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**Trade Contacts
in the Cross-Border Areas
between Thailand and Burma
1900 - 2002**

Research Center for Regional Resources -
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PREFACE

This book is based on empirical research on 'Trade Contacts in the Cross Border Areas between Burma and Thailand 1900-2002' carried out in July-August, 2004, by a team from the Research Center for Regional Resources, the Indonesian Institute of Science (PSDR-LIPI), Jakarta, Indonesia. In this research, Trade Contacts in the Cross Border Areas are analyzed from a variety of angles that incorporate a wide range of issues from the historical, anthropological, and economic aspects. It demonstrates that for a long time the local people of both sides have recognized the significant role of trade development in the border areas, since they depend not only socially and culturally but also economically on one another. Even though from the political point of view, they are not always in harmony, since in the past the Burmese have been considered a threat to the Thai people. The current development shows that the trade contacts in the cross border areas between Thailand and Burma have strongly contributed particularly to the Thai economy. In addition to this, it has played a significant role in trade development particularly in northern Thailand. Both Thailand and Burma have been successful in changing the image of the border from the backyard to the frontyard at the entry gate of a state.

However, recently there has been some misunderstanding especially on the Burmese side which is reluctant to allow the eastern part of Thailand to be developed as a tourist area. One thing from which we can learn much is the security aspect in the border areas between Thailand and Burma where there is often instability and criminal activity. To avoid this problem the Thai government continues to encourage the local ethnic groups such as the Akha, the Karens, the Hmong and the Lisu to use their rights to be Thai citizens. The Burmese, with the Thai government a little more successful in this policy through persuasion of the local ethnic minorities residing in the border areas and providing training for them. As part of all this, many of their cultural products are utilised for tourist development in Thailand. We need to learn better how to learn more from the Thai experience in arranging the border to be a place of economic development.

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CONTENTS

PREFACE.....	i
CONTENT	ii
SOME NOTES ON BORDER ISSUES BETWEEN THAILAND AND BURMA <i>I Ketut Ardhana</i>	1
MAN, ENVIRONMENT AND SOCIO ECONOMIC TRADITIONS IN THE BORDER AREAS BETWEEN THAILAND AND BURMA <i>I Ketut Ardhana</i>	17
ETHNIC GROUPS ON THE BORDER BETWEEN THAILAND AND BURMA: QUESTIONS OF IDENTITY <i>Yekti Maunati</i>	51
MIGRATION, TRAFFICKING AND THE SEX INDUSTRY IN THE CROSS BORDER AREAS BETWEEN THAILAND AND BURMA <i>Lamiyo</i>	77
CROSS BORDER NETWORKS AND TRADE ROUTES: THAILAND AND BURMA <i>Rucianawati</i>	99
LEGAL AND ILLEGAL TRADE ON THE BORDER BETWEEN THAILAND AND BURMA <i>I Ketut Ardhana</i>	117
Executive Summary	

ABSTRACT

TRADE CONTACTS IN THE CROSS-BORDER AREAS BETWEEN BURMA AND THAILAND 1900-2002

The border problem has become a significant issue in Southeast Asia in general and between Thailand and Burma in particular, since the end of the Second World War. This period marked a new era of concurrence amongst the neighbouring states in the border areas, due to the absence of the domination by super powers. Due to this there has arisen a good chance for each country in the region to pay more attention to its border areas to develop, not only in terms of economic growth, but also in terms of social and political stability relevant to the transboundary transportation networks or 'corridors of growth', 'border bonanza', Asia's 'growth circle' and so on. On one hand, development in the border regions strongly affects economic growth and on the other hand this fast development causes the creation of more critical and sensitive issues to do with smuggling, illegal trade, security and the trends we can see in the increasing amount of undocumented migration, human trafficking, and the growth of cross-border prostitution. This book highlights the historical background of the relations between the people of Thailand and Burma, their social and economic contacts, and the policies of both countries to improve the economic prosperity of the ethnic minorities in the border areas. By learning from the Thai and Burmese experience we hope that we can understand better and learn more about the border issues which have become significant in the development of Southeast Asian countries, not only in the present but also in the future.

SOME NOTES ON BORDER ISSUES BETWEEN THAILAND AND BURMA

By
I Ketut Ardhana

I. INTRODUCTION

The issues of border areas have become very important in Southeast Asia, especially since the end of the Cold War, partly due to geopolitical developments in relation to transboundary transportation networks, called corridors of growth. The development of the infrastructure and the growing number of trading activities in the border areas have resulted in the discourse on a 'border bonanza' in Southeast Asia, especially in the areas that are known to as the 'Golden Triangle' or Asia's 'growth circle'.

As the matter of borders is very important, this research will attempt to analyse the issues regarding cross border areas between Burma and Thailand. The increase of activity in these areas has resulted in economic growth, but has also complicated matters, including the question of security in Southeast Asia in general. The increasing number of undocumented migrations and human trafficking has become part of developments in other cross border areas as well.

Focusing on trading contacts in the border areas this research will look at factors from different angles, including from the historical and anthropological perspectives. Even though the time frame of this research is from 1900, by taking into account the historical tradition of trade activities in the border areas, this analysis of the trade issues will mostly stress the period from the 1960s or 1970s since this period is considered as particularly a time of growth. In the 1960s for instance, Thailand earned a reputation as one of the fastest growing and most successful developing countries in the world. (Thailand 2000,1993). Historically, the border areas were often the grey areas where people did not concern themselves about the borderlines because usually those living

close to them were of the same ethnic groups. Borders are the result of the development of a modern nation state. The rapid flow of globalisation, the development of trans-national economics, the process of economic growth in the newly industrial countries in Southeast Asia, and trans-national trading have become the important issues to be understood. This study, hopefully, will contribute to the understanding of these complex issues in the border areas between Burma and Thailand and also be useful for understanding similar issues in Indonesia.

Burma, once colonized by the British, today is called Myanmar and has 15 ethnic groups (Frasch, 1999: 205). While Thailand has never been colonized by European powers and pre World War II was called Siam. Although it is true that Thailand has never been colonized by western powers, it has often been threatened by its neighbours (Carl Grundy Warr and Elaine Wong, 2001:101). During the Second World War, after 1941, parts of Cambodia and Laos, which in the past were under the power of Siam, were attacked by their neighbours and two years later, Thailand reintegrated into itself the Kentung area which had been seized by Burma. As in Burma, the majority of people in Thailand (around 90 %) rely on agriculture (Terwiel, 1999: 121 and 329). It is also widely known that in each country there is a dominant ethnic group: in Thailand; the Thai, while in Myanmar it is the Burmese.

Relations between the ethnic majority and the minority vary from country to country. For instance, Thailand does not always share the problems of Burma. In Burma life has often been disturbed by ethnic conflicts, especially in the border areas and it has always had the problem of disintegration. Unlike Burma, Thailand is relatively calm and has experienced few ethnic conflicts. Burma consists of around 70 % Burmese and 30 % of several minorities, especially the Shan, the Kachin, the Karen and the Chin. The Shan and the Karen constitute about 16% of the total population of Burma. These ethnic minorities reside mainly in the border areas between Burma and Thailand and in

Tenasserin. Ethnic Karens have long lived along the Irrawaddy River and in the valleys. In previous times there was no Karen political organisation and these people were marginalised and dispersed. The responsibilities of paying tax and being subordinated have resulted in the Karen's present suspicion of the Burmese government. Partly due to this circumstance, the conflicts in the border areas cannot be resolved (Christie, 1996: 53). Osborne (1991:58) notes that in each country the number of indigenous minorities is less than 20% of the total population.

Plate 1: The Border Areas between Thailand and Burma



From the historical dynamic, Burma and Thailand have had trading contacts for a long time. Indeed Osborne (1991: 56) reports that since the 18th century the population on the borders has had good relations with people in the mountain areas fostered by trade with present economic activities in the border areas continuing to develop. In Thailand, many small cities on the borders have developed rapidly.

Mae-Sai, Mae-Hong Son and Me Sariang in the Province of Chiang Rai, Mae Sot in the Province of Tak, and Kra Buri and Ranong in the southern part of Thailand having important roles in economic activities in the border areas (Carl Grundy-Warr, Rita King and Garuy Risser, 1996: 88).

II. THE BORDER DISCOURSE

In terms of border issues, Southeast Asia has a relatively open environment for trade. This has been a hallmark of the region for many centuries (Tagliacozzo, 2001: 254). Recently, particularly post the Cold War, the issue of borders has become increasingly important. We can see this from political developments at the present time in relation to the *transboundary transportation networks*, often called '*corridors of growth*'. The border crossing business activities and the often improved infrastructure, have encouraged the emergence of a border discourse, namely of the '*border bonanza*' in the Southeast Asian regions, particularly the sometimes insecure regions, called the '*Golden Triangle*' or Asia's '*growth circle*'.

Regarding the urgency to understand border issues, this paper analyses certain matters relating to the *cross border areas* between Thailand and Burma. On the one hand it seems that cross borders cause some problems in security, but on the other, human relations in the border areas have encouraged economic activities. Strong relations have at times been somewhat distorted particularly in the context of the movement of illegal migrants (*undocumented migration*), human trafficking and prostitution (*cross-border prostitution*).

In this work we wish to especially discuss the people who are divided by the different states of Thailand and Burma. We focus the analysis on the trade contacts particularly by looking at the historical background, ethnic relations and social and cultural conflicts

relating to *smuggling* of people and goods, especially illegal weapons which has influenced affairs in both countries. This situation has been determined by transnational economic events and economic growth caused by the development of newly evolving countries in Asia. This relates also to the issues of poverty, instability and possible criminality. We will also attempt to contribute to the better understanding of human movements in the border areas in Southeast Asia, particularly of the better solution taken by the government in Indonesia.

The field research was done in the border areas of both Thailand and Burma. Although, as Osborne writes (1991:56) trade contacts have been in place for many years, it is important to note that around 30 million women and children came across to the Asian and Pacific regions more than 30 years ago, a supposed burden due to the historic slave trade. Around 1,2 million children, often teenage girls, work in the *sweat shops* or as prostitutes, making up even more than 30 million in the past three decades. From these figures it is sometimes said that Southeast Asia has the worst record on *human trafficking* in the world (Hiyama, 2003: 3). Indeed efforts to stop *human trafficking have been made even by the corrupt bureaucracy*. With the police involved in the criminal actions by offering protection to the criminals and the brokers concerned, nevertheless, government officials do try to stop the illegal trade in humans (Hiyama, 2003: 3).

The Thai-Burma trade connection has been increasing since 1988, when the Thai government participated in encouraging it with the Myanmar government's SLORC (*the State Law and Order Restoration Council*) which later fell as a result of its suppression of students in pro democracy demonstrations (Lintner, 1990). Recently the Thai government has supported stronger domestic economic activity as a basis for the welfare of the Thai people (*Regional Outlook Southeast Asia 2002-2003*: 78). There are two networks in the border areas between Thailand and Burma which have developed

strongly: the Keng-Tung-Taschileik-Mai Sai-Chiang Mai- and the network line connecting Myawaddy and several cities on the Thai border like Mae Sot, around 6 km across the Moei River. In the southern direction there are several villages like Kawthaung and Ranong. Towns on the Thai borders such as Mae-Sai, Mae-Hong Son and Me Sariang in the Chiang Rai Province, Mae Sot in the Tak Province and Kra Buri and Ranong in southern Thailand, play a major role in the issues (Carl Grundy-Warr, Rita King and Garuy Risser, 1996: 88). The development of the border areas can be seen in the policy of the government to create opportunities to increase the income of the people in those areas by particularly promoting legal goods and by encouraging them to become centres of 'duty free' shopping. This fast development cannot be separated from the influences of globalization in Southeast Asia (Malhotra, 2002: 32 cf. Saskia, 1998: 197) where attention must also be given to human rights issues. On the border between Thailand and Burma there is a border pass and an immigration office in Chiang Rai (Thailand).

The region has increasingly developed to sell various products, at half price and is considered central for smuggling, illegal drugs and as a place providing 70% of the world heroin production (Carl Grundy-Warr and Elaine Wong, 2001: 108), along with the sex industry which has a negative impact on the spread of HIV/AIDS (Carl Grundy-Warr, Rita King and Gary Risser, 1996: 86, 90-91, cf. *Regional Outlook: Southeast Asia 2002-2003*: 27). Here, however, HIV and risky behaviour among homosexually active men are much less than among the homosexually active population in general in the extensive male sex industry in the major cities in Thailand (Graeme Storer, 1999: 1). There are many businesses which depend on political stability in Burma. In 2002, for instance, the shops located in Mae-Sai were closed due to political unrest in Burma. This of course, affected Chiang Rai in a border area between the two countries.

The geopolitical changes in the region have given rise to stronger relationship at state level. Now, the Burmese military has a presence in the region which was previously under the military of the Yangon ethnic minority, which effectively controlled the border since Burmese independence (Lintner, 1995). The ethnic minority in Burma reside premanently in the *peripheries* such as Arakan, Shan mountain areas, and in the border area between Thailand and Burma such as in the Mon and the Karen ethnic group areas in the Chin valley, particularly in the Union system under the autonomous system. However, as noted by Frasch many border issues are related to the political conflict within their neighbouring states (Frasch, 1999: 206).

The border between the two countries in the Chiang Rai Province has facilitated the movement of humans and trade in the divided region. This caused a human movement in Thailand itself and it can be noted that between 200.000 and 500.000 Burmese live there illegally. Among them are students and political activists who fled to Thailand to avoid being arrested by the SLORC as a result of instability in Burma (Carl Grundy-Warr, Rita King and Gary Risser, 1996: 88).

The Thai government under Defence Minister, Chavalit and other military leaders has tried to minimise bilateral issues between Thailand and Burma, instead putting stress on trade activities. Conflict, however, cannot be avoided among the people in the border areas as we can see from the military conflicts on the border since 2001. The Thai government under Chavalit and Thaksin tried to improve the relationship with Burma (*Regional Outlook, Southeast Asia 2002-2003*: 27). Therefore, from the existing contacts we can see the importance of movements of people which is not only related to the humans themselves but also their ideas on culture which is of course different from one state to another (Carl Grundy-Warr, 1996). Even the similarity of religion caused some disagreements among them (Diamond, 1998) which resulted in the killing of several people. Research on border areas has been made by a number of scholars. Riwanto (2002)

focuses on some social and economic aspects between East Kalimantan (Indonesia) and Sabah-Sarawak (Malaysia) and shows that there are some answers at local level to the challenges as well as some opportunities related to a number of crucial issues in the reformation period between the two countries. It indicates that the region should be considered a barter place and an economic transnational movement area between Indonesia and Malaysia. In relation to the conflict issues, Fisher, et al. (2000: 41) claim that culture influences the emergence of conflict and all people want to solve the conflict within the cultural contexts in the region, particularly the people from different cultures (cf: Christie, 1996: 53). However, research on the border issues in Southeast Asia has not generally been done by using interdisciplinary approaches. This interdisciplinary approach is useful not only for the understanding of certain concepts but also of the policies in the border areas.

III. CENTRAL ISSUES

Based on the above arguments there are several important issues relating to the border areas: First, the long trade contact from the historical perspective; Second, a discussion of crucial conflicts in terms of economic, social, political and cultural conflicts; Third, trying to find some alternative solutions to how conflict can be resolved as has already happened in the Indonesian regions (Widjajanto, 2002: 7); not only at the national level, but also at the regional level in Southeast Asia. Therefore, there are some pertinent questions in relation to the border areas between Thailand and Burma as follows: what are the crucial issues in the border areas between Thailand and Burma?; Which factors cause conflicts?; How and to what extent do the states have a role in solving problems in the border areas?; What is the role of a state, in this case the role of the two governments in solving such an issue?

IV. THE AIMS OF THE STUDY

- To analyse the social and economic relations amongst the societies in border areas;
- To investigate ethnic relations among minorities in the border areas and to understand minorities' role in trading activities;
- To understand causes and impacts of the migration in the border areas, in this case the development of human trafficking and the sex industry;
- To discuss cross border networking and trade activities;
- To analyse legal and illegal trade in the border areas.

V. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Fieldwork will be carried out in Bangkok and the Provinces of Chiang Mai and Chiang Rai over a few days. We will seek data from different sources, including literature on Thailand and Burma by both foreign and local writers and our own interviews with numerous people in Thailand. In depth interviews will be conducted with many groups. Bernard's discussion of the use of unstructured and semistructured interviewing is expected to be very useful (1995), as are Geertz's research methods, such as his conceptualisation of fieldwork as 'thick description' (Geertz, 1973)..

In order to collect data on trading contacts, we will start with government officials who deal with border issues and trade. Government policy on the border areas is partly based on a government's perspectives on the issue of transnational economics. In-depth interviews will be conducted with scholars at the Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok and at the Mae Fah Luang University in Chiang Rai who are concerned with border issues. We will also interview several people from non-government organisations (NGOs) concerned with border issues. Interviews with several people who trade in the border areas will be further important sources of information.

Recently, cross border issues received more attention, after one state claimed a region for reasons of economic and political interest or sovereignty, in this case, the two islands Sipadan and Ligitan which were claimed by Malaysia and Indonesia. Based on International Justice (*Mahkamah Internasional*) both islands were won by Malaysia in 2002, through reasoning that the physical development of the islands was carried out by the Malaysian government. It seems that the border issue has positive and negative aspects, greatly based on how much attention a state gives to its regions.

Indeed there are many questions raised by the decision on the two islands, with, according to *Departmen Dalam Negeri, Republik Indonesia* (Republic of Indonesia, Department for Internal Affairs) more than 80 islands potentially facing the same fate, if the case judgement is similar to that of Sipadan and Ligitan. That is probably the reason why Malaysia decided to solve the border issue by approaching it not from the ASEAN level. If the issues were solved in ASEAN it would possibly be another story. From this case we can start to realize more comprehensively how important the border areas are, in defending the sovereignty of a state. The above issues are of concern by those in foreign affairs who have authority to regulate bilateral and international relationships. However a more comprehensive understanding needs to be achieved by looking at economic, cultural, social and politico-cultural aspects in the regions.

The importance of border issues for Indonesia can be seen through the decision on Sipadan and Ligitan as well as some issues relating to Batek Island in the Kupang district in West Timor. The East Timorese government believes that the island is a part of Oecusi, which is an East Timorese enclave, located in West Timor and hopes that the issue can be solved through the Indonesian representative office in Dili. However, the military district head does not agree with the claims and hopes that the East Timorese government will not create a new problem with the Indonesian government. It is argued that the East Timorese government cannot claim the island, merely because of its

location close to its region. This can be interpreted as weak and illogical reasoning: what if it were a West Timor region claiming from the East Timorese government as could indeed happen with other Indonesian islands.

To add to the difficulty. During a time the East Timorese government did not control the region, some officials had already come to the island. In addition to this, before the secession of East Timor from the Indonesian Republic, fishermen had visited the area and the Indonesian flag has been there since December 2002. How and why should the border issues be tackled in this research? How can we anticipate the problems?

To understand the issues on the border we need to discuss several aspects relating to the crucial ones in Southeast Asia, particularly in Thailand and Burma. We therefore need to look at several cases in relation to smuggling and human trafficking such as has happened in India, China, Bangladesh and Australia (Tagliacozzo, 2002: 194). In addition to this, *transnational migration* cannot be separated from the issues, as it can be understood that increasing migration causes a weakness in state control.

Remennick (2002) has, for instance, studied the impact of Russian migration in the Israeli region. She notes that new immigrants have their regions (*enclaves*). However, this has created new conflict against the former newcomers. But, economic integration has also taken place although the people concerned had different cultural backgrounds.

As well, there are questions on: Whether the border regions which are principally the first places for immigrants also have these kinds of enclaves which are based on a dominant ethnicity or state and how can we analyse the social and economic ties among those people?

The existence of new enclaves on the border between Thailand and Burma is floated in Cady's work (1966). He describes clearly the background of the emergence of enclaves in Southeast Asia in relation to the emergence of trade activities. In his opinion the general trend of population migration in Southeast Asia emerged in prehistoric times, people moving from north to south and finally creating new enclaves in the regions in the Malay Peninsula and spreading to the Indonesian Archipelago. The migration processes to the western part involved the Mons, the Pyu and the Burmese ethnic groups. The enclaves in the Irrawaddy seem to be dominated by the Karen (cf. Lucian, 1922). In the mountain regions such as Sittang and Irrawaddy reside the Shan who were powerful in the political and economic aspects. Meanwhile, in the mountains in Khorat and also in several regions on the Chinese border such as Yunan there are groups of Thais (Cady, 1966: 28-30).

The whole migration process as experienced by the Shan and the Thai has indeed been long lasting as they have played a major role in trade activity. Through this process emerged centres such as Chiang Rai, Sukhotai and Chiang Mai (Hanks, 1985 63-72, cf. Cady, 1966: 30, and Geddes, 1976: 5). According to historical evidence, trade between the immigrants besides that conducted by the Mon and Thai ethnic groups is also carried out by the Khmer. These ethnic groups learnt much from the Mons, for instance, in the agricultural and government, architectural and literary aspects. They ruled the region producing rice which has long played a major role in trade activities on the Chinese border (Marlowe, 1967: 53-65).

Despite the general harmony amongst the people in the border areas there have emerged some conflicts among the different ethnic groups namely, the majority against the minority (Bradly, 1983: 46-79). The history of conflict we can see in Havanandana's work (1967). He argues that the conflict situation between Thailand and Burma, based on the enclaves in the border areas, is that in the Burmese border side they were Kachin and

Chin ethnic groups who had difficulty adapting to the closed state, namely Burma. He gives one example of how on the one hand the Burmese government has difficulties in absorbing the ethnic minority which is from the northern part into the strong administration and on the other hand, how the people in the enclaves on the Thai border have no great difficulty adapting to administrative matters in Thailand. From this analysis we can see what the position of the ethnic group facing the centre of power is (Wilson and Hanks, 1985).

This gives a good opportunity to the Thai government to expand its authority and conception to the northern part, and from this process it can be said that the border between both countries is more determined by the Thai rather than the Burmese government. Meanwhile, Renard (1988) and Silva et al. (1988) write that in the past the border region was unstable, not only because of smuggling and illegal trade, but also the spread of communist ideas. They add that there were some cases of corruption and subversion between Thailand and China between 1956-1957 relating to the increased hostility of the communist activists in Thailand against the United States.

From this description we can see to what extent there is potential for instability in the border areas and to what extent the central government needs to pay more attention to these areas. If more attention is paid by the Thai government to this we suppose that we will not have serious problems regarding the small islands on the Indonesian borders in the future. Through this research we hope that we make a contribution to understanding the border issues in relation to the creation of a peaceful and stable region; despite the activities carried out on the borders by people of different ethnic groups, to solve the problems and increase economic growth in the region.

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MAN, ENVIRONMENT AND SOCIO ECONOMIC TRADITIONS IN THE BORDER AREAS BETWEEN THAILAND AND BURMA

By

I Ketut Ardhana

I. INTRODUCTION

When we arrived at Don Muang Airport in Bangkok, Thailand, it occurred to us to wonder just what a border in a region means? This also emerged when I was on the border between East Kalimantan, Indonesia and Sarawak, Malaysia I saw that the border area in East Kalimantan is very undeveloped, and it is quite correct to call the region a remote area. In East Kalimantan we cannot see evidence of prostitution or drugs as big issues. Here there are only a few factors relating to illegal migrants, illegal workers and illegal trade in relation to some smuggling of forest products (Ardhana, 2004).

It is true, that in East Kalimantan there is conflict among people on the border, but here conflict is basically based on economic reasons and not really cultural or political as we can see in some border areas like Pattani in southern Thailand (Rodney Tasker, 1982). Of East Kalimantan, for instance, it can be said that the region really depends on the Sarawak border in terms of its economy and it is quite true that economic problems can sometimes affect a political situation as has been so throughout history until now with many border issues relating to the past experiences between the two countries.

In addition to this, like in much of the developing world, in Thailand there are many social movements which have emerged since the 1970s. Those movements have been particularly based on poverty and peripheral or minority community issues (Phongpaichit, 2002: 13) as we can see in Chiang Mai in places such as Ban Rom Thai, Ban Hua, Mae Chan and in Chiang Rai in places like Chiang Saen and Taschileik which are passes between Myanmar and Thailand. However, the Thailand region is not like that of the border areas between Sarawak and East Kalimantan since the border areas

between Thailand and Myanmar are much better organized. This surprised me when I visited Mae Sae, a gateway between Thailand and Myanmar. It is also said to be true in the border areas between Thailand and Laos, which like Thailand and Malaysia, we hope to investigate in future research.

It seems to me that the border areas of Thailand and Myanmar is not a 'backyard', but rather a 'front yard' where both the governments have successfully paid attention to the region so that the concept of 'a backyard of a house' has changed into 'a front yard of a house'. From this perspective I think we need to learn more from the lessons of Thailand and Myanmar. From some interviews with people in the region, it seems that people in the Thai border area still perceive a threat if the political situation in the Myanmar border area is uneasy. If the political situation is uncertain, the Thai government closes the passes between the two countries. Not only political unrest, but also cross border flows of marginalized minorities, the so called 'hill tribes' could come to be perceived as a 'threat' to the state (Mika Toyota, 2004: 1).

The term hill tribe in Thailand, designates ethnic minorities, most of whom live in the remote highland areas of the north and southwestern parts of Thailand. According to the Technical Service Club Tribal Research Institute those people attracted the serious attention of the Thai government in 1959, when the National Committee for the hill tribes was set up (Technical Service Club Tribal Research Institute, *The Hill Tribes of Thailand*, 1998: 1).

As we can see from recent developments both countries maintain good neighbour policies although if we compare between the Thai and the Myanmar border areas it seems that the Thai border area is more developed. On the Myanmar side, for example, there seem to be more jobless men. In addition there are many more Burmese women selling their goods in Mae Sae than Thais doing so. It is calculated that more than 1000

people enter the Thai border area but not so many from Thailand go to Myanmar. Myanmar people depend on the Thai border since Thailand is more developed than Myanmar in terms of the tourism industry. Many handcrafts and agricultural products from Myanmar are sold in Mae Sae in Thailand.

It is not surprising that many people from Myanmar look for work in Thailand causing possible problems in terms of visas and other crucial matters like smuggling, illegal trade and so on. Therefore, the Thai government tries to maintain a safe, conducive to progress and stable situation in the border areas by developing the regions socially, culturally and economically. Why and how do both governments create this secure situation? To answer this question, I think we should go back to the history of the regions since this affects current developments.

II. GEOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND

The kingdom of Thailand is at the heart of mainland Southeast Asia stretching from the central region of the Malay Peninsula from latitude 5-27 to 20-27 and across longitudes 97-22 to 105-37. Thailand covers 513,115 sq. km. with 84% of the country lying within the 'bulge' mainland section and the remaining 16% part of the southern peninsula. The country's 'golden axe' shape provides excellent access to the sea with 23 of the 76 provinces having a coastline. The total shoreline faces both the Pacific and the Indian Oceans and extends over 2,705 kilometres, with 1,840 of these on the Gulf of Thailand and the remaining 865 kilometres along the Andaman Sea. Thai sovereignty extends over several hundred islands ('The Bare Facts: A Tasty Snack for Number-Crunchers' in *Guidelines Chiang Mai: Chiang Rai & the North*, vol. 11, no.7, 2004: 12).

There were several places observed and investigated in this research, particularly in what is called the northern region, which is also the border area between Myanmar and Thailand. Northern Thailand which includes Kamphaeng Phet, Chiang Rai, Chiang

Mai, Tak, Nakhon Sawan, Nan, Phayao, Phichit, Phitsanulok, Phetchabun, Prae, Mae Hong Son, Lampang, Lamphun, Sukhotai, Uttaradit, and Uthai Tani is located in the northern region. (*Pocket Thailand in Figures*, 2004: 331). It, above 18N, is divided up by five roughly parallel mountain ranges, forming four valleys, and from their mountain streams flow the principal northern tributaries of the kingdom's largest rivers such as the Ping, the Wang, the Yom and the Nan. These rivers drain southwards to converge as the River Chao Phraya.

