough in a clip that we can expect him to reappear in a more significant role, as to the sole foreigner who watches the activities, zoomed into focus, what role does he play? Where the filming or better 'capturing' of every scene might have seemed necessary upon outset, the filmmaker could have tried to focus the visual information and cut these shots during the editing process. Instead his camera deviations during the ceremony depicting community members laughing and playing in the background with only a few devout elders praying at the spirit house are part of the message of this documentary. None of these shots overshadows the *dzoeqma*'s actions and the *pirma*'s reciting. They merely coexist. The *dzoeqma*, has a very particular role in this film as he is virtually mute, but proceeds with the efficient killing of the sacrificed animals, dripping their blood, placing their intestines, maize, rice and other offerings in the necessary quantity, in correct sequence, and in absolute serenity. More tension reverberates from the *pirma*, who's chanting is sometimes overshadowed by other members of the group of elders – possibly a *nyirpaq* or *chivqma*[23]

That knowledge is not all embodied by one person is accentuated when the chicken's liver and later its bones serve as oracle to foretell what the future will bring. After everybody finally sits down to eat and drink, and every 'forest table' decked for 8-10 people is briefly shown doing just that, we watch how the bones change hands, and various interpretations are negotiated for five minutes. Such long shots leave time for the audience to learn about peoples' relationships without being told what they are, and linger and detect small details, which would otherwise go unnoticed. For example his 'sensitive camera' movements applied when he films the *dzoeqma* decorating the spirit house, frontally, but through the bamboo weaving. This filming style is significantly made use of when we are introduced to the 'earth spirit' or 'land owner' in the first quarter of the film: Aju Dzoeqbaw tilts his digital camera from the leaves on the forest floor up the wooden stairs slowly leading to the spirit house. This sense of respect for

---

[23] See Appendix D.2 Akha Spiritual and administrative leadership

local land spirits or 'owners of the productive forces of the earth' has also been described as follows: "They (the land deities) do symbolize the political forces of the majorities (the lowlanders), who at any time can claim the use of the fields and forest and so control production and reproduction... They are (the) only agents who, in ceremonies, are clearly treated as 'Lords' for whom you bow your head, that is, as humans of a higher class. This contrasts with the egalitarian way in which all other nèq [spirits] are treated." (Alting von Gesau, 1983: 251[24]) Lest the lyrics of the songs seem to indicate a more complex socio-political and economic picture, let me confirm that when the *dzoeqma*, *pirma* and *chivqma* have taken off their hats and kneel down in front of the spirit house, the band has stopped playing and a bamboo flute plays instead.

Aju Dzoebaw is autodidact and media expert, in the sector of traditional Akha, i.e. oral history in the classic medium of radio broadcasting, and as lyrics composer for Akha songs. He has produced one other film about the Akha respectively, but would like to make a film about every ceremony of the Akha *Zangr* year, i.e. between nine and twelve, including those concerning hunting, since the knowledge of conducting these rituals even the more complex funerals for which three bulls must be sacrificed is vanisshing with the people who memorized the sacrificial texts, he says.

Although no funding for the *Mirsaw Lwa-eu* film was specifically provided, Aju's cooperation in a Rockefeller Foundation funded project in association with the Mirror Art Group to produce ethnic minority music VCDs, as well as through his work with SEAMP-Netherlands, and the Japanese funded *Oerzar* project (DIARA[25]) seems to have been helpful[26]. Aju sees digital media (DVDs and VCDs) as an alternative to television and Chinese movies. He produced *Mirsaw Lwa-eu* for the Akha people to appreciate their own cultural traditions. Limited voice-over and Thai sub-titles were added to explain why this ceremony is held for those Akha, who might not understand Akha language, but can read Thai (the young generation).

---

[24] Geusau conducted research in Baan Saen Chareon since the late 1970's and married the filmmaker's elder sister.

[25] Dissemination of the Archaic Resources of the Akha Project, funded by the Japan Foundation.

[26] Higashide Noriko, former director of MPCD/SEAMP-HRI, personal communication during her visit in spring 2007 to Chiang Mai.

