

Chapter 4

THE TAI YAI SETTLEMENT IN MAE HONG SON AFTER 1962

4.1. The Settlement of Post-1962 Tai Yai Immigrants

In this section, I will review the settlement of post-1962 Tai Yai immigrants by focusing on examples of their community formation and their social participation in the receiving society. In particular their social network formation and its role as a supporting system, which improves the condition of settlement life for the immigrants, will come into focus.

4.1.1. Community Formation

A standard sociological criteria for "community" has been "densely knit neighborhood solidarities filled with mutual aid"¹ and this notion is supported by (1) specific geographical territoriality, (2) common relations between people in it, and (3) commonality through the interactions.² The meaning of "community" used in this section follows these criteria.

Patterns of community formation are not always the same among the post-1962 Tai Yai immigrants. They are influenced by the immigrants' places or areas of residence, and their places of residence differ depending on their length of stay in Thailand, timing of entry, and most importantly, their relationship with local villagers. Two main patterns of residential location were identified: (1) the pattern that immigrants' residences are located in the middle of a pre-existing community which residents are mostly local villagers composed of pre-1962 Tai Yai immigrants and their descendents; and (2) the one that immigrants established new communities in separate areas. In the former case, the

¹ Definition by Hillery in 1955, cited in Barry Wellman, Peter J. Carrington and Alan Hall, "Network as Personal Communities" in *Social Structures: A Network Approach*, ed. by Barry Wellman and S.D. Berkowitz. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp.130-131.

² Yuki Yasuda, *Nettowaku Anarusisu (Network Analysis)*, (Tokyo: Shinyousha, 1997), p.158. (in Japanese)

immigrants form a community together with local villagers in the pre-existing community, and the later case, they form a community with newly arrivals, who are in a similar situation with them, in the newly established community. These are, however, not completely separated communities that exist independently, but rather interdependent sub-communities which are lumped together with the village community.³

The former pattern includes the cases of immigrants who started to live there because they bought or were given the land, they were married to a local villager and moved in together, or are the dependents of their relatives or friends who reside there. These cases can be found mostly among the immigrants who have stayed in the village for ten to twenty years or more longer, and have already established considerable friendships with villagers.

The villagers, as members and residents of a pre-existing community, sometimes offer some land to immigrants whom they know well and trust. This is not a business transaction, but an act of friendship. This offering of land is sometimes arranged without a charge, or for a fee lower than the rate that would be charged to strangers.⁴

Some immigrants started to live in the pre-existing community because they married a villager there. The longer the immigrants stay in Thailand, the more chances they have to meet a marriage partner among the local villagers, as their lives intersect at schools, grocery stores, temples, and in the fields.⁵ Ten to twenty years stay is long enough for the immigrants to get to know each other for them, thus the cases of immigrants'

³ See Figure 2, p.113.

⁴ For example, "P (a post-1962 immigrant) and I have been good friends. He came to our village alone about ten years ago. Firstly, he had no land and no house, but worked very hard and had good character. My father liked him and let him stay on the land of our family without charging him. P built a hut and started to live there and keeps good relations with the neighbors." Interview with a villager with Thai nationality, 38 years old. P is an immigrant who came to Mae Hong Son in 1987, now 36 years old.

⁵ For example, "I came to this village in 1978 with my family. I have lived in neighborhood of my present husband; he is Tai Yai born in Mae Hong Son and, of course, with Thai citizenship. We often met around our houses and at the temple, then he asked me to marry after five or six years friendship. At that time, my family was going to move to another village because they could get a land there. I wondered what to do, but decided to marry him and live in his house. My family left, but they come to visit my husband and me often." Interview with an immigrant, 34 years old. "I studied at school in the village and my present husband was a classmate. We had good feeling toward each other and decided to marry. I moved to his house and lived with his parents", Interview with an immigrant, 24 years old, who came to Mae Hong Son in 1984.

marriage-into the pre-existing community are not rare.

Not only longer staying immigrants but also some newly arrived immigrants can be found in the pre-existing sub-community. These new arrivals mostly came by relying on their friends, relatives and the other people whom they knew and are living with them as their dependents in the earlier stages of their lives in the village. They stay with them until they can live independently, getting jobs to make their living, finding new places to live, and getting to know more people in the village and expanding their networks wider. Once they can live on their own, they leave the households of friends or relatives. From the interviews, we can see 45% of the informants once being such dependents, though the length of the time varies from one month to a few years. Of them, about 70% lived with their relatives, including their own family members who came to Mae Hong Son earlier, and about 30% stayed with their friends. This settlement pattern can be commonly observed anywhere in Thailand and other countries, not only in Mae Hong Son.⁶

In any of the cases, we can see that the key factor making the immigrants live in the pre-existing sub-community is the existence of relations, which have to be trustable and supportive, between the immigrants and the residents of such pre-existing sub-community.