Plate 1: Map showing borders between Thailand and Burma



Among the regions we have investigated are Chiang Mai and Chiang Rai Provinces located in the north of Thailand. Chiang Mai, for instance, is located between 16 North latitude and 99 East longitude and is 1,027 metres above sea level. 750 km. from Bangkok, it lies in a fertile basin at an elevation of 335 metres below Doi Suthep, which at 1,685 metres is the eighth highest mountain in the north. Chiang Mai has cool weather and the average temperature is approximately 25.4 C. with the highest temperature 31.8 C and the lowest temperature around 20.1 C. Further north, Chiang Rai lies at an elevation of 350 metres in the Mai Nam Kok basin, near the Khun Tan

mountain range. In Chiang Rai the relative humidity is around 72%. In addition to this, the weather is under the influence of two kinds of monsoons, namely, the southwestern and the northeastern monsoons.

It can be generally said that the northern region of Thailand is located in the mountainous area. Therefore, its geographical characteristic is the north mountainous highlands, where the terrain is characterized by parallel chains of mountains and valleys running from north to south. From the west to the east there are important mountain ranges such as the Thanin Thongchai Range, the Daen Lao Range, the Phi Pan Nam Range and the Luang Phrabang Range.

There are many mountains and valleys in Chiang Mai and Chiang Rai, including one that the people of Chiang Rai believe to be like a 'sleeping woman'. The Inthanon Mountain is the highest in the country. There are plains in the central area along the banks of the Ping River. The Kok and the Ing Rivers flow northwards into the Mae Nam Khong (Mekong River) while to the west, is the Maed Hong Son. The river systems are tributaries of the Salween, which for some of its length forms the Thai-Burmese border. Chiang Mai is the second largest city, after Bangkok, in Thailand and the main centre of the country's northern region. The combination between climate and location has facilitated human settlement from prehistoric to the present time.

III. THAILAND AT A GLANCE:

Baker notes that the original migration and settlement can be roughly dated to a period from the eighth to the thirteenth centuries and the early centre of each settlement was a fortified town, close to a river (2003: 195). From historical evidence we know that there were several small kingdoms across the regions known today as northeast Burma, central and northern Thailand, and Laos. As chiefdoms they had competed with one another in an effort to maintain power in the region. This was often considered to be the first

attempt at the formation of a state by Tai people. It is also believed by people in the region that the Tais were the principal ancestors not only of today's Thais but also of the people of Lao, the Shan of Burma, a range of upland communities in mainland Southeast Asia such as the Black, Red and White Tais of Laos and Northern Vietnam, and the Lu of Yunnan, in China. In addition to this it used to be thought that before the 13th century, the Tais had a major role in dominating a chiefdom called Nanchao in Yunnan which was dispersed southwards by a Mongol attack in 1253 causing many changes in terms of socio cultural, economic and political spheres. However, it seems that scholars no longer hold this theory due to new evidence found in historical sources in the region. Instead, the evidence suggests a long, slow Tai migration over many centuries, beginning in western China. Church (2003: 161) notes, that these people moved even further north, and spread southwards from the seventh century.

Ethnologists tell us that the Tais were good wet rice farmers. They clustered in *muang*-one or more villages under a chieftain, who organized their everyday lives. In a long period of history some *muang* developed relationships cemented by trading networks, intermarriage, security needs, and talented military leaders. These aspects we can see up to the present day in the northern region of Thailand such as in Chiang Mai, Chiang Rai and other places in the border areas.

Entering the 13th century a leap from the linked *muang* to kingdoms was propelled by Tai adaptations of beliefs, ideas and techniques from the states they encountered in their southward movement and also from surrounding regions. It seems that the Tai people adopted Theravada Buddhism. Those processes began from the Mon states in what is now central Thailand and from the Burmese kingdom of Pagan. From this we know that there were strong relations among the people in the region.

Regarding this process, Church argues that the Theravada Buddhism adapted to Tai folk traditions. He adds that this was also an institutionalized religion with a universalist world view and a transmitter of Mon, Burmese and Sinhalese civilizations (2003: 162).

Angkor, the great Cambodian kingdom in 11th -13th centuries, was, however, the principal blueprint for Tai state builders. This kingdom dominated an empire stretching from the Mekong Delta to the northern Malay Peninsula and also as far north as the Vientiane Plain. It is important to note Tai attacks upon Angkor in the 14th and 15th centuries. In addition to this, the most celebrated of the early Thai states was the kingdom of Sukhotai in the 13th century. At present modern Thais believe Sukhotai to be the birthplace of the Thai nation. Later, further south, was established the kingdom of Ayutthaya or Siam in 1351. Church (ibid.) notes that Siam's capital, Ayutthaya, founded by U Thong survived until 1757. U Thong is thought to have been a Chinese merchant who acquired wealth and prestige from his trading connections with the Chinese imperial court. Apparently he was related by marriage to a prominent Thai family and emphasized his devotion to the Thai form of Buddhism (Church 2003: 163). However, there were many serious problems that the Thais had to face. In the 18th century, for instance, Thai society had to rebuild itself after its destruction by Burmese armies of the four centuries' old Thai kingdom of Ayutthaya, which the Thai (and the Burmese) people still remember. (Church 2003: 161).

As we have said Thailand is unique in Southeast Asia, since it avoided the disruptions of western colonial rule. In other words, it can be said that Thailand was therefore, spared the upheavals of decolonization. From historical evidence we know that Thailand's modern history differs strikingly from the turbulent history of the rest of the Southeast Asian region (Church 2003: 160). As Wyatt (2001: 1) notes, Siam was much written about by the westerners who visited Ayutthaya and Lopburi in the 17th century. That period was remarkable for the intensity of relations between Thailand and the west when the

Portuguese came. In addition to this, that period saw extensive international commerce involving several ports and states in the Southeast Asian region. Anthony Reid calls this era an 'Age of Commerce in Southeast Asia' from the mid fifteenth century to the late 17th century (Reid 1988, 1993). The Siamese ports of Ayutthaya, Mergui (Marit) and Ligor (Nakhon Sithammarat) participated in the trading activity. Thailand had neither gold nor spices to lure the west, but the abundance of forest produce, tin, and rice made it an entrepot for trade carried on in Ayutthaya. Those trading relations involved other people such as Lao, Chinese and Indian. It is important also to say here that Thailand at that time tried to extract profit from international trade by instituting a system of royal monopolies and warehouses. This occurred together with an extensive network of crown shipping. In addition to this, almost all foreigners, who came had to contact the king's officials and the royal court. However, the westerners never colonized Thailand (Pambejra, 2001: 1). Because of that, it can be said that the Siamese kingdom has a special position in Southeast Asian history, since Thailand, unlike its neighbours, has never been under European colonial power. That happened due to the good leadership in accordance with strategic and diplomatic ways of Kings Mongkut (r. 1851 -1868) and Chulalongkorn (r. 1868-1910). As we know the monarchy is significant in Thailand with the monarch referred to familiarly as the 'father' or *phor* of the nation or the head of the national family; a social body consisting of imagined kindred, the essence of collective sentiment through shared symbols (Taylor, 2003: 134).

The year 1932 was important for Thailand as until then Thailand was an absolute monarchy. Serious conflict about the form of Thai government, still needing urgent attention, arose and caused pressing problems including widening gaps between urban and rural and rich and poor Thais (Church 2003, 161).

Siam has been called Thailand since 1939 and Phibun Songram was a key figure, when the Japanese troops attacked Pearl Harbour at the end of 1941. The Japanese War caused no serious conflict in Thailand, a historic fact which makes it different from other countries in Southeast Asia. After the war, and unlike in neighbouring Indochina, communism never attracted widespread support in Thailand. This political situation caused Thailand to become a frontline state in the Cold War, its fortunes tied closely to US interests (Church, 2003: 160-161).

Thailand became quite close to the United States of America and its special relation with the US influenced how the tourist industry has developed. After the end of the Second World War in Europe, some parts of Cambodia and Laos were taken over. Two years later (1943), Kengtung, a part of Burma, was absorbed into Thailand (Terviel, 1999: 320-321). Although the internal economic and political situation in Thailand was quite stable, it experienced a succession of unrepresentative governments, in which the military dominated, causing a collision between the military and pro democracy demonstrators on the streets of Bangkok in 1992. This kind of thing did not only occur in Thailand but also in Burma. Therefore, both states need to overcome some issues on the border areas between Thailand and Myanmar. Even though there is a fixed border in the region, there are still problems, since the movement of people in the border areas between Thailand and Myanmar is increasing. To better understand the problem, and how great is the movement of people in the border areas between the two countries, will be analyzed by carefully looking at the early developments between Thailand and Myanmar, particularly in the northern region of Thailand.

IV. EARLY DEVELOPMENT OF THE NORTHERN REGION OF THAILAND

The history of Thailand has been dominated by the histories of Bangkok and Ayutthaya although that of Chiang Mai is also important in demonstrating that the history of Siam and Thailand are not synonymous only with the histories of Ayutthaya and Bangkok.

Wyatt and Anoonrut Wichienkeo (1998: xxxi) argue that although it is true, that the old kingdoms of much of the country are remembered, that is not to say that Lan Na or Nakhon Thammarat, or Nakhon Phanom, sometimes called Lannathai (Nicholl, 1988:17) should be forgotten. They add that these once ruled the lives of countless people for many years in the northern region.

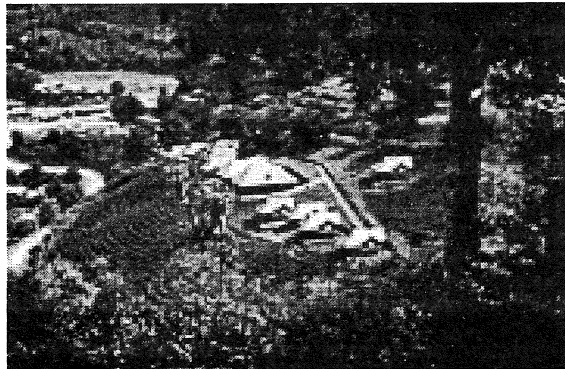
Historical records and chronicles of the north show that the Lua people lived along the river plains, from the Ping River to the Tak Province further south. They founded Wiang Nopburi, Wiang Chet Lin and Wiang Suan Dok towns, located in the area of present Chiang Mai city. Queen Chamma Thewi of the Hariphunchai kingdom defeated the Lua ruler, and made the Hariphunchai kingdom the first state to be established in the north. The founding group moved here from central Thailand and brought with it Buddhism and arts and culture from the Indian civilization. According to legend Wasuthep invited Queen Chamma Thevi to rule Lamphun during the 9th century with the Lua people staying in Chiang Mai until the reign of King Mang Rai. In addition to this, the ritual ceremonies of the Lua people influenced the way of living of the Lan Na people. The area called 'Lan Na' comprised an area of eight of Thailand's northern provinces: Chiang Mai, Lamphun, Lampang, Chiang Rai, Phayao, Phrae, Nan and Mae Hong Son. Wyatt (2003: 33-34) notes that the founder of the Lan Na kingdom of Chiang Mai, Mang Rai, was born on 2nd. October, 1238, at Chiang Saen. Later on with the annexation of the Hariphunchai kingdom and the founding of Chiang Mai city in 1296, Mang Rai's kingdom of Lan Na was established.

From historical evidence, it is said that from its founding in 1296, Chiang Mai has been the main capital city in the region and the centre of its civilization. The northern region of Thailand, particularly Chiang Mai, dates its history from that era.

Chiang Mai was established on April 12, 1296 and became the centre of trade, politics, religion and culture of the Lan Na kingdom (*Guidebook Chiang Mai National Museum*, 1999: 29). During the reign of the sixth king of the Chiang Mai dynasty, King Kawilorot, when Shan and Chinese traders lived in shop houses behind the market, the products sold were rice, tobacco, honey, fruit, flowers, betel-nut, dried fish and pork.

During the Lanna Kingdom with Chiang Mai the centre of trade, there were two main methods of transportation: pack horse or ox on land and boat along the river. For instance, on the land route, pack horses and oxen were used to travel from Chiang Mai to Yunnan and Chiang Mai to Mou Lemin. Cloth was traded along with other goods. At times elephants were also used to carry goods. The Chiang Mai National Museum presents the trade and economy of Chiang Mai from the beginning of Chiang Mai's role in each aspect. Market fairs have been very important for a long time and during the Lan Na period the market fair was used as a place for barter amongst many people from different regions.

Plate 2: Border Regions in Thailand and Burma



Chiang Mai was under Burmese rule for over 200 years (Guidebook,1999) when Burmese and Shan people prospered. Based on my field research in Chiang Mai it can be said that over a long period there have been many minorities like the Akha and Karen in the region. They moved from one place to other places. However, the Thai government has not yet acknowledged their status as Thai nationalities, since the government worries about their activities in drug trading. Only in the last 20 years has the Thai government allowed the Karen to stay in hill tribe villages in Chiang Mai Province, even though they are still moved as part of human trafficking. The Thai government, despite this, makes use of their attributes in the promotion of its tourist industry.

This city was the centre for agriculture as well as trade due to its location ringed by the Mae Kok and Mae Pig Rivers. In the past, the border was crossed by many different ethnic groups, like the Burmese and the Yunannese, from different regions. The border itself was not a matter for determining the people's place of belonging. After the construction of a railway in 1939 by the British government, the local people, as well as the British, used the train to travel and animals were rarely used for movement on the land. The banking and loan systems were also introduced by the British and accelerated the development of Chiang Mai. Apart from Chiang Mai, Lampang was the largest trade centre in the region. It had unique trade in the Mae Rim market and the Bo Hin market in the Doi Saket district.

In the World War I era, opium cultivation was established in the present day Chiang Rai and Phayao Provinces. A British diplomat, Reginald Le May, attempted to grow a little opium on the quiet, in the hope that the difficulty of approach would prevent the authorities from taking any active steps against it. But, one day, just south of Chiang Rai, Le May came upon a party of gendarmes leading a number of 'picturesque ruffians' to captivity. It is said that the captives, who were the Hmong, had been surprised in the act of smuggling illicit opium on their pack mules, and had resisted arrest by opening

fire. It was, however, only after the Japanese occupation of Thailand in the 1940s, a chain of events instigated by the colonial superpowers, that the Golden Triangle turned into the number one drug centre of the world (Sjon Hauser, 2004: 46).

Plate 3: Opium in Thailand



The great development of the northern region of Thailand is related to what happened after the 1970s. At that time the tourist industry was also developed by the Thai government, not only in Bangkok but also in what is well known as the Golden Triangle, which means the place where the borders of Myanmar, Laos and Thailand meet. Green calls the region a triangle of Myanmar, Laos and Thailand. Renard puts it as an area which, 'implicitly recognized the absence from China'. The Golden Triangle area covers about 40,000 sq.km. and is notorious for opium cultivation. The 'opium' area includes Thailand's Chiang Rai Province, a large part of Myanmar's Shan State, and the Laotian Provinces of Bo Keo and Louang Namtha. In addition to this, Sop Ruak is also considered a centre. Opium certainly was, and still is, a major product of the Golden Triangle region. However, the region's being an important poppy growing area is excluded when the term is defined (Sjon Hauser, 'Travels in the Golden Triangle -avants

la letter: Story and photos, in *Guidelines Chiang Mai, Chiang Rai & the North*, vol. 11, no. 7, July 2004: 44). The spell of the name 'Golden Triangle' is hardly older than the beginning of the tourist boom. As opium historian Ron Renard explains in: *Opium Reduction in Thailand 1970-2000*, that it is said that the term was coined by the United States' Assistant Secretary of State, Marshall Green in 1971. This happened on the eve of Nixon's announcement of his intention to visit China. This was amidst serious worries about the surge in heroin addiction in American cities, leading to major initiatives to interdict the drug at its source in Asia. This issue continues to mark a serious disagreement between Thailand and Myanmar.

To control opium production, since the 1970s, the Thai government began using force as well as introducing crop substitution programs. It has been successful in eradicating poppy cultivation and reducing its production to less than ten percent of the yield of the former days, although it is paradoxically said that, the overall output of the Golden Triangle has hardly been affected. Therefore, Thailand is still a major centre of the drug trade (Sjon Hauser, 'Travels in the Golden Triangle -avants la letter: Story and photos, in *Guidelines Chiang Mai, Chiang Rai & the North*, vol. 11, no. 7, July 2004: 46).

V. POPULATION AND MIGRATION

In Thailand ample provisions and a large settled population made the valley an important staging point on routes which linked it with the lower Chao Phraya Basin, with lower and upper Burma, with northern Laos and Vietnam, and with southern China. This has been done from ancient times, armies marched, caravans traded, and people migrated. Most of the migrants were Yuan or Yonok, who are believed to be Tai people, of the same stock which elsewhere gave rise to such groups as the Siamese, the Lao, and the Shan. It was the Yuan who founded Lan Na (*Chiang Mai & The Hill Tribes*, 1998: 10).

Until the 17th century, the mountainous south was governed by rulers, among whom it is believed were Hmong 'kings' who were subject to the emperor of China. When the Manchu pushed their power southward, they instituted direct control exercised by ethnic Chinese officials. Entering the 18th and 19th centuries there emerged conflicts over dissatisfactions among the local people. Together with the prospect of prosperity opened by opium production, Hmong pioneers moved further south (Chiang Mai & The Hill Tribes, 1998: 49). This means that the Hmong are the mountain people, who probably are the most recent migrants to arrive in the area in the north of Southeast Asia (Christian Culas and Jean Michaud: 2004: 61).

The major ethnic groups in Thailand are the Karen, the Kachin, the Hmong, the Shan, the Hung, the Lisu and the Akha. The Karen is the largest single upland group in northern Thailand. It is estimated that their number is from above 125.000 to approximately 200.000. Their history of residence is the second longest of those groups still living on the uplands; with only the Lu'a having lived longer in northern Thailand. The Karen live in the backcountry along the Thai/Burma border, with the majority of the Karen living in the hills of eastern Burma with their language related to Tibeto-Burman. Buddhism and Christianity are among their religions (Klausner, 2002: 195).

Some literature mentions that the S'Kaw Karen oral tradition, for instance, is scanty in central Chiang Mai. The original migration into the area came from the west, from either 'the banks of the Salween' or from west of the Mae Chaem River. This movement of pioneering families is said to have taken place over two hundred years ago and to have been followed by secondary movements within the larger geographic area in north Thailand as the valleys of the main rivers and streams were populated by their respective founding families (Marlowe, 1967).

Some Karen settled in the lowlands and took up the customs of their neighbours while others remain in the hills and retain the old ways. They work in the logging industry and in the fields of other ethnic groups or own and operate elephants in northern Thailand (Chiang Mai & the Hill Tribes, 1998: 77).

The Lisu presumably originated in Tibet, but the centre of their population is now northern Yunnan west of the Salween River. The Lisu are found living scattered throughout the nine northern provinces such as the Chiang Mai, Chiang Rai, Phayao, Mae Hong Son, Tak, Lampang, Sukhotai, Kamphaeng Phet and Phetchabun (Technical Service Club Tribal Research Institute, *The Hill Tribes of Thailand*, 1998: 6). They have a language which is a branch of the Tibeto-Burmese family. Not only English is difficult in north Thailand (Tucker, 2003: 3), as Lisu elsewhere have difficulty understanding the dialect spoken in Thailand. Local people, however, are often able to speak Yunnanese, Shan or northern Thai and Lahu, closely related to Lisu (Chiang Mai & the Hill Tribes 1998: 94).

The Akha live in the east of Sip Song Pan Na in the mountains along the Black and Red Rivers in southeastern Yunnan. The people living here, whom the Chinese call the Hani, include the Akha. In the past, the Akha spread into Vietnam, Laos and Burma. One of the reasons why they migrated was due to the chaotic conditions during the 19th century, and starting from 1900 the Akha migrated to Thailand from Burma.

The Akha settlement has remained concentrated north of the Kok River in the Chiang Rai Province. Apart from that, villages have been founded in more southerly areas of Chiang Rai and Chiang Mai. The total number of people is approximately 25,000 (Chiang Mai & The Hill Tribes, 1998: 34).

In addition to this, there are many other ethnic groups in Thailand. Outside Thailand, the Lahu, for instance, are found in Myanmar, Laos, Vietnam and China, with the greatest density between the Mekong and Salween Rivers west of the Sip Song Pan Na in southern Yunnan. A conflict emerged between the Lahu and the Chinese government authorities causing a migration to the southern regions. The Lahu migrated to Thailand in the 19th century. Western explorers and missionaries came across them in the hills between Chiang Mai and Chiang Rai Provinces in the 1890s.

As has already been said, during the second half of the 19th century, poppy growing tribes began to settle in the Golden Triangle. Yunnan, in southern China was still in turmoil with an uncertain political situation, following the suppression of a wide spread Muslim rebellion, driving various hill tribes deep into Burma and bringing gangs of plundering Haw Chinese to northern Laos. In northern Thailand, Lan Na was still at war with Burma and British and French colonial encroachments had become another threat. Because of that, large parts of this area were depopulated. In 1882, a Norwegian, Carl Bock, reached Chiang Saen from Chiang Mai and was absolutely delighted by the scenery:

The country round the settlement was most beautiful ...the most charming, I think, that I met with during my travels in Indo-China. The river flows along its deep channel... the mountains rise terrace above terrace, range above range...hills and valleys, clothed with magnificent forests of teak. (Sjon Hauser, 2004: 45).

The Lahu grew poppies and paid taxes to the local prince. The Lahu Nyi were the first settlers, later followed by the Lahu Shehle. Other sub groups like the Lahu Na, the Lahu Shi, and the Lahu Hpu have been migrating to Thailand since the 1950s and in 1998, the total number of the Lahu, most of whom reside in rural areas with most living in northern Chiang Rai, Chiang Mai, and Mae Hong Son Provinces, was 30,000. In addition to this there are some Shehle as far south as the Tak and Kamphaeng Phet

Provinces (Chiang Mai & the Hill Tribes, 1998: 112). Myanmar is the most ethnically diverse state in mainland Southeast Asia. The Burmese comprise around 68% of the population of 45 million, but there are more than 100 ethnic groups in the country.

The Burmese dominate the alluvial plains and the major towns and cities. The hills bordering the neighbouring countries of India, Bangladesh, China, Laos and Thailand are populated by ethnic minorities. These people have long resisted Burmese domination. The largest of the ethnic minorities are the Shan, the Karens and the Arakense (on the Bangladesh border) (Church, 2003: 108-109).

Thailand had a population of around 16.5 million in 1945. More than 90% of the population was involved in the agrarian sector. Between 1945 and 1998 the population increased to around 61 million (Terviel 1999: 329). Culturally, Thailand's population of 61 million is relatively homogenous with no major regional, ethnic, linguistic or religious rifts threatening national coherence. Thailand does harbour minorities, but it is well on the way to assimilating its most significant minority, the Chinese.

The urban sector grew throughout this period. New banks were established and, after 1960, protectionist tariffs were imposed and Thai firms manufacturing goods that replaced previously imported items flourished. Gradually, as these industrial concerns began producing goods for export, a number of increasingly large conglomerates dominated urban expansion. These firms were generally dominated by first or second generation immigrants from southern China, an immigration which has been taking place since the mid nineteenth century. Many came from Swatow, Fujian, and Hainan where economic difficulties had grown amid internal rebellions in the mid nineteenth century.

Leaving port cities such as Guangzhou (Canton) and Xiamen (Amoy) to seek cash earning opportunities elsewhere, from the gold fields of California to coolie labour in Bangkok and other cities in Southeast Asia, hundreds of thousands of migrants left southern China. Although many stayed in Thailand, others returned and out of this emerged a network linking the Overseas Chinese with those in China. Using these connections and links they have been setting up with Thai leaders from the early twentieth century on, it was these Chinese who controlled the conglomerates that were pushing urban growth.

Mika Toyota notes (2004: 1) that the category of 'hill tribe' in Thailand was constructed in the 1950s and 1960s during a period when there were major concerns about security in the Thailand-Myanmar border zone. She adds that the creation of the category was intended on the one hand to provide a generic term for upland minorities, and on the other, as a way of affirming Thais as the 'core' of the nation state. She argues that in the process of formation of the nation state, 'hill tribe' people were downgraded to being non Thai and could therefore be excluded from citizenship for security reason, as they were seen as a threat to the integrity of the state. They use two currencies namely the Thai currency (baht) and the Myanmar currency (kyat). Mae Sot is closed if conflict breaks out between the Thai and the Burmese. One reason is that the people along the borders have two nationalities, Thai and Myanmar as we can see in Mae Sae. Meanwhile there are between 40-60 % of 'hill tribe' people who have a legitimate claim to Thai citizenship, remaining without it. Mika Toyota writes that as a consequence of being denied Thai citizenship they are deprived of many rights, such as freedom to travel between provinces and access to government health care schemes. In addition they do not get an official certificate after finishing school, which deprives them of the opportunity for higher education and the chance for the better forms of employment. They are also unable to vote or buy land and are usually expected to accept lower wages than fellow Thais in employment. (Mika Toyota, 2004: 1).

Thai citizenship laws and the preponderance of male migrants resulted in many Chinese settlers marrying Thai women. The Sino-Thai families and clans that resulted grew in power throughout the twentieth century, sometimes rising to great economic and even political strength. By the 1960s, most of the country's major commercial banks and principal trading houses were run by these families. Rags to riches stories abound. To mention just two: a family in the pawn shop business expanded into real estate, establishing the Land and House Real Estate Company capitalized at 62 billion baht in 1995 and a family known for selling silk grew to be the country's major telecommunication concern run by Thailand's richest man, and now Prime Minister, Thaksin Shinawatra.

Since the 1970s Bangkok has been supplanting other destinations. This has caused a decrease in the number of people in the rural sector indicating the beginning of the closing of the agricultural frontier and the stabilizing of the rural population. In addition to this, the migration into Bangkok has benefited all regions and Bangkok became the destination for migrants from the northeast. This was the largest provider of inter-regional migrants and reached its peak in the 1970s and 1980s. When the highway from Chiang Mai to Chiang Rai was widened in the late 1970s Thailand's corner of the Golden Triangle became a major tourist destination. Until the 1970s the distances involved in this type of migration have tended also to increase, especially since the 1980s. In addition to this, immigrants from the northeast make up an increasing proportion of migrants to Bangkok.

Migration is closely correlated with the poverty of a region, especially in comparison with Bangkok, the northern region is a constant, but the gap is widening slightly (Kermel-Torres, 2004: 52-54). The growth rate of the rural population is, however, rapid in some provinces such as in the northeast and south.

Table 1: Level of urbanization by region 1990-2000

Region	1990	2000	1990-2000
BMA	100,00	100,00	0
Vicinity	54,09	66,15	12,06
Upper Central	27,96	34,74	6,78
East	33,55	43,52	9,97
West	29,16	35,32	6,16
Northeast	17,92	24,68	6,76
North	23,76	30,18	6,42
South	20,20	25,74	5,54
Thailand	32,30	38,92	6,62

Source: *Thailand 2000* (1993, 79).

A large number of migrants came to Nong Khai, Kamphaeng Phet, Petchabun, Kanchanaburi, Mae Hong Son and Tak with urbanization increasing faster than the rural population. Ao Udon has more than 71.000 inhabitants. Following the implementation of the Eastern Seaboard the urban population of Chon Buri and Rayong has doubled reaching 760,500 in 2000 up from 378,300 in 1980. Urban areas follow the communication routes out of Bangkok. The number of people in Bangkok itself, in 2000, was around 8 million (Kermel-Torres, 2004: 48 and 52) and of Chiang Rai in 2000 it was 1,259,988; in 2001, 1, 263, 169; and in 2002, 1,274,214. Meanwhile the total population in Chiang Mai in 2000 was 1,590,327, in 2001,1,600,850, and in 2002, 1,595,855 (*Pocket Thailand in Figures, 2004*: 336 and 338).

Later on the imposition of a uniform system of administration centred in Bangkok and the authority of the powerful Ministry of the Interior, created in 1892, were felt at every level. This produced a centralizing force that is without parallel in continental Southeast Asia (Kermel-Torres, 2004: 59).