As is evident from the film, the filmmaker has an intimate relationship with the people of Baan Saen Charoen, in Mae Suai District, 50 km south of the provincial capital Chiang Rai, but was not born there. Aju's grandparents were born in Burma, and his father in the Doi Thung area, Baan Pa Kluai, on the Burmese border, yet moved again to another village, Yehsa Akha. Besides raids by the Kuomindang, his sister recalls harassments by other ethnic groups there (he claims lowlanders) and the imprisonment of her father. Together with two other families they decided to go where the lowlanders didn't want to go, and having heard that there was plenty of space in Mae Suai, moved to the Doi Laan area south of Chiang Rai in 1966. His father, Abaw Buseu Dzoebaw, knew the village head of Baan Saen Charoen, whose secretary he would become. The two together with Geusau and his wife Deuleu Choopoh were the founding members of the Akha NGO Southeast Asian Mountain Peoples for Culture, Development and Education (SEAMP/MPCDE).

Baan Saen Charoen is nominally a 'U-Lo Akha' village with 170 families, but Aju rejects this classification, which he claims was an invention by Paul Lewis, a Baptist missionary, who worked first in Burma and then Thailand. He created 'Akha' subgroups according to the women's different headdresses, namely the 'U-Lo' and 'Luo Mi' as well as the 'Pami'. Aju concedes that Akha genealogy suggests the 'Pami' migrated from Xishuangbanna (Yunnan Province, China) to Thailand, while the 'Luameh' originated from a mountainous area with the same name (meaning: 'bear'). These sub-categories, printed on Thai tourist maps, do not appear in the ritual texts in the *Oerzar*[27]. (As *Oerzar* texts translator from ancient 'Akha' to modern-day 'Akha', former director of the Akha Association for Education and Culture in Thailand (AFECT)[28], and coordinator of the student examinations in Akha *Zangr*[29], he was part of the extensive SEAMP/MPCDE network[30].)

---

[27] *Oerzar* is usually translates as "old words of wisdom". As the Akha did not have a script, their history and ritual texts have been passed on orally. Dr. Leo Alting van Geusau's research of Akha oral history resulted in over 700 taped records and written data, which were compiled and compared with those from Hani/Akha from Yunnan Province, a few Burmese and Laotian Akha *pirma*'s texts. In 2002, a book with the title *Oerzar* was edited and - using the Catholic transcript (not the one by Paul Lewis) - written in modern Akha and English in cooperation with Ms. Laura Varnham, Mr. Ilmari Hyvoenen, Mr. John Cadel. The book is unpublished, but a few copies circulate in Thailand and internationally.

[28] The students of the AFECT- Akha Association in Chiang Rai have been transcribing and registering important Aha texts and customs (von Geusau 1992: 171)

[29] The Akha *Zangr/Hgangr* is made of folktales, riddles, children's stories and songs as well as fixed texts for recitation, and memorized throughout generations by a patrilineal line of *pirma*. It contains

The missionary Paul Lewis also introduced the first transcription of the Akha language, a movement which had its parallels in Thailand in the 1960's. Few Akha's use the system, according to Aju, however, but organizations such as the Akha Kinship and Holistic Alternatives Foundation, funded by Diokonia (Thailand), recognize Lewis' script in their lunar calendars. As mentioned in the previous chapter, part of the initial motivation to create scholarship associations and organisations dedicated to fostering a new generation of various ethnic peoples' leaders, was countering other missions in this respect. According to Deuleu *et al.* (1994: 13) "a few hundred students from different tribal groups in Thailand since 1986" have received scholarships from SEAMP/MPCDE organizations. AFECT administered projects have always combined Akha knowledge and the Thai curriculum; they could not foresee that the lack of official opportunities would lead to an unofficial boom in the student hostel industry in Chiang Rai and Chiang Mai. Akha children returning home during holidays from missionary owned enterprises convert other children through their habits, says Aju. In Saen Charoen, 70 families have converted to become Baptists. The neighbouring village Baan Saen Charoen Mai (*mai* means 'new') everybody is Christian. Many of the conflicts derive from this split in belief systems (says Deuleu, Aju's sister).