Another pattern can be found among the immigrants who had no one to know and to rely on when they arrived at the village, or who had relatives or friends but they were not able to live together because of their financial and residential conditions. Thus, they had to find an area to reside outside of the pre-existing sub-community. In the case of the village I researched, the village headman prepares the unused land and allows new arrivals to live there. Most of the immigrants who reside in this area have stayed in the village a relatively short time coming during the late 1980s to 1990s. Because it is difficult for them to find places to live by themselves, they naturally gather to the area which the village headman offers and gradually start to form a sub-community as the residents in the

⁶ Cf., the case of community formation in Central Thailand, Kitahara, op. cit.; the case of Brazilian immigrants to Japan Hirota, op. cit.; and the cases of the immigrants in Jakarta and Kuala Lumpur, Yoshihiro Tsubouchi, "Seikatsu no Kiso Tan'i (Basic Unit of Life)" in *Tounan Ajia no Shakai (Societies in Southeast Asia)*, ed. by Yoshihiro Tsubouchi, (Tokyo: Koubundo, 1990), p.39. (in Japanese)

area increase. Two such communities can be found in the village; one is located in the northeastern part of the village with about 25 households, and the other is in the southwestern part with about 20 households.⁷

The pre-existing sub-community is located in the center of the village, facing the roads and other public facilities such as a school, a temple, public telephones, and grocery stores. Of course, there is supply of electricity and water for the whole area of the pre-existing communities. On the other hand, the newly established communities of later arrivals are located a distance from the center of the village, in areas that were once bamboo forests with slope. That sloped land had been unused, since it was suitable neither for cultivation nor for living space. There are no facilities other than a common well for each community.

In the case of other villages, which are more mountainous, we can see the change in the settlement location of Tai Yai people as the population pressure increases. When we look back at the history of Tai Yai settlement in Mae Hong Son, we can see a change in the altitude of settlement. Tai Yai people are originally valley dwellers, but they started to live more on upper hills after the valley basin became overpopulated. Initially, the clusters were established by clearing large flat areas with the flow of the Pai River and they became communities such as Pang Muu and Jon Kham (present provincial capital). The excess population from these older communities moved out to surrounding areas of the village and established new communities. These communities were located on the flat lands or on the skirt of mountains with gentle slopes at a little bit higher altitude. Pa Pong, Mok Cam Pe, Huai Pa are examples of these communities⁸. As the natural increase of the population and inflows of immigrants continued, less flat land became available and that made Tai Yai people move to much higher hills and mountains. Many Tai Yai new arrivals live in higher areas next to various hill tribes⁹ and form communities with these people. This makes some people misunderstood that Tai Yai people are

⁷ See Map 1, p.116.

⁸ Refer to Map 2, p.117. The village of research site is also categorized in this group.

⁹ Chakrit, op. cit., pp.90-91.

highlanders living in the steep hills and mountains.

But this is not the case of the village of the research site, because there are no such high mountains in the village. It remains true, however, that immigrants living in newly established communities feel the inconvenience of living there. Some of them try to move to more convenient areas by buying land with the money they managed to save. Of course it is unofficial dealing to buy land from the villagers who have such lands. Because they cannot find nor buy lands by themselves, the establishment of trustable relationship with the legitimate villagers, who can be mediators that make the dealing possible, becomes an important factor.¹⁰

These facts demonstrate that the Tai Yai immigrants' settlement and community formation in Mae Hong Son is determined by the relation between geographical factor and the timing of entry, and, more importantly, the one between length of stay and the distribution range of the reliable social relationships with local villagers. The details of such social relations are reviewed in the following section.

4.1.2. Social Organization and Networks

Social relations of immigrants with other immigrants and with host villagers take the forms of solid organization, moderately structured semi-organization, and freely dispersed networks.