VI. THE NATURAL RESOURCES

In Chiang Mai the total of forest land in 1999 was around 8,743,367 rai (69.6%), farm land: 1,371,815 rai (10.9%) and unclassified land: 2,451,729 rai (19.5%). Meanwhile in Chiang Rai the total of forest land in 1999 was around 2,365,967 rai (32.4%), farm land: 2,122,239 rai (29.1%) and unclassified land: 1,810,775 rai (38.5%) (*Pocket Thailand in Figures 2004*: 336-338). 1 rai = 1.62 hectare (Naruemon Thabchumpon, 2002: 71).

Other natural resources are minerals of which there are eight in Chiang Mai among them: coal, manganese, feldspar, kaolin and building stone. The production relies on the demands of the market and the price of the minerals. It is important to note that the areas which had been given mining concessions, which are no longer in use, have to be revived to become harmonious with their environments. The soil in the region is fertile and suitable for settlement.

Livestock was important to the Hmong and the other tribes because through to the 1970s very few roads reached into the hills and those that did were not paved, at that time too there were virtually no hill villages with a supply of electricity. The Hmong used ponies for transportation, buffalo, and cattle for ploughing and other such labour intensive tasks. Nowadays since the development of transportation there has been an increase in vehicle use as by bus, car, motorcycle and other such things. The new vehicle registration in Chiang Mai and Chiang Rai can be seen in the Tables below (*Pocket Thailand in Figures 2004*: 336-338).

Table 2: New vehicle registration in Chiang Mai

New vehicle registration	2000	2001	2002
Passenger car	2,407	2,903	4,002
Microbus	368	539	337
Van and pick-up truck	3,591	2,843	3,504
Motorcycle	27,723	33,907	45,230

Table 3: New vehicle registration in Chiang Rai

New vehicle registration	2000	2001	2002
Passenger car	780	817	1,270
Microbus	61	289	210
Van and pick-up truck	2,035	1,661	2,247
Motorcycle	16,173	19,923	25,729

Even the increase in the number of motorbikes is very dangerous for people including tourists, since motorcyclists are sometimes irregular in their use of the roads. Meanwhile, pigs, chickens, and sometimes goats are raised for food. The government facilitated growth by continuing the rapid development of the infrastructure that had started in the 1970s. New roads, dams and irrigation projects were built to help open up new agricultural land. Besides encouraging investment, these are supported also by government incentives. New crops such as cassava, sugar cane and pineapples became lucrative exports in the 1970s, growing at a cumulative rate of 12 % per year. Food processing enterprises also grew at this time (*Pocket Thailand in Figures, 2004*: 336 and 338).

Table 4: Gross provincial products in Chiang Mai

Gross provincial product	1998	1999	2000
Agricultural	13.8	12.8	11.4
Manufacturing	16.2	18.1	18.9
Construction	5.7	6.2	4.8
Transport and communication	7.2	6.9	7.1
Wholesale and retail trade	10.7	10.7	11.1
Service	23.9	27.2	28.8
Other	22.5	18.1	17.9
Total (%)	100.0	100.0	100.0
Total (million baht)	82.294	81.397	81.423
GPP per capita (baht)	56.754	56.020	55.846

Table 5: Gross provincial products in Chiang Rai

Gross provincial product	1998	1999	2000
Agricultural	21.5	19.8	21.3
Manufacturing	4.2	4.5	4.9
Construction	5.3	5.6	4.5
Transport and communication	6.8	6.7	6.7
Wholesale and retail trade	20.2	21.0	20.8
Service	18.7	20.8	20.9
Other	23.3	21.6	20.9
Total (%)	100.0	100.0	100.0
Total (million baht)	33,009	32.207	34.303
GPP per capita (baht)	29.684	28.911	30.710

From the Tables above we can see the different natural resources in Chiang Mai and Chiang Rai, but this situation does not give rise to conflict between the poor and the better off people. Naruemon Thabchumpon argues that most public policy conflicts in the region stem from the mismanagement of the country. He explains that several conflicts over natural resources would have been unnecessary if the issues had been handled properly by the state. This means that the root cause of such conflict was a misdirection of strategies. Meanwhile the Thai government tends to endorse development based on growth through industrial development, rather than the

alternatives of democratic pluralism (Naruemon Thabchumpon, 2002: 68). In relation to the northern region of Thailand we can see, for instance, that the central government in Bangkok, encourages the hill tribe people to become Thai rather than remain hill tribe.

VII. ECONOMY AND AGRICULTURE

In Thailand most of the population lives in the rural areas and more than 40% of the land is used by the agricultural sector. The advance of the agricultural sector at a national level and the development of land at the local level makes it possible to absorb the population growth that has occurred in rural areas. This was followed by migration of the people from the northern region or north and eastern provinces to Bangkok, which was historically associated with rice cultivation where a major source of revenue was the agricultural sector with rice the main item for export.

Naruemon Thabchumpon (2002: 68) notes that the economic development of Thailand has been guided by five-year plans prepared by the National Economic and Social Development Board (NESDB) since the 1960s. To achieve growth, the government promoted agricultural and manufacturing industries. It is said that of its 8% rate of increase in the GDP during that period, agricultural products contributed a healthy 4.2%. Two constraints in the 1970s that the country managed to overcome were increasingly high energy costs and the exhaustion of some agricultural land. Through discoveries of huge amounts of offshore natural gas and continued export growth, the country earned sufficient foreign exchange to manage its increasing debt. Since the Third Economic Development Plan from 1972 to 1976, the Thai government has encouraged links between agriculture and industry. The aim was to support an export oriented policy. This development caused the Thai economy to be able to share in the global growth of the market. By the early 1980s, when little open land on the plains was unutilized, lowland agriculture intensified and many farmers moved into the foothills to cultivate crops. Since 1987, the Thai government has emphasized the development of

three main industries: export, tourism and agribusiness. This policy has caused the emergence of conflicts over the country's natural resources, in which the political conflicts over the control of the natural resources have become a serious issue at the national level. There were 754 protests with between 1994-1995, 334 cases involving the use of natural resources. In addition to this, 10 protest leaders were killed, nine protesters were injured and 20 NGO and village leaders were arrested (Naruemon Thabchumpon (2002: 69). However, it is important to note the further economic development in Thailand. Before the economic crisis in 1997, the rate of economic growth peaked at around 10% per annum. The reason for the success of the export oriented policy was the low cost of production; a function of low wages and price stability.

However, as Naruemon Thabchumpon (2002) explains Thai people had to pay the hidden costs of such economic growth as differences in income levels between the rural and urban areas became wider. In addition to this, farmers were forced to leave their homes and migrate to urban areas; mainly Bangkok. It is not surprising that their sons and daughters have migrated to cities where some of them toil as unskilled labourers in labour intensive industries leaving their children in the care of older people in the villages. This development has affected the lives of farmers; many losing their land and becoming bankrupt after the demise of their cash crops (Naruemon Thabchumpon, 2002: 68). Since 1999 there has been positive development in the agricultural sector in the northern region of Thailand with increasing rice productions in Chiang Mai and Chiang Rai from 1999 to 2002 as shown in the Tables below: (*Pocket Thailand in Figures 2004*: 336-338)

Table 6: Rice Production in Chiang Mai

Rice Production	1999/00	2000/01	2000/02
Major rice (ton)	236,007	239,460	317,816
Second rice (ton)	8,837	25,054	15,654
Yield-major rice (kg)	491	517	579

Table 7: Rice Production in Chiang Rai

Rice production	1999/00	2000/01	2002/02
Major rice (ton)	498,611	500,509	510,419
Second rice (ton)	35,126	38,224	46,091
Yield-major rice (kg)	462	461	477

From the Tables we can see increasing rice production since the support for agriculture by the Thai government. Later, government taxes on rice led to the development of non-rice crops with export potential.

Since the 1990s urbanization has been coupled with a diversification by rural dwellers into fields of activity other than the agricultural sector. This process has been made possible by the trickle down of growth in as far as villages in the remote or peripheral regions, like Chiang Mai and Chiang Rai are concerned (Kermel-Torres, 2004: 48). Thailand's northern gateways Chiang Mai and Chiang Rai, are located upriver from Bangkok, across the central plains, up to the Chao Phraya and the Ping. Most Karens reside in mountainous areas of western provinces along the Thai-Burmese borders in Mae Hong Son, Tak, Kanchanaburi and Phracuap Khiri Khan. Those areas are scattered over provinces in north and central Thailand such as in Lampang, Lamphun, Sukhotai, Phrae, Kamphaeng Phet, Phetchaburi, Uthai Thani, Suphanburi and Ratchaburi. It is believed that over 200 years, those ethnic groups had moved east from Myanmar into Thailand, following political conflicts with the Burmese (Technical Service Club Tribal Research Institute, *The Hill Tribes of Thailand*, 1998: 13).

Kumara (1999: 2) notes some incidents of tension, namely, on October 14, 1999 when Thai troops clashed with unidentified, armed intruders from Burma at Han Huay Pueng, in Mae Hong Son Province at Ban Maisape. In addition to this there was also a month-long joint US-Thai military exercise begun on October 18, 1999 in Mae Hong Son which is very close to the Chinese border. Later, on October 22, 1999, Burmese troops

arrested dozens of Thai gamblers in Koh Song, opposite Thailand's Ranong Province, only releasing them after they had paid a \$1,200 fine. Then, on November 1, 1999, Burma lodged a protest against the intrusion of Thai warplanes into its airspace. This situation caused Burma to increase the number of its troops from 10,000 to 30,000 in the Mae Hong Son area. Burmese military forces were also sent to Tachileik, opposite Mae Sae, and to several other points near the border. Three patrol boats were deployed near Ranong. On 17 November, 1999, two Thai soldiers were wounded while clearing mines along the border. These mines are believed to have been laid by the Burmese military. Kumara (1999: 2) also explains that the border reopening was the result of a special visit to the Burmese capital of Rangoon (Yangon) by the Thai Foreign Minister Surin Pitsuwan. The aim was to resolve the dispute before the opening of the weekend's meeting in the Philippines of ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian nations), of which both countries are members. Since, there has been a marked intensification in international pressure against the military junta, under the banners of democracy and human rights (Kumara, 1999: 2).

It can generally be said that both Chiang Mai and Chiang Rai are green land, girt by mountains. There are many good places like caves, waterfalls, wild flowers and wonderful vistas of forests and fields. The Ping valley is the centre of the population and Lan Na in the heart of the state means a 'million rice-fields'. Wet rice cultivation has been the mainstay of the economy. In addition to this, the valley's rice lands are among the most productive in Thailand, thanks to irrigation. (Chiang Mai & Hill Tribes 1998: 9).

The hill tribes in Thailand such as the Karen and the Akha are shifting cultivators. This means that they are thought to be peasants. They can be placed in three groups in relation to their cultivation practices, namely, dry rice cultivators, wet or irrigated rice cultivators, and a combination of these. In addition to this, there are three principal

forms of land use: Firstly, pioneer or primary swiddening, shifting cultivation in the real meaning where farmers move from place to place. Secondly, land rotation of cultivable fields, sometimes called cyclical bush fallow. This system is based on permanent residence. It can be said that it is a stable or permanent form of agriculture. Thirdly, wet rice cultivation. It is said that pioneer swiddening is usually employed by opium poppy growing people who can also be considered a cash crop oriented sector of the peasantry (Technical Service Club Tribal Research Institute, *The Hill Tribes of Thailand*, 1998: 6). However, until the present the Thai government has allowed the continuation of the customs of the people in doing the same jobs.

Renard (2001:21) notes that Thailand has enjoyed sustained economic growth since the Second World War. It did not only survive the war years without experiencing major armed conflict but international settlements in 1945-1946 enabled the country to join the United Nations in 1947 and live through the postwar years under stable economic conditions. Thailand has maintained its basic governmental system since the nineteenth century and not mobilized its army since 1824 which has benefited the country's economy. It is said that from 1951 until 1969, Thailand's gross national product rose from 35.2 to 112.4 billion baht, an average of 6.6 per cent per year.

After annual growth of 4.7 per cent from 1951 until 1958, the rate of growth increased through the next decade to about 8% per annum. Much of this growth came from agricultural exports. As world demand for agricultural products rose, Thailand was able to exploit open land from 1950 to 1980 when 2.5 million new farms were created and total farmland doubled.

The rate of growth represents a doubling of real income per capita about every eleven years. This growth has had a negative side as it has contributed to a fall in the country's forest cover from 30 % to 15% from 1960 to 1990.

In the 1980s, the continued strength of the baht, pegged to the US dollar, caused the cost of Thailand's agricultural exports to grow unattractively high. In response to this and other changes, the government devalued the baht twice and began to promote industrial growth that would allow the expansion of manufactured exports. In 1988, two years after Vietnam announced its *Doi Moi* (liberalization) policy, Thailand's General Chaticai called for *sanam rop* (battlefields) to become *sanam kankha* (marketplaces) and the country sought to dominate development in mainland Southeast Asia (Trogemann, 1997).

Thailand's economy declined suddenly in 1997. The baht lost half its value in six months, falling from 50 to 25 to the US dollar before recovering to 40 and then slowly to about 45. Although the rate of economic growth slowed, the resource base remains the most vibrant in the lower Mekong subregion, attracting legal and illegal migrants from many nearby countries (Renard, 2001: 23-25). There is mutual dependence between Thailand and China. As an example, it can be said that exports from Thailand to China bring 3000 million baht and imports cost 7000 million baht. Thai exports from China in 2002 of 152,036 showed an increase of 28.39%.

The total imports from Myanmar to Thailand were 85,336. In this case the total of exports was 163,669 and the total of imports was 21,667 million. In 2002 there was an increase of 70,046 or around 60.76%. With China we find the data as follows: Of the total 421,728, exports were 312,911 billion and imports were 108,817 billion.

This means that the increase from 100,189 was around 31.16% in 2002. With Laos it was around 80,445 million, with exports 53,410 and imports 27,035. It decreased by around 18,199 or around 1.45 % in 2002.

At present busloads of tourists frequently stop off at the village of Sop Ruak on the confluence of the little Ruak River and the vast Mekong. Many tourists board long-tailed speedboats for a brief outing, almost touching the Laotian and Burmese banks of the Mekong before returning to the Golden Triangle souvenir stalls lining the Thai side. A little opium museum is another attraction as is the huge, new Hall of Opium which opened its doors in October 2003.

The Kao Wao News Group (2004: 2) reported that most local traders and businessmen have joined hands with the ceasefire camp to boost border trade through illegal activities. Some motor vehicles crossing the border are the biggest supporters of revenue for the ceasefire camps and the Burmese troops during the dry season. Local car dealers sell used cars to Burmese traders with a common agreement at the border cross points. The problems at the border of Myanmar and Thailand, namely, criminal activity as well as illegal trade, can be deduced from the presence of the Wa armies, the national identity of which is basically unclear, unlike their involvement in opium and illegal weapon trading. There is a small ethnic group in the Burmese army called Wa. This group is small and unorganized and the population of the Wa armies is less than of the Karen or the Sha ethnic group. They are like 'warriors' living in Myanmar. Their role is particularly obvious in the diversification into amphetamines in the Burmese areas controlled by the Wa armies. This has led to a surge in speed addiction in Thailand and has caused a social problem which has eclipsed the formerly opium and heroin caused one. In 2003, at the cost of hundreds of human lives, concerted actions by police and military, brought the amphetamine trade in Thailand to a halt (Sjon Hauser, 'Travels in the Golden Triangle -avants la letter: Story and photos, in *Guidelines Chiang Mai, Chiang Rai & the North*, vol. 11, no. 7, July 2004: 44).

According to Thai scholars, the Wa are often manipulated by the Chinese in illegal businesses, like in the illegal weapons trade. The Wa ethnic group is considered as a buffer for Myanmar and is strongly encouraged by the Chinese in South China (Yunnan) but are also considered to be brokers who protect illegal trade in the border area.

Aung Su Shin (2003) noted that importers and exporters on the Thai-Burma border have been badly hit by increased US sanctions and the economic spillover from political chaos inside Burma. According to the Mae Sot Customs office, in 2002 Thai merchants only exported 315 million baht (US \$ 7.5 million) in commodities to Burma down from the previous more than 400 million baht in goods across the Mae Sot border. Imports from Burma, were also down. It is also reported that Thailand bought around 80 million baht in goods from Burma, but recent figures plummeted to 30 million baht. It is important to note, as Suchart Tritwattana, deputy chairman of the Tak Chamber of Commerce, said, there was nothing border traders could do about the lull in economic activity. They just had to wait until Burma's political situation returned to normal (Aung Su Shin, 2003).

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ETHNIC GROUPS ON THE BORDER BETWEEN THAILAND AND BURMA: QUESTIONS OF IDENTITY

By
Yekti Maunati

I. THE FORMATION OF ETHNIC GROUPS

The relation between culture and ethnicity is somewhat unfixed. As Eller argues: 'not all culturally distinct groups are ethnic groups precisely, and (in an odd paradox) not all ethnic groups are culturally distinct groups' (1999:8). It is in this instance that Eller suggests that ethnicity and 'culture' are not always in an ideal relationship (ibid.). Citing from DeVos, Eller explains that 'ethnicity is a symbolic use of any aspect of culture to make different between them and other groups (ibid.). To Eller, 'ethnicity is consciousness of difference and the subjective salience of that difference' (1999:9). Eller, further, notes that even when ethnicity is associated with, refers to, or evokes 'objectives' or shared cultural or historical markers, it is subjective (ibid.). Ethnic groups usually do not utilise all aspects of their culture or history as markers of their identities. Besides, some elements of their culture may be shared by other groups which will cause difficulty in distinguishing them from others (ibid.). Grey areas have been reported by many experts concerned with cultural identity (Kahn, 1995).

The use of certain markers of identity selected from groups' cultures is subject to change. For instance, Eller notes that an ethnic group which chose religion at one stage, may change to class or other parts of its culture (1999:9). Another important feature is that to a certain extent ethnicities are labels which can be made and remade (Eller, 1999:10).

Eller provides an example of the shifting of identity from *black* to *African-American* in the United States which basically does not change the membership much, but transforms the marker of ethnicity from 'skin colour to ancestral origin in the broadest sense' (1999:10-11).

Likewise, King and Wilder argue that to study ethnicity is to deal with the social and cultural processes and aspects that affect similarity and difference and understand the construction and transformation of social and cultural identities by groupings of people (2003:196-197). In the context of construction, many experts argue that boundaries are constructed (King and Wilder, 2003; Kahn, 1995; etc.). Barth (1969) argues that the formation of ethnic groups involves social processes of exclusion and incorporation and the selection of social and cultural aspects which are considered relevant for the construction of identity and boundaries.

It is widely argued that cultural identity is constructed (King, 1982; Vickers, 1989; Hall, 1992; Eriksen, 1993; Kipp, 1993; Kahn, 1993; Kahn, 1995; Picard, 1997; Wood, 1998; and King and Wilder, 2003). King and Wilder further explain:

Ethnicity is obviously expressed as a product of the past, evoking common origins, social linkages and shared cultural values and traits like language and religion. However, the historical dimension of identity also demonstrates that rather than identities being fixed, constant and immutable, they frequently change and can be acquired (2003:198).

Scholars differ on the degree to which the construction of cultural identity is linked to particular processes and different historical experiences. The idea of cultural identity as constructed is obviously connected to a related set of beliefs around the concept of culture. In particular, as Kahn (1995) and others argue, culture is less organic and bounded than has often been claimed.

In discussing cultural difference Kahn argues that culture itself is a cultural construction. He suggests that:

There are, in fact, two problems with the image of a culturally diverse world that lead us to its discursive dimensions. The first, on which most attention has focused, arises from the fact that the project of, variously, describing, translating or interpreting 'other cultures' contains a fatal flaw in so far as it can never genuinely succeed in locating these cultures except in relation to, and hence within the culture of, the person doing the interpreting. The argument that the western texts that purport to describe the 'culture' of this or that group of people are cultural artefacts of 'the West' and hence have little to do with otherness at all is by now a relatively standard one – in part a consequence of a poststructuralist revolution in the treatment of anthropological texts, and in part the result of a postcolonial critique of western discourses (1995:128).

In Kahn's opinion the voice of the other is the voice of the author (1995:129). He also outlines a further problem, saying:

But there is here a second problem, less often discussed in current debates over who is and should be authorised to speak about other cultures, for it will be noted that the conclusion about postmodern poetics does little to undermine the assumption that these other cultures are still 'out there', that the modern world is still a cultural mosaic – it is only that now individuals can never hope to escape the boundaries of their own particular corner of it (1995:129).

Kahn points out that 'this language of differentiation is artificial' (1995:129). Using the image of a television picture as a metaphor, he writes: 'the cultural imaginary takes the dots for something more than technique, as though the dots of colour represented reality itself' (Kahn, 1995:129). Kahn also points out how intellectuals have contributed a great deal to the processes of cultural construction.

Culture is therefore best seen as the product of earlier processes and as open to reinterpretation and new ideas as well as the shedding of old components. It is in relation to this conceptualisation of culture, that Kahn argues cultural identity is equally constructed and contextual. Similarly, concepts of identity and indeed identity itself are increasingly viewed as the result of a dynamic interplay between context (and history) and construct. Eriksen (1993) has demonstrated some of the processes involved in the historical construction of ethnic identity in the case of Indians who migrated to Mauritius and Trinidad. In each case, the subsequent identity was different and thus works against the notion of an 'essential' form of Indianness.

...it would be misleading to start from an assumption of 'primordial characteristics' of groups or categories. The formation of different categories of 'Indians' in Mauritius and Trinidad, respectively, clearly shows this. Not only are the ethnic subdivisions within the 'Indian' category different in the two societies, but so are the stereotypical assumptions about 'Indian culture'. Indians in Mauritius, where they are in a majority and dominate the state bureaucracy, often complain that they are good politicians but 'have no talent for business'. In Trinidad, Indians have a smaller stake in the state bureaucracy and many Indians have gone into business (Eriksen, 1993:84-85).

Similarly, the dynamic nature of the construction of cultural identity is evident in the case of Indonesia. (Vickers (1989), Picard (1997), Kahn (1993), and Kip (1993), amongst others). In the case of Bali, Vickers (1989) illustrates the way in which Dutch colonialists redefined the image of Bali from one of a savage place to that of an island paradise:

There is much that has been forgotten in the world's image of Bali. Early European writers once saw it as full of menace, an island of theft and murder, symbolised by the wavy dagger of the Malay world, the kris. Although the twentieth-century image of the island as lush paradise drew on the earlier writings about Bali, these were only selectively referred to, when they did not contradict the idea of the island Eden. The overall negative intent of most of the earlier western writings about Bali has been discarded (Vickers, 1989:11).

Vickers' argument is also evident in Picard's work (1997) when he describes the involvement of Dutch colonial officials, early Balinese intellectuals and Indonesian government officials in the construction of an 'authorised' view of Balinese identity. Picard argues that contemporary Balinese identity is a construction which draws on colonial, Indonesian and tourist images. Picard's project is 'to deconstruct the contemporary expression of Balinese identity by retracing the history of its construction' (1997:184). In a similar vein Rita (1993) and Kahn (1993) investigated identity construction in other parts of Indonesia. Picard's aim 'relates to ethnic consciousness rather than cultural history' (1997:184). As he argues, he is not concerned with the evolution of what has been called 'Balinese culture' by anthropologists and travel writers alike, but with the dialogical fashion in which a certain image of Balinese culture came to be used self consciously as a mark of identity (Picard, 1997:184-185).

Like Kahn, Picard treats Balinese culture as a cultural artifact. In this respect he argues:

...the allegedly immutable and primordial unity of religion, custom, and art/culture, through which the Balinese presently define their identity, is the outcome of a process of semantic borrowings and of conceptual reframing in response to the colonization, the Indonesianization, and the touristification of their island. (Picard, 1997:185).

The Dutch greatly shaped Balinese identity according to Picard. In particular their orientalist vision of Bali 'as a Hindu island surrounded by a sea of Islam' (1997:186) had two long-term consequences:

On the one hand, by looking for the singularity of Bali in its Hindu heritage, and by conceiving of Balinese religious identity as formed through opposition to Islam, the Dutch set the framework with which the Balinese were going to define themselves (Picard, 1997:186).

The New Order Government also contributed to Balinese identity formation. Picard elaborates on the ways in which the New Order Government domesticated ethnic identities in order to accommodate these identities within nation building processes (1997:197). To achieve this, the New Order Government promoted a homogenous provincial identity in disregard of the ethnic diversity within each province. Consequently, 'Bali' now points to three references - one geographic, one ethnic and one administrative (Picard, 1997:198-9).

Other means in which cultural identities can be seen as constructions is in the ways identities may be strengthened when a group is under threat (Eriksen, 1993). Hall (1992) in his discussion of the processes of globalisation concurs with this argument. He notes the rise of particular or local cultures as a response to globalisation that also, paradoxically, is seen to usher in cultural homogenisation. The studies of identities and boundary maintenance, therefore, tend to be directed at 'minorities' or otherwise 'threatened' or 'weak' groups, or in situations of rapid social change' (Eriksen, 1993:113). King (1982:35), for instance, drawing upon Rousseau¹, points out that the Kajang tend to identify themselves in opposition to the Kayan as a form of 'defence mechanism against the politically dominant and aggressive Kayan'. Additionally, the construction of an identity which is 'Pan-Dayak' is related to the ethnic conflicts between the Dayak and the Madurese (Peluso and Harwell, forthcoming). This, however, does not mean that dominant groups do not also have problems in 'identity processes and the maintenance of identity' (Eriksen, 1993:113)². Globalization has widely affected various ethnic groups, including the dominant groups in some countries.

¹ Rousseau, Jerome. (1975:32-49)

² For details see Forsythe's study of Eriksen

In Indonesia, for instance, the state's attempt to reduce westernisation can be seen through TV programs about provincial cultures³ which it is hoped will generate pride in those cultures.

The apparently arbitrary way in which cultural markers are selected and the importance of the context in determining which elements are selected is further evidence of the constructedness of cultural identities. Eriksen stresses that:

from the Barthian emphasis on boundary processes and later studies of identity boundaries, we also know that the selection of boundary markers is arbitrary in the sense that only some features of culture are singled out and defined as crucial in boundary processes (1993:117).

He goes on to argue that '...ideologists always select and reinterpret aspects of culture and history which fit into the legitimation of a particular power constellation' (1993:118). Similarly Winzeler (1997) notes that in order to lessen the unity of powerless groups, governments often manipulate cultural identity. Eriksen (1993), Kahn (1995) as well as Picard (1997) similarly argue that ethnic identity is constructed according to the situation. Eriksen points out: '...identities are negotiable and situational' (1993:117). He also argues that ethnic identities are composed in relation to others (1993:111), noting:

Groups and collectivities are always constituted in relation to others. A shared European identity, for example, would have to define itself in contrast to Muslim, Middle Eastern or Arab identity, possibly also in relation to African, East Asian and North American identities – depending on the social situation (1993:62).

This negotiable and situational quality of identity markers is clear in the way religious differences have been incorporated into identity formation. Picard points out the way in which Balinese define themselves with reference to a religious identity in opposition to

³ The Indonesian government proposes that each region have its own culture.

Islam (1997:186). Dayakness similarly is linked to Christianity and opposed to Islam, the dominant religion in Indonesia. If a Dayak converts to Islam, he is no longer considered Dayak, becoming instead 'Malay' (Coomans, 1987). In a similar vein, Winzeler finds that among the Bidayuh Dayak 'usually to become a Muslim is to cease to be a Bidayuh...' (1997:219). Correspondingly, King points out that pagans who convert to Islam become Malay (1982:27). Furthermore, this process of shifting identity/ethnicity has a long historical pedigree. As King found, as early as the 1890s European observers noted that many of the approximately 400 'Malays' in the Putus Sibau and Mandai areas were ethnic Taman (Maloh) who had converted to Islam (King, 1982:38). To pinpoint the boundary between the Malay and the Dayak in certain areas of Kalimantan is not surprisingly somewhat problematic due to this means of shifting from Dayak to Malay. Therefore the Dayak are not necessarily distinctively different from neighbouring 'ethnic' groups, although they are constructed as such. This intermingling of cultures is perhaps the order of the day rather than the exception. For as Said has argued:

Partly because of empire, all cultures are involved in one another; none is single and pure, all are hybrid, heterogeneous, extraordinarily differentiated, and un-monolithic (Said, 1993:xxix).