Aju, a Catholic himself does not conduct Akha *Zangr* ceremonies at home, only smaller less formal rituals in the city of Chiang Rai, where he lives today. He considers himself part of the Akha community in Baan Saen Charoen, where his father lives, and where he turns for questions. Whenever exceptional rituals are requested or required, a village council of elders, *xavma*, has to be consulted. As in the case of Aju, when he was young. His continuous illness let his father consult the *pirmah* and the *dzoeqma* for help. It was suggested that Aju's given name Xang Jie would be disconnected from his father's (Lmq Xang) by conducting a 'new born baby' ceremony, which includes a renaming. Thus Aju's name was changed to Pi Che, and his son's name would have to start with 'Che'. Anthropologist Kammerer is optimistic about the continuity of old wisdom and related practices, she writes: "For Akha, their *Zangr* is not [...] simply rules governing action; it is also action governed by those rules. Thus, the male leader

---

'Akha' traditional law and knowledge of an endogenous marriage. Men can marry in, but have to be 'adopted' into the 'Akha' *Zangr* system, i.e. the genealogy. (From the *Oezar*)

[30] International Hani/Akha Culture Studies Conference take place regularly since the late 1990's in mainland China and the Netherlands.

of every village (*dzoeqma*) is described in ritual texts and in normal conversations as the one who 'does *Zangr*.' [...] This leader, who must perform Zangr but who need have no textual expertise, is ranked above the reciter, the male ritual specialist responsible for chanting the appropriate verses from the vast oral tradition at various ceremonies." (Kammerer, 1990: 280)

Commenting on academic publications concerning the impact of development, public policy, tourism, etc., on the so-called tribal people in Thailand, Deuleu *et al.* have noted the tendency to regard tribal people as 'victims' or passive recipients of change. To better understand adaptation and reaction to change "it should be recognized that people continuously develop their culture in order to incorporate change" (Deuleu *et al.*, 1994: 185 citing Toyota 1993: 3). Suggesting an "inside-out" perspective, i.e. an emic approach, the authors furthermore critically reflect on the popular trend to grant ethnic minority people a 'voice'. They call for a moving beyond Western ideals of cultural and environmental preservation.

> "In the quest to preserve the authenticity of cultures and the environment, traditions have been turned into a static concept that is either lost or retained. However, culture and traditions can only be recognized through contemporary validation *by* the people." (ibid.)

Table 9: Digital Film* Production Overview

Commercial Producers	2003	2004	2005	2006	Total
Baa-Ram Ewe / Sahamongkolfilm			1		
Five Star Co. Ltd. / Film Factory		1			
Kantana				1	
P.O.V. Production /R.S. Film		1			
Sahamonkolfilm		1			
Total films released (approx.)	45	41	36	45	**5**
Government Organisations					
SAC	-	6	5	4	15
CESD	-	-	-	4	4
Tribal Museum	x	2	1	4	7
					26
Independent Production North					
Southeast Asian Mountain People for Culture, Development and Education					2
The Mirror Art Group / Mirror Foundation					5
The Peace Way Foundation / BI					5
					12
Special Government Projects					
Office of Contemporary Arts and Culture in cooperation with the Thai Film Foundation*	-	-	13	-	13
The National Reconciliation Commission with Thai Short Film*	-	-	-	12	12
Chuan Dek Doo Nang (childrens' films) *	-	-	10	-	10
					35
Independent Production Houses, filmmakers, TFF, TSF and Thai Indie					
Thai Film Foundation**, Thai Indie a.o.	5	8	13	28	**54**
Digital film productions			**TOTAL**		**127**
Commercial film productions (incl. censored ones)			**TOTAL**		**166**

*These films were all included regardless of their length reaching 30 minutes or not.

** Of the 332 film and video submissions to the TFF's Short Film and Video Festival in 2006 only those reaching approx. 30 minutes were included. TFF and BIFF often leave it unclear, which format films are in. The BIFF prefers using 'Asian shorts' as a genre and format. Such practice seems to suggest that 1) film submissions are all in the same format (?!) and/or 2) digital films are considered equal to celluloid productions and a distinction unnecessary. On these premises, but not without careful study of the conditions, I assumed in favour of an independent film as being digital, if in doubt. But I am responsible for the errors this conceptual framework might have caused.