As for the organization among the immigrants, the village of research site has an organization named "*Palang Mai*", which handles all affairs concerning immigrants who do not have Thai citizenship. The organization is in charge of recording the number of newly arrived immigrants, improving of their livelihood, and encouraging self-help among the immigrants. The leader of the *Palang Mai* is selected from the immigrant group, and negotiates and coordinates with the village headman on the issues which effect immigrants

¹⁰ "My child started to go to school, and my wife wanted to stay in a more convenient place, so we decided to build a new house in the area close to the center of the village. Although I do not have the right to buy land because my wife and I just have pink cards, I had two friends with Thai nationality help me. We decided to buy land jointly, then to divide it into three and build three houses in the area. We saved 8,000 Baht each. These two friends are co-workers at a construction site, and we have been good friends for seven to eight years and trust each other." Interview with an immigrant, 36 years old, who came to Mae Hong Son in 1981.

in the village. This leader is not elected by the immigrants, but is appointed by the village headman. According to the village headman, he selects a person who has been in the village for a long time, and who has a relatively high level of social consciousness. There are neither regular meetings nor particular activities, but, rather, meetings are called as problems arise.¹¹ Other than this organization, I could not find any organization formed by the immigrants themselves.

Nor could an organization involving both immigrants and members of the host society be found. However, both immigrants and hosts are involved and work together in various events in the village, although there is no official organization that arranges their collaboration. This immigrant-villager collaboration can be seen on such occasions as the preparation and management of the annual festival of the temple, the ordination ceremony of novices, various occasions of making merits,¹² and public works such as road construction and bridge building in the village.¹³ Working together on joint projects cultivates the participants' feelings of belonging to "one circle". This group which works together is not an established organization, but might be seen as a semi-organization, if we consider its effect on the psychological outlook of the participants' feeling. Another similar semi-organization could be found in the form of occupational groups, composed of immigrants as employees and a host villager as employer. If there is a strong and reliable connection between employees and employer, this relationship will impact immigrants' lives outside the workplace.¹⁴

Without being any particular organization, however, various forms of the

¹¹ During my stay in the village, they held some meetings in order to discuss the countermeasure to the Thai government's repatriation policy. But not all of the immigrants attended the meeting.

¹² Activities concerning Buddhism are important part of the village community life. "The connections of Tai Yai people within the village, especially the one of the outer villages, are very firm. On the occasion of merit making at the temple, most of the villagers are invited to the event." Samnakan suksthigan Chanwat Mae Hong Son, op. cit., p. 22.

¹³ Nicola Tannenbaum, "The Heart of the Village: Constituent Structures of Shan Communities" *Crossroads*, Vol.5, No.1, 1990, p.24.

¹⁴ Some immigrants working as gardeners in a resort hotel in the village told that their employer is very kind and helpful to the immigrants who are his employees. The employer takes care of all aspects of the employees' lives, even of their families and relatives. So all of the employees under him feel like they are belong to one circle centered on the employer.

immigrants' networks occupy certain parts of their settlement life. This has been suggested in former studies on migration networks in other areas. Wilson, who studies transnational migration of Mexicans into the United States, writes on the position of the networks in the migration process:

Numerous studies of transnational migration and internal migration have documented that migration is mediated by kinship and social networks. In order of strength of ties, relatives, friends, and *paisanos* (community members) may offer the potential immigrant housing, loans of money, aid in finding employment, and orientation in the destination community. Once at destination, acquaintances made at work or at sites of leisure expand the information members of any given network have about potential employment opportunities and possible future destinations.¹⁵

And she summarizes five interrelated principles concerning migration networks and their dynamics as follows: (1) multilocality of networks, (2) work sites and work types as anchoring points of networks, (3) the "strength of weak ties" in network expansion, (4) diffuse networks as social capital, and (5) dense networks as social capital.¹⁶ On the other hand, Wellman, Carrington and Hall list up six distinct types of "roles" given to networks, which their informants in Toronto recognized: (1) immediate kin, (2) extended kin, (3) neighbor, (4) friends, (5) co-worker, and (6) organizational ties,¹⁷ and these roles are expected to bring two sorts of resources: companionship and aid.¹⁸ Companionship includes: "sociability", that is getting pleasure from being in one another's company; doing things together; discussing interests and ideas; and so on.¹⁹ Aid includes: minor household aid, such as occasional help with housework; minor services, such as errands and occasional childcare; lend/ give household items, such as foods and tools; and

¹⁵ Tamar Diana Wilson, "Weak Ties, Strong Ties: Network Principles in Mexican Migration" *Human Organization*, Vol.57, No.4, 1998, p.394.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp.394-398. Diffuse network composed of less strong ties spread to wider range provides previously unknown information with its wide ranged sources. Dense network composed of strong ties provides supports priority to its member with its strong sense of mutual responsibility. But differences between these two networks must be seen as describing a continuum on an axis of subjective feelings of mutual responsibility.