The markers of cultural identity may originate in a presumed distinctiveness of religion, language, and custom. However, overlapping may occur among different ethnic groups. In the grey areas where markers of identities overlap, the existence of cultural difference is particularly problematic (Kahn, 1995). Such grey areas and difficulties in delimiting distinct ethnic groups often colour the process of identity formation. There is the possibility of the mixture or change of ethnic groups over time. Barth illustrates identity changes, for instance, with reference to the Yao of northern Thailand, Laos and Burma (1969:22). The incorporation of non Yao to become Yao also took place individually. Another example Barth draws on is the process of becoming Baluch experienced by Southern Pathans:

Southern Pathans become Baluch and not vice versa; this transformation can take place with individuals but more readily with whole households or small groups of households; it involves loss of position in the rigid geneological and territorial segmentary system of Pathans and incorporation through clientage contract into the hierarchical, centralized system of the Baluch. Acceptance in the receiving group is conditional on the ambition and opportunism of Baluch political leaders (1969:22).

King (1982) also provides an example of the process of delimiting distinct ethnic groups by exploring the concept of ethnicity in Borneo, pointing out that it is complicated and raises several problems. He found that:

...many people who had been classified as "Maloh" in the past had, over time, become something else, and the forbears of some people categorized as "Maloh" in 1972-3 had come from other ethnic groupings (King,1982:25).

Moreover King notes that processes of cultural exchange or, in the longer term, a process of assimilation, occurred between neighbouring ethnic groups (1982:25).

The construction of cultural identity is complex partly because it is a product of history. Cultural identity itself is changeable depending on the context and on the power and vested interests at play.

In Thailand, many people who used to be included in the ethnic minorities have become Thai through a historical process (Bradley, 1983). However, ethnic minorities are still in existence and mostly reside in the mountainous border areas. The process of an ethnic minority person becoming Thai can happen because young people of certain ethnic minorities have the opportunity to attend school and obtain Thai citizenship.

II. ETHNIC GROUPS ON THE THAI-BURMESE BORDER

Thailand is constituted of two groups, the majority and the minority. Bradley, for instance, points out that Thailand, apart from having a national dominant group, like some other nations, has a number of minorities (Bradley, 1983:46). The majority or the dominant group of Thailand are the Thais, while the minority is constituted of many groups, including the Karen, the Meo, the Lahu, the Akha, the Yao, the H'tin, the Lisu, the Lua and the Khamu (Technical Service Club, Tribal Research Institute, 1995). Bradley notes that the minorities have their own identities in which the markers of identities can be observed from linguistic distinctiveness, names, social structure and material culture, and religious, political and economic differentiations (1983:46).

Plate 1: A representative Akha person



Bradley argues that 'the markers of this identity gradually disappear, as the minority is assimilated by and becomes part of the dominant group' (1983:46). Often, the classification of membership in a group is a problematical question. In Thailand, 'dominant groups may lump minorities together; the Thai include various groups in the

category Lua/Lawaa' (Bradley, 1983:46). Bradley even finds that people, or even whole villages may change identity for an unknown reason (ibid.). Clearly, many people of ethnic minorities have changed to become Thai, but the ethnic minorities are still in existence and often labeled 'hill tribes'.

Technical Service Club, Tribal Research Institute (1995:2) reports that there are several issues of hill tribe or ethnic minorities in Thailand: the practice of shifting cultivation is assumed to lead to deforestation and the destruction of highland watersheds; some hill tribes are involved in opium production and addiction; due to living in a remote area the hill tribes lack a sense of national identity and have little access to education, health facilities and sources of income. According to the Technical Service Club, Tribal Research Institute (1995:6), hill tribes engage in different types of cultivation, particularly pioneer or primary swiddening, land rotation of cultivable fields, and wet rice cultivation. Opium poppy growing usually utilizes pioneer swiddening. Traditionally, the Karen, Lua, H'tin and Khamu do not grow opium poppies, and employ the rotational farming system. Apart from utilizing the rotational farming system, the Karen and Lua engage in wet rice cultivation when there is enough water to do so (Technical Service Club, Tribal Research Institute, 1995:6). The Meo, the Yao, the Lahu, the Akha, and the Lisu, who traditionally grow opium poppies, in terms of land use engage in the primary forest cultivation, shifting cultivation (Technical Service Club, Tribal Research Institute, 1995:49). In terms of linguistic classification of hill tribes in Thailand, drawing from Matisoff, the Technical Service Club, Tribal Research Institute (1995:3)⁴ claims as follows: There are three main classifications: Sino-Tibetan, Austro-Thai-Meo-Yao, and Austro-Asiatic - Mon-Kmer; Sino-Tibetan constitutes three categories: Sinitic - Haw, Tibeto - Burman which consists of Lisu, Lahu and Akha, and Karenic which consists of S'Kaw, Pwo, Kayah, and Taungthu; Austro-Thai - Meo - Yao constitutes two groups,

⁴ Matisoff, James A. in John McKinnon & Wanat Bhruksasri (eds.) *Highlanders of Thailand*, Oxford University Press, Kuala Lumpur, 1983

Meo and Yao; the classification Austro-Asiatic - Mon-Kmer constitutes four groups, H'tin, Lua, Khamu, and Mlabri. The Technical Service Club, Tribal Research Institute (1995:5) reports the total population of the hill tribes in 1995 and names the Karen as the biggest amongst the hill tribes recorded in 1995.

Table 1. Tribal Population

Tribes	Villages	Households	Persons	Percentage
Karen	2,132	60,385	321,900	46.34
Meo	243	16,146	124,211	17.88
Lahu	421	13,307	73,252	10.54
Akha	258	8,050	48,468	6.98
Yao	173	5,525	40,371	5.81
H'tin	148	6,090	32,755	4.71
Lisu	135	4,802	27,899	4.02
Lua	53	2,923	15,711	2.26
Khamu	32	1,988	10,153	1.46
Total	3,595	19,216	694,720	100

Source: Technical Service Club, Tribal Research Institute (1995:5).

Kampe (1997:22), based on a 1996 research report, shows slightly different figures for hill tribes in Thailand, as follows: the population of major Thai hill tribes was 790,369, constituting 1.3 % of the total national population of Thailand. Breaking it down to::

Karen	402,095
Hmong	126,147
Lahu	78,842
Akha	48,468
Mien	47,305
H tin	32,755
Lisu	31,536
Lua	15,711
Khamu	10,153
Mlabri	173

Kampe (1997:23) notes that these indigenous peoples⁵ are inhabitants of the mountainous areas of the north and along the western border between Thailand and Burma.

⁵ Kampe (1997) uses the term indigenous peoples for the hill tribes of Thailand. According to Clarke, indigenous people are defined as 'autochthonous, or descendants of the earliest known inhabitants of a territory' (2001:415), while ethnic minorities are 'settler populations with more recent links to a

Being minorities, Kampe further notes that 'their political status is very low, with no seats in Parliament, representation at higher levels and extremely little at mid levels of government' (1997:23). This circumstance, to Kampe, is affected by the fact that traditionally minorities have no power in the national decision making, with fewer than one third of them having Thai citizenship. Though their social and economic status has been improving for the last three decades due to special development programs and wider socio economic gains in Thailand, they are still far below the majority Thai population (Kampe, 1997:23). Recently Southeast Asian countries have paid more attention to the indigenous people and/or minorities. Ethno development, which is sensitive to the needs of indigenous people and minorities, is one of the models to include those people within the context of development (Clarke, 2001). The Thai government, international donors and development agencies and international and local NGOs have assisted the hill tribes of Thailand and in the past 10 years, the private (commercial) sector has played a stronger role (Kampe, 1997:23).

In Thailand, Kampe reports that government policy towards indigenous people has been progressive in terms of the scope of activities and resources employed, but in terms of goals and approaches, top down and unimaginative (1997:23). Kampe argues that for the past 30 years, policy on the ground has been largely misconceived due to the thinking that hill tribes are: '(1) a threat to national security, (2) destroying the environment, and (3) producing illegal narcotics (mainly opium). The indigenous peoples themselves have had no input into the formulation of this policy until recently (but still very little)' (ibid.).

territory (often stretching back hundreds of years), who share a common identity with groups in at least one other country'. Nevertheless, in Southeast Asia the differences between indigenous people and minorities are somewhat complex due to political issues. In Vietnam, the government does not recognise the term indigenous people, but all small groups are considered to be ethnic minorities (Clarke, 2001). Likewise, in Thailand this also applies. Often, experts do not differentiate between indigenous peoples and minorities.

The Thais are Buddhists, while the minorities have somewhat different beliefs. To minorities, religion is the main marker of group identity, particularly because this is different to that of other groups, especially that of the dominant group (Bradley, 1983:51). Eriksen (1993) and others argue that the marker of identity is opposed to the dominant group.

The majority of minorities have their traditional 'animist' beliefs, which are different from that of the Thai Buddhists (Bradley, 1983:51). Bradley notes that 'the Meo, the Yao, the Lisu, or the Akha have highly developed ritual activities that are not based on one leader's innovations' (Bradley 1983:52).

In terms of social structure, the minorities have unique systems. Bradley notes that 'social structure provides boundaries for various purposes - kinship and marriage rules; ways of acquiring women; inheritance, and so on, which strongly differentiate between minorities' (Bradley, 1983:52). Apart from this, if we look at the leadership, each minority has not shared a similar distribution of leadership or the function of the leader. Among the Lahu, capability is the most significant consideration and the headmen can also step down early. The function of the leader for the Akha is mainly to be a religious figure. Unlike the Akha, the headmen of other minorities are more to be political figures who have to deal with regulating external relations and internal disputes (Bradley, 1983:52).

The hill tribes, who reside on the Thai-Burma border, consist of various groups, including the Akha, the Lisu, the Meo (Hmong), and the Karen. These groups can be identified through their different material cultures, especially traditional clothes, ornaments, and their main livelihoods (Technical Service Club Tribal Research Institute, 1995)

If we look at the historical accounts, we can find that ethnic minorities on border Burma-Thailand had migrated from neighbouring countries. This process of migration is a common issue for ethnic minorities who used to be 'stateless' people. Tapp et al. (2004: xiv) note that historically the Hmong had migrated from China to many countries in northern Indo-China. Culas and Michaud (2004:61) report that:

There are dozens of mountain peoples inhabiting the northern parts of Burma, Thailand, Laos and Vietnam, as well as southwest China. The whole of this region forms a geographical entity generally known as the Southeast Asian Massif. Its highland plains and mountains for centuries have provided a refuge for relatively small societies trying to keep out of lowland disputes and the fierce competition between powerful foes fighting for control over fertile land and vital trading routes. For centuries the Lolo, or Yi, the Miao and the Chung-chia, or Pu-yi, to name but the most numerous of these groups, criss-crossed the massif, fleeing from stronger aggressors or simply seeking better opportunities elsewhere; their settlements today are scattered all over these remote mountain ranges (Culas and Michaud 2004:61)⁶

According to information obtained in interviews with Thai scholars who study the hill tribe cultures, the hill tribe of Padaung, also known as 'long necks', residing on the border areas of Burma-Thailand, migrated from Burma due to political instability. The fights between ethnic minorities and the Burmese army in the western part of Thailand have occurred for decades (Chantanawat, 2004:32) and ethnic minorities moved to northern Thailand as refugees. The Thai government has looked after them and assisted them, especially in economic and health terms. Those people often move around and even cross the border. This kind of movement was very common amongst the hill tribes. However, the Thai government has decided that they should not be allowed to cross and recross the border any longer. According to interviews with Thai people, this rule is to prevent the minority people from becoming involved in opium production or trading.

⁶ Citing McKinnon, John and Michaud, Jean, 'Introduction' in Jean Michaud ed. *Turbulent Times and Enduring Peoples: The Mountain Minorities in the Southeast Asian Massif*, Curzon Press, Richmond, Surrey, 2000

Drawing on his own experiences of working in the tribal communities, Chantanawat (2004) illustrates the migration process of the Kulo Lahu, one of up to 23 Lahu ethnic groups, who reside in northern Thailand on the Thai-Burma border. The routine fights in Burma have affected the minorities a great deal. For instance, in 1993, the fights between the Burmese army and Khun Sah's armed forces, a powerful group which resides on the opposite northwest border of Thailand, have affected a large evacuation of the Yai, the Lisu and other tribal groups to Thailand. They were sent back to the original ground later on but many sneak back to Thailand to be safe (2004:32-33).

In 1997, it was reported from Thailand that around two thousand villagers from Burma, predominantly ethnic Karens, escaped to north Thailand, into areas like the Tak Province where there were already thousands of Karens in camps. 'The Thai authorities are said to consider them economic migrants, rather than people who have been displaced by fighting' ([Http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/world/foreast/20735.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/world/foreast/20735.stm)).

The hill tribe or ethnic minorities who reside in the border areas between Thailand-Burma have not always shared the same experiences in terms of receiving treatment from the Thai government agencies or in other matters. Some hill tribes have been residing in the areas for generations, while others have recently moved to the border areas. The people who have resided there for a long time often hold hill tribe identity cards, while the newcomers may not have these cards. For example, the story of the Padaung (Karenic group) and the Akha of Chiang Mai can illustrate this issue.

The Padaung or long necks are not allowed to go to Bangkok or Chiang Mai because they are not Thai citizens. Even the holder of a Blue card or holding hill tribe status, needs to have permission if he/she leaves his/her district (Toyota, 2004:12-13). The Thai government has not only assisted the Padaung in terms of education and health but also has provided training for making handcrafts based on their own designs. Unlike the

Padaung, the Akha who live near the Padaung village can hold a hill tribe card. They settled in this area before the Padaung and are allowed to go to Chiang Mai. The Akha ladies offer their material culture products in the night bazaar in keeping with the policy of their being promoted for their material cultures, especially in the forms of handcrafts, used for their ceremonies or feasts in Chiang Mai or Thailand in general. In the night bazaar of Chiang Mai, we could see many Akha ladies offering objects like: ladies' traditional hats, decorated bags and jewellery (especially bracelets and necklaces). The ladies wear traditional hats with many decorations, including the metal coins which make the sound 'cring,cring'. Originally, the Akha used silver for the decorations but today they often use cheaper metal as a replacement for the silver. They walk through the night bazaar to offer their handcrafts to visitors. Usually, they stop and touch people walking in the night bazaar or offer the handcrafts to those having dinner in the restaurants. They do not enter the restaurants, but offer their handcrafts to the people sitting close to the pavements. When I was having dinner near the night bazaar, I observed an Akha lady offering her handcrafts to westerners who happened to be sitting near the barrier which separates the restaurant from the pavement where people walk back and forth browsing among the stalls located along the edge of pavements. We could not, however, find any Padaung or long necks because they are not allowed to visit Chiang Mai or other cities of Thailand.

Plate 2: The Costume of the Akha People



Historically, many people of the ethnic minorities have taken on Thai nationality (Bradley, 1983), of those who have maintained their identities, not all have shared the same experiences. In the Akha village that I visited in the Chiang Rai Province the Akha have resided for a long time. It is very near a Thai primary school which their children can attend.. The young generation can hold a Thai ID card, but the older generation can only hold the hill tribe card. By holding only the hill tribe card they have more limited access to facilities than Thai citizens. In this village, we could observe “7 eleven” type shops in which we could buy basic products like sugar, oil, salt, snacks, and so forth. The young generation of the Akha in this place can transform their identity in the near future because they will be allowed to hold Thai citizenship when they attend the school.

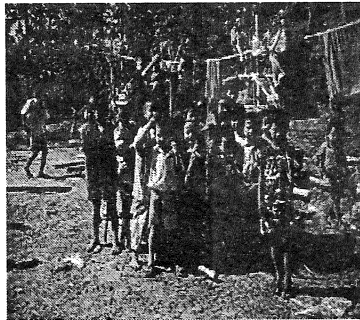
It seems that the experience of the minorities in the border areas who often cross the border is not unusual in Southeast Asia. Bradley reports that many minorities in Southeast Asia live in several different countries. ‘These *transnational* minorities maintain contact across borders and feel solidarity as a whole; they tend to be a larger group’ (Bradley, 1983:46).

The situation of certain hill tribes, especially the Akha and the Padaung can be illustrated as follows: The borders are thickly forested mountainous areas. Many people have informed us that historically hill tribes crossed the borders. As mentioned previously, many minorities, like the Hmong and the Karen are basically trans national groups. To cross borders is a common practice for them. Tapp et al. (2004) discuss comprehensively the Hmong/ Miao in Asia. Often, the movement of ethnic minorities is partly for economic reasons. Chantanawat (2004) tells the story of the ‘long neck’ girl who used to live in Burma where she was very poor, only being able to afford one dress, had no slippers and no food. After moving to Thailand her economic conditions improved (2004:56-57).

The hill tribe villages of the Akha and the Padaung (Karenic group) or the long necks in the border area of Chiang Mai Province and Burma can be reached by car in about three and a half hours from Chiang Mai, using the main road from Chiang Mai to Chiang Rai. The road is partly winding and on the edge of the mountainous area. Before reaching the Chiang Rai area, we enter a small, winding, pressed soil road. Vans can use this road, but buses cannot because the road is too narrow for them. On entering this road we can see a sign 'Hill Tribe Village'. We thought we would not be able to use the rough road, but in fact it was not too rough and it was easy to get through. As soon as we arrived we saw many tour vans parked in the parking space provided by the village. There are also toilets for women and men, which are relatively clean. The village is in a hilly area. If we look at the scenery we will observe the green hills. People visit these villages because these villages are designated as tourist destinations. According to our information, the reason for designating this a tourist area is to avoid the hill tribes going back and forth from Thailand to Burma. However, the Thai government does not wish to control them in crossing the border without giving them an alternative to survive economically. It is widely known that certain hill tribes are producers as well as being addicted to opium. Tourism seems to be the alternative way for them to keep up with their economic needs. The Akha village is located lower than the Padaung or 'long necks' village. When we arrive in the parking area we see many souvenir shops, which function as Akha houses as well. We see Akha ladies offering their souvenirs to visitors. Based on my observation, visitors go to the long neck village first because they need to walk along a small hilly path for 5 minutes before arriving there. Soon after reaching the village, we could observe a lady weaving a traditional sarong in her tiny house which functioned as a souvenir stall as well. She smiled when we asked to take a photograph with her. The smile meant she agreed to be photographed. According to the tour guide, if the hill tribe people do not want to be photographed they will sign using their hands to oppose the visitors' intention to take a photograph. If they do not mind being photographed they

will smile. Visitors should ask them first if they wish to take pictures of them. We bought many souvenirs at this first young lady's stall: a long neck doll, bracelet, and photographs of the long necks involved in different activities, such as weaving, having showers, and sleeping. She knew a few English words like 'forty baht', 'sixty baht', and 'hundred' and could understand when we asked her her age. The missionary and Thai government agencies have trained them to speak Thai and English and produce handcrafts based on their ornaments. The designating of the village of the Padaung as a tourist spot has been made to improve the position of the Padaung who were from Burma.

Plate 3: Refugees in Thailand



The Akha have resided in this village for a long time and now have the hill tribe identity card. Holding this card, they receive certain benefits from the government although the facilities are not equal to those of Thai citizens. Citing Vienne, Toyota (2004:9) notes that it was only in 1959 that the official identification 'hill tribe' was established and incorporated nine ethnic minorities. Toyota further argues that the impacts of the creation of hill tribe grouping are: the result of the problem of the practice of moving back and forth across the national borders and lowland/upland boundaries. Viewed from the government perspective of sovereignty; the symbolic mobility across ethnic boundaries would be a problem; as would the binarity of Thai and non-Thai and lowland-highland (Toyota, 2004:9-10). According to Toyota the hill

tribe card is a kind of prerequisite for applying for Thai citizenship. There are many hill tribes residing in the hamlets which have not been recognised within the national administration. They, consequently, have not been acknowledged by the state, not even as 'hill tribes' (Toyota, 2004:11-12).

Unlike the Akha, who hold the hill tribe card, the Padaung have only recently settled in this village and they have no hill tribe card. According to Tik, a tour guide who often goes to this village, the Padaung have been there for about the last twenty years. They used to cross the border between Thailand and Burma, but now they are not allowed to do so by the Thai government. The Padaung are not allowed to go to Bangkok or Chiang Mai either. They are not yet considered to be Thai citizens, or even to have hill tribe status. The issue of opium is partly the reason for the Thai government's not allowing them to cross the border back and forth. Certain hill tribes have depended on opium production, especially in the past (Technical Service Club, Tribal Research Institute, 1995). The Lisu who reside in the mountainous hinterland of north Thailand, grow opium for sale (Technical Service Club, Tribal Research Institute, 1995:34-35) and the Thai government is concerned with their dependence on opium production. In order to reduce this dependence on opium, the government encourages them to produce their own traditional handicrafts. The life of the hill tribes is also being promoted for tourist enterprises. Maya and Tik (tour guides) informed us that the Queen herself has assisted the hill tribes by providing training for them to produce handicrafts based on their material culture. From my observations in the hill tribe villages of Akha and Padaung, the Padaung sell woven material for sarongs or skirts for women, scarves and other small handicrafts, while the Akha sell traditional bags decorated with coins and beads and traditional hats decorated with coins. Bradley notes that in terms of culture, the minorities' material cultures distinguish one from another (1983:50). He further reports that 'each minority has strikingly attractive traditional clothes for its women; some, such as the Sgaw Karen, even have further distinctions between unmarried and married

women's clothing' (Bradley 1983:50). If some minorities or hill tribes choose to wear Thai clothes, they gain a higher position since this is 'a sign of upward mobility into national society' (Bradley, 1983:50). In a vein similar to Bradley's, if we look at those two groups, the Akha and Padaung, we immediately notice the different traditional clothes that they wear, apart from their accessories. Nevertheless we saw that the handcrafts sold are quite similar, whether from the Akha or the Padaung stalls. For instance, people can buy silver bracelets set with gem stones in them from both..

The Padaung also sell photographs of their daily activities, including having showers, weaving, sleeping, working in the field, and so forth. Usually, they sell each photograph for 20 baht which is the standard price for these photographs. We bought several from different ladies, but the price was always the same. In both Akha and Padaung villages, we only met women and children. Tik told us that men were working in the fields. The Technical Service Club, Tribal Research Institute (1995:6) reports that hill tribes can be classified as peasants whose cultivation practices are dry rice cultivation, wet or irrigated rice cultivation, or a combination. The gender division of labour in this hill tribe village is quite clear. The women stay at home and engage in a cottage industry, while the men go to the fields.

The way to the Padaung village is by rough and narrow path. The houses of the Akha and Padaung are quite similar with both using bamboo for walls. When we visited the Padaung village, in the first house we immediately met a Padaung lady weaving a traditional cloth. She was sitting on the elevated floor of her open house. Another part of this house is a section for exhibiting the handcrafts. Almost everybody sells similar types of handcrafts. In the centre of each house there is an open space from where people can see the whole village, which is like a compound of souvenir shops.

The village is located in the valley of the mountain ranges which are also the border lines between Thailand and Burma. A fresh breeze can be felt in this village due to its green mountainous surroundings.

On leaving the Padaung hamlet, we enter the Akha village. Several houses are in the hilly area with one house connected to another. Before we enter this compound, the Akha lady waves, offering her handcrafts. When people enter this compound they should not return to the way they entered, instead they should continue to walk through the houses which function as souvenir shops. According to the Akha belief, visitors should use different doors to enter and leave. This also applies to entering and leaving the compound which people should not enter and leave at the same house. The houses are mostly very small. Leaving this Akha compound, we had to walk down a ladder. Like the Padaung, the Akha sell handcrafts that are similar to those sold by their neighbours. The vans are parked in the yard of these Akha houses.

This Akha village in the Chiang Mai Province is slightly different from the Akha village in the Chiang Rai Province with the latter more permanent in terms of housing and other facilities. When we visited the Akha village in Chiang Rai Province, we noticed some differences with the Akha village in Chiang Mai Province since the Akha in Chiang Mai reside side by side with the Padaung groups with there being only a few Akha houses. The Akha people in the Chiang Rai Province generally have larger houses than the Akha in Chiang Mai. I went to one of the Akha houses in the Akha village in Chiang Rai. In this house, if a visitor intends to take a photograph the tour guide will ask the visitor to give 5 to 10 baht. We saw an elderly man wearing a traditional hat, seated playing his flute near the Akha house which is often visited by groups of tourists. He offered visitors the chance to take photos with him and to pay 10 baht, saying 'ten baht...ten baht'. We took a picture with him and paid the 10 baht. Bradley (1983) reports that though the Akha have lived near the city and near the Thais for a long time, they

seem likely to remain little affected by the Thai life style. Bradley further argues that the Akha uphold their identity with 'a strong cultural and religious system controlled by traditional village leaders' (Bradley 1983:53).

The Akha village has maintained its cultural uniqueness as an Akha village. In a similar vein, Bradley notes that 'in the minority village, the layout, public building (temple, drum house, swing, sacred tree grove, dancing ground, rest house, village gate and so on), and the design of the houses also reflect the identity of the inhabitants' (Bradley, 1983:50). The Akha village of Chiang Rai also holds much material culture that differentiates their group from other minorities.

A little girl was following visitors to offer her bracelets for 20 baht each. We also met an elderly lady carrying a doll inside a bag to be sold to a visitor. We bought it for 50 baht. People who sell handcrafts usually set up stalls to display their handcrafts. Based on my observations, there are similarities in the hill tribe villages whether Akha or Padaung where people set up stalls to sell their handcrafts in their houses. Another feature is that visitors can mostly find elderly men, women and children in these villages. Adult men usually do not stay in the village during the day; going to the fields or doing other things outside the village. This pattern can be found in several places where elderly people and women and children stay in the village while the adult men are away.

Bradley (1983), concerned with ethnic minorities in Thailand, notes that the process of incorporation of ethnic minorities into the Thai dominant group has been occurring for a long time. The Luwaa/Lua is a case in point:

The 'Lud' or 'Lawaa', are actually not one group but several completely distinct groups. The Kanchanaburi, Suphanburi, and Uthai Thani group Ugong is almost completely assimilated, and soon will have become Thai (Bradley, 1983:54)

However, many ethnic minorities are keeping their identities and their distinctive material cultures as markers of identities. For instance, 'the Lisu, like the Meo and Yao, at the moment are less assimilated due to their recent migration into Thailand. Nevertheless, the Lisu who are more outward oriented than the Akha, will participate in the country's progress more than the Akha as well' (Bradley 1983:54).

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MIGRATION, TRAFFICKING AND THE SEX INDUSTRY IN THE CROSS BORDER AREAS BETWEEN THAILAND AND BURMA

By
Lamijo

A. INTRODUCTION

Thailand is the only state in Southeast Asia that has never been colonized. However, since its monarchal power was curtailed, in 1932, this state has experienced dramatic political changes in comparison with other Southeast Asian states. From 1932 until now, Thailand has had 53 Cabinet changes, 17 coup d'états, and 16 Constitutional changes (Chris Dixon, 1999: 61). With a territorial area of 513,115 sq. km. Thailand had in 2002, a population of about 63 million.. About 80 % of this population is Thai comprising 50% Siamese and 27% Laotians. Among the minorities, the largest group is Chinese (12%) followed by Malaysians (about 4%). Besides these two groups, there are some other minority groups, made up of 'mountain people' or 'hill tribe' groups (the Lisu, the Luwa, the Shan, the Khan, the Karen, and the Yao) and Vietnamese refugees (Erwiza Erman and Mayasuri Presilla, 2003: 15). Besides Vietnamese refugees, there are also Myanmar refugees along the Thai-Myanmar borders. This paper will look at the Thai-Myanmar borders and their problems.

