

Chapter VII

The Trans-border Ethnic Mon Network of Mass Communication for Diffusion of Mon Nationalistic Messages among Targeted Groups.

This section is directed to the study of the nature of the trans-border network of mass communication under the control of the Mon nationalist movement. The mass communication herein is conceived as an indispensable process within which diffusion of nationalistic message has been made possible through two types of efficient media ; traditional media and modern media.

The extent of the role played by the trans-border ethnic Mon network of mass communication has varied according to the political climate within the individual ethnic Mon enclaves. For example, it is estimated that between the years 1988 and 1990 , the network of mass communication expanded rapidly following the exodus of Mon refugees into Thailand at various points along the porous Thai-Burmese border. But since 1992 onwards, the trans-border network of mass communication has decreased in size under increasing political

constraints placed by Thai State mechanisms upon Myanmar's groups of displaced persons and refugee-warriors ,most of whom work for the Mon nationalist movement.

The field study reveals that refugee-warriors are the most politically sensitive and controversial group , appearing to act as the most efficient conduits of traditional human media , usually without modern communication equipment , in circulating and spreading what could be broadly termed as Mon nationalistic messages. Given the nature of the traditional human media , these Mon refugee-warriors of Burmese origin as human media are found to have transformed themselves systematically for either survival or with an aim to achieving their goals among various social categories from bona-fide refugees, temporary warriors, seasonal economic immigrants, professional trans-state political activists to spies and so on. This dynamic social categorial transformation among these Mon nationalists has been made in accordance with their psycho-dynamic nature or the way in which they interpret the situations they have faced for various mixed or even disguised objectives; from the political, the economic, the ideological the socio-cultural to the psychological. In recognition of this complex reality , it is almost impossible to determine an exact permanent social category among these ethnic individuals living

their lives across the Thai-Burmese border. Turning to the issue of existing modern media , specifically radio and television broadcasting and the printed media as employed by the Mon nationalists ; in earlier days some Mon activists of Thai blood attempted to use radio with a view to propagandizing Mon nationalistic messages but this later banned by the Thai authorities. Printed media, in the form of newsletters , were found to be one of the most influential and accessible forms of message-relay as an integral part of the New Mon State Party's political propaganda machine. Most of newsletters were found to be edited in one location, but published in another , they were then widely distributed to their targeted groups ; Thailand's Mons at Ratchaburi and Ko Kret. These newsletters have so far played the most crucial role in mobilizing the public imagination ,whereby Mon nationalist group cohesion can be maintained. The newsletter's influence however, has been limited to those Mon of the educated class. The survey found that the techniques adopted by the New Mon State Party in publishing and circulating newsletters in an attempt to command the optimal degree of loyalty among targeted groups included , inserting compassion-arousing facts into news letters , presenting news in the style of emotionalism and dramatizing or emphasizing scanty historical facts as a justification for all their political goal-oriented actions.

In each issue , the introductory page opens with a declaration of the aims of the editor ; the Committee for Publicity of People's Struggle in Monland (CPPSM), following the declaration statement is a description of what is going on within their network and refugee camps. A call for financial support is usually the last item to be addressed on the opening page.

The study further reveals that it is both the traditional and modern media that function , not only to sharpen the line of ethnic consciousness among Thailand's Mons , but also to prolong ethnic stereotyping among Thai citizens of Mon blood. The trans-border network of mass communication under Mon nationalist movement control was facilitated especially by the Thai-Burmese border environment of political vacuum within which neither the Thai nor Burmese State could hold permanent political power among its local population of highly dynamic social categories with various degrees of dynamic political loyalty. In other words, it is the nature of this natural political vacuum, upon which all existing forms of trans-state activities , whether pro or anti State, organized both directly and indirectly by the Mon nationalist movement, have thrived for decades.

At this point a conclusion can be drawn that most political moves on the part of Thailand's Mons have in general been psychologically motivated since a majority of Thailand's Mons, particularly those living in provincial areas largely cut off from the integrating force of Thai national official culture and values, as well as from the imperative of capitalism, who exhibit signs that a consciousness of their ethnic world has been cultivated and thus kept alive to some extent. The power of the printed media is not sufficient to lead to violent action among a majority of Thailand's Mons, but rather its effect has been confined to a mobilization of public imagination and a desire to promote and protect some of the New Mon State Party interest. Most of Thailand's Mons have so far never deemed Thailand and its people as a cause that deepens the suffering of their compatriots and most of them continue to show political loyalty towards the host society. Their collective behavior suggests no tendency that they will resort to violence in the foreseeable future as a means of reducing their frustration over their perceived discrepancy between expectation and social reality. Few of Myanmar's Mons, despite the fact that many have felt frustrated with Thailand's increasingly marked unwillingness in this decade to continue assistance towards their countrymen or homeland have, with a rational analysis of the cost benefit of their situation and strategy, ~~been~~ been

radicalized toward any form of violent action against the Thai State and its people.



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