¹⁷ Wellman, Carrington, and Hall, *op. cit.*, p.142.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p.159.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

emotional aid, such as family problems advice, mental support in both minor upset and major crises.²⁰ These are, as seen in chapter 1, what Douglas and Caces say are the migrant network's functions in buffering migrants from costs and disruptions of migration and serving as the channels for information, other resources, and normative structures in immigrants' settlement process.²¹ These principles and roles of networks are applicable to the networks of Tai Yai immigrants too, although they might need some adjustment because they are not exactly same, having different background in formation of networks and some overlaps in the roles and difference of their importance from these former studies.

For Tai Yai people, immediate and extended kin might be categorized in the same group because they are treated in almost the same way. According to the interviews with Tai Yai immigrants, kinship networks seems to be the most neat and reliable contacts for them. Most of the informants (84%) answered that they would ask for help from their own families and relatives if they had any problem and there was not a significant difference between immediate and extended kin (immediate 56%, extended 49%). Tai Yai kinsfolk composed of their own relatives linked by bloodline and those linked by marriage, who became relatives by marriage. These relatives-in-law are also taken into this network as kinsfolk, and put in an important position as well as blood-linked one. We can deduce this by their frequent visits with each other, during which they ask for help, advice and financial support,²² and undertake cooperative agricultural works with members of the kinship networks. These networks can be understood as the one of the "dense networks" as social capital, as described in Wilson's "network principles". In cases of the newly arrived immigrants, these kinsfolk tend to be found only among post-1962 immigrants such as their own families who came to Thailand together, or the

²⁰ Ibid., p.162.

²¹ Refer to Chapter 1.

²² According to some informants, these are regarded as very personal affairs and should not involve other people other than their relatives. The act should be avoided because it is regarded as both shameful, because they can be judged as the people who have no ability to manage their life, and bothering others, because they also have such troubles and cannot afford to help others.

relatives who have come there little bit earlier or later than them. The longer their stays in Thailand, the more the kinship network expands beyond the categories of "immigrants" and "host." This indicates that the immigrants gradually expand their interactions with local villagers the longer they stay in the village.

Networks of neighborhood are also neat. These networks are formed from the relations of family or household members to members of neighboring families or households. In many cases, these neighbors include their own kinsfolk because they tend to live in adjoining areas.²³ In most of the cases, all of the family member keep good relations with their neighbors, but especially female members and children build firm relationships than others because they are more bounded to home. Among 20% of the informants who answered that they will ask neighbors supports in time of trouble, 86% were female. Because they have few other chances to make friends, these neighbors' networks play the role of "friend" network too.²⁴ These networks of neighborhood become the means of passing information through daily chats over fences; provide mutual helps in household work such as cooking, fixing utensils, and taking care of children; and engaging in friendly activities such as occasional joint meals, drinking, or shared activities. The location of immigrants' residence is one of the factors that determine the range of network and who are involved in the neighborhood network. In the case of the village of the research site, the members of a network change depending on where they live, that is, which sub-community they belong to. While newly arrived immigrants' neighborhood networks are formed mostly by these new comers because the newly established communities in which they live are occupied by a majority of such newly arrived immigrants; the long-resident immigrants live in pre-existing sub-community which include both immigrants and host villagers.

For Tai Yai immigrants, friends' networks sometimes overlap with those of

²³ This is partly because of their traditional style of residence. Multi-household compound can be found among Tai Yai people and children live around the house of parents if there is enough land to spare.

²⁴ In Wellman, Carrington and Hall's study, this neighborhood sometimes is the beginning of friendship. Wellman, Carrington, and Hall, *op. cit.*, p.145.

neighbors and co-workers because they rarely have a chance to meet people who are not kinsfolk, neighbors, or co-workers if they stay only in the village. Most of these relations hence develop into firm friendships. For school-age children, school is the place where such networks are formed. According to the interview, these networks seem to provide more companionship than aids; only 10 % of the informants expect help from them when they have trouble.

Another important network is those with co-workers that is formed at the working site. For agricultural workers, this network might overlap with the kinship network, as labor forces are still mostly mobilized from one's family members or relatives.²⁵ In most of the paddy fields, there are huts for cooking and napping at lunchtime. The workers go out to the fields in the early morning, have lunch and nap there, and return home in the evening. If they hire someone who lives far away, they let these people stay at their home until the work has been finished. This means that they spend most of their time with other people who are working in the same field. This communal life surely contributes, to some extent, to the cultivation of a sense of solidarity among the workers. We can also see strong relations among co-workers not involved with agriculture, such as among wage laborers engaged in house building and road construction. These laborers usually have a drink after work and become familiar with each other.²⁶ This network is also one that provides more companionship than aid, but it plays a crucial role in the job placement of later immigrants whom the network members know. Members of this network pass along employment information and sometimes invite their kin, friends, and other persons from the same origin into this network. This process is very important for the employment of the various networks' members, as shown in Wilson's network principle of work sites and work types as anchoring points of networks.

Organizational ties are not so significant in the Tai Yai immigrants' case. As

²⁵ Cf. "Co-residents [in the household] pool their labors to do the works necessary to provision and maintain the household", Tannenbaum, *op. cit.*, 1990, p.24.

²⁶ Some informants told me that the works was very hard and they could not do it without drinking after finishing work. In such drinking occasions, the topics of talk are usually to complain of the job, something about their families and so on.

mentioned before, a few could be found, but they do not reach the point that it can fill the immigrants' needs.

We can find gender among these networks. Tai Yai women go out to work as men do, but are also in charge of keeping houses and prefer to stay home if they have nothing to do. Eberhardt writes on cultural reasoning for this custom as follows:

Guided by their understanding of Buddhist teachings, Shan [Tai Yai] perceive women to be in certain respects inherently inferior to men....being born a woman indicates a lesser store of accumulated religious merit (*kuhsou*) from past lives than does being born a man....Their weaker karma also makes them more vulnerable to the forces of this world. They can more easily be manipulated, for example, by powerful others, spirits as well as humans, and are more subject to certain illness....These beliefs provide a coherent rationale for many restrictions on women's behavior – for example, the notion that women are in need of protective companionship and should be kept close to the safety of home.²⁷

The networks reflect this custom. Neighborhood networks are mostly female centered,²⁸ and co-workers' networks are male centered. Although wife and husband, or sister and brother develop their networks in different area and in different directions, these networks are joined together through mutual visiting by members of both networks to their houses, or occasions of joint activities of families that involve different network members. Then, the networks which were once of neighbors and co-workers transform into those of families. These two networks join together and make the range of the networks wider. This expansion and transformation of networks is also the premise of Wilson's network principles; for example, transformation of diffuse network to dense networks and expansion of networks through bridging by weak ties.

This expansion of the networks is an important process in the immigrants' settlement lives because it can show the expansion of their social interactions and space of

²⁷ Nancy Eberhardt, "Siren Song: Negotiating Gender Images in A Rural Shan Village" in *Gender, Power, and the Construction of the Moral Order: Studies from the Thai Periphery*, ed. by Nancy Eberhardt, (Madison: The Center for Southeast Asian Studies, University of Wisconsin, 1988), p.78.

²⁸ Another occasion of female's network formation can be seen in cooperative agricultural works. In Tai Yai society, women also work in agriculture as do men. Meeting in fields is one opportunity for women to know more people and to widen their networks other than neighborhood.

activities. In the first stage, their network start with specific and limited one, which is influenced by their reasons and patterns of the entry to the village. For example, the immigrants came to work naturally attach themselves to their co-workers' network, those who came to marry tend to be in kinship network first, those who came by relying on their friends start their network with the one of friends', and those who came alone start to build their networks with their neighbors. But these originally separate networks gradually expand and are fused as time goes by.

As previously mentioned, networks are characterized by their disregard for given attributes, or what Wilson referred to as "multilocality".²⁹ Immigrants' networks are not limited to the village, but are spread over the territorial limits of village.³⁰ The work places are sometimes located outside the village and it becomes one node of the immigrants' network as the immigrants' relationships developed. According to Wilson, labor market conditions of the destination and the existence of kin, friends, and co-villagers which can be expected to provide aid influence the destination options of the immigrants.³¹ And now it is not uncommon for these Tai Yai immigrants to go to work in Chiang Mai, Bangkok or other cities in Thailand as their local villager counterparts do, although it is regarded as an illegal action by the Thai government. They form networks with the people from Northern Thailand, or from Mae Hong Son, or even of Tai Yai people in such cities, and some of the relations are kept even after they come back to their homes. Such networks in the cities are supported by a strong sense of solidarity in being Tai Yai speakers and sharing the same culture and customs, regardless of whether they are Tai Yai of Thai nationality or Tai Yai of illegal immigrants. Because their language and culture, especially food are different from the others in Thailand, they miss and need someone to understand and share it to make them feel at home during their stay in such

²⁹ Wilson, op. cit., p.394.

³⁰ This expansion of networks is also discussed in Masao Nobe, "Community Question': Examination in Case Study in Canberra." *Shakaitgaku Hyouron (Sociological Review)*, 42, pp.110-125 cited in Yasuda op. cit., and Barry Wellman, et. al., op. cit.

³¹ Wilson, op. cit., p.395-396.

unfamiliar places.³²

Another immigrants' network over the area of the village is the one connecting them to their origin society, that is the Tai Yai community on the Burmese side. That network might have existed before the immigrants' entry to Mae Hong Son and surely continue to exist after they settled there. Because their original society and Mae Hong Son are located on an old trade route which allows for easy border crossings, it is not difficult for the immigrants to visit their original community or to send letters via others making the trip. Among my informants, 42% of them have visited their origin society after coming to Thailand; it becomes 55% if it includes the visits by other family members. Another 9% of the informants deposit letters or messages for their relatives and friends with persons who go to the Burmese side. There are also cases that the relatives in Burma come to visit the immigrants in Mae Hong Son and these cases are seen in 17% of total number of informants. By any means, a total of 64% of my informants still keep in touch with their relatives and friends in Burma. The informants who answered that they have no contact with people on the Burmese side explained that it is because either all of their relatives have moved to the Thai side and there is no need to have contact with Burmese side, there is no home village there because the Burmese soldiers burnt it down, they are too old to trek through the forest and most of their relatives and friends there are already dead, they are afraid of being traced by the Tai Yai army if they go there or send letters because they deserted, and/or they do not want to meet Burmese soldiers there.

The above-mentioned networks, such as those of kin, neighbors, co-workers and outer village are not completely independent, but are connected and interrelated.³³ The junctions of these networks can sometimes be relations of families, as is seen in the

³² According to the interviews with Tai Yai workers in Bangkok, most of their close friends in Bangkok were Tai Yai people, no matter whether they come from the same village or not. There are some temples where Tai Yai people in Bangkok gather regularly. They just come to talk, exchange information, to make new friends, and to see if their friends are alright. At a market close to one such temple, there is a booth selling Tai Yai foods and stuff, such as *tua nao* (bean disc cake using for cooking), medicines, books, and so on. These are brought from Burma to Mae Hong Son and carried from Mae Hong Son to Bangkok. This is a rare place for the Tai Yai people in Bangkok to get stuff from their home. In the case of Chiang Mai, Wat Pa Pao, the Tai Yai temple, is the place where Tai Yai people gather.

³³ For model of immigrants' networks, see Figure 3, p.114.

connection between the networks of neighbors and co-workers, the introduction of friends' friends, accidental encounters with members of other networks at events such as temple festivals, moving in and out, and so on. The importance of weak ties, as seen at the connecting points of formerly separated networks, is often mentioned in the network principles of Wilson.³⁴ The longer the immigrants are in the settlement, the more chances they have to establish such in-middle relations that connect independent networks and widen the whole network. Networks function as a support system or as social capital, so the widening of networks can lead to a more comfortable and secure settlement life for the immigrants, and can motivate them to stay in Thailand continuously, despite their unstable status as unofficial residents.

4.2. "Circle of Relation" of Pre-1962 Immigrants and Post-1962 Immigrants

The term "circle of relations" refers to a range in which various relations connect the people in it to each other, as its name suggests. Hanks sees the concept of the "circle", together with the "entourage", as a component of the Thai social order. An "entourage" is a group focused on a single person and has an individualistic character. A "circle" consists in the extension of an entourage. It includes not only face-to-face relations of entourage but also the indirect connections derived from direct relations.³⁵

All members inside the circle have some links and relations with other members, and the members recognize other persons as being in the circle as long as the two have a noticeable link or relation. The "circle" is the space where members share the feeling of being "we", and it symbolizes the "we-ness" of its members. This "we-ness" is not composed of vague sentimental elements, but it is visualized by the connections of relations between members. These relations are created and reinforced through the members' joint works or by their doing and sharing something together. All of these relations strengthen the circle. For as the network is defined as the structured set of

³⁴ Wilson, *op. cit.*, pp.397-398.

³⁵ Lucien Hanks, "The Thai Social Order as Entourage and Circle" *In Change and Persistence in Thai Society: Essays In Honor of Lauriston Sharp*, (New York: Cornell University Press, 1975), pp.200-202.

social relationships between individuals,³⁶ the “circle of relations” can be understood to be a kind of network, or a set of various networks.

As reviewed in chapter 3, local Tai Yai population in Mae Hong Son consists of earlier immigrants, such as refugee princes, pioneers looking for new lands, teak traders and their descendants. Starting with a relatively small scale, most of them can trace their relationships to other members in the community. Most of the members of the community are “someone of being familiar faces” for these members through the recognition of the relations such as kinship, trading partnership, neighborhood, and memberships of the old community. And these “someone of being familiar faces” forms the circle. The relations have been cultivated through interactions in daily life and participation in the shared activities and events there since the establishment of the settlement. This elucidates the connections of members and shows the edge of their circle. But we can see post-1962 immigrants being in this circle of the local villagers, say being “we”, when we review their network, even though they are clearly separated into two groups, as one is Thai Tai Yai of legitimate residents of Mae Hong Son and the other is Burmese Tai Yai of being refugee/ displaced persons, by outsiders’ view.

This is explained in part by the recent expansion of the circles due to the entry of post-1962 immigrants, but we can observe this feeling of belonging to the community even prior the arrival of post-1962 immigrants. And this feeling might have even induced their migration across the border by keeping them from feeling that they were going to another country. Answers from informants confirm this. When asked why they chose to settle in the village, informants cited the presence of relatives (29%), friends (24%), family members (20%), and so on.³⁷

When considering kinship relations, we note the fact that kinsfolk of the Tai Yai people are spread over the whole trans-Salween area. This is because the area has been a

³⁶ As for the definition of network, refer to Chapter 1.

³⁷ Other reasons listed are they had heard of the village from the people who had been there (11%); they came there because they married one of the villagers (6%); and they had visited the village prior to their migration (4%).

natural territorial range and living space for Tai Yai people on both sides of the border, and, for a long time, was not divided by a national boundary. They are visiting each other even after the boundary had its actual effects.

Relations between traders on the Thai side and on the Burmese side were also established prior to the migration of post-1962 immigrants. Trading in this area is mostly small-scale, and ordinary villagers could be "traders" who cross the border. The goods they trade include cattle, forest products, and Burmese products such as sandals, cloth, hats, and medicines. These traders stock goods in Burma, carry them to Mae Hong Son, stay at the homes of friends or trading partners, sell the goods there, and then return home. This relation works similarly when the partner in Mae Hong Son goes to the Burmese side.³⁸ They had already been in the circle through such business relations. These reciprocal visits of business traders and their partners are one of the factors that facilitate the migration of the Tai Yai people. The immigrants' experiences actually visiting Mae Hong Son on trading trips are another factor which makes migrations easier.³⁹ These people know the routes, the situation in the receiving society, and people who can potentially help them.

Intermarriage over the border can often be found and can be seen as results of such contacts over the border.⁴⁰ The couples of Thai Tai Yai trader and Burmese Tai Yai woman, or Burmese Tai Yai trader and Thai Tai Yai woman, are often found example.⁴¹

³⁸ "S (a local Tai Yai villager) and I have been trading partners since before I came to Mae Hong Son. We traded cattle. I had come to Mae Hong Son often and S had been to Burma often. When I decided to stay in Mae Hong Son, I did not feel uneasy because there was S and other people known to each other through trading." Interview with an immigrant, 58 years old, who came to Mae Hong Son in 1980.

³⁹ In the framework of a migration system, short trip is also considered as the incentive which affects migration flow. See Figure 1, p.112.

⁴⁰ "I had never been in Thailand before, but my husband was a trader in Mae Hong Son, because he had relatives in Burma and it helped his business work easier, and he often visited the Burmese side and we met there and married. After marriage, I lived in Burma for a while and my husband came and went between Burma and Thailand. Then I moved to Thailand. My son is also doing business with traders in Burma and goes there often. He also married a woman of Burmese nationality recently." Interview with an immigrant, 49 years old, who came to Mae Hong Son in 1978. Her son was born in Burma, but he got Thai citizenship because his father is a Tai Yai with Thai citizenship. He met his wife during the business trips to Burma and has now brought her to Mae Hong Son.

⁴¹ Traditionally, most of Tai Yai long-distance traders were male, while female is actively engaged in the peddling in the village or market in the town.

These intermarriages produce new relatives in law on the other side of border and take these people on the other side of the border into the circle.

The relation of old community memberships between immigrants and host villagers are mostly found among the elder people. They had been neighbors or friends in Tai Yai community on the Burmese side during the period prior to their migration. One of them emigrated first and has become a Thai citizen, and later, others followed and became illegal immigrants on Thai soil. In this village of the research site, there are two prominent persons, both of them in their seventies, who induced migration of informants from the Burmese side: one is *Pu Tao* (grandpa) *K* from Mawk Mai; and other is *Pu Tao* ⁴² from Muang Nai. They had been very active in participating the events in the community when they were in Burma, so many people knew them. Some of the villagers of their origin later followed them after their move to Mae Hong Son more than 50 years ago. Both of them often go back to visit their neighbors and relatives in their former residence, so many of the villagers in their origin societies came to know them and their new residences in Mae Hong Son.

As being seen so far, the circle of relation existing in Mae Hong Son spreads over the border and involved the people on both sides of the border as its members because its membership does not require any qualification or legal standing that are required by highly institutionalized entities such as the nation-state, and it consists of freely expanding networks unbounded by the given attributes and its regulation.

For the circle of relation is formed of networks, and for networks has nature of being social capitals and supportive system as seen in former section, the circle of relation exists as the informal social space that has supporting functions for its members. For the immigrants, this social space provides them opportunities to carry out their daily practices

⁴² For example, "*Pu Tao K* was my neighbor when we were in Burma. He is eight years older than I am but we were like actual brothers. We worked in the field together and sometimes had drinks together when we were young. He moved to Mae Hong Son when he was 23 years old and became a Thai citizen. I first had no interest in going to Mae Hong Son, but the situation in Burma turned worse, so I decided to move. I knew the address of *Pu Tao K*, so came to this village when I was 44 years old. We still keep a good and close relationship with each other and have drinks together sometimes. I know other immigrants who were friends or neighbors of *Pu Tao K*." Interview with an immigrant, 62 years old, who came to Mae Hong Son in 1982. *Pu Tao K* came from Mawk Mai in 1952.

such as economic, social, religious, and recreation activities through its functions of companionship and aids, which are mostly difficult for them to obtain through the official system and process offered by the government because of their status as illegal immigrants. Because it has supporting functions in the space on Mae Hong Son, it can induce the influx of immigrants there by making them expected to have potential supports in their settlement lives, although the international migration is usually regarded as the process associated with more risks and hardships than internal migration.⁴³ Thus, the immigrants started to move by tracing their networks. The people came to Thailand like this seem to be “new comers” or “strangers” in the eyes of outsiders of the circle, who does not share the social space of the circle, but at the same time, to be “we” in the eyes of the members of the circle.

These phenomena might look strange through the standards of institutionalized national scheme that treats these immigrants as illegal existence, but it will become easier to understand if we conceptualize this circle as the social space separated from the national scheme, but physically sharing the area of Mae Hong Son as a sub-categorical entity ruled by national institution. Thus Mae Hong Son emerges on two level of position: one is of institutionalized sub-category of the nation that is regulated by Thailand’s law, order and value judgement derived from them; and other is of the circles for Tai Yai residents as unofficial social space in, and importantly, around Mae Hong Son, that is free from given attribute formed by Thailand and its value judgement.

This circle keeps changing its range through the new entry of outsiders and the exit of old members. The immigrants who did not have any relationships to the member of the circle when they came to Thailand are also gradually involved into the circle through the daily interactions and networking in their settlement lives in Mae Hong Son. As I mentioned before, the circle of relation is the social space where its members share daily activities and the feelings of “we-ness” by recognition of the dispersed relations within the circle. When we see the assimilation process of immigrants through this notion, it can be

⁴³ This is because the immigrants meet and have to cope with the different legal system, unfamiliar languages, culture and customs of the receiving country in their everyday life.

conceptualized as the process that the person who comes from outside of the circle goes into the circle and become “we” by establishing firm relationships with other members in the circle through the interactions with them. This process of assimilation is reviewed in the next chapter.



สถาบันวิทยบริการ
จุฬาลงกรณ์มหาวิทยาลัย