Thailand and Myanmar, formerly called Burma, have a long, unique history relating to both frontier regions. The frontier region between Thailand and Myanmar is an important area that has undergone radical changes during the past one hundred and sixty years. Most borders between Thailand and Myanmar were negotiated many years ago and tend to remain fixed (Constante M. Wilson and Lucien M. Hanks, 1985: 1). The border between Thailand and Myanmar is about 2,400 kilometres long from the infamous 'Golden Triangle' in the north to Victoria Point or Kawthaung in the south.

Most of the border area is covered by forest and mountains and inhabited by various ethnic minority populations e.g. the Mon, the Karen, the Kareni, and the Shan. Most of these minority groups are opposed to the Myanmar government and have waged political and armed struggle for wider autonomy or outright independence. The Myanmar government is actively suppressing these uprisings and political persecutions are widely reported from various areas. As a result of these conflicts, worsened by Burmese military attacks, many ethnic minorities have moved to the border areas inside Thailand and are living in several refugee camps.

There has been a continuing deterioration of the Myanmar economy because of political isolation, so most people there do not have the opportunity for higher education or productive employment. The government and local authorities continue to impose taxes on people that make their lives more difficult. As a result of these complex socio political constraints, thousands of Burmese people are coming to Thailand in search of political asylum, jobs, and income; for a better life.

Due to the difficult terrain and thick forest, as well as long standing political differences between Thailand and Myanmar, road and transportation infrastructure are generally poorly developed in the border areas. At present, there are four major border crossing points along the Thai-Myanmar border, from north to south: (1) Mae Sai - Tachilek, (2) Mae Sot - Myawaddy, (3) Sangkhlaburi - Phyathongsu or Three Pagoda Pass, and (4) Ranong - Kawthaung (Supang Chantavanich, 2000: 188). In addition, there are many other smaller border crossings in several provinces, but the whole border is porous and usually not very rigidly monitored by either country, thus allowing for a continuous flow of people.

Many areas on the Thai-Myanmar border have become home to a mixture of refugees, political activists, local villagers and migrant workers. There are also many traders, tourists and visitors of both countries the numbers of which vary from place to place. The upper Thai-Myanmar border is also known for its notorious opium producing 'Golden Triangle' and drug trafficking routes at various points. In recent years other drug production facilities like those producing the drug 'ecstasy' have reportedly moved from Thailand to hidden areas inside Myanmar.

The Thai-Myanmar border has also been the focus for the trafficking of girls and women, mostly from Myanmar and China, for sex work. Even now Mae Sai, Mae Sot, and Ranong have a large number of Myanmar sex workers but it is not clear if any of them are victims of recent trafficking or not. What is known though is that some of them were trafficked to the brothels in the past but following the closure of the brothels many could not find alternative ways of living so stayed on in sex work (Supang Chantavanich, 2000: 188). At present most of the sex workers have freedom of movement and it appears that they are 'voluntarily' working in the sex industry.

The fast growth of the sex industry on the Thai-Myanmar border contributed to the spread of HIV/AIDS and other easily transmittable diseases. It is therefore very important to understand the Thai-Myanmar border in the context of migration, human trafficking and (child) prostitution or the sex industry, especially those factors causing child prostitution, characteristics of prostitution and also how the Thai government can cope with it.

B. CROSS BORDER MIGRATION ON THE THAI-MYANMAR BORDER

1. Cross Border Migration: Definition and Brief Description

Cross border migration is the mass movement of populations across a border from the country in which they belong to another country for a continuous period, where they are remunerated for work activities. The International Travel Regulation defines a period of one year as the length of stay in the new land which determines migrant status. Tourists who travel to a country are not migrants due to their short stay. Transients or sojourners who travel regularly from one country to another country are not migrants either according to such a definition (Supaphan Kanchai and Shakti R. Paul, 2002: 11).

Migration certainly belongs to the key phenomena, which characterize the present social and political developments in the world. At the same time, it is one of the core problems in need of better international solutions. International migration movements can be viewed as normal and in no way extraordinary developments. In taking a historical example, the North American and Australian continents would obviously look different today if international migration had not taken place. The same, though, can be said about any other region of the world, as none of today's metropolises would have developed without major internal and cross border migration. Accordingly, the present century has been referred to as the age of migration (Supang Chantavanich, 2001: 2).

The emergence of major migration movements can create problems, which national governments around the world find difficult to cope with. Among the problems most often named are the sometimes catastrophic appearance of migration and refugee flows and the difficulty of controlling such movements. An unwillingness to develop a more appropriate migration policy and to address the issue from a broader perspective, aside from acute political crises, has also been diagnosed for inter state bodies like the European Union and the ASEAN association (Supang Chantavanich, 2001: 2).

Southeast and South Asian countries have been incorporated into the global changes in many ways, and Thailand has developed a tradition of both accepting immigrants and sending Thai migrants abroad. Over the past century, only relatively small groups of people moved out of the country permanently while population groups of different ethnic origin came into what is now Thailand, among them groups of Shan, Karen and Mon origin. At present, Thailand's labour migration situation is more complex since the country shifted from a formerly labour supplying country into the position of both a labour receiving and labour sending country.

2. The Growth of Cross Border Migration on the Thai-Myanmar Border

Thailand has a long history of immigration from neighbouring countries notably from Laos, Myanmar, China, and Cambodia. Over the last two decades, rapid economic growth in Thailand has effectively transformed the country from a labour exporter during the 1970s/80s to a de facto labour importing country by early 1990. Since then thousands of migrant labourers from neighbouring countries have been entering Thailand in search of better paid jobs. Most of them are from Myanmar with relatively smaller numbers from Cambodia, China, Laos, and South Asian countries. Migrant workers, legal or illegal, can be found in most provinces of Thailand. The most important entry point into the country for migrant workers is through the border areas since some of those are not rigidly controlled.

Borders are magnets for many people with one of the most important groups, both due to sheer volume and socio political implications, being migrant workers. However, border areas attract many mobile population groups, including traders and businesspersons, as well as general commerce which brings many truck drivers into the areas. In addition, there are increasing numbers of tourists in some border areas, and often a large presence of police and military.

Criminal gangs have been known to operate on many of these borders and these areas have been sources of, and transit points for, trafficking in drugs, in women and girls for prostitution, and for the smuggling of a range of goods and artifacts.

The number of migrant workers, especially from Myanmar and Cambodia, has increased rapidly over recent years as the economy surged in Thailand and remained relatively stagnant in the two other countries. In 1999, the Thai government estimated that there were more than 500,000 migrant workers in the country, mostly from Myanmar. This is down from the estimate of one million in 1997. From this estimate of one million it was determined that registered migrant workers constituted only 29.3% of the total number of migrant workers (Supang Chantavanich, 2000: 13).

In September 1996, the Thai government issued a directive for the registration of and subsequent issuance of temporary work permits to undocumented migrant workers. This followed two previous failed attempts in 1992 and 1994 to regulate the flow of undocumented migrant labour into the country. During this last round, the migrants from three neighbouring countries namely, Myanmar, Cambodia, and Laos were allowed to register. Out of a total 76 provinces in the country, 43 were permitted to register migrants in eight authorized occupations: construction, fisheries, fisheries related industries (pier work, cleaning seafood, etc), and industrial production (shrimp paste, fish sauce, squid drying, tapioca, lumber rice and pebbles), agriculture, mining, land transportation, and domestic helpers. Many others were not allowed to register e.g. those working in garment or shoe factories, restaurants and other service sectors, gasoline stations, retail shops etc. Prostitution is, officially, illegal in Thailand and therefore, all direct and indirect commercial sex workers (CSWs) as well as entertainment workers were also not able to register. The result of this was that among the registered migrant workers, in 1997, 89.35% were Burmese followed by 8.71% Cambodians and 3.95% Laotians. They were heavily concentrated in the border areas with Myanmar, as well as

in Bangkok and nearby vicinities. Since the economic crisis occurred, hundreds of thousands of migrants have been sent back across the border (Supang Chantavanich, 2000: 14).

At present, there are more than one million illegal migrants throughout Thailand, mostly from Myanmar. They prefer to cross the border into Thailand illegally, without making use of any recruitment agents, because it is easier and cheaper than utilising a recruitment agent which often needs some inquiry and is more expensive. Most ethnic Burmese along cross borders have strong local connections, so they do not pay any fees to cross the border, or pay less than they would to a recruitment agent. Therefore, it is not surprising that this fact has contributed to the increase of illegal migration in the border areas.

3. Causes of Cross Border Migration on the Thai-Myanmar Border

Migration can be classified by its causes of which there are two: the first is natural or man made disasters and the other is by the decision of the migrants, that is, forced migration or voluntary migration. There are many issues surrounding workers' rights and the plight of migrants in their hometowns, which motivates them to seek greater opportunities in Thailand

Economic motivation was the most important reason to migrate during the economic crisis. Higher wages and better employment opportunities are pull factors for migration. People will move from an economically less advanced country to a more advanced one. Economically, Burmese are worse off than Thais because of the instability of the political situation, low wages, low agricultural productivity and high unemployment in the country. A dramatic increase in the cost of living has contributed to the worsening social situation in Myanmar.

Therefore, it was no wonder that during the economic crisis there were massive waves of Burmese migration across the border, especially on the Mae Sai, Mae Sot, Ranong, and Sangkhlaburi borders, into Thailand in search of jobs and better pay.

Myanmar is governed by military power and political instability in the country adds to the migration wave across the border. At times also some minority groups in Myanmar, which are opposed to the government and have waged a political and armed struggle for wider autonomy or outright independence have been prompted to leave. Therefore, a combination of many of these conditions has caused the massive migration to Thailand.

In the past decades, Thais or Burmese crossed the borders freely. After Thailand experienced good and progressive economic growth and Myanmar's economic growth was still stagnant, even tending to decrease, the number of people who wanted to cross the border, both Thai and Burmese, was limited or tightly controlled to reduce the Burmese migrants crossing into Thailand in search of jobs.⁷

Often, cross border migration has been interpreted in a context of a threat to national security or sovereignty while only seldom is it viewed in a broader context in the political sphere. This interpretation often causes misunderstanding in both countries. Therefore, cross border conflicts often occur with the last conflict relating to the Thai-Myanmar cross border breaking out two years ago. The establishment of a Joint Economic Quadrangle Committee (JEQC), which consists of Thailand, Laos, Myanmar, and China, is one of the ways it is hoped to reduce the cross border migration and eliminate cross border conflicts.

⁷ Interview with Tanomsak Serivichyaswat, President of the Thai-Myanmar Cultural and Economic Cooperation Association, May 21, 2004.

There are many issues facing migrants at their destination. They are faced with many difficulties, whether in the border areas or in other places in Thailand, along with the recently increasing unemployment. The government is responding to increasing unemployment among Thais but employers argue that Thais do not want most of the jobs taken by migrants. Therefore, the problem of migrant versus Thai is that migrants generally work for very low wages and have no health or welfare support.

It is no surprise that police and immigration officials control the movement of the migrants. Because of the migrants' illegal status, the authorities often have to take unpopular actions against them. Sometimes they arrest the migrants for illegal entry into the country or impose a fine for illegal employment. They also deport the migrants across the border to Myanmar. In addition to their job related encounters with the migrants, the police and immigration officials are often blamed for ill treatment of the detained and arrested migrants. There are numerous reports about physical and sexual abuses of migrants by the police, which results in a strong dislike of them. On the other hand, some employers and health officials are more understanding and provide support and services as required (Supang Chantavanich, 2000: 140).

Health problem and access to services can be a problem which is now made worse by the increasing prevalence of HIV/AIDS and the unique characteristics of border areas which tend to facilitate the spread of HIV/AIDS, especially the fast growth of prostitution on the Thai-Myanmar cross border areas.

C. HUMAN TRAFFICKING AND THE SEX INDUSTRY IN NORTHERN THAILAND

1. Background

Commercial prostitution, as opposed to the indigenous practice of concubinage, appeared in Southeast Asia in the late 16th century. The coming of European men to Southeast Asia supported the growth of prostitution. It can be seen that since then the sexual relations between foreign men and local women began to more closely resemble the modern understanding of prostitution as a commercial transaction. In the 18th century, prostitution appears often to have been practiced on boats anchored in city harbours, the prostitutes being mostly women who had been sold into debt bondage.

Thailand is one of the Southeast Asian countries, which has a long history in prostitution. The growth of prostitution on a large scale in this country points to the Vietnam War and the stationing of thousands of American troops in Thailand. During the Vietnam War, women, mainly from the poorer Province of Isan in the northeast and from the northern Province of Chiang Mai, began to migrate to the areas close to American air bases in Thailand as well as to the urban centres where soldiers were taken for rest and recreation (R & R) leave. These women were to provide sexual services in the mushrooming bars, discos, and massage parlours built to cater for the military and, increasingly during the 1970s and 1980s, to tourists. Even after American military forces pulled out of Vietnam in the early 1970s, prostitution continued to grow as tourist agencies picked up where the military left off. Patriarchal structures in Thai society, the role of the dutiful daughter to maintain the family income and religious teachings that placed women below men in the social hierarchy, along with regional poverty were the driving factors behind women's entry into prostitution.

Tourism has had a significant influence on the growth of the sex industry in Thailand. In 1987 tourism became the main income for that country; better than the annual income from textiles and paddy rice (Walden Bello, Shea Cunningham, and Li Kheng Poh, 1988: 228). In the same year, around 3.48 million tourists visited Thailand and spent more than 50 million baht (Chaiwat.Satha-Anand, 1991: 89). It is most important to note that the growth of tourism led to an increase in crime and prostitution. The Visit Thailand Year 1987, led to more children being trafficked into tourist sites for prostitution. The Amazing Thailand Tourism campaign for 1998-1999, is also thought to have brought more children into the sex trade (*Bangkok Post*, 24 November 1999). This growth of prostitution led to the spread of HIV/AIDS in Thailand.

After the first Thai AIDS case was detected in 1984, the Royal Thai government mobilized all efforts to control the epidemic. In 1995, the prevention and alleviation of HIV/AIDS strategy was integrated into the eighth national economic and social development plan. This was done to instill the desire to contain the AIDS problem and to minimize the damage to the existing economic and social infrastructure. The explanation below will stress human trafficking and child prostitution on the northern Thai cross borders.

2. Human Trafficking and Child Prostitution in Northern Thailand

Prostitution means selling one's body for sexual use and exploitation. The growth of prostitution in Thailand has had an almost universal effect. There are laws against prostitution, but they are not enforced. The police force is corrupt and often joins the pimps in making money. In Thailand today, women and children are oppressed, abused, exploited, and degraded by society. Daughters of poor families are often sold into prostitution.

Some parents sell their children because they need the money for food and dope. Many parent are duped into selling their children and do not realize what kind of lives their children will lead (Sirirat Pusurinkham, at <http://thewitnes.org/agw/pusurinkham.121901.html>).

Culturally and socially acceptable sexual behaviour may vary from country to country and even within the sub populations in a country. For example, many of the hill tribe and ethnic minority populations in northern Thailand have a much more open attitude towards commercial and extramarital sex than those from the southern part of Thailand. 'Khuen khru' or getting the first sexual experience with a 'professional' woman before marriage has long been a common practice in Thailand.

Around 80,000 women and children have been sold into Thailand's sex industry since 1990, with most coming from Myanmar, China's Yunan Province, and Laos. Trafficked children were also found on construction sites and in sweatshops. In 1996, almost 200,000 foreign children, mostly boys from Myanmar, Laos, and Cambodia, were thought to be working in Thailand (*Bangkok Post*, 22 July 1998).

2.1 The growth of Child Prostitution

Child prostitution, which exists in almost all countries, including America, Germany, Great Britain, Japan and France is becoming a serious problem throughout the world. In Asia, it is thought that more than one million children (girls and boys) are involved in commercial sex (www.thaiembdc.org/socials/childprs.htm).

Among Southeast Asian countries, child prostitution is a most serious problem in Thailand. According to the United Nations report in 2001, child prostitution in Thailand was in the third place behind India and the United States.

There were 400,000 child prostitutes in India, 244,000-325,000 in the United States, 200,000 in Thailand, 175,000 in Central and Eastern Europe, 100,000 in Brazil, and 35,000 in West Africa (www.thaiembdc.org/socials/childprs.htm).

Northern Thailand is a popular destination for both foreign visitors and for the Thais themselves. The area conjures up romantic images of green rolling mountains flanked by paddy fields and colourful hill tribe villages. The beauty of the area, however, belies a much harsher reality. Each year thousands of young girls are trafficked from the local area and neighbouring countries for purposes of sexual exploitation. They are sold, forced, and coerced to become not only prostitutes, but also beggars, domestic workers, factory workers, and construction workers.

2.2. Factors Placing a Child at Risk of Prostitution

2.2.1 Poverty

Poverty is the main reason why children enter prostitution. This does not mean that the children are so poor that they have nothing to eat, or that the poorest of the poor undertake this work. Nevertheless, the lack of wealth is the main factor that pushes most children into this work.

The next two most important factors are that the children want to be rich and lack education. These two factors are related to poverty. The lack of education is a reflection of poverty. Most of the children in the remotest areas of northern Thailand leave school at the end of Year 6 or Year 9 because their families cannot afford to pay for their education. The rapid increase in school enrolment, especially in Chiang Rai Province since 1983, is a result of families becoming economically more secure. They have fewer children on average and are finding it easier to educate them and ensure that they do not enter prostitution.

The importance of poverty is also demonstrated by who the sex workers of Chiang Rai are. There are fewer lowland Thais working in this field even though numerically they are the dominant group of the region but their economic position is far better than that of the hill tribe communities or the migrants from Myanmar. At the national level, foreign girls are more often found in prostitution. Since 1996 there have been more stories about foreign girls, namely from Cambodia, Laos, and Myanmar than about Thai girls.

2.2.2 Materialism

It is not always poverty that forces children into prostitution. Materialism, the need for a better standard of living or the desire to have the latest and the best or simply to have, has been a driving force pushing children into prostitution. Consumptive culture, which was created by fast economic development in Thailand, spread throughout the country, including into remote areas. It has given birth to a perceived need for money. As a result, many farmers living in poverty sold their young girls in order to buy electronic products, vehicles, and agricultural machinery made in Japan (Yayori Matsui, 2002: 14).

Materialism is one of the substantial reasons for why children enter prostitution, although behind that of poverty. It seems that sex work provides the only means for upward mobility for many girls and women. Materialism is often in the perception of the beholder. Some people claim that girls entering prostitution were doing so in order to gain material things but more often than not they already had the material objects that they were striving for. They were not in poverty and did not need to sell their bodies in order to maintain their standards of living.

2.3 Main Pattern of Entry into Child Prostitution

There are numerous ways in which children from northern Thailand have entered into prostitution ranging from being 'sold' to 'volunteering' themselves. Agents were the most important way of recruitment of new child prostitutes. In the 1980s, agents even came to schools to seek victims in the remotest areas in northern Thailand. It would seem that at present agents are still operating, but the character of agents is now maybe changing. The agent today is likely to be an ex or current sex worker and someone known to the girl. Relatives and friends who are sex workers also try to persuade children to enter this work. The sex worker's debt is reduced if she can recruit a friend into the business (David Celentano et al. 1995: 21). Sex workers are likely to be a large proportion of today's agents.

The second most common reason for entry into prostitution is being tricked. This method, if still used, is likely to be restricted to only certain groups. The hill tribe children from Myanmar, especially Akha children, could be more easily tricked into prostitution due to their lower levels of education. The Akha children indicated that they were at high risk of being tricked. It seems that many *Jae* (a Chinese word for older sister that has entered the Thai language) enter a village to trick the girls into prostitution by offering them good jobs.

The third most common way of recruitment is by the children volunteering themselves. It may seem depressing that children would volunteer to do this work and it can be argued that they would not be aware of the consequences. However, many children living in poverty know that there is one occupation that can earn them a lot of money. Becoming a sex worker for some children is a rational decision.

The next two methods of entry into prostitution are parents forcing children and parents selling their children. It is indicated that children are sometimes forced into prostitution by their parents. It is frightening that any parent would force their child into prostitution. However, when this does happen it is too easy to blame the parents. Reality is likely to be far more complex than parents simply forcing their children into this work. Rather than the parents, it is the evil of poverty that is to be blamed. If this is still taking place today it is the Thai government that should be held responsible, as there is a lack of social security and policies to alleviate poverty. According to a Thai Member of Parliament, who is the president of an NGO working with female teenagers in northern Thailand, today neither parents forcing or selling their children into prostitution exists anymore. *Tok khiew*, a down payment system where agents give loans to villagers with the farmers pledging their daughters in exchange has received attention (Rodney Tasker, 1994: 28). However, this system no longer exists.

Who is at high risk of child prostitution in northern Thailand? There are many groups at high risk, among them hill tribe children. These children are more likely to leave school at the end of primary school because of poverty, augmented by poor roads, drugs, and because many of the children do not have Thai citizenship and lack a decent school.

Children from Myanmar are also a group at high risk of becoming child prostitutes, especially in Mae Sai. Prostitution is well known in Mae Sai because the area has an active sex market, which includes a number of under age girls who are from Myanmar. Conflict in Myanmar and greater levels of poverty in that country have created a massive flow of girls and women into the sex industry in Thailand.

According to some sources, the girls from Myanmar are a major component of child prostitution in the region.

Street children are also at risk of being victims of child prostitution. Even though the number of children who are in this situation is not large in Chiang Rai, the majority of street children are from Mae Sai, which means from Myanmar, with the next largest group from hill tribe communities throughout northern Thailand. This is where street children from Myanmar first arrive in Thailand. They make a living by begging, selling things, and also by selling their bodies. This location seems to be a stopover point for street children from Myanmar before they enter the Bangkok, Pattaya and Chiang Mai sex market.

3. Impacts of Prostitution: Spread of HIV/AIDS

The most important impact of prostitution growth in Thailand is the spread of HIV/AIDS which has spread well beyond the Thai-Myanmar border. Thailand was the first country in Asia to experience an AIDS epidemic and northern Thailand remains one of the most affected areas in Asia. HIV was first detected 19 years ago in Thailand and the epidemic proportions were detected in sex workers in the north 16 years ago, in 1988.

Therefore, what will be the final arbiter in the struggle over prostitution is the advent of AIDS. AIDS is spread rapidly and efficiently by the brothels because, basically, men do not like to use condoms, and the women can ill afford to refuse a customer who will not. The rapid onset of the disease is imminent, if not already in progress, simply because most of the men visiting prostitutes report having nonprostitute partners as well. Of those men who had both types of partners, prostitute and nonprostitute, most men who had unprotected intercourse with prostitutes also had unprotected intercourse with nonprostitutes. The men who patronize prostitutes bring the disease home to their wives, and ultimately, their children ([Http://www.paralumun.com/issuethai.htm](http://www.paralumun.com/issuethai.htm)).

There are now more than one million people infected with HIV/AIDS in Thailand. Over 260.000 people have died since the beginning of the epidemic including 60.000 in 1997. HIV surveillance in 1998 showed that 1.49% of pregnant women were HIV positive and 21.05% of direct sex workers were also positive. Here migrants cannot be ignored. They are vulnerable to HIV/AIDS infection and they may, along with other mobile groups, spread HIV across borders.

4. Policies and Law

The Thai Government has run a national HIV/AIDS program to reduce the spread of HIV /AIDS since the 1990s. In 1996, it issued *Prevention and Suppression of Prostitution Act*, which moves the emphasis of guilt for child prostitution onto parents, customers, agents, and sex establishment owners and has had a role in reducing the number of child prostitutes.

The legislation has played a role in changing the nature of prostitution in Thailand. It has helped reduce the number of brothels, once a major feature of the Thai sex industry. The decline of brothels is important in the fight against child prostitution as the majority of child prostitutes have been located there or in low class bars away from the public view. It seems also that the new legislation and police crackdown on brothels have played an important role in reshaping the sex industry in Thailand.

The government of Thailand is aware that AIDS is a serious problem, therefore it has set up a National AIDS Committee which has formulated two policies, namely 1) A policy aimed at prevention and behaviour change; and 2) A policy to provide adequate medical and other services to deal with the problem. This policy includes the provision of suitable personnel for both care and counseling and to encourage the acceptance of AIDS sufferers by the community (Niels Hoerup et al. (eds.), 1998: 62).

In order to implement these policies the National AIDS Committee developed an Action Plan 1997-2000, which emphasizes the need to encourage a responsible attitude in both individuals and the community in order to create the potential for preventing the disease and avoiding the problems, which the disease is associated with in the environment and society. The Committee is also trying to foster a holistic approach by encouraging the cooperation of government organizations, nongovernment organizations and the people with HIV/AIDS. The objective is to decrease the rate of incidence at which AIDS is occurring in the country.

The Ministry of Public Health also laid down procedures for HIV/AIDS prevention and control in 1997, in which one of the operation plans is a program on 'Continuum of Care'. This program aims to solve the problems of HIV/AIDS patients and families that have suffered physically, psychosocially, legally and ethically by the promotion of family and community based care.

D. Conclusion

Borders are magnets for many people. The cross border between Thailand and Myanmar is one of the most dynamic cross borders in Southeast Asia. The border, which stretches for about 2,400 kilometres from the infamous 'Golden Triangle' in the north to Victoria Point or Kawthaung in the south, has become of critical concern in recent years in the fight against illegal migrant workers and HIV/AIDS.

Because there are no rigid controls at the border crossing points along the Thai and Myanmar border, this border is the most risky border area in the Greater Mekong and Southeast Asian region with criminal gangs known to operate here. The Thai-Myanmar border has also become a transit point for trafficking in drugs, in women and girls for prostitution, and for the smuggling of a range of goods.

One of the most important matters needing to be understood in relation to the Thai-Myanmar border, especially in northern Thailand, is the fast growth of the sex industry. The fast growth of this industry here has contributed to the growth of human trafficking and child prostitution and to the spreading of HIV/AIDS. Poverty is the main reason children in northern Thailand are lured into prostitution, besides materialism and the tourism campaign. Therefore, it is no surprise that Thailand became the first country in Asia to experience an AIDS epidemic and northern Thailand remains one of the most affected areas in Asia.

The government of Thailand has tried to cope with the spread of HIV/AIDS by issuing the Prevention and Suppression of Prostitution Act in 1996 and the legislation has played a role in changing the nature of prostitution in Thailand. Efforts which, at least, have succeeded in controlling the spread of HIV/AIDS on the Thai-Myanmar border of northern Thailand.

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CROSS BORDER NETWORKS AND TRADE ROUTES: THAILAND - BURMA

By
Rucianawati

A. INTRODUCTION

Burma, borders Thailand on the west and the north. The two nations have engaged in regional warfare over centuries, tracing it back to the period of Ayutthaya. In spite of that, people on both sides of the border, Thai and Burmese, have benefited from cultural and social exchanges, as well as economic relations. They have been trading and crossing the frontiers for many years.

The border region between Thailand and Burma, which runs for about 2,400 kilometres, is important for social and economic contacts for people along the border. The Thai-Burmese border, with borders to Laos, is part of what is known as the '*Golden Triangle*' which has become one of Asia's main illicit opium growing areas, where people, mainly in the highlands plant the opium poppy. Although opium grows well there, trade activities in various other products, such as beans, fish, crafts, forest products, and livestock has also been going on for a long time.

The economic activities on the Thai-Burmese borders include the activities of the highland and lowland people in the border areas, the major part of which is covered by mountains and forest, with a traditional road. The highland people sell their products and buy goods for their needs, as do the lowland people. We will learn how the system of trade or barter was carried out and the way the goods move across the country, from Thailand to Burma, and from Burma to Thailand.

B. CROSS BORDER NETWORK

At the end of the 19th century, Britain and France stabilized and carved out international borders surrounding northern Thailand with the boundaries of Burma and Laos. This decision on the borders brought changes for the people who live around the borders, since among other things, they had to follow the regulations put in place to decide their allegiance. They could not do just as they liked as previously, in social and economic activities because now there was a law that had to be obeyed. Their activities would be labelled 'illegal activities' if done without the permission of the government.

Of the 76 provinces in Thailand there are ten that share the border with Burma: Mae Hong Son, Chiang Rai, Chiang Mai, Tak, Kanchanaburi, Ratchaburi, Petchaburi, Prachuap Khiri Khan, Chumpon, and Ranong. Geographically, the long stretch of mountains and hills with highlands and lowlands divide Thailand and Burma. Historically, the highland people have always had connections with lowland people in their activities of exchanging products and other necessities. In the cross border network, it seems that there are no significant changes in the relations between the highland and lowland people before and after the borders were carved out, particularly on the Burmese and Thai borders. In the Thai-Burmese border areas, various ethnic groups have resided since long ago. This paper will explain the existence and the network of the Karen and the Lahu, for example, in their activities in cross border trade.

The Karen is the largest single upland people in northern Thailand. Most of them live in the mountainous areas of the western provinces along the Thai-Burmese border. The majority of the upland people are agriculturists, although they do not produce enough for themselves. The Karen of the upland villages in Chiang Mai are sub-subsistence rice producers, this means a direct purchase of rice from lowland rice exporters. Besides, many household necessities must be imported, such as dried fish, salt, tobacco, fermented tea, cloth, pottery and jeweler.

The Karen is the consumers of local lowland products and farmer trader redistributed products from other parts of north Thailand. However, the Karen are the primary producers of pigs and buffalo.

An example of the activities of lowland people can be seen in the valley of the Khun Yuam River of the Mae Sariang District in the Mae Hong Son Province, which is populated by people who identify themselves as descended from northern Thai, Shan, Burman, Karen, Lua, and Taungsu people. They are primarily irrigated agriculturalists who grow rice for their own consumption and for sale. The upland people import rice from this area, distributed by traders from the lowland to the upland. Indians (Mostly from the Chittagong area of Bangladesh), Chinese and central Thais are found in towns. They are merchants, government officials or employees of large companies (Kunstadter, 1967: 69).

Local lowland products are distributed through regulated channels of trade, which range from purely local distribution and exchange systems involving discrete complexes of Karen and lowland villages, to intricate and long established trade routes. Marlowe (1967) explains the frequency of the trading activities of the Karen of upland villages. The pig buyers from the lowlands, for example, appear in the Karen villages on an average of about once a week, while water buffalo purchasers tend to visit Karen villages once in a three month period. Peddlers and stock buyers visit more distant villages about once a month. Lowland farmer peddlers selling tobacco, fermented tea, betel, sugar cane cakes, and the like, visit Karen villages as often as once a week. Trade is a continuing and all pervasive series of interlocking sub systems that weave the uplands and the lowlands into an economic whole.

Rice purchase in this area is primarily oriented to traders in major market centres such as Chom Thong, Ban Peh, Samoeng, Mae Na Jon, Pai, and Mae Sariang. Karen of the Chiang Mai uplands tend to do business with specific traders who are willing to extend credit, often for lengthy periods. The trader more often is also the purchaser of secondary crops and forest products from the Karen. The majority of these Karen local trade relationships are highly stable, involve specific trading partners and appear founded upon reciprocal trust. In some cases, the trading relationships between Karen villagers and certain north Thai farmer peddler families spans three generations (Marlowe, 1967: 57).

The Lahu community in north Thailand is another example of an ethnic minority group involved in border trade activities. Most of them are agriculturists, whose primary concern is their subsistence requirements. They prefer to sell rice, pigs, and fowls to members of other ethnic groups, who may also be called in to play the role of intermediaries. Outsiders often bring manufactured goods, such as cloth, shoes, radios, rifles, cooking utensils, and so on, which they use to barter for vegetables. Buffaloes, cattle and horses also have commercial significance. Some villages raise goats, geese and ducks, which may be sold. The Lahu, most of whom live in northern Chiang Rai, Chiang Mai, and Mae Hong Son Provinces play an important role in the cross border trade activities.

Besides producing livestock, planting rice and secondary cash crops, the Lahu grow poppies both for consumption and for cash. They pay taxes to the local prince. Opium transactions within the village and with other villages are common, since opium poppies are a traditional primary cash crop planted by hill tribes in the Thai section of the notorious 'Golden Triangle'. For many years, peasant cultivators in this region produced a major share of the world's opium. Indeed it can be said that the hill tribes in this area have depended on opium production in the past.

The caravans and traders would buy the opium from the highlanders and then bring and sell it in the lowland areas. This activity can be seen in Plate 1:

Plate 1 A typical caravan moving heroin probably near the Thai-Burmese border



Source: *Drug Intelligence Brief, BURMA COUNTRY BRIEF MAY 2002* (www.dea.gov).

The hill people of the border regions served as buffers between the lowland principalities, and sometimes were temporary allies in warfare, or controlled trade in the midst of lowland politics. On the long established regular trade routes, which crossed northern Thailand leading to Burma, China and Laos, the upland people played an active part in this trade as customers, suppliers and in caravans (Peter Kunstadler, 1967: 71).

The traders involved in the trade activities of uplands-lowlands, and the border areas generally had come from ethnic groups, such as Chinese or Indian, Muslim traders and local people. It is noted that in the 1840s, Chinese caravans had long brought salt, broad sun hats of straw, and iron kitchen ware from Yunnan to trade for cotton and forest products the majority of which came from the upland people. To the markets of fortress

towns, they carried silks and gold leaf to barter for ivory. The bulk of this commerce, however, was local or regional exchange in rice, betel nut, livestock and slaves (Constance M. Wilson and Lucien M. Hanks, 1985: 3).

It can be said that the border trade network included the uplands with their agricultural and forest products, the lowlands with their production of goods needed by the uplands, and the traders or peddlers (majority Chinese and Indian), who sold and bought goods in the upland or lowland areas. It is noted that Thai-Burmese border trade activity has a long history, but the real regulated border trade occurred right after Burma got independence from Britain in 1948. Major items that were heavily traded included rice, timber and other agricultural products.

Between 1962 and 1987, Thai-Burmese ties reached their lowest ebb and mistrust grew. It was caused by the different political courses the two countries took where Burma turned socialist while Thailand applied anti communist policies. However, the illegal market along the border areas proliferated.

Since the late 1980s there has been much greater contact at higher levels between Thailand and Burma, which is partly related to the end of communist insurgencies and partly to the more 'open door' economic strategies the Burmese military have adopted following the failure of the Burmese Way to Socialism.

On the Thai side, there has long been an interest in securing access to some of Burma's vast natural resource wealth, including timber, fisheries, water and gemstones (Carl Grundy-War and Elaine Wong, 2001: 114). General Chavalit Yongchaiyudh, who was then the Thai Commander-in-Chief, facilitated early cross border business deals.

The 'open door' policies, particularly in the economic aspects of the two countries, give more chances for the people to intensify trade relations, and hope to reduce the black market trade. Since 1983, bilateral trade between Burma and Thailand has expanded significantly. This is partly because of better relations and partly due to an increase in demand for goods in both countries. Official trade between Burma and Thailand has increased since late 1988 when Thai authorities began a form of constructive engagement with the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) governing Myanmar following the SLORC's military crackdown on student led pro democracy demonstrations (Carl Grundy-War, Rita King and Gary Risser 1996: 88).

Burma's major imports from Thailand are miscellaneous edible preparations, pharmaceutical products, iron, steel, aluminum, clothing apparel, beans and pulses, marine products, raw rubber, vegetables and fruit, and industrial art objects. These commodities will have to be imported until Burma makes major policy changes to produce them. Imports from Thailand have also to be made because of insufficiency in Burma's production of chemical raw materials required for the pharmaceutical industry, textile industries and light industries. For Thailand, the major imports from Burma are wood and wooden articles, especially of teak. Other imports from Burma are precious stones, metal, fish, crustaceans, mollusks, minerals, fuel, oil, wax, rubber, and synthetic leather. These commodities will continue as imports from Burma because of increasing demand now that Thailand is becoming a trade centre among the Asian countries and a rival to Hong Kong and Singapore (King Maung Nyunt, 1988: 92-93).

Illegal exports to Thailand include timber, gems, minerals, livestock and drugs from the 'Golden Triangle', while Thai exports to Burma across the border are mostly manufactured goods, including textile products, plastic goods, pharmaceuticals, machinery and spare parts, electrical goods, foodstuffs, watches and miscellaneous goods (Carl Grundy-War, Rita King and Gary Risser 1996: 96). These illegal markets still go on

although the government encourages the legal trade. It can be understood, that the illegal trade might cost less than the legal trade, where traders must pay tax. Particularly in the illegal opium trade, Renard (2001) notes that since the early 20th century, Chinese traders have monopolized the smuggling on both sides of the border.

Chinese groups established links with the Muslim Haw traders and other traders from China. The opium growing areas are scattered across the higher hills of northern Thailand. Among the opium growing groups in northern Thailand, the largest and most intensive cultivators are the Hmong. During World War II, the smuggling network was elaborated and links were made in the network to facilitate exporting opium from southern China, the eastern part of British Burma, and upper Laos through Thailand. (Renard, Ronald D. 2001: 13-15).

The opium-heroin trade of the 1980s stemmed from a history of international political machinations in the countries of and around the Golden Triangle. The hill tribes grew the opium. Insurgents and separatists in Burma transported it. Yunan Chinese living in northern Thailand taxed it, and Chaozhou Chinese (overseas Chinese living in Bangkok and Hong Kong) bought and exported it (www.exploitiz.com). Thailand and Burma always suspicious neighbours, increased cooperation in an effort to eliminate traffic in narcotics along their borders.

As is known, the 'Golden Triangle' was the centre of the drug trade, so the two governments arranged for limited intelligence exchange on narcotic refineries and trade routes along the border and cooperated in combined tactical mission against the narcotic traffic. (www.exploitiz.com).

Thailand is a key transit point for illegal immigrants and migrant women and girls from Burma, Laos and China to third countries like Malaysia, Japan or the United States (www.cwa.tnet.co.th). From this fact, it can be deduced that the border areas are not only the way for the goods trade, but also the way for human trafficking.

C. TRADE ROUTES

Over their history, Thailand and Burma have had trade contact for a long time, particularly in the border areas. In general, the border trade is the outgrowth of conventional practices for the social and economic development originally focused on the border people (King Maung Nyunt, 1988: 93). The border trade along the Thai-Burmese border first took place a long time ago, and used the same trade routes.

During the reign of the sixth king of the Chiang Mai Dynasty, King Kawilorot, it can be noted that Chiang Mai became a centre of trade. The city market was busy with many kinds of products, such as rice, tobacco, honey, fruit, flowers, betel nut, lime, dried fish, and pork. Shan and Chinese traders lived in shop houses behind the market. There were trade routes within and outside the city. Merchants travelled by packhorse or pack ox on land and by boat along the rivers (Guidebook Chiang Mai National Museum: 72).

Trade between the uplands and the lowlands on the borders was carried out primarily in lowland markets. Usually the farmer-trader made one or more trips per year to market, carrying a load of rice or forest products on his back, or leading a pig. Some villages specialised in the production of crafts such as grass mats, clay pots, and silver work, which were sold mostly in the mountains. Some traders sold their goods to friends and relatives who had moved down to the valley to sell in the market (Peter Kunstadler, 1967: 74).

Villages in remote areas, under a day's walk from the nearest market centre, are rarely visited by professional traders. Haw, Shan or north Thai traders who mostly come from Samoeng, Chom Thong, Mae Sariang, Khum Yuam and Chiang Mai usually visit villages with their pony caravans (Marlowe, 1967: 57).

Though many upland people feed themselves through their own production of rice or other grains, they have for years been involved in the sale of cash crops, livestock and labour. Some have surplus rice to sell or trade, locally or in the lowland markets. They may also sell livestock (especially pigs), forest products and some garden crops such as peppers or cotton (Peter Kunstadler, 1967: 73 - 74).

On the border of Burma and Thailand, two main overland routes are currently used most often; they are the Keng Tung - Tachilek - Mae Sai - Chiang Mai route and a route connecting Myawaddy and the Thai border town of Mae Sot, six miles across the Moei border river.

Further south there is some trade across a narrow strait between Kawthaung and Ranong. The main border outposts along the Thai side of the border are Mae Sai, Mae Hong Son, and Mae Sariang in Chiang Rai Province, Mae Sot in Tak Province, and Kra Buri and Ranong in the southern tip of Thailand (Carl Grundy-War, Rita King and Gary Risser quoting Mya Than, 1994). These are also key crossing points for the trafficking of women and children. Now that the Burmese military has pushed deep into the territory formerly held by ethnic minority armies, Yangon (Rangoon) has effective control over long stretches of the border for the first time since Burma's independence (Carl Grundy-War, Rita King and Gary Risser quoting Lintner, B., 1996: 88). Indeed new border crossings have been opened to facilitate cross border activities.

Since the late 1980s, migration flows into Thailand have soared as a consequence of the socio economic and political hardship in surrounding countries, which together with Vietnam form the Mekong basin region. Over the years, the same trafficking routes have been used, with two kinds of cross border junctions: the official checkpoint and the hidden jungle or river passes. (www.cwa.tnet.co.th).

Along the Thai-Burma border, six border outposts are used for cross border trade. They are Mae Sai, Mae Hong Son, Mae Sariang, Mae Sot, Kra Buri, and Ranong (Plate 2). In general, fishery products and charcoal, beans and pulses, are popular imports into Ranong, while live animals, precious stones, and beans and pulses, are brought across the frontier into Thailand at Mae Sot (King Maung Nyunt, 1988: 95).

Mae Sai and Mae Sot are important cross border routes between Thailand and Burma in the north, while Ranong is in the south. From Burma, several other channels are used. Passages from Shan and Kayah States into the Province of Mae Hong Son have also been reported.

The central channel refers to jungle passes from the Karen border areas into the Thai border district of Sangkhlaburi, in Kanchanaburi Province. (www.cwa.tnet.co.th). Sangkhlaburi relates Thailand with the Phayathongsu or Three Pagoda Pass in Burma.

Mae Sai, the town at the most northern point of Thailand, located 62 kilometres north of Chiang Rai and 32 kilometres from the 'Golden Triangle' is the largest border export and import market of all the six border market points along the Burmese-Thai border. In 1986, ninety three per cent of total border exports to Burma were through Mae Sai.

Plate 2

Thai Customs Outposts along the Border including those between Burma and Thailand Border



Source : Department of Customs, Bangkok.

A small bridge connects Mae Sai to a little Burmese town, Tachilek. From Tachilek, the traders can reach Keng Tung. The second largest cross border point is Mae Sot, while Ranong is the third (King Maung Nyunt, 1988: 106).

The volume of Thai border trade with Burma can be seen in the Table below:

Table 1: Thailand's Border Trade with Burma (in thousand baht)

No.	Customs Ports	1983		1984		1985		1986	
		Export	Import	Export	Import	Export	Import	Export	Import
1	Mae Sai	52713	531	139263	1002	97175	756	123923	795
2	Mae Hong Son	-	2861	-	7886	-	10029	-	5863
3	Mae Sariang	-	8394	-	661	-	4343	-	1638
4	Mae Sod	7	3757	72596	6956	24414	4952	6495	2366
5	Kra Buri	-	3901	-	11129	-	12710	-	12074
6	Ranong	2587	33637	1286	144458	2576	80412	4735	35980
Total		55307	53081	213145	172092	124165	113202	135153	58716

Source: *Department of Customs, Bangkok.*

Mae Sai is essentially a trading post known for its brisk trade in gems and precious stones with rubies, emeralds, jade and a variety of other offerings brought in from Myanmar for sale. The prices of those goods in this busy little town are quite a lot lower than in Bangkok and is the reason why the Thai-Burmese border has become a popular shopping stop for tourists. There is plenty of trade between the two towns, Mae Sai and Tachilek. Besides the trade in precious stones, illicit trading takes place in the region with drugs the main product imported from Burma.

Not only the Thai and Burmese but also the Chinese, with their commercial skills, play an important role in trading activities in Mae Sai and Tachilek. A Chinese temple near the bridge is one of the sites. Chinese traditional medicine, dried mushrooms, and fruit that are unavailable elsewhere in Thailand, can be found there. All the goods from both sides of the border are transported by motorcycle, trolley, handcart, truck and all other manner of wheeled vehicles (www.thaifocus.com).

Mae Sot, 503 kilometres north west of Bangkok, has at least five places as market centres: Moe Li Chai, Phar Lu, Mae Sa Lin, Mae Tak and the Moei river bank outpost. Moe Li Chai has the largest volume of trade. Mae Sot is across from Myawaddy, which is

classified as a black area in Burma. For security purposes, certain areas of Burma have been classified into black, which indicates that they are under rebel control, grey, which indicates alternate control between the rebels and the government, and white, which means under the government (King Maung Nyunt, 1988: 98).

Burmese traders come to Myawaddy on an average of three times a month. If there is no fighting between Burmese troops and rebels in that area, 400-800 or more traders arrive. Most of them come to buy goods from Mae Sot. From Myawaddy, the Burmese traders go to Moulmein, the third largest city of Burma. The difficult and risky journey from Myawaddy to Moulmein takes two days (King Maung Nyunt, 1988: 98).

Another route that connects Mae Sot with Moulmein is via Moei Li Chai. There is a wooden bridge across the Moei River that demarcates the border, between Burma and Thailand. Moei Li Chai has the largest daily volume of trade in Mae Sot. Traders feel safe here, because there is protection from the Karen National Union (KNU), one of the largest ethnic groups among Burmese rebels. The KNU promises security to the black-marketers, in return for a tax. Traders have their goods carried by hired porters who trek for four days if going from Moe Li Chai to Moulmein. Burmese traders prefer to trade during the rainy season when security is at its maximum (King Maung Nyunt, 1988: 98).

Ranong, another trading outpost along the Thai-Burmese border is 600 km. southwest of Bangkok. Across Ranong is Kawthaung, the southernmost township of Burma. Burmese boats come daily into Ranong port from different points with purchases of fish, prawns, and other seafood. At Ranong, fishing is the major business of both the Thais and the Burmese. The Burmese sell their fish and other seafood, then buy diesel oil for their craft and chipped ice for freezing fishery products in their boats until they move once again into Ranong. Other commodities traded are beans, pulses, charcoal and rattan for making furniture. It is estimated that about 50-100 Burmese boats come in daily,

increasing when the price of goods is attractive. The round trip from Ranong to Kawthaung takes about seven days. There are no less than 150 warehouses of different sizes in the Ranong port stocking goods from Burma (King Maung Nyunt, 1988: 102).

The volume of border trade determines the income of Burmese traders at the borders. A large number of textile imports into Burma from the Mae Sot border point were not only for sale in Burma but also for re-export to Bangladesh, and India through the Burma-Bangladesh border and India-Burma border (King Maung Nyunt, 1988: 108).

Thailand opened a border checkpoint in the Chiang Dao District of Chiang Mai to allow Burmese teak to enter the country. Rangoon agreed to provide military protection for the wood during its transportation from the Burmese interior to the border. More checkpoints would open should the Chiang Dao checkpoint operate smoothly (King Maung Nyunt quoting the Bangkok Post, 1988: 113-114). Before British logging companies began operating in the north, traders from Burma, Shan areas and China monopolized the trade along the border of Burma and Lan Na. Although these trade routes were ancient and well established, the people still use them today. Chinese played an important role in the boat trade between Chiang Mai and Bangkok. They were skilful, familiar with the routes, and had good connections with traders in Bangkok (Guidebook Chiang Mai National Museum: 74-75).

The economy of Burma continues to suffer from extensive trading of goods on the black market. In 1985, about two thirds of such goods were smuggled in from Thailand, and the total, illegal trade was thought to have a turnover of up to 50 per cent of official trading (King Maung Nyunt quoting the Europe Year Book, 1988: 94). In Burma, only the government officially handles export and import trade. In the beginning, it looked as if Burma would allow the minorities to trade with Thais without much interference, but later it became apparent that the Burmese government was searching for ways to disarm

the minorities and wrest direct control of the border trade. In the late 1990s, Burmese troops attacked the minorities and tried to exert control over their strongholds in the border areas. Thus, border trade as a whole, is regarded as illegal in Burma. In Thailand, export import business can be undertaken also by the private sector. Thai foreign exchange transactions are done freely, subject to the existing rules and regulations of the government.

The southern Burma-northern Thailand border was once the primary transit point for Burmese produced heroin destined for international markets. Heroin produced in Burma also enters Thailand for personal consumption and for onward transshipment to drug markets throughout the world (www.dea.gov). The two countries, Thailand and Burma, try hard to reduce this activity in joint narcotic suppression and proposed demarcation of the border areas.

D. CONCLUSION

Cross border areas between Thailand and Burma can be said to be the centre of activity among the people who live along the border. Many little towns have become central market places where the people of the two countries make economic contacts. The trade activities along this frontier have existed for a long time; before the boundaries of the two countries were carved out. It seems that there have been no significant changes in the networks of border trade for centuries. One that should be noted is the policy of the Burmese government which became stronger and stronger in its attempts to control the border trade.

The border networks among the upland and lowland people in the border areas is usually based on mutual trust, and can run for some generations. Not only the Thai and Burmese are included in the border trade activities, the Chinese, Indians, and Muslims also take part in this.

It can be said that the trade activities on the Thai-Burmese border are a part of the global trade network, although some of the activities, mainly the trade in drugs, are labelled 'illegal trading'. In trade border activities, caravans travelling north and south generally traverse established routes. There are a number of border outposts used in the cross border trade along the Thai-Burma border, including the legal way (via the main road) and illegal way through the jungles and along the rivers. Among the many border outposts, a major border crossing point between Thailand and Burma is Mae Sai, which in turn has become the favourite place for tourists who want to spend their money on goods such as precious stones that are cheaper here than in other towns. Since 1983, trade between Burma and Thailand has expanded. The two countries realize that cross border trade could bring advantages to both countries by additional measures to legalize trans border trade. Border trade between Burma and Thailand appears to play a significant role in the economic development of both countries.

What we can learn from the networks and trade routes of the Thai-Burmese borders is that border trading will support the development of the border areas, as the people profit from their activities. This means that they can increase their prosperity. On the macro scale, the trade border will bring advantages to the two bordering countries, if there is good management. One thing needed is the support and the protection from the government, not the prohibition that brings out resistance among the border people. Indonesia can learn from the Thai-Burmese border case, in order to manage and develop its border relations, as in the border trade of Kalimantan-Sarawak, and Papua-Papua New Guinea. Border areas could be developed as the centres of economic activities supported by physical development, such as the development of means of communication and transportation. Thus, the border areas that are usually far from the centre of the country do not become backward districts, but become the front yards and lead the economic development of the country.

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LEGAL AND ILLEGAL TRADE ON THE BORDER BETWEEN THAILAND AND BURMA

By
I Ketut Ardhana

I. LEGAL AND ILLEGAL TRADE: THE POLICY OF THE THAI GOVERNMENT

The environment affects the cultural traditions of people, not only in the region called the border areas but in other parts of Southeast Asia and elsewhere. As we have noted Thai economic development really began after the Second World War when the King in his coronation speech, pledged to: 'reign with righteousness for the benefit and happiness of the Siamese people'. He initiated the first Royal Development Projects with infrastructural and water resource development in the central south of the country in 1952 and over the next ten years directed his efforts towards solving immediate problems. After visiting the northeastern region of Thailand for the first time in 1955, he began to formulate his determining thesis that integrated systematic development, largely based on sustainable agricultural practices. This he believed would be fundamental to the long term livelihood of the population ('The King and the Environment' in *The Nation*, January 7, 1995).

The border area in north Thailand is called the northern region, in what is known as the Golden Triangle. In Chiang Saen, the three states of the Golden Triangle, Myanmar, Laos and Thailand agreed to build a gateway to illustrate the relations among them using their animal logos, like, a *naga* for Myanmar and an elephant for Thailand, with at its peak a poppy symbolizing opium. At that time, opium was traded legally among the states in the Golden Triangle and was known, from China, through Southeast Asian countries and even in Europe. Through opium too the names of towns and small cities like Chiang Saen, Chiang Mai, Chiang Rai, Ban Rom Thai and Mae Chan, became familiar.

The border area was considered a free region, over which people living in the surrounds could move from one place to another carrying their goods to sell to their neighbours. The best known and synonymous with the Golden Triangle product was opium which was very expensive at the time. As some people remember it, one kilogram of opium could be exchanged for one kilogram of gold. From historical evidence we know that opium was brought from China to the Thai, Lao and Myanmar boundaries. Opium grows very well at an altitude of 3000 meters. The indigenous people who live here are the Hmong, the Lisu and other small ethnic groups.

There was no state or police able to control the traffic of people or goods in the area. It is said that people could sail from Chiang Saen, the oldest city on the border, to Vietnam in eight to nine days and from the same place to South China in five to six days. This means that from ancient times to the present, there have been many hill tribe people moving across the borders. If there was trouble in the border area between Myanmar and Thailand, Myanmar people could leave Myanmar and come across the Thai border (interview with Prateep). Today, few governments around the world match the Burmese military regime for repression of opposition and dissent. Civil organizations such as trade unions are suppressed and forced labour is allowed. Slave labour and child labour are common, and the ruling military elite is noted for its corruption and involvement in the illicit drug trade.

It is important to note that the Aid Group APHEDA has played a major role in assisting refugees and migrant workers on the Thai-Burmese border since 1995. This includes providing help for Shan speaking migrant workers and refugees.

One of the tasks of the organization is to assist in six projects for Burmese refugees on the Thai-Burmese border and to support medical training and mobile medical clinics, vocational training for refugee and displaced communities, schools for refugees as well as providing information and education based radio programs for migrant workers in Thailand ([www.apheda.org.au/projects/thaiburmal/thaiburma border](http://www.apheda.org.au/projects/thaiburmal/thaiburma%20border)).

Banya Hongsa (2003) reports that illegal trade, migration, smuggling and other activities seem just a part of the ordinary life of the local people along the Thai-Burma borders. In relation to the infrastructure of transportation, it can be said that the Myawaddy-Moulmein road is one of the most practical roads for merchants during the wet season. The Three Pagodas Pass-Moulmein road for instance, is closed from 3 to 4 months every year due to poor road conditions. This road is used by the local people of the Mon and Karen states who rely on border trade but are wary of illegal tax collection at a number of border checkpoints. Most truck owners did not make much of a profit during the last rainy season as they had imposed upon them heavy illegal cash collection by the Burmese troops and other armed people on the border route. A truck owner from Moulmein told me: 'We must always pay a fee at all border checkpoints and to our drivers, so we make only a few thousand kyat'. All vehicles are charged at least 18,000 kyat at various checkpoints on the route to Myawaddy from Moulmein, the capital city of the Mon State. They must pay the Burmese troops, the traffic police, the local police force, the immigration police (*lawaka*), guards on bridges, troops of the DKBA (Democratic Karen Buddhist Army) and the local security forces. The truck owners pay 30,000 kyat including a gas fee for one return trip. They charge 2,500 kyat per passenger and if they bring no goods to Moulmein the owners make no profit. Illegal goods from Thailand are sold at Myawaddy since the truck owners bringing goods to Moulmein are punished by the authorities if goods from Thailand are found in the truck.

Meanwhile the Royal Thai Government and Burmese authorities led by the State Peace and Development Council agree to deport illegal migrants and a 'Temporary Holding Centre' has been set up in Myawaddy town.

II. SOCIO ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENTS BETWEEN THAILAND AND OTHER STATES

One Thai institution, called the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) is an international contract which covers several aspects such as the economy, trade, governance, legislation, diplomacy, culture and security. The aim of the FTA is to establish international economic cooperation in diversifying both export and import markets and enhance mutual cooperation among allied economies as well as construct linkages within Asia and throughout the rest of the world. At present, Thailand has already established FTAs with countries such as China, India, Bahrain, Japan, Australia, USA and Peru.

Sub Regional Economic Cooperation

The Greater Mekong Subregion Economic Cooperation (GMS) project was launched in 1993 with assistance from the Asian Development Bank (ADB). It focused on streamlining procedures and regulations for the facilitation of trade and investment and other economic activities to build capacity for the private sector as well as to attract investment to the sub region. In addition to this, there is progress in sectoral cooperation. From the aspect of transportation we can see firstly, a project on the East-West Economic Corridor, linking Myanmar-Thailand-Lao PDR and Vietnam. The route from Myawaddy (Myanmar)-Mae Sot-Mukdahan (Thailand)-Savanmakhet (LaoPDR)-Danang (Vietnam) is to be completed in 2004. The second Mekong Bridge will be constructed in 2004-2006. Thailand and Myanmar also plan a western route from Mae Sot to Thaton via Pa-an for 2004. Secondly, a North-South Economic Corridor, linking Thailand-LaoPDR/ Myanmar and the PRC will be constructed. In this project the building of the road via Myanmar, from Mae Sae (Thailand)-Kengtung (Myanmar)-

Mongla-Kunming (PRC) has been completed. The road via LaosPDR-Chiang Khong (Thailand)-Houay Xay Laoung Numtha-Boten (LaoPDR)-Jinghong-Kunming (PRC) will be constructed in 2004-2007. In addition to this, Thailand will help develop the coastal route from Trat (Thailand)-Koh Kong-Sre Amble (Cambodia) to be completed in 2006. Finally it is important to note the Cross Border Transport Agreement. All 6 GMS countries have signed the agreement to help facilitate cross border movement of goods and people among them. The agreement will be fully enforced in 2005 (*Thailand in Brief 2004*: 87-89).

III. HOW DANGEROUS IS THE BORDER AREA BETWEEN THAILAND AND BURMA IF A CONFLICT BREAKS OUT?

There is still the ongoing potentially dangerous issue relating to the border between Thailand and Burma, since Burma is under a military junta. As is well known the people of Burma have since 1962, suffered under a military dictatorship with the result that opposition and dissent have been crushed. Besides that, trade unions and civil organizations are suppressed. This situation has allowed forced labour and forced relocations nationwide, education and health services are underdeveloped, and poverty and hunger are widespread. Therefore, up to one million people are internally displaced while hundreds of thousands of people who fled the repression inside Burma endure a harsh and insecure life in refugee camps or as 'illegal' migrant workers in neighbouring countries like Thailand.

There are many hill tribe people shot by the Myanmar soldiers, including some innocent Akha or Karen people. Although, border areas are sometimes considered safety areas for refugees from Myanmar, until now the Thai government considers the border area between Myanmar and Thailand a dangerous place, since at times Thais cross the border when suddenly the Myanmar government closes the gate.

One time the border was closed for seven weeks then officially reopened on November 24, 1999. Another time Burma reopened its border with Thailand after a diplomatic row sparked a five month closure and crippled regional trade. The problem increased after Burma closed its border with Thailand on 22 May, 2002. This occurred after the Thai army fired shells into Burma during a battle between the Burmese army and ethnic Shan rebels. The Thai government claimed that its forces opened fire only when the fighting spilled over the border, but Burma accused them of aiding the rebels.

Another conflict broke out when the Burmese military junta closed the border in retaliation for the Thai handling of the October 1 seizure of the Burmese embassy in Bangkok by five gunmen from the Vigorous Burmese Student Warriors (VBSW). Later on negotiations took place over the resumption of economic ties. The Thai government negotiated an agreement that saw the students flown to the border and released without charge. Regarding this issue, the Thai Interior Minister, Sanan Kachornprasart heightened the fury of Burma's military regime, by refusing on behalf of Thailand, to apprehend and try the VBSW members by declaring: 'We don't consider them to be terrorists. They were student activists who were fighting for democracy.' The border gate in Mae Sae was closed in September 2003 over a conflict, which occurred, between the people of Myanmar and the military or the supporters of Aung San Suu Kyi against the military (Kumara, 1999: 1). However, a Thai shopkeeper in Mae Sot, blamed Burma's pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi and oppositional political forces for hurting her business and praised one of Burma's top junta leaders, Gen. Khin Nyunt, for encouraging trade at Mae Sot in the past (Aung Su Shin, 2003). This particular disagreement had a great impact as the shopkeeper said confusion and uncertainty over the political situation in Burma had meant that no Burmese customers had come to her shop since July 2003. After the arrest of Suu Kyi and her supporters in Upper Burma on May 30, 2003, border trade was slow in comparison to the previous period. However, tougher US sanctions, approved by President George W Bush on July 29, have had an

even worse impact. Just before the sanctions came into effect, foreign banks refused to honour Letters of Credit from Burmese banks. Since the ban on US currency exchange, banks in Burma no longer have access to dollars so importers and exporters across the country have had to consider other ways to make transactions (Aung Su Shin, 'Sanctioned Burma Hopes to Double Border Trade').

In Aung Su Shin's opinion (2003) tough US sanctions are hurting people at the grassroots level without affecting traders or highranking officials. Khin Shwe, for instance, a leading private businessman based in Rangoon with close links with to of the top generals, claims that transport links between Myawaddy and Rangoon are good and that it only takes ten hours for goods to reach the capital from the border. It is important to note that businessmen encourage traders to barter or use Thai baht, since sanctions have put the US dollar off limits. According to traders in the border areas, however, wholesale trade has come to a complete halt, since merchants on the Thai border have stopped placing orders. A Burmese trader in Mae Sot, for instance, said that only retailers who sold food were still going. He explained that 'the only reason I came across the border to Thailand is to get some of the things I had left behind. I don't buy commodities any more' (Aung Su Shin, 2003).

Sometimes the cross border trade comes to a standstill, with Burma blocking the Ranong crossing in the south, the major Friendship Bridge and the Mae Sai crossing in northern Thailand. Kumara (1999: 1) also notes that according to the head of the Mae Sai Chamber of Commerce, Suchart Brirattana, the closure was costing Thai businessmen 25 million baht (\$US 620,000) a day in lost trade in consumer goods, apart from construction materials and gasoline. Any out break of conflict was inevitably followed by a closure of the borders, and Burma's barring of the Thai fishing vessels from its waters. This had negative impact, as the fishing ban affected some 400 Thai trawlers licensed to fish in Burmese waters and up to 5,000 Burmese workers normally employed

on the vessels. According to the head of the Provincial Fisheries Department at the southern Thai port of Ranong, a ban on fishing and related business lost some 43 million baht (\$US 1.1million) a day.

Despite the economic impact on both countries, the Burmese ambassador to Thailand, U Hla Maung, indicated on October 13 that the Rangoon regime was prepared to continue the closure indefinitely: 'We want Thailand to arrest the five who stormed the Burmese Embassy and put them on trial here the five are arrested, the sooner the border and the fishing problems will be solved' (Kumara, 1999: 1). There are two, namely, the New Mon State Party and the DKBA who are members of ceasefire agreement camps to SSPDC in Myanmar. The DKBA travel armed while driving their vehicles, so the government troops dare not give them trouble. In addition to this, a few vehicles with registration by the DKBA have better opportunities because the DKBA soldiers sit in their cars for protection.

It can be noted that they have access to border trade and other local business in Burma. In addition to this, the local Immigration Officers ban all girls and young women crossing to border towns without accompanying male relatives. This happened to two young girls, for instance, who planned to visit their siblings at Myawaddy but were turned back to Than Phyu Zayat in September 1999. The authorities assume that young girls are illegal migrants to the Thai border. Despite the Royal Thai Government's declaration of no further legal employment status for new arrivals to Thailand, many migrants still seek to enter Bangkok. The Kao Wao News Group wrote that 'they can only earn 50-60 baht a day in Measot, but in Bangkok they can double their wage' (Kao Wao News Group, 2004: 2).

In recent days, however, the reopening of the border checkpoints illustrates that the close relationship between the two countries has returned. Boomthiem Chokewattana, who is the head of the Customs Office at Mae Sot, one of the main border crossings, said that the border closure had lost Thailand about 5 billion baht (\$113.7 million) in trading activities. Apart from legal products crossing the porous 1,800 km (1,125 mile) border there is the illegal drug running. Both countries, through the Thai Foreign Minister Surakiart Sathirathai and his Burmese counterpart Win Aung discussed cooperation in the fight against, in particular, illegal drugs (Worldview Rights-BBC, in *Burma Today Weekly*).

In the past, the Myanmar government did not allow the border areas to be used as tourist sites but recently it seems to have realized the benefits of the tourist industry and allowed their people, wearing sarongs, to come across the border to sell their goods. The kinds of goods exported by the Thai merchants are food, beverages, clothing, vehicle spare parts and construction materials, while gems, furniture, seafood and cattle are usually imported from Burma. The region on the Myanmar border side is poor and underdeveloped in comparison to the Thai border side. We can see there many Myanmar women covered in yellow powder, Myanmar men wearing sarongs and Myanmar children begging for money from tourists. In my interview with Mia, a tour operator, I was told that it was better to give them food rather than money, since if we gave them money more and more children would come to ask us for it.

At present, the Thai government allows tourists to come across the Myanmar border, but very quickly, for instance, three minutes, to avoid danger if anything should happen in the border area. At the border gate between Myanmar and Thailand in Mae Sae, tourists wishing to cross the border can receive a 15 day visa very fast. However, there is still the serious question for the Thai government regarding the national status of those people who are local residents. When the previously colonized states in the region became

independent, neither they nor Thailand formally acknowledged the status of the hill tribe people such as the Akha, the Karen and the Hmong. The people from the western part of Thailand such as the Akha, the original inhabitants and the Hmong migrants were thought to deforest the mountain slopes without worry about conservation of the source of soil fertility. Only for less than the last 20 years in Thailand, if a child of the Akha as an adult marries a Thai woman can he be considered a Thai..

Renard (2001: 25) writes that among the opium growing groups in northern Thailand, the largest, most intensive cultivators were the Hmong. He quotes from early UN opium surveys, that opium was the 'mainstay' of the Hmong economy. Although patterns varied, most Hmong grew corn and rice in the rainy season months from about May until November and opium in the cold season from October until January. Sometimes they grew fruit trees, one type of which was a peach used for pickling, which often earned them considerable income. The Hmong raised livestock, hunted and gathered, manufactured handcrafts, and engaged in cottage industries.

In the case of the Hmong village of Khun Wang in the Chiang Mai Province, almost 120 hectares was used for growing the main crops of rice, opium, and corn. Less than 5 hectares were used for vegetables, fruit trees, and other crops such as tobacco and castor oil beans. Over three times as many days were spent working on the main crops as on all the others put together (Renard, 2001: 26).

IV. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN THE BORDER AREA

In the near future Chiang Rai in Thailand is expected to develop more than Chiang Mai for particular reasons. Firstly, Chiang Rai is the nearest important entry point for the movement of goods from Burma, China and Laos. Secondly, Chiang Rai is and is planned to continue to be the gate for the movement of goods from Thailand to Laos, China and Burma. It is quite true, that in border areas like Mae Sae there is smuggling

of electronics many Thais going there to buy radios, compact discs and other goods more cheaply than elsewhere. Good quality tape recorders, for example, cost only 2000 baht in Mae Sae while in Bangkok they cost around 15.000 baht.

Thailand initiated the notion of a Joint Economic Quadrangle Cooperation (JEQC) consisting of four committees from the neighbouring countries. This grouping, established in 2001, aims to develop economic activities in the regions and improve import and export activities through the borders. In interviews with members of the Chamber of Commerce of Chiang Rai, I was told that the flow of people and goods in the border is considered to have a positive impact on the Thai economy so the cooperation will be intensified in keeping with the notion of the JEQC. However, one needs to ponder whether this open area will give rise to the problem of illegal movements of people. Through an interview with a boatman in Chiang Saen, I found out that the southeast part of China is unlike other parts of China as it depends on the flow of agricultural goods from Thailand. Meanwhile, Chinese ships bring many products including clothes. The daily movement of Chinese ships travelling to Thailand is more than of Thai ships to China. Chinese sailors have the ability to navigate the ships, indeed, in the Mekong River the Chinese sailors can better understand the river conditions, including those of the rocky areas. The flow of goods from China can clearly be seen in the Chiang Rai market and the markets in the border areas of Laos.

The Thai government has concerns that this rapid flow of goods could result in a weakening of the local economy. Therefore, it has come up with a strategy to encourage the local economy, by the development of local handcrafts to become the most important means to counter any obstacles. Chiang Rai had been notorious through opium production, so to reduce the bad image of the border areas, the Thai government has attempted to increase the prosperity of people in this region by increasing their skills especially by involving them in small scale enterprises.

Based on our observations, there are many cottage industries, including ceramic production, clothes making and weaving, supported by the government, in the area surrounding the city of Chiang Rai.

This is simultaneously encouraging to the government policy of 'OTOP', One *Tambun* (district) One Product. The Thai government's OTOP program has been a wonderful success with Thai products now receiving worldwide recognition for the quality of their workmanship. This applies to many local and hill tribe handcrafts in the northern parts of Thailand which appeal to both tourists and locals. The Thai government has also attempted to establish a close relationship with neighbouring countries by using culture. For instance, Mekong Culture Festivals are often conducted in the region. Many tourists visiting Chiang Mai from Europe, Asia and America almost exclusively go there to shop, although going to see the nature of northern Thailand is equally popular. .

In Chiang Mai apart from the gorgeous silk products there are other industries including the one producing cottage industry type jewellery available throughout the city and the environs and that making the excellent handcrafted woodcarvings, from lifesized elephants to tiny birds. Around the Regent Resort near Mar Rim antiques and carvings, floral crafts, porcelain and much more may be found.. Some people suggested that we should obtain receipts as certificates of guarantee for genuine jewellery. Meanwhile, as well as in Chiang Mai, in Chiang Rai Province, for instance, we can also observe the night market in which local people have a major role and which attracts many tourists. Based on our observation, tourists enjoy the uniqueness of this kind of market that offers special food like edible insects that cannot be found in their countries. In several hotels there are many skillful tailors who will produce a required garment within a day or so. In addition to this, there are a number of fine retail shops throughout the city selling high quality clothing at about half the price one could expect to pay in most western countries.

The night bazaars are famous and popular. As we know, in almost all markets in the surrounding regions, bargaining is a long practiced art. Based on information from Tik, we can bargain to receive 20% to 30% off the given prices. This, however, in places such as department stores does not apply.

When we were at the market, we could see that the performance was arranged in turn between singing and dancing so that tourists would not get bored. Youngsters of the border areas, like of Chiang Rai Province, have learnt traditional dances. There were also dances from Sukhotai and Ayutthaya and other ancient places. It seems that the intention of the Thai government is not only to change the image of border areas to be the front yard of the country with an attractive culture but at the same time to improve the people's economy. Almost every night we could see in Chiang Rai many hill tribe women, including some from the Akha ethnic group, trading in the market. If we compare this with the border of Sarawak and East Kalimantan in Indonesia it seems that the image of the border between Thailand and Myanmar is more modern (Ardhana, 2004).

Taschileik is a border place where passports are checked before people go to Myanmar. We paid five baht to go from the Chiang Rai terminal to Taschileik. Here goods like gold, silver and other handcrafts are sold at a discount of 30 % to 40 %. The price of T-shirts was around 200 baht. From the Golden Triangle to Laos we paid 500 baht by speedboat. Chinese clothes are also sold in the markets in Laos where people also sell drinks like *arak* made from the cobra and other snakes. The opening of this market has been a benefit for the local people. However, the Thai government still worries in case there is illegal trade through illegal roads in the region, since there seems to be an increasing movement of people across the borders.

The hill tribe people in the northern region in Thailand speak both Burmese and Thai and relations among these people are good as indicated by the mixed marriages among them. These factors were among the causes of their coming to the border, for instance, to Mae Sae, so easily and often in the past, leading to a good knowledge of the border officials. It is true that on the border we can see many products from other countries being sold, as well as many tourists. Because of this, many people on the Myanmar side offer to pose for photographs. They persuaded us to have photos taken even though we did not want to. In addition to this we could see them offering illegal pornographic CDs to visitors.

Unlike the Thai border, the Myanmar border looks dirty and undeveloped. There are many men standing on the streets offering a number of products, like cigarettes and other things, as well as many fake goods including precious stones and jewellery.

There appears to be a general increase in human trafficking, so it is not surprising that the police are worried about this as well as about illegal trading in drugs, AIDS, illegal migration or movement of people and illegal businesses or traders, where many foreign companies come and invest in Chiang Rai and other parts of the northern region of Thailand. Security forces search through all packages and boxes, ripping open the boxes with a small knife to look for explosives and related materials.

At the Burmese border the security forces suspect everyone and search for anti government, armed activists that often use the road via local traders bringing weapons into the country. Banya Hongsa (2003) notes that the Traffic Control Board, which is under U Kyi Win, Director of the Board, monitors all trucks entering and departing Myawaddy town, on the other side of Measot. In this case all vehicles are photographed including their licence number plates, for security. For this, the Board charges every vehicle 200 kyat (Banya Hongsa 2003).

While we were in Chiang Rai, I went to the border of Thailand and Myanmar. From Chiang Rai to Mae Sae it takes one and a half hours by bus. Here there are police who check visitors' passports. On the way from to the gate between Thailand and Myanmar to Mae Sae, we saw the police check the passengers in the trucks as well. They opened the luggage and asked for passports or other identity papers. Fortunately there were no illegal goods like opium or weapons found so the police permitted us to continue our journey to Mae Sae. From this we can say, that the control of the people in those areas is strong to maintain the safety and order of the area to ensure that Thailand is a peaceful place for tourists, since Thailand depends so strongly on tourist development.

What is interesting to see here is that a lot of goods come from Myanmar, Laos, even China to Thailand along the Mekong River. From Chiang Rai to China is not more than 200 km. and it takes three days from Chiang Rai to Yunan. From the discussion with the boatmen we found out that there are many Chinese ships sailing to Thailand, since the Chinese are better at navigation. To sum up, it can be said that on the Mekong River there are three Thai boats to every 100 Chinese boats. Sometimes the boats carry a lot of apples. Generally the Chinese come to Thailand for economic reasons, which have been important for a long time. On the Myanmar border, for instance, we could see big casinos for rich people. The rich come by boat, not only Chinese, but also many Burmese and Lao. We can say that there is a lot of Burmese working in the border area with approximately one million Burmese working in Thailand illegally. This situation often worries the Thai government and it is obvious that in the northern region there is an economic problem rather than a cultural one as we can see in the southern region like on the border between Malaysia and Thailand at Pattani. Part of the reason for some of the cultural sympathy between Thailand and Burma could be due to the following: It is well known that the education system in Burma in the past was much better than in Thailand.

This was influenced by the British colonial system, which was very different from other colonial systems in Southeast Asia. As a result many Thais, seeking a better education, were educated in Burma. In addition to this there are also many Burmese who have Thai nationality working in Thailand. These people, try to explain how good relations between Myanmar and Thailand must be maintained in keeping with the concept of a good neighbourliness, since as we already know in the past the Burmese had attacked Thailand by attacking Ayutthaya, an event still remembered by both people.

CONCLUSION

From the analysis of some of the interviews, historic evidence and by reading what is available, it can be concluded as follows:

From the historical perspective on the development in the border areas between Thailand and Burma there are some issues regarding the differences between Thailand and Burma based on their historical traditions. For a long time the people of both sides have recognized the significant role of the development in the border areas, since they depend not only socially and culturally but also economically on one another, even though from the political perspective they are not in harmony, since in the past the Burmese have been considered a threat to the Thai people.

Over a long period Sukhotai, Ayutthaya, and finally Bangkok have been the main cities in Thailand. Despite occasional battles over the time both sides try to be good neighbouring states. However, the political development in one state often influences the developments in other regions, as we can see from the border issues between Thailand and Burma. Currently there is some misunderstanding particularly on the Burmese side which is reluctant to allow the eastern part of Thailand to be developed as a tourist area.

In addition to the last development, there is some change in relations in the border areas between Thailand and Burma., though both sides have been successful in changing the image of the border from the backyard to the frontyard at the entry gate of a state.

In the past, the border areas between Thailand and Burma were developed by opium production, through which Thailand is believed to have provided 70% of the world opium production. The Thai government strongly encourages attempts to change the negative image of the border areas between Thailand and Burma, where the areas are considered to be places for smuggling, illegal drug trade, human trafficking, prostitution, illegal weapons and so on. Nowadays there is a significant policy of the Thai government to try to enrich the local people by producing goods like umbrellas, ceramics, cloth, and other crafts, which can be sold to the local, regional and international markets in relation to the concepts OTOP (One Tambun One Product).

By doing this, the local people, it is hoped, will forget their old tradition of making use of opium, which can now not be tolerated by the international world. Therefore, both sides try to coordinate better economic development by rebuilding the road infrastructure in the context of focusing on the border as a centre of economic growth on the mainland of Southeast Asia, particularly in China, Thailand, Burma, Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam and Malaysia.

Until now we can see that the Burmese side is less developed if we compare it to the Thai side. The Thai border area looks more modern than the Burmese border area. In addition to this the people in the Burmese border area seem to be less economically developed, with many in the street wearing sarongs while selling goods like cigarettes, copied discs, and craft products, while on the Thai border the people sell electronics, crafts and new products with the prices here much lower than in other cities in Thailand.

One thing from which we can learn much is the security aspect in the border area between Thailand and Burma where there is often instability and criminal activity. To avoid this problem the Thai government continues to encourage the local ethnic groups such as the Akha, the Karens, the Hmong, the Lisu to use their rights to be Thai or Burmese, with the Thai government a little more successful in this policy through persuading the local ethnic minorities residing in the border areas and providing training for them. As part of all this, many of their cultural products are utilised in tourist development in Thailand. We need to learn better how to learn more from the Thai experience in arranging the border to be a place of economic development.

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Executive Summary

**Trade Contacts in The Cross-Border Areas
Between Burma and Thailand 1900 - 2002**

**(KONTAK-KONTAK PERDAGANGAN
DI PERBATASAN BIRMA DAN THAILAND 1900 - 2002)**

I. PENDAHULUAN

Kajian perbatasan (*cross-border issues*) menjadi masalah yang signifikan di Asia Tenggara setelah berakhirnya era Perang Dingin (*the Post-Cold War*). Apabila tidak ada ancaman kekuatan-kekuatan bipolarisasi yang berarti akan memunculkan persaingan dan berbagai kepentingan di negara-negara yang letaknya saling berbatasan itu. Tidaklah mengherankan apabila masing-masing negara di kawasan itu mempunyai anggapan untuk memberikan perhatian yang serius berkenaan dengan peningkatan kemakmuran wilayah itu. Berkaitan dengan persoalan inilah perlunya perhatian yang lebih memadai agar diupayakan peningkatan jaringan transportasi lintas batas (*transboundary transportation networks*) yang disebut "*corridors of growth*", dalam pengertian bahwa di kawasan itu pertukaran ekonomi, masalah sosial dan politik sering berlangsung. Infrastruktur lintas batas, aktifitas bisnis yang ramai telah mendorong munculnya diskurs tentang keberadaan wilayah perbatasan yang disebut dengan "*border bonanza*", "*golden quadrangle*" atau lingkaran pertumbuhan Asia (*Asia's "growth circle"*). Permasalahan-permasalahan yang dikaji dalam penelitian ini:

- Memahami hubungan sosial ekonomi di antara masyarakat di perbatasan antara Thailand dan Birma.
- Di satu sisi peningkatan aktifitas di daerah perbatasan telah membangkitkan aktifitas ekonomi di kawasan ini, namun di pihak lainnya telah memunculkan persoalan yang sangat kompleks dalam kaitannya dengan upaya-upaya penciptaan situasi keamanan di Asia Tenggara pada umumnya.
- Distorsi yang muncul terutama erat kaitannya dengan terjadinya jumlah perpindahan manusia yang tidak terdaftar (*undocumented migration*), lalu lintas manusia (*human trafficking*) dan prostitusi antar wilayah perbatasan (*cross-border prostitution*).

- Di sekitar wilayah perbatasan ini telah muncul kelompok minoritas yang berbatasan antara Birma dan Thailand dan peran mereka dalam kaitannya dengan perkembangan di wilayah Thailand Utara dan segi tiga emas itu.
- Oleh karena itu perlunya pemahaman intensitas hubungan antar kelompok etnik di perbatasan yang sebenarnya sudah berlangsung cukup lama.
- Seringkali terjadi konflik-konflik yang terjadi antar ke dua wilayah terutama ditinjau dari aspek ekonomi, politik dan kebudayaan.
- Perlu kajian yang lebih mendalam mengenai seberapa jauh keterlibatan negara dalam membantu proses penyelesaian.
- Pelajaran apa yang dapat diambil dari adanya konflik yang berkepanjangan itu dalam kerangka untuk memahami konflik-konflik yang terjadi di Indonesia dalam skala nasional dan di kawasan Asia Tenggara dalam skala regional.

II. MANUSIA, LINGKUNGAN DAN TRADISI BUDAYA: KASUS THAILAND DAN BIRMA

Thailand adalah negara yang sekitar 40% penduduknya bergerak di sektor pertanian. Kemajuan dalam sektor ini menyebabkan penyerapan sebagian penduduknya untuk bekerja di daerah pedesaan. Hal ini diikuti oleh migrasi yang cukup pesat dari penduduk yang bertempat di bagian timur dan utara kota Bangkok. Sejak tahun 1960-an pembangunan ekonomi Thailand didasari atas rencana pembangunan lima tahunan yang disiapkan oleh *the National Economic and Social Development Board* (NESDB). Untuk meraih pertumbuhan ekonomi pemerintah Thailand mempromosikan industri pertanian yang mengakibatkan terjadinya peningkatan jumlah produksi beras.

Produksi Beras di Chiang Mai

Rice Production	1999/00	2000/01	2000/02
Major rice (ton)	236,007	239,460	317,816
Second rice (ton)	8,837	25,054	15,654
Yield-major rice (kg)	491	517	579

Produksi Beras di Chiang Rai

Rice production	1999/00	2000/01	2002/02
Major rice (ton)	498,611	500,509	510,419
Second rice (ton)	35,126	38,224	46,091
Yield-major rice (kg)	462	461	477

Tahun 1970-an telah menunjukkan adanya jumlah penduduk yang stabil di pedesaan. Sementara itu, adanya migrasi ke Bangkok dan daerah-daerah lainnya seperti Nong Khai, Kamphaeng Phet, Petchabun, Kanchanaburi, Mae Hong Son dan Tak telah menyebabkan berkembangnya daerah tujuan migrasi dari penduduk yang tinggal di arah timur laut seperti Chiang Rai. Selanjutnya meningkatlah jumlah migran inter regional yang mencapai puncaknya tahun 1970-an sampai tahun 1980-an. Dengan dibangunnya highway tahun 1970-an dari Chiang Mai ke Chiang Rai menyebabkan kawasan yang dikenal sebagai Golden Tri Angle menjadi daerah tujuan wisata internasional.

Gross Provincial Product In Chiang Mai

Gross provincial product	1998	1999	2000
Agricultural	13.8	12.8	11.4
Manufacturing	16.2	18.1	18.9
Construction	5.7	6.2	4.8
Transport and communication	7.2	6.9	7.1
Wholesale and retail trade	10.7	10.7	11.1
Services	23.9	27.2	28.8
Others	22.5	18.1	17.9
Total (%)	100.0	100.0	100.0
Total (million baht)	82.294	81.397	81.423
GPP per capita (baht)	56.754	56.020	55.846

Gross Provincial Product In Chiang Rai

Gross provincial product	1998	1999	2000
Agricultural	21.5	19.8	21.3
Manufacturing	4.2	4.5	4.9
Construction	5.3	5.6	4.5
Transport and communication	6.8	6.7	6.7
Wholesale and retail trade	20.2	21.0	20.8
Services	18.7	20.8	20.9
Others	23.3	21.6	20.9
Total (%)	100.0	100.0	100.0
Total (million baht)	33,009	32,207	34,303
GPP per capita (baht)	29,684	28,911	30,710

III. KELOMPOK-KELOMPOK ETNIK DI PERBATASAN BIRMA DAN THAILAND: PROBLEMATIKA IDENTITAS

Di Thailand, ada dua pembagian kelompok etnik, yaitu mayoritas (Thai) dan minoritas (lihat Bradley, 1983:46). Menurut Clarke, berbeda dengan indigenous people yang dianggap sebagai “*autochthonous, or descendents of the earliest known inhabitants of a territory*” (2001:415), etnik minoritas umumnya ‘*settler populations with more recent links to a territory (often stretching back hundreds of years), who share a common identity with groups in at least one other country*’. Namun di Asia Tenggara perbedaan dua kelompok ini bisa membingungkan dan kompleks karena persoalan politik. Di Vietnam, pemerintah tidak mengenal indigenous people, tetapi semua kelompok kecil dianggap sebagai etnik minoritas (Clarke, 2001). Begitu pula di Thailand, kelompok-kelompok kecil dikategorikan sebagai etnik minoritas. Di daerah perbatasan Thailand-Burma sejak dulu dihuni oleh berbagai etnik yang dimasukkan dalam kategori etnik minoritas atau dikenal dengan sebutan *Hill Tribes*, tetapi Kampe juga menggunakan istilah indigenous people untuk menyebutkan kelompok ini (lihat Kampe, 1997:23). Para ahli sering tidak membedakan antara indigenous people dan minoritas.

Berdasarkan laporan dari Tribal Research Institute kelompok minoritas ini bisa digambarkan sebagai berikut:

Populasi Kelompok Minoritas Di Thailand

Tribes	Villages	Households	Persons	Percentage
Karen	2,132	60,385	321,900	46.34
Meo	243	16,146	124,211	17.88
Lahu	421	13,307	73,252	10.54
Akha	258	8,050	48,468	6.98
Yao	173	5,525	40,371	5.81
H'tin	148	6,090	32,755	4.71
Lisu	135	4,802	27,899	4.02
Lua	53	2,923	15,711	2.26
Khamu	32	1,988	10,153	1.46
Total	3,595	19,216	694,720	100

Sumber: Technical Service Club, Tribal Research Institute (1995:5).

Isu yang mencuat tentang hill tribes ini utamanya berkenaan dengan beberapa hal: mata pencaharian yang menggunakan sistem shifting cultivation; akses terhadap kesehatan dan pendidikan masih sangat minim; sebagian kelompok ini memproduksi dan memakai opium; dan kesadaran identitas nasional masih sering dipertanyakan. Di Thailand sendiri orang yang dulu dianggap sebagai etnik minoritas, seperti orang Luwaa/Lua, sudah masuk menjadi orang Thai (lihat Bradley, 1983). Namun, kelompok minoritas ini masih bisa ditemukan di daerah-daerah perbatasan dan mereka memiliki identitas yang berbeda dengan kelompok dominan Thai. Kampe (1997:23) melaporkan bahwa pada umumnya mereka ini tidak memiliki suara di politik nasional, bahkan kurang dari seperiga yang memiliki status sebagai orang Thailand. Berdasarkan penelitian di lapangan, melalui kunjungan ke dua desa hill tribes, ditemukan kenyataan bahwa etnik Padaung yang baru sekitar 20 tahun menetap di perbatasan Thailand-Burma di wilayah Chiang Mai, tidak memiliki identitas sebagai orang Thai.

Mereka bahkan tidak memiliki identitas sebagai Hill Tribes. Ini berbeda dengan kelompok Akha yang tinggal bersebelahan di mana kelompok Akha ini memiliki kartu identitas sebagai Hill Tribes.

Orang-orang Padaung ini tidak diperkenankan pergi ke Chiang Mai, Bangkok atau kota-kota di Thailand lainnya. Sementara orang Akha yang sudah tinggal lebih lama di wilayah tersebut diperbolehkan berkunjung ke Chiang Mai untuk menjual kerajinan-kerajinan milik kelompok tersebut. Jika kita berkunjung ke Chiang Mai Night Bazaar, kita akan melihat perempuan-perempuan Akha lengkap dengan pakaian tradisionalnya berjalan mondar-mandir sepanjang jalan di Night Bazaar untuk menawarkan dagangannya. Tetapi, kita tidak akan menemukan orang-orang Padaung atau long necks karena memang mereka tidak diperbolehkan masuk ke kota-kota di Thailand.

Kelompok Akha di propinsi Chiang Rai yang telah lama menghuni wilayah tersebut memiliki hak yang lebih istimewa, selain mereka memiliki identitas Hill Tribes, generasi muda mereka juga diperkenankan masuk ke sekolah. Generasi muda ini nantinya boleh menjadi warga negara Thai dan memiliki kartu identitas Thai. Dengan hanya memiliki kartu identitas Hill Tribes, kelompok minoritas ini memiliki fasilitas yang terbatas baik terhadap pendidikan, kesehatan, lapangan kerja maupun aspek lainnya.

Status yang “mengambang” dari kelompok-kelompok minoritas di daerah perbatasan ini juga disebabkan karena mereka masih banyak yang berpindah-pindah melewati batas negara. Mereka banyak yang semula adalah para Pengungsi dari Burma yang mengalami gejolak politik tak kunjung usai. Para pengungsi ini terkadang kembali lagi ke wilayah Burma dan ketika ada gejolak mereka kembali ke Thailand.

Belakangan ini, pemerintah Thailand menerapkan kebijakan bagi mereka yang tinggal di wilayah Thailand tidak diperkenankan untuk keluar masuk wilayah perbatasan. Jika mereka kembali ke wilayah Burma mereka tidak diperbolehkan masuk wilayah Thailand. Tetapi peraturan ini tidak mudah dilaksanakan karena daerah perbatasan ini adalah pegunungan yang sulit dideteksi atau dikontrol keluar masuk di perbatasan. Peraturan ini juga merupakan antisipasi dari peredaran opium karena sejak dulu berbagai kelompok minoritas memproduksi opium.

Kelompok minoritas yang tinggal di daerah perbatasan ini pada dasarnya masih memiliki problema identitas. Usaha pemerintah untuk mengintegrasikan generasi muda menjadi "orang Thai" bisa menjadi bahan yang perlu dipelajari lebih lanjut dimana pertanyaan tentang akan hilangkah kelompok minoritas ini menjadi pertanyaan besar.

IV. PERDAGANGAN ILEGAL DAN HUBUNGAN PERBATASAN DI BIRMA DAN THAILAND

Analisis akan dipusatkan pada kontak-kontak perdagangan yang terjadi dengan melihat latar belakang sejarahnya, hubungan etnik yang terjadi, sampai persoalan-persoalan konflik perbatasan seperti penyelundupan (*smuggling*), dalam perdagangan barang-barang dan senjata, konflik sosial dan politik, prostitusi antar daerah perbatasan yang mempengaruhi tingkat hubungan antar negara. Kondisi-kondisi seperti yang terjadi di daerah perbatasan ini seringkali sangat ditentukan oleh perkembangan ekonomi transnasional, proses pertumbuhan ekonomi sebagai akibat perkembangan negara-negara ekonomi industri baru di Asia, persoalan-persoalan kemiskinan, perkembangan lalu lintas perdagangan dan sebagainya.

Melalui studi ini diharapkan akan memberikan kontribusi terhadap pemahaman yang lebih baik mengenai pergerakan antar manusia di wilayah perbatasan di Asia Tenggara, khususnya dalam hal ini memahami secara lebih baik dalam menangani persoalan-persoalan perbatasan sebagaimana juga terjadi di Indonesia.

Chiang Rai untuk wilayah Thailand cukup berkembang yang menampilkan ramainya pertokoan yang menjual berbagai produk, dari pakaian, asesoris sampai dengan sepatu dengan harga miring. Pertokoan yang berlokasi sepanjang jalan raya di Chiang Rai merupakan daerah yang rawan dengan selundupan obat-obatan dan minuman terlarang (dimana kawasan ini mensuplai 70% dari heroin dunia), dan adanya industri seks yang kadangkala menimbulkan dampak negatif berupa penyebaran penyakit HIV. Selain itu pertokoan juga tergantung dengan keadaan politik di Birma. Menjelang akhir 2002, misalnya, pertokoan yang berlokasi di Mae-Sai ditutup beberapa hari karena gejolak politik di Birma memanas. Situasi politik di Birma juga mempengaruhi daerah Chiang Rai yang dikelilingi oleh pegunungan yang menjadi daerah perbatasan antar ke dua negara tersebut. Menyeberang daerah perbatasan antar dua wilayah di propinsi Chiang Rai itu telah memfasilitasi gerakan manusia dan perdagangan pada daerah perbatasan yang terbagi itu. Adanya upaya penyebarangan lintas batas antar negara ini telah membuka upaya untuk memfasilitasi aktifitas daerah perbatasan. Akibat terjadinya pergerakan manusia ini di perbatasan antara Laos dan Thailand terdapat kelompok masyarakat yang hidup secara ilegal. Diantara mereka adalah para mahasiswa dan aktifis politik yang melarikan diri ke Thailand. Berikut kelompok imigran yang diizinkan memperoleh kewarganegaraan Thailand sebagai berikut:

No	Kelompok Imigran	Tanggal diizinkan memperoleh status kewarganegaraan	Jumlah orang yang kewarganegaraannya dijamin
1.	Anak-anak dan orang tua yang berasal dari Vietnam sebagai akibat perang indochina tahun 1945-1946.	22 Agustus 1984	9,339
2.	Anggota dari battalion tentara Kuomintang dan keluarganya	22 Agustus 1984	5,586
3.	Kelompok minoritas etnik di pegunungan yang bertempat tinggal di Thailand Utara	22 Agustus 1984	Tidak dicatat

Pada tahun 1996 Kabinet Thailand mengeluarkan kebijakan untuk mendaftarkan migrasi buruh illegal di Thailand. Meskipun migran terdaftar itu dilakukan namun masih illegal secara teknis, kemudian pemerintah Thailand mengupayakan apa yang disebutnya secara efektif dengan amnesti sementara (*a temporary amnesty*). Kebijakan itu hanya ditujukan kepada migrant yang berasal dari Birma, Laos dan Kambodja. Ini berlaku bagi pekerjaan di 43 dari 76 provinsi yang ada di Thailand dan hanya berlaku bagi beberapa tipe pekerjaan yang sudah ditentukan. Tenaga migrant illegal diharuskan mendaftar antara tanggal 1 September sampai dengan 30 November 1996. Kegiatan ini memerlukan biaya sekitar 2500 baht, yaitu 500 baht untuk pemeriksaan kesehatan, 1000 baht untuk pembayaran asuransi kepada pemerintah Thailand dan sisanya 1000 baht untuk mengurus izin kerja. Setelah tahun yang pertama, pekerja itu bisa meminta izin kerja untuk beberapa tahun kemudian dengan biaya tambahan 1000 baht. Ini dapat dilakukan dengan asumsi bahwa mereka tidak melakukan tindakan kriminal dari tahun yang pertama. Berkenaan dengan terjadinya krisis ekonomi, tampaknya upaya untuk memperoleh perpanjangan satu mengalami kesulitan bahkan tidak mungkin. Pada akhir proses registrasi dapat disebutkan bahwa sebanyak 293.652 migran illegal dapat menerima izin pekerjaan mereka (*work permits*) yang terdiri dari 256.492 orang Birma, 11.594 orang Laos dan 25.566 orang Kambodja. Sementara sebanyak 20.290 migran gagal memperoleh izin kerja dari pemerintah Thailand. Bagaimanapun juga kebijakan

registrasi tahun 1996 ini tampaknya cukup berhasil karena kurang dari setengah dari umlah migran buruh illegal yang terdaftar tidak diterima oleh pemerintah Thailand.

Namun demikian tampaknya pihak pemerintah Thailand di bawah Menteri Pertahanan Thailand, Chavalit dan pemimpin militer lainnya berusaha mengurangi masalah-masalah bilateral di wilayah perbatasan. Yaitu dengan memprioritaskan tidak hanya penyediaan lapangan pekerjaan tetapi juga upaya penyediaan sektor perdagangan. Meskipun demikian konflik tidak dapat dihindari pula antar daerah perbatasan itu. Hal ini misalnya dapat dilihat dengan munculnya pertikaian militer yang serius sepanjang daerah perbatasan yang terjadi pada tahun 2001 oleh kedua pemimpin negara itu.

Kontak-kontak antar daerah perbatasan ini kita melihat adanya intensitas pergerakan manusia yang tidak hanya menyangkut manusia sendiri tetapi juga kebudayaannya yang sudah tentu berbeda antara negara yang satu dengan negara yang lainnya. Kadangkala situasi harmoni tercipta karena adanya kondisi agama yang sama namun kadang-kadang muncul persoalan konflik antar mereka. Persoalan-persoalan perbatasan itu menjadi meningkat bahkan tidak jarang menimbulkan konflik sosial yang berkepanjangan sampai terjadinya pembunuhan. Sebagaimana terjadi di daerah perbatasan adanya peristiwa-peristiwa itu juga merefleksikan peranan krusial di wilayah yang disebut sebagai "*Golden Quangle*" sebagai tempat pertukaran dan gerakan transnasional.

V. MIGRASI, PERDAGANGAN PEREMPUAN DAN ANAK: SERTA INDUSTRI SEKS DI PERBATASAN ANTARA THAILAND DAN BIRMA

Kawasan perbatasan antara Thailand dan Myanmar merupakan salah satu kawasan perbatasan yang paling dinamis di daratan Asia Tenggara sejak lama. Sejak masa pra kolonial, gelombang manusia pelintas batas mewarnai dinamika kawasan tersebut. Sejak beberapa dekade yang lalu Thailand menghadapi persoalan gelombang migrasi tenaga kerja dan semakin meningkat sejak dekade 1990an. Pertumbuhan ekonomi yang pesat di Thailand sejak tahun 1990an menarik para pekerja migrant dari negara-negara tetangga, seperti Myanmar, Laos, Kamboja, dan China, untuk bekerja di Thailand. Mereka masuk ke Thailand melalui beberapa titik perbatasan di Thailand, seperti Mae Sot, Mae Sai, Sangkhlaburi, dan Ranong, baik secara legal maupun ilegal.

Pemerintah Thailand pernah berupaya mengurangi laju gelombang migrasi pada tahun 1992 dan 1994 dengan memperketat ijin dan registrasi bagi para pekerja migrant, dan juga hanya beberapa sector pekerjaan yang diberi ijin untuk memperkerjakan para migrant, seperti, industri perikanan, pertambangan, pertanian, dan transportasi darat. Namun, upaya itu kurang berhasil, karena banyak pekerja migrant yang bekerja secara illegal. Pada tahun 1999 pemerintah Thailand memperkirakan ada sekitar 500,000 pekerja migrant—sebagian besar dari Myanmar—bekerja di Thailand dan hanya 29, 3% yang resmi terdaftar. Walaupun saat terjadi krisis ekonomi tahun 1997 banyak pekerja migrant dipulangkan ke negara asal melalui perbatasan, namun gelombang migrasi tenaga kerja ke Thailand tidak surut, bahkan cenderung meningkat. Saat ini diperkirakan ada sekitar lebih dari satu juta tenaga kerja migrant illegal di Thailand, kebanyakan dari Myanmar. Masalah ekonomi dan ketidakstabilan politik di negara asal merupakan faktor utama para pekerja dari Myanmar bermigrasi ke wilayah Thailand.

Para pekerja migran yang sebagian besar terkonsentrasi di daerah perbatasan tersebut menimbulkan berbagai persoalan, baik social, ekonomi, maupun kesehatan. Berbagai persoalan di perbatasan Thailand-Myanmar semakin kompleks seiring dengan pesatnya perkembangan tempat-tempat hiburan dan industri seks di Thailand. Meningkatnya permintaan jasa layanan seks di kawasan perbatasan, terutama Thailand bagian utara, mengakibatkan pertumbuhan industri seks semakin pesat.

Seiring dengan pesatnya gelombang migrasi tenaga kerja ke Thailand pada dasawarsa 1990an, berkembang pula dengan pesat perdagangan wanita dan anak untuk dijadikan pelacur di industri seks di kawasan perbatasan Thailand-Myanmar. Sejak tahun 1990, ada sekitar 80.000 wanita dan anak-anak, yang sebagian besar dari Myanmar, Laos, dan provinsi Yunan di Cina dijual ke Thailand untuk bekerja di industri seks. Perkembangan pariwisata yang pesat sejak pertengahan tahun 1980an di Thailand juga berpengaruh besar bagi pesatnya pertumbuhan industri seks di Thailand.

Terkait dengan pertumbuhan pariwisata, Thailand utara merupakan salah satu tempat terpopuler bagi wisatawan untuk dikunjungi, sebab selain menyuguhkan panorama alam yang masih asri, Thailand utara juga merupakan salah satu rendezvous bagi penjualan perempuan dan anak-anak dari negara-negara tetangga untuk dijadikan pelacur di industri seks di Thailand. Sebenarnya tidak mudah untuk menilai apakah mereka memang dijual atau sengaja menerjunkan diri ke dunia pelacuran. Yang pasti, banyak anak-anak dari suku-suku di pegunungan Thailand utara memang sengaja melacur karena masalah kemiskinan dan materialisme. Pertumbuhan ekonomi yang tidak merata di Thailand dan cepatnya persebaran barang-barang elektronik dan mesin-mesin pertanian mengakibatkan ketimpangan di Thailand utara. Himpitan kemiskinan dan keinginan yang kuat untuk memperoleh standar hidup yang layak merupakan motivasi utama sebagian anak-anak terjun ke dunia pelacuran di Thailand utara.

Di sebagian masyarakat Thailand, pelacuran memang sudah merupakan tradisi, sehingga tidak heran bila ada sebagian orang tua yang sengaja menjual atau mengirim anak-anaknya untuk menjadi pelacur demi perbaikan kehidupan ekonomi keluarganya. Selain itu, memang ada sindikat perdagangan anak dan perempuan untuk dijadikan pelacur di Thailand. Ada beberapa pola perekrutan anak untuk dijadikan pelacur. Dalam hal ini, agen perekrutan tenaga kerja merupakan salah satu wadah untuk merekrut perempuan dan anak menjadi pelacur. Dengan iming-iming gaji yang besar mereka merekrut para perempuan dan juga anak-anak untuk bekerja di perbatasan. Jadi, banyak perempuan dan anak-anak yang terjebak dengan pola seperti ini. Pola penculikan anak juga merupakan bentuk lain yang lebih ekstrim dari upaya penjualan anak dan perempuan ke dalam industri seks di Thailand. Pola penculikan yang dilakukan oleh orang/agen tertentu di Thailand utara ini biasanya terjadi di daerah pedalaman Thailand utara, bahkan sampai juga ke wilayah Myanmar China selatan, dan Kamboja.

Sindiket penjualan perempuan dan anak-anak untuk dipekerjakan di industri seks di Thailand sangat sulit untuk dihapus, karena mata rantainya sangat panjang dan terkesan ada kerja sama antara sindikat dengan oknum aparat

Walaupun pemerintah telah mengeluarkan Undang-Undang untuk mencegah maraknya prostitusi, yaitu *Prevention and Suppression of Prostitution Act* tahun 1996, yang antara lain memberikan ancaman berupa hukuman dan denda yang berat bagi siapa saja yang mempekerjakan atau pun berhubungan dengan pelacur anak, namun prostitusi anak terus tumbuh subur. Oleh karena itu, tidak heran bila kondisi demikian mengakibatkan dampak yang amat serius bagi persebaran penyakit kelamin, terutama HIV/AIDS di Thailand.

Thailand merupakan negara pertama di Asia yang mengalami epidemi AIDS dan wilayah Thailand utara merupakan salah satu wilayah yang paling terpengaruh. Sejak kasus HIV pertama terdeteksi tahun 1985 di Thailand, Thailand bagian utara telah memasuki tahap epidemic HIV pada tahun 1988, terutama di kalangan para pekerja seks. Sejak terdeteksinya HIV/AIDS hingga tahun 1997, lebih dari 260.000 orang meninggal karena HIV/AIDS di Thailand. Sejak tahun 1990an berbagai program dilakukan oleh pemerintah dan LSM untuk menekan laju perkembangan HIV/AIDS di Thailand. Sejak tahun 1997 pemerintah Thailand, melalui Komisi AIDS Nasional, juga telah berupaya menerapkan kebijakan melalui *Plan Action 1997-2000*, untuk menangani program pencegahan dan perawatan HIV/AIDS.

Walaupun berbagai upaya dan program telah diterapkan oleh pemerintah Thailand untuk mereduksi laju perkembangan HIV/AIDS, namun hasilnya belum maksimal. Hal ini terkait erat dengan masih suburnya industri seks di Thailand. Hingga saat ini, lebih dari satu juta penduduk Thailand positif mengidap HIV/AIDS. Dalam hal ini, peran para pekerja migrant dalam penyebaran HIV/AIDS sangat signifikan, sebab mereka ini

merupakan kelompok masyarakat yang memiliki tingkat mobilitas yang tinggi, sehingga sangat rentan terhadap HIV/AIDS. Dengan demikian, tampak sekali adanya korelasi antara migrasi, perdagangan perempuan dan anak, serta industri seks bagi perkembangan HIV/AIDS di Thailand, khususnya di perbatasan Thailand bagian utara dengan Myanmar. Oleh karena itu, di sini penting sekali pemahaman tentang perbatasan Thailand-Myanmar dalam konteks migrasi, perdagangan perempuan dan anak, serta perkembangan industri seks yang memiliki kontribusi besar bagi persebaran HIV/AIDS, khususnya berbagai faktor penyebab, karakteristik/pola, dan berbagai upaya penanggulangannya.

VI. JARINGAN PERBATASAN DAN ROUTE PERDAGANGAN

Pada akhir abad ke-19, pemerintah Inggris dan Perancis menetapkan batas-batas negara di utara Thailand yang berbatasan dengan Burma dan Laos. Penetapan batas wilayah tersebut membawa perubahan pada masyarakat yang tinggal di sekitar daerah perbatasan, dimana sejak saat itu mereka harus taat pada peraturan negara. Mereka tidak bisa lagi melakukan kegiatan dengan bebas sebagaimana sebelum ada pembatasan. Ada peraturan-peraturan tertentu yang harus ditaati untuk melakukan aktivitas social-ekonomi di daerah perbatasan.

Kegiatan perekonomian di daerah perbatasan Thailand-Burma juga meliputi aktivitas dari orang-orang yang tinggal di upland dan lowland yang terdapat di sepanjang daerah perbatasan. Hubungan antara upland-lowland tersebut dari waktu ke waktu tidak banyak berubah. Masyarakat upland (pegunungan) membutuhkan barang-barang dari dataran rendah, demikian juga sebaliknya.

Masyarakat Karen di dataran tinggi di Chiang Mai sebagai contoh, mereka membutuhkan barang-barang kebutuhan sehari-hari dari daerah lembah seperti ikan kering, garam, tembakau, pakaian, barang tembikar, perhiasan dan sebagainya. Disamping itu, mereka juga beternak babi, kerbau, juga memiliki hasil hutan.

Pertukaran atau jual beli barang kebutuhan masyarakat *upland-lowland* tersebut merupakan bagian dari jaringan perdagangan di daerah perbatasan. Perdagangan biasanya melalui jaringan yang sudah lama terjalin. Para pedagang akan datang ke daerah pegunungan dalam periode waktu yang berbeda, misalnya pedagang ternak babi akan datang seminggu sekali, sedangkan pedagang kerbau akan datang sekali dalam tiga bulan. Pedagang kebutuhan sehari-hari akan datang seminggu sekali.

Barang kebutuhan yang diperdagangkan di daerah pegunungan merupakan hasil dari daerah daratan rendah di utara Thailand, dan kemungkinan besar juga dari perbatasan Burma. Barang-barang tersebut dibawa oleh pedagang ke pusat perdagangan di daerah perbatasan, dibeli oleh pedagang perantara, kemudian diambil oleh tengkulak yang akan menjajakan ke berbagai daerah, termasuk daerah pegunungan di perbatasan. Demikian juga dengan hasil dari dari pegunungan akan diperdagangkan dengan jalur dan jaringan yang sama. Hubungan antara penjual dan pembeli disini terlihat sebagai hubungan timbal balik yang saling menguntungkan, yang bisa berlaku sampai tiga generasi. Pedagang perantara disini sebagian besar adalah orang Cina, India, dan Thailand sendiri.

Jalur perdagangan yang dilalui di daerah perbatasan meliputi jalur resmi, yaitu yang melalui pemeriksaan petugas, dan jalur tak resmi, yang biasanya melalui hutan-hutan. Pada dasarnya terdapat beberapa route perdagangan yang dilalui di perbatasan Burma-Thailand. Jalur yang paling ramai dilalui adalah Keng Tung - Tachilek - Mae Sai - Chiang Mai. Jalur kedua yaitu Myawaddy - Mae Sod, melalui jembatan yang menghubungkan Sungai Moei.

Di sebelah selatan jalur perdagangan melalui selat yang memisahkan Kawthaung - Ranong. Selain itu tercatat pula beberapa tempat seperti Mae Hong Son, Mae Sariang dan Kra Buri.

Dari beberapa route yang dilewati, Mae Sai adalah yang terbesar di daerah utara, sedangkan Mae Sod menempati posisi kedua. Di Mae Sod setidaknya terdapat lima pusat perdagangan, yaitu Moe Li Chai, Phar Lu, Mae Sa Lin, Mae Tak, dan tepian sungai Moei. Di daerah selatan Ranong adalah jalur perdagangan yang utama. Pada umumnya barang kebutuhan yang diperjual-belikan di Ranong adalah ikan dan kacang-kacangan, sedangkan ternak biasanya melalui Mae Sod.

VII. KESIMPULAN

Hasil sementara dari penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa telah terjadi perbedaan perspektif tentang perbatasan antara Birma dan Thailand.

- Pada awalnya memang wilayah perbatasan dianggap sebagai wilayah yang tidak stabil akibat pengalaman historis masa lalu di kedua negara yang berbatasan itu. Satu negara menganggap negara lain sebagai ancaman. Bahkan karena dianggap sebagai ancaman seringkali terjadi salah persepsi misalnya bagaimana pemerintah Birma menolak kawasan di Thailand timur laut untuk dikembangkan sebagai kawasan wisata.
- Telah muncul perubahan perspektif yang memandang wilayah perbatasan tidak lagi sebagai halaman belakang *backyard* dari sebuah rumah tetapi sebagai halaman depan *frontyard* sebuah rumah atau sebagai gate untuk memasuki sebuah negara.
- Seperti diketahui bahwa daerah perbatasan antara Birma dan Thailand dikenal sebagai produksi opium yang terkenal didunia. Untuk menghilangkan kesan negatif itu, pemerintah Thailand telah mengubah wilayah itu menjadi wilayah yang dapat dikembangkan untuk meningkatkan penghasilan masyarakat lokal, misalnya

mereka dilatih cara mengembangkan kerajinan keramik, tekstil dan sebagainya sehingga mereka melupakan pekerjaan lama nenek moyang mereka yang sibuk dengan perdagangan opium.

- Kita telah mengetahui bahwa memang terdapat perbedaan kualitas hidup antara masyarakat di wilayah perbatasan seperti mereka yang hidup di wilayah Birma tampak terbelakang dibandingkan dengan mereka yang tinggal di wilayah Thailand. Di wilayah perbatasan Birma tampak penduduk yang memakai sarung menjual barang-barang selundupan seperti CD, rokok, sementara di wilayah Thailand mereka tidak memakai sarung, tetapi mempergunakan celana panjang dan menjual batu cincin, kerajinan masyarakat lokal.
- Kedua pemerintahan Birma dan Thailand berupaya meningkatkan kesan perbatasan yang maju dengan mengupayakan jaringan kerjasama antara negara-negara yang letaknya berbatasan untuk pengembangan sektor perekonomian seperti industry dan perdagangan dengan memperbaiki sarana transportasi.
- Kedua negara yang berbatasan tampak memelihara persoalan keamanan yang sangat rawan terhadap kegiatan penyelundupan, teroris atau aksi-aksi illegal lainnya dengan mengontrol secara kuat mobilitas penduduk.
- Pemerintah Thailand cukup intensif mendata kelompok etnik yang ada di perbatasan, bahkan pemerintah menganjurkan mereka menjadi warga Thailand yang diberikan berbagai latihan untuk meningkatkan taraf hidup masyarakat di perbatasan.
- Kita perlu belajar dari Thailand dalam mengelola, menata, dan menumbuhkembangkan kehidupan ekonomi, sosial dan budaya masyarakat di perbatasan